

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My name is Olivia Nyambura, and I am 20 years old. I was born on 24th November, 2003, at St Mary's Hospital in Kenya, as the eldest in a family of two children. I wouldn't say I was born into a struggling family but rather a humble one that lived well within its means. My mother, a tireless and enterprising woman, has built a successful career as a supplier of building materials in the construction industry. Her determination and resilience have been a constant source of inspiration for me. My father, a quiet and methodical man, is also involved in the construction sector. Their combined efforts have provided a stable and comfortable upbringing, though financial challenges were not uncommon. Despite these hurdles, my parents instilled in me the values of hard work, perseverance, and the importance of education.

Having lived a nomadic childhood, I've called various corners of Nairobi home, from the bustling heart of the city to its quieter suburbs. Today, Syokimau is my base, a place where I've found a sense of belonging amidst the urban sprawl. As a young woman navigating the challenges and exhilarations of university life at Dedan Kimathi University, I've experienced a whirlwind of emotions—triumphs that soared like eagles, adversities that tested my limits, and self-discoveries that illuminated my path.

Through this autobiography, I hope to share the tapestry of my life, revealing the intricate threads of experiences, challenges, and aspirations that have woven me into the person I am today. Education has been my guiding star, illuminating the path to a future where I can contribute meaningfully to my community. Resilience and perseverance, forged in the crucible of life's trials, have become my steadfast companions. I am eager to build upon the foundation laid by my parents, venturing into the realm of entrepreneurship to create a legacy of my own.

Early life and education

My childhood was filled with innocence and wonder, characterized by the simple pleasures of family, friends, and exploration. Living in various places exposed me to a rich mix of cultures, languages, and traditions, each providing a distinct view of the world. From the vibrant city streets to the serene beauty of the countryside during visits to my grandparents, I embraced the diversity around me, drawing inspiration from the sights, sounds, and experiences that shaped my formative years.

As the eldest sibling, I was fortunate to receive the love and guidance of my parents and older cousins, who fostered a deep appreciation for education in me from a young age. From the very first day I entered a classroom, I was filled with curiosity and a desire to learn and explore the world. My early comprehension was exceptional, and I grasped reading and listening skills more quickly than my peers, giving me an advantage in my academic pursuits. With the support of my family and the encouragement of my teachers, I embarked on a transformative journey of discovery that profoundly shaped my life.

Much of my early childhood is a blur, but by the age of six, my understanding began to sharpen. My parents often joke about my intense curiosity, which even led them to feel pressured to enroll me in school earlier than usual. I was always intrigued by where students went in the morning and returned in the evening wearing matching uniforms. The level of critical thinking and insight I demonstrated exceeded their expectations, and my speech during those years was notably advanced.

I attended a local private primary school, Williams Primary School then I later transferred to Green Cottage Academy. while we were still living in Maziwa Estate. It was there that I discovered my passion for learning, excelling in both academics and extracurricular activities. I enjoyed competing with my fellow students, and it thrilled me to see myself leading the pack simply by putting effort into my studies. Some might say I became cocky with my success, and I would agree—for shouldn't one have the right to be proud when they surpass their own expectations?

Apart from excelling in my studies, I engaged in extracurricular activities such as football and basketball, but only during primary school. Playing sports helped me clear my mind and exert the energy I stored up during school days. It was exhilarating. As a young girl, I also loved reading fictional books; my imagination would light up as I visualized the scenarios I read about coming to life, with characters dancing and conspiring, making sarcastic jokes, and more. After primary school, I struggled to find time to read as many books as I did before, although I'd still pick up a piece of literature here and there.

Outside of school, I found great satisfaction in spending time with my cousin and younger sibling. My cousin Ted was ingenious; he loved coming up with inventions and plans and would always drag my cousin and me into his schemes, which we loved. My cousin Diana, who was more like a sister and grew up with

me, was very imaginative and frank in her opinions. Looking back, I think spending so much time with them shaped my attitude towards others and taught me how to relate to people. They were a duo that challenged each other intellectually and physically, and to this date, I still draw inspiration from them.

When I finished primary school after scoring a mean mark of 352 in my KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education), I was called by the government to attend Chania Girls High School in Thika, Kiambu County. It took a toll on me because I knew I could do better and expected a higher mark but all hope was not lost. I went ahead and continued to focus with my high school education.

During high school, I interacted with students from various cultures and backgrounds, which tested and refined my interpersonal skills. I encountered a wide range of personalities, from quirky to more reserved. Through these interactions, I built many enduring relationships, and some of my closest friends today are those I rely on completely, including for making important life decisions.

Academically, I developed an interest in literature—stemming from my earlier love of reading—and an interest in the sciences. High school was a whirlwind of activities and responsibilities, but in the end, I managed to work hard enough to achieve a B minus in my final KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education) exams.

Mentorship Experiences

Throughout my journey, mentorship has been a cornerstone of my growth, profoundly influencing my personal and academic development. From an early age, I was fortunate to encounter individuals who offered guidance, wisdom, and encouragement, shaping my path in ways I could scarcely imagine. One of the most significant mentors in my life was Daniel Annan, a trailblazing man who inspired me with his unwavering commitment to pursuing his passions. Despite facing resistance from his family, Daniel chose to follow his dream of studying IT abroad, securing a scholarship through sheer determination and self-belief. His story was a beacon of courage and resilience, prompting me to reevaluate my own aspirations and affirm my commitment to a career in literature and technology. Additionally, the support and insight from my professors at Dedan Kimathi University have been instrumental in my academic journey. Their constructive feedback and encouragement helped me navigate the complexities of my field, pushing me to achieve excellence and explore new frontiers. Outside the academic sphere, my involvement in community projects introduced me to mentors who

provided practical wisdom and career advice. These experiences taught me invaluable lessons about leadership, perseverance, and the importance of giving back to the community. Each mentor, with their unique perspectives and experiences, has contributed to my growth, instilling in me a profound appreciation for the power of guidance and the impact of supportive relationships. Their influence continues to resonate in my approach to challenges and opportunities, reminding me of the importance of mentorship in shaping a fulfilling and purposeful life.

Choosing a university

As I approached the final years of high school, the time came to make one of the most important decisions of my young life: choosing a university. Guided by my aspirations and fueled by a desire for academic excellence, I embarked on a journey of exploration and introspection, seeking to uncover the path that would lead me to my true calling.

For many students, the prospect of choosing a university and a course of study can be daunting, filled with uncertainty and anxiety. I had to do some deep internal digging to discover what I wanted to do for the rest of my life—or rather, what I wanted to give me the momentum that would impact the rest of my life. I read books and consulted my parents, seeking inspiration. Honestly, none of that really helped. It was only after a visit from my older cousin, Diana Muthoni who was four years ahead of me in her studies and had been someone I looked up to since primary school, that I truly decided.

Diana stepped in to assist me with selecting a course to pursue, recognizing that I lacked guidance in making this decision. She helped me research the various programs I could apply for based on my academic grades. Diana promised to support me in the decision-making process, ensuring that I remained true to myself and chose a course aligned with my future goals. She made sure to explain everything that would be expected of me throughout my higher education journey and advised me to look for the opportunities that would arise along the way.

As I navigated the maze of options and possibilities, I found myself drawn to the esteemed University of Nairobi, a beacon of learning and innovation in the heart of the city. With its rich history, diverse academic offerings, and vibrant campus life, it seemed like the perfect fit for my aspirations and ambitions.

However, as fate would have it, circumstances led me to choose Dedan Kimathi University as my alma mater. While it may not have been my initial choice, I soon discovered that Dedan Kimathi University offered its own unique opportunities and advantages, from its close-knit community to its specialized programs in my field of interest. With an open mind and a spirit of optimism, I embraced this new chapter in my academic journey, eager to see where it would take me.

Adjusting to University Life

As I first stepped onto the esteemed university campus, I was overwhelmed with a mix of excitement, anticipation, and nervousness about the journey ahead. During the busy orientation week, I faced the challenges of adapting to a new environment, making new friends, and managing academic responsibilities alongside newfound independence.

Navigating the maze of lecture halls, libraries, and dormitories, I found comfort in knowing I wasn't alone. The friendly faces of fellow students and the supportive advice of professors helped me realize that the university was more than just a place of learning—it was a community, a second home where I could grow, thrive, and chase my dreams. I came to love the environment and felt it was preparing me for the adult life I was about to embark on. I saw it as a platform to learn how to handle future challenges, and this prospect filled me with excitement.

Academic Challenges and Achievements

University introduced a new set of challenges that tested my intellect, resilience, and determination. The demanding coursework and rigorous exams occasionally led to moments of self-doubt, but with steadfast resolve and the support of mentors and peers, I pushed through. I surpassed perceived limitations, driven by a passionate pursuit of knowledge. Over time, I celebrated academic successes that

exceeded my expectations, including earning top grades and receiving prestigious scholarships and awards.

Balancing coursework with newfound independence proved difficult at first. I was suddenly responsible for managing my own time and maintaining a balance between enjoying my university life and excelling academically. It was a significant shift from high school, where I was closely monitored by parents and teachers. Ultimately, I learned to distinguish between what was essential and what could potentially undermine the future I had worked so hard to build.

Aligning my actions with my goals was challenging, particularly in an environment where many students had misplaced priorities—some were simply enjoying their freedom and spending their parents' money without regard to their obligations. The transition from high school to university was filled with hurdles. The academic rigor demanded critical thinking and analytical skills beyond what I had developed. However, each challenge revealed new strengths within me, driving me to overcome obstacles with a renewed sense of purpose.

Outside the classroom, I sought growth through a variety of extracurricular activities. Joining student clubs, participating in community outreach, and engaging in debates provided valuable opportunities for personal development. These activities not only enriched my university experience but also helped me forge lasting friendships and create memorable experiences.

I particularly enjoyed engaging in these activities because they allowed me to meet new people—some with similar interests and others with different perspectives. It was exciting to learn from individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

In my second year, I decided to run for a leadership position in the student government. The political landscape was challenging, revealing how power and money could influence decisions. While campaigning for Chair of Finance, I witnessed firsthand the manipulation and greed that often come with political

power. Despite investing significant resources into my campaign, I lost due to my limited financial backing.

Throughout the rest of my university journey, I continued to explore a wide range of extracurriculars. I joined the university debate team, which was a continuation of my high school debate experiences, but with more complex topics. During holidays, I volunteered at Parklands Baptist Church, gaining wisdom from experienced individuals while contributing to the community.

In my first year, I worked in the children's Sunday school department, helping design and print materials for kids. Learning to use tools like Canva and Blender proved beneficial for my studies. In my second year, I volunteered with the mission department, visiting orphanages and homeless shelters to assess needs and distribute donated items. These experiences taught me to appreciate my privileges and recognize the efforts of my parents, while also providing valuable connections and mentors.

One particular experience I'm proud of, though it often attracts social stereotypes, was working part-time at a garage. My fascination with cars and their mechanics motivated me to learn about them and challenge the stereotype that girls are uninterested in machines. Despite the potential risks, my prayers kept me safe. I vividly remember the excitement of working on a black Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, a vehicle I admired. The garage staff welcomed me and eagerly shared their knowledge, which I cherished. Eventually, I stopped going to the garage, but the experience was immensely rewarding.

Overall, every extracurricular activity contributed to shaping my character, instilling important values, and helping me become the person I am today.

Impact on my journey

Mentorship has had a profound effect on my journey, offering me invaluable advice, support, and wisdom that have shaped my decisions and personal growth.

Among the most influential figures has been Daniel Annan, whose guidance and resilience motivated me to stay true to my passions. Daniel's experience of overcoming family opposition to pursue a career in IT illustrated the importance of following one's own path despite external pressures. Her encouragement to remain dedicated to my goals and not be dissuaded by obstacles gave me the confidence to pursue careers in literature and technology—fields I am deeply passionate about.

In addition to Daniel, the support from my professors at Dedan Kimathi University was crucial to my academic progress. Their constructive feedback and encouragement assisted me in navigating complex concepts and enhancing my critical thinking skills. One professor, in particular, offered practical advice on applying theoretical knowledge to real-world problems, which proved invaluable during my internships. Their insights highlighted the importance of combining academic learning with practical experience, a lesson that has been essential as I pursued various professional opportunities.

Furthermore, my involvement in community projects connected me with mentors who provided practical wisdom and career guidance. These mentors stressed the importance of networking, effective communication, and gaining hands-on experience. Their support helped me polish my professional skills and expand my understanding of career possibilities. The mentorship I received through these projects emphasized the value of contributing to the community, a principle that continues to guide me both personally and professionally.

Overall, the advice and support from these mentors have been pivotal to my development. They have taught me to face challenges with resilience, to value ongoing learning, and to embrace my unique path with confidence. Their influence has not only guided my decisions but has also instilled a deep appreciation for the role of mentorship in crafting a successful and fulfilling journey.

Making Friends and Building Relationships

One of the most fulfilling aspects of university life was the chance to build deep and meaningful connections with peers from various backgrounds. Through shared experiences and mutual support, I came to appreciate the power of friendship and

camaraderie. Whether it was during late-night study sessions or spontaneous weekend adventures, my friends—a blend of university acquaintances, high school buddies, and those I met through extracurricular activities—became my sources of strength, offering laughter, encouragement, and steadfast support through life's challenges. Together, we navigated the complexities of university life, forming enduring bonds that would last well beyond graduation.

I believe that within social structures, an average person maintains three circles of friendships: the largest circle consists of acquaintances—people you have a general familiarity with; the middle circle includes friends—people with whom you share a mutual understanding and enjoy spending time; and the smallest circle encompasses close friends—individuals you love and trust deeply, to whom you might entrust your life.

As someone who, aside from participating in extracurricular activities, would rarely engage with others, I deeply valued those who made an effort to care for and appreciate me for who I am. This was especially true for the friends I had who did not attend the same university; initially, they were my primary social support before I became comfortable socializing on campus. They would invite me out on weekends, and we would embark on spontaneous adventures or dine at stylish restaurants that seemed beyond our student budgets. They lifted my spirits, provided a respite from the academic pressures, and played a crucial role in maintaining my sanity.

As I grew more confident, I developed several friendships on campus with individuals whom I genuinely admire and who share similar values and mindsets. These friendships went beyond mere acquaintances—they became vital sources of support and stability amid the uncertainty and change of university life. From my roommate, who became like a sister to me, to classmates who turned into my study partners and confidants, each relationship enriched my university experience and contributed to shaping who I am today.

A particularly serendipitous detail was that my roommate and I had been to the same primary school. We used to make mud pies together and play with dolls. Although she was a year older, this never affected our bond. Meeting her again at university felt like picking up right where we left off. Despite some changes, she remained fundamentally the same person. Rediscovering and getting to know each other anew was a delightful adventure. To this day, she remains one of my closest friends.

Exploring Kenya's Culture and History

As a student deeply interested in history and culture, I eagerly embraced every opportunity to immerse myself in Kenya's rich heritage and traditions. From visiting historical sites and museums to attending cultural festivals and events, each experience furthered my appreciation for the vibrant tapestry that defines my country's identity.

Many of my explorations were shared with my elder siblings, who were always enthusiastic about adventure, while others were with friends. To give a snapshot of my travels: I explored Suswa and Nairobi, climbed mountains, visited Paradise Lost, took numerous road trips to Naivasha, and admired waterfalls in various parts of Kenya, including Nyahururu.

I particularly cherished these excursions with my cousins. As the youngest, I enjoyed being fully cared for and never had to spend from my own pocket. Even as adults, my cousins, including Ted with his fiancée, retained their endearing quirks. Ted, in particular, still had that unmistakable gleam in his eye when he was excited by an idea or something fascinating. Despite growing older in body and mind, they remained the playful, imaginative individuals they had been in their youth, a quality I absolutely adored.

My parents also ensured I was treated like royalty, setting a high standard for any future suitors. They took me to the most luxurious restaurants and gifted me with the finest presents. Any prospective partner had a high bar to meet!

With my friends, I embarked on spontaneous adventures to explore art galleries and museums in Nairobi. We were particularly drawn to art galleries, a common interest among many of our peers, all of us eager to project an image of sophistication and culture. For me, however, the art resonated deeply with my artistic side, the same side that had fallen in love with literature and poetry.

Whether wandering through the vibrant streets of Nairobi or venturing into the countryside, I delighted in the beauty and diversity of Kenya's landscape, uncovering new aspects of its culture and history with every adventure.

Internship and Professional Development

During my three years at university, I embarked on various internships that provided invaluable hands-on experience in my chosen field of study and the skills I had previously acquired after high school. From corporate placements to grassroots organizations, each attachment offered a unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges.

Given that my uncle worked in microfinance and had connections in the corporate world, I secured internships in the tech sector after my second year. My volunteering experience in church proved beneficial, leading to a well-paid attachment in the tech sector. I approached every task with dedication, believing that even the most mundane assignments could shape my future. I absorbed as much as I could from my superiors and made every effort to excel, despite the rigorous demands.

Traveling to and from work daily was cumbersome and exhausting, often leaving me discouraged by the long commutes from Syokimau to the work areas. Nevertheless, I excelled in my performance and made significant strides in applying my skills in chemistry, data analytics, and backend development. These experiences not only honed my expertise but also broadened my perspective on my chosen career path. Through mentorship and guidance, I navigated the complexities of the professional world, laying a solid foundation for future success and fulfillment.

Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

University has been a transformative journey, marked by significant personal growth and self-discovery. It has pushed me to confront my fears, embrace my vulnerabilities, and pursue my passions with unwavering determination. Every victory I've achieved has been born from moments of near defeat. As a woman in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), I faced an already challenging job market and societal constraints, which meant my career opportunities and expectations were distinctly different from those of my male peers.

Despite the additional risks and limitations associated with being a young woman in society, I have managed to overcome these obstacles and exceed the expectations I set for myself. Through periods of triumph and uncertainty, I have learned to navigate life's challenges with resilience and grace. My journey of self-discovery has been a process of introspection, uncovering hidden strengths, and addressing persistent insecurities. This path has led me to find solace in the pursuit of knowledge, purpose, and meaning, emerging stronger, wiser, and more self-assured with each passing day.

Lessons Learned

From my experiences with mentorship, I have acquired several important lessons and values that have profoundly shaped my approach to both challenges and opportunities. One of the most significant lessons is the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. Daniel Annan's story of pursuing a career in IT despite strong familial opposition taught me that staying true to one's passions and goals demands resilience and a steadfast commitment. This lesson has empowered me to tackle challenges directly, viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks.

Another crucial lesson I've learned is the importance of continuous learning and adaptability. The guidance from my professors highlighted that true education extends beyond textbooks and classrooms. Applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, as I did during my internships, underscored the need for adaptability and openness to new experiences. This value has shaped my approach to both academic and professional challenges, encouraging me to seek practical solutions and remain flexible as circumstances evolve.

Additionally, the mentorship I received through community projects emphasized the significance of networking and effective communication. These experiences taught me that building meaningful relationships and collaborating with others are essential for personal and professional success. The ability to connect with diverse individuals and communicate ideas clearly has become fundamental to my approach in navigating opportunities and challenges.

Overcoming Obstacles and Challenges

No journey is devoid of obstacles, and mine was no exception. From academic setbacks to personal struggles, I faced numerous challenges on my path to graduation. Each obstacle, however, offered a chance for growth and resilience. Through perseverance and determination, I tackled adversity head-on, refusing to let circumstances beyond my control define me. Whether it was grappling with financial difficulties, surmounting academic barriers, or dealing with personal issues, I emerged stronger and more resilient, buoyed by a steadfast belief in my capacity to confront and overcome life's challenges with grace and fortitude.

Graduation and Future Plans

As I approach graduation, I am overwhelmed with a deep sense of accomplishment and excitement for the future that awaits me. This milestone, the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice, signifies not an end but a new beginning. Equipped with knowledge, experience, and an unbounded sense of possibility, I am ready to embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie beyond the university. Whether I choose to pursue further studies, embark on a career, or explore new avenues of personal and professional growth, I am confident in my ability to navigate the uncertainties of life with courage, resilience, and determination.

Conclusion

My university experience has been a testament to the transformative power of education, resilience, and the pursuit of one's dreams. From the academic halls to the corridors of self-discovery, I have undergone a deeply personal journey marked by triumphs, trials, and profound growth. Reflecting on the chapters of this journey, I am grateful for the experiences, friendships, and lessons learned. Although my time at university may be drawing to a close, the insights and memories I have gained will endure, guiding me forward on a path filled with promise, purpose, and endless possibilities.

Lastly, I have learned the importance of giving back to the community. My mentors in community outreach highlighted the impact of contributing to the greater good, a principle that has reshaped my perspective on success and fulfillment. This value has inspired me to seek ways to support and uplift others, reinforcing the idea that true achievement is not only measured by personal success but also by the positive impact one makes on the lives of others.

Overall, these lessons and values have deeply influenced my approach to life's challenges and opportunities. They have instilled in me a sense of resilience, adaptability, effective communication, and a commitment to making a positive difference, guiding me in both my personal and professional pursuits.