**RIGAN COLLINS ODERO**

**CO26-01-1060/2021**

**CAPSTONE AUTOBIOGRAPHY ESSAY**

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**Introduction**

My name is Rigan Collins Odero, and this is the story of my life—a narrative woven with passion, resilience, and an unwavering dedication to the pursuit of knowledge. My journey, rooted in the vibrant landscapes of Funyula, has taken me through a transformative process from childhood curiosities to becoming a budding technologist with aspirations to make a significant impact in the world. This essay is not just a recount of events but a reflection on the experiences and influences that have shaped who I am today. As I look back on the path I have traveled, I see a story of growth, challenges overcome, and dreams nurtured into reality.

**Early Life and Family Background**

I was born in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu, a region known for its agricultural prowess and bustling urban centers. My early life, however, was less about the urban sprawl and more about the values instilled in me by a close-knit, hardworking family. Growing up in such an environment, where the importance of education, integrity, and community was emphasized, provided me with a strong moral and ethical foundation. My parents, who were both deeply committed to their professions, made sure that my siblings and I understood the value of hard work and perseverance.

My father, a dedicated public servant, and my mother, a resourceful businesswoman, were the pillars of our household. They balanced their demanding careers with an unwavering commitment to our upbringing. My mother, in particular, played a crucial role in my early development. She was not only a mother but also a mentor, guiding me through the intricacies of life with wisdom and patience. I vividly remember her late-night discussions with me, where she would share stories of her struggles and successes in the business world, always emphasizing the importance of education and self-discipline. These conversations were not just about imparting knowledge but also about shaping my worldview, helping me to understand that success is not handed on a silver platter but earned through dedication and hard work.

Growing up in Eldoret also meant being part of a larger extended family, where gatherings were frequent, and traditions were respected. These family gatherings, often during holidays, were times of joy, learning, and bonding. They provided a platform for me to learn from my elders, absorb the cultural heritage that was passed down through generations, and understand the significance of family ties. These experiences fostered a sense of belonging and instilled in me the values of respect, humility, and resilience—values that have continued to guide me throughout my life.

**Growing Up in Funyula**

At a young age, my family moved to Funyula, a town in Busia County, Kenya, which is situated near the Uganda border. Funyula, with its rural charm and close-knit community, became the backdrop of my formative years. The town’s serene environment, characterized by vast agricultural lands and a strong sense of community, played a significant role in shaping my early perspectives on life.

Life in Funyula was markedly different from the urban setting of Eldoret. It was a place where everyone knew each other, and the community functioned like an extended family. The values of respect, resilience, and cooperation were not just taught but lived every day. Funyula was a place where the local economy was heavily reliant on agriculture, and everyone, including children, was expected to contribute in some way. I vividly remember the early mornings spent helping my parents with farm work, a task that, while exhausting, taught me the value of hard work and the satisfaction that comes from seeing the fruits of one’s labor.

The rural setting of Funyula also provided me with a unique perspective on life. Unlike the fast-paced life in the cities, Funyula was slower, more deliberate, and deeply connected to the rhythms of nature. The environment encouraged a close connection with the land and a deep respect for the natural world. This connection was something that I came to cherish, as it provided a sense of peace and grounding amidst the challenges of growing up. My mother, who was deeply involved in the local community, often took me along to community meetings and events. These experiences exposed me to the importance of community involvement and the power of collective action. It was in Funyula that I learned that success is not just about individual achievement but also about contributing to the well-being of the community.

One of the most influential figures during my time in Funyula was my grandmother. She was a repository of knowledge and wisdom, and I spent countless hours sitting by her side, listening to her stories. These were not just stories but lessons in life, morality, and the importance of tradition. My grandmother had a remarkable gift for storytelling, and through her tales, I developed a love for narrative and an appreciation for the power of words. Her stories often revolved around the history of our family, the struggles and triumphs of our ancestors, and the values that they held dear. These stories were a source of inspiration for me, and they instilled in me a sense of pride in my heritage and a desire to continue the legacy of hard work and perseverance that had been passed down through generations.

**Childhood Experiences**

My childhood in Funyula was characterized by a deep connection with nature and a sense of adventure. The town, with its lush green landscapes and wide-open spaces, was a playground that offered endless opportunities for exploration. I spent my days climbing trees, exploring the nearby hills, and learning about the different plants and animals that were part of our ecosystem. These experiences not only fostered a love for the natural world but also instilled in me a sense of curiosity and a desire to learn about the world around me.

In addition to exploring nature, I also spent a lot of time with the elders in our community. In Funyula, the wisdom of the older generation was highly valued, and it was common for children to sit with their grandparents and other elders to listen to their stories and learn from their experiences. My grandmother, as I mentioned earlier, was a particularly influential figure in my life. Her stories were a treasure trove of knowledge, and I absorbed every word, eager to learn and understand the lessons she imparted.

These childhood experiences were not just about having fun but also about learning important life lessons. From the elders, I learned the value of patience, the importance of respecting others, and the significance of maintaining strong community ties. These were lessons that would stay with me throughout my life, guiding my interactions with others and shaping my approach to challenges.

One of the most memorable experiences of my childhood was the annual village harvest festival. This was a time of celebration, where the entire community came together to give thanks for the year’s harvest and to celebrate the bonds that held us together. The festival was a vibrant display of our cultural heritage, with traditional music, dance, and food. It was a time of joy and reflection, a time to appreciate the fruits of our labor and the strength of our community. Participating in these festivals gave me a deep appreciation for my culture and a sense of pride in my identity as a member of the Funyula community.

Another significant aspect of my childhood was my involvement in community service activities. My parents were actively involved in various community initiatives, and they encouraged me to participate as well. Whether it was helping to organize a local event or participating in a community clean-up, these activities taught me the importance of giving back to the community and the impact that one person can have in making a difference. These experiences instilled in me a sense of responsibility and a commitment to contributing to the well-being of others, values that continue to guide me in my personal and professional life.

**Educational Journey**

My formal education began at Moody Awori Primary School, where I quickly distinguished myself as a diligent and enthusiastic student. From the very beginning, I showed a natural aptitude for learning, particularly in subjects like Mathematics. My teachers recognized my potential and provided me with the encouragement and support I needed to excel. This early success in Mathematics sparked my interest in technology, a field that combines logic and creativity in a way that deeply resonated with me.

One of the most influential figures during my time at Moody Awori Primary School was Mr. Vincent, a teacher who had a profound impact on my academic journey. Mr. Vincent was not just a teacher but a mentor, someone who recognized my potential and took a personal interest in my development. He introduced me to the world of technology, encouraging me to join the school’s technology club and to explore the possibilities that technology offered. Under his guidance, I developed a keen interest in computers and technology, setting the stage for my future academic pursuits.

My interest in technology continued to grow as I progressed through primary school. I was fascinated by the idea of using technology to solve problems and to create new possibilities. This fascination led me to spend countless hours in the school’s computer lab, learning everything I could about computers and how they worked. I was particularly interested in programming, a skill that I would later develop further during my university years.

After completing my primary education, I was accepted into Friends School Kamusinga, a prestigious high school known for its strong academic program and emphasis on extracurricular activities. My time at Friends School Kamusinga was a period of significant growth and development, both academically and personally.

In high school, I was actively involved in a number of extracurricular activities, including the debate team, the football team, and the science & innovation club. These activities provided me with opportunities to develop important skills such as public speaking, teamwork, and problem-solving. The debate team, in particular, was a formative experience for me. It taught me

how to think critically, to construct logical arguments, and to communicate effectively. These skills would prove invaluable in my later academic and professional endeavors.

My involvement in the science & innovation club also had a profound impact on my academic development. The club provided me with a platform to explore my interest in technology and to apply the theoretical knowledge I was gaining in my classes to real-world problems. I was involved in a number of projects during my time in the club, including the development of a prototype for a solar-powered water pump that could be used in rural areas to improve access to clean water. This project was particularly meaningful to me because it addressed a real need in my community and demonstrated the power of technology to solve pressing social issues.

In addition to my extracurricular activities, I also excelled academically during my time at Friends School Kamusinga. I was consistently at the top of my class, particularly in subjects like Mathematics and Physics, which were my favorites. My success in these subjects further fueled my interest in technology and reinforced my decision to pursue a career in this field.

After completing high school, I was accepted into Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, where I chose to study Information Technology. This decision was a natural progression of my interest in technology, and I was excited to delve deeper into the field.

My time at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology was a pivotal period in my life, marked by significant academic and personal growth. The university’s rigorous academic program challenged me to push the boundaries of my knowledge and to develop a deep understanding of the field of Information Technology. I took courses in programming, database management, network security, and software development, among others. These courses provided me with a solid foundation in the technical skills that are essential for a career in technology.

In addition to the academic curriculum, I also had the opportunity to gain practical experience through attachments and internships. One of the most influential experiences during my time at university was my internship at The Jitu, a leading technology firm. During my time at The Jitu, I was able to apply the knowledge I had acquired in university to real-world scenarios. I was involved in a number of projects, including the development of a web-based management system and the implementation of a network security protocol for a client. These experiences not only enhanced my technical skills but also gave me a deeper understanding of the professional world and the challenges that come with it.

My time at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology also provided me with opportunities for personal growth. Living away from home for the first time, I had to learn to be independent and resourceful. I developed important life skills such as time management, problem-solving, and the ability to adapt to new situations. These skills were crucial for my success in university and have continued to serve me well in my professional life.

**Personal Growth During University Years**

University life was a transformative period for me, marked by significant personal growth and the development of key life skills. Living away from home for the first time, I had to learn to be independent and resourceful, managing my time effectively to balance academic responsibilities with personal interests. The challenges I faced during this time—whether they were academic hurdles or personal setbacks—taught me the importance of perseverance and maintaining a positive attitude in the face of adversity.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned during my university years was the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving. These skills were not only crucial for my academic success but also for navigating the complexities of life. My internship at The Jitu, a leading technology firm, was particularly influential in this regard. During my time there, I gained hands-on experience in software development and network security, applying the knowledge I had acquired in university to real-world scenarios. This experience not only enhanced my technical skills but also gave me a deeper understanding of the professional world and the challenges that come with it.

The transition from high school to university was a significant one, marked by both excitement and uncertainty. On one hand, I was thrilled to be stepping into a new chapter of my life, one that promised new experiences and opportunities. On the other hand, I was leaving behind the familiar environment of my hometown and stepping into a world where I would have to rely on my own abilities to navigate the challenges that lay ahead. This transition was not without its challenges, but it was also a time of tremendous personal growth.

One of the biggest challenges I faced during my first year at university was adjusting to the academic demands of higher education. The coursework was more challenging than anything I had encountered in high school, and I quickly realized that I would need to develop new study habits and time management skills to keep up with the demands of my classes. I also had to learn how to balance my academic responsibilities with my personal life, a task that was made even more difficult by the fact that I was living away from home for the first time.

Despite these challenges, I was determined to succeed. I threw myself into my studies, spending long hours in the library and seeking help from my professors whenever I needed it. I also made a conscious effort to get involved in campus activities, joining several student organizations and participating in events that allowed me to meet new people and develop new skills. These experiences not only helped me to adjust to university life but also provided me with opportunities for personal and professional growth.

One of the most valuable experiences I had during my time at university was my involvement in a student organization called the Technology and Innovation Club. This club provided a platform for students who were interested in technology to come together, share ideas, and work on projects. I quickly became an active member of the club, participating in several projects and eventually taking on a leadership role as the club’s vice president.

One of the projects that I was particularly proud of was the development of a mobile app that was designed to help students manage their academic schedules. The app, which we called “Student Planner,” allowed users to input their class schedules, assignment due dates, and exam dates, and then receive reminders and notifications to help them stay on top of their academic responsibilities. The app also included features that allowed users to track their grades and set academic goals. The development of this app was a collaborative effort, and it was incredibly rewarding to see our hard work come to fruition in the form of a finished product that was used by students across campus.

In addition to my involvement in the Technology and Innovation Club, I also took advantage of the many opportunities for personal and professional development that were available at university. I attended workshops on topics such as leadership, communication, and career development, and I sought out mentorship from professors and professionals in the field. These experiences helped me to develop important skills and build a network of contacts that would be invaluable as I prepared to enter the professional world.

One of the most significant turning points in my university career came during my third year, when I was selected to participate in a prestigious internship program at The Jitu. The Jitu is a leading technology firm that specializes in software development and network security, and the opportunity to work there was a dream come true for me. During my internship, I was able to apply the knowledge I had gained in my classes to real-world scenarios, working on projects that ranged from developing a web-based management system to implementing a network security protocol for a client.

This internship was an incredibly valuable experience for me, not only because it allowed me to gain practical experience in my field but also because it gave me a deeper understanding of the professional world. I learned about the challenges and complexities of working in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment, and I developed important skills such as project management, teamwork, and problem-solving. The experience also helped me to clarify my career goals and gave me the confidence to pursue them with determination and focus.

Looking back on my university years, I am incredibly grateful for the experiences I had and the lessons I learned. These years were a time of tremendous personal growth, and they provided me with the foundation I needed to succeed in my career. I am proud of what I accomplished during this time, and I am excited to continue building on these experiences as I move forward in my professional life.

**Influences**

Throughout my journey, I have been fortunate to have several mentors and role models who have guided me along the way. One of the most influential figures in my life has been Dr. Gabriel Kamau, a professor at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. Dr. Kamau was not just a teacher but a mentor who took a personal interest in my development. His guidance and support were invaluable as I navigated the challenges of university life and prepared for my future career.

Dr. Kamau’s influence on my academic and professional development cannot be overstated. He was the first person to recognize my potential and to encourage me to pursue a career in technology. He introduced me to the world of research, guiding me through the process of conducting a research project and helping me to develop the critical thinking and analytical skills that are essential for success in this field. Dr. Kamau also provided me with opportunities to get involved in research projects and to present my work at conferences, experiences that were invaluable in helping me to develop my skills and build my confidence as a researcher.

In addition to personal mentors like Dr. Kamau, I have also been deeply influenced by the books I have read. One book that stands out in particular is "Think Big" by Ben Carson. This book had a profound impact on me, inspiring me to pursue my goals with determination and to always strive for excellence. The values of hard work, perseverance, and continuous learning that are emphasized in the book resonate with the lessons I learned from my family, particularly the importance of education and integrity.

Reading has always been a source of inspiration and knowledge for me. From a young age, I developed a love for books, and this passion for reading has continued throughout my life. Books have provided me with a window into different worlds, allowing me to learn about new ideas, cultures, and perspectives. They have also been a source of motivation and guidance, providing me with the tools I need to navigate the challenges of life.

Another book that had a significant impact on me is "The Lean Startup" by Eric Ries. This book introduced me to the principles of lean methodology and the importance of innovation and adaptability in entrepreneurship. It provided practical insights into building and scaling a business with limited resources and helped me to understand the value of iterative progress and customer feedback. The concepts and strategies outlined in the book have been instrumental in shaping my approach to problem-solving and project management, especially in my work with web development and online platforms.

Overall, the combination of mentorship from individuals like Dr. Kamau and the wisdom gained from influential books has shaped my personal and professional growth. They have instilled in me a passion for continuous learning, a commitment to excellence, and a drive to make a meaningful impact in the field of technology. As I move forward in my career, I am grateful for these influences and the role they have played in guiding me toward my goals.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting on my journey, I am both proud and grateful for the progress I have made and the experiences that have shaped me. From my early days growing up in Funyula to my transformative years at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, every step of this journey has been a building block towards the person I am today.

My story is a testament to the power of passion, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to continuous learning. These qualities have been the driving force behind my academic achievements and personal growth. Each challenge I faced, and each lesson I learned along the way, has contributed to my development, equipping me with the skills and insights needed to navigate the complexities of the technology field.

As I look toward the future, I am energized by the possibilities that lie ahead. I am committed to maintaining the core values that have guided me so far—hard work, integrity, and an insatiable curiosity. These principles have not only helped me overcome obstacles but have also inspired me to pursue excellence in every endeavor.

I am eager to embrace the new opportunities and challenges that await me in my career. The journey so far has been incredibly rewarding, and I am enthusiastic about applying the knowledge and skills I have gained to make a meaningful impact in the field of technology. The future holds exciting potential, and I am ready to continue this journey with confidence and a sense of purpose.