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**From the Streets of  
Accra, Ghana to  
Global Classrooms**

Growing up in Ghana, I was that barefooted boy, playing football in the charcoal fields of Accra, carefree and certain that life revolved around our compound house, our vibrant market, and the symphony of drums that defined communal events. But life, as it turns out, had a bigger plan for me. From the streets of Accra to the alleys of Paris, and to the great halls of Emory University, my travel across continents has been my education. The experiences I have accrued have left an indelible mark on my worldview and fostered in me a deep understanding of how interconnected our world truly is.

In Accra, Ghana, I was constantly surrounded by people from various regions and backgrounds. Whether it was a relative visiting from the northern part of Ghana or neighbours speaking languages I didn't yet understand, I quickly learned that the world was far bigger than my own backyard. Accra, though seemingly small on the world map, was a melting pot of cultures, languages, and traditions. It was here that I first began to grasp the value of unity in diversity as a way of life. From the communal meals that brought us together to the collective games like "Pilolo" in the charcoal fields, I realized that the richness of life lay in our shared experiences and unique perspectives.

From Ghana, I moved to Cote d'Ivoire and Togo where the vibrancy of the markets, the music, the rhythm of daily life, I mean everything felt familiar, yet different. It was in Cote d'Ivoire that I first experienced the concept of "local within the global." I was still in West Africa, yet I could feel the nuanced differences that existed between our two countries. These subtle shifts in culture and thought started gradually shaping the way I see the world.

But France truly shifted my perspective. The diversity I encountered in France and other parts of Europe made me reflect on my own identity as an African in a global context. I found myself in front of a class of curious students and colleagues, introducing them to the “Adowa” dance of Ghana, demonstrating how every movement tells a story and how the beat of the drum communicates more than just rhythm but speaks to the history and the worldview of the Ghanaian people. I ate French “Rillettes” with colleagues and cooked some west African jollof as a way of cultural exchange. There’s something about sharing food that breaks down barriers faster than words ever could. Food, like music, is a language on its own.

Finally, I made the leap across the Atlantic to the United States, to Emory University, my new home. I carried along my global patchwork of experiences I had sewn together with the understanding that education is not confined to books and classrooms but in the conversations, the shared meals, the moments of cultural exchange that make you question everything you thought you knew. A colleague in France once told me, “*Il n'y a pas de hasard, il n'y a que des rendez-vous*” meaning there are no coincidences, only encounters. So, I pay attention to every encounter I make on campus knowing that each one is a continuation of my becoming.

I remember one day I brought the “*Fritswa*” (a simple instrument from Ghana used to lead communal singing during hard labour or group activities) to my literature class. I demonstrated how its sound was a lifeline during tough times, a way of saying, “We’re in this together.” My professor was intrigued, my colleagues fascinated. It was moments like this that I realized I wasn’t just talking about Ghana; I was negotiating my own identity. I was no longer the barefooted, carefree Accra boy, but a node in a bigger human network navigating complex conversations with other great minds.

The Emory campus is a microcosm of the world, filled with students from every corner of the globe. I'm reminded each day of the lessons I've learned from Accra to Paris, Abidjan to Atlanta. Each conversation with a fellow student, each lecture, and each new idea is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity of thought and culture that I've come to cherish. International education is more than just the acquisition of knowledge; it's about understanding that learning doesn't happen in isolation. It's about recognizing that every person, every place, and every experience is a thread in the vast tapestry of our shared humanity.

In celebrating international education, I celebrate the people, places, and perspectives that have shaped who I am today.

"This paper was edited using Grammarly for grammar."