

Iyore (I Return) by Unknown Yet

From Gratefulness.org

Here in our Stories of Grateful Living, we honor the voices of our community as we invite people to share their personal experiences with gratefulness. Join us in appreciating the explorations, reflections, and insights of fellow community members as we collectively learn what it means to live gratefully.

In the short poetic video Iyore, Imuetinyan Ugiagbe shares her powerful story.

Every moment offers an opportunity to be grateful. When we choose to be grateful, our soul glows.

My name is Imuetinyan Ugiagbe and I am a visual storyteller who happens to be visually impaired. The title of the piece I am sharing with you is Iyore (pronounced E YO RAY), which means I return in the Edo language.

When I take a trip, I rarely think of whether I would make it home safely. But, all of that changed on the 13th of June, 2020.

It felt like a regular Saturday in the city of Baltimore. I was on a marked crosswalk when I got struck by a black SUV truck.

"I can't breathe," I managed to gather every breath I had to inform the paramedic. "That is because your nose is broken," she said.

While I was being rushed to the hospital, I felt the organs in my body failing. You know, if I knew I was going to die on June 13, 2020 at 3:06 p.m, I would have prepared a delicious last supper the night before. It sounds crazy to tell you this, but that was how I felt.

As a visual storyteller, all I wanted to do with this piece was to share the lessons I learned. I am fortunate to have my younger sister, Edoghogho, who is also a photographer, document the healing process as it unfolded. Plus, with the creative magic of my production team, Onset Imaging, we were able to tell a story which I hope will uplift the soul.

Today, many of us will leave our homes with hopes of returning safely. But guaranteed safety is far from the truth.

Life is truly a gift. We don't have to wait to be happy to appreciate the beauty in life. We don't have to have a near-death experience to appreciate the gift of life.

Every moment offers an opportunity to be grateful. When we choose to be grateful, our soul glows.

Thank you for taking the time to watch our video.

Video Transcript

lyore (I return)

Life is a market place. We all have come to trade.
When we are done, our souls will return home.

I am going to share with you a story that makes me believe this.

It was June 13th, a sunny Saturday afternoon in the city of Baltimore.

I was on a crosswalk when I got struck by a black truck.

My small framed body flew in the air and spun before landing on a metal pole 15 feet away.

My world went black as if the plug that gives light to my life was disconnected abruptly.

As the ambulance rushed me to the emergency room,

I noticed it was impossible to breathe.

You see, the absence of breath in the body is death

and, the presence of breath in the body is life.

So I poured life back into my body by breathing with my mouth.

Just when I thought my life was starting to flourish, I was knocked down.

This time, it was due to a driver's callous behavior. Life is funny that way.

I woke up from surgery with a cast on my nose,

my upper lip was about three times larger than its original size.

And I had a drain that was connected to a 16 inch deep cut on my right hip.

The near-death experience is what made me see life as a marketplace.

You and I have come to trade. When we are done, our souls will return home.

Before the surgery, I watched the doctor tear every item of clothing from my body with a pair of scissors.

Each cut made me realize that material wealth, physical beauty, academic achievements, and money might make us comfortable here on earth, but they won't return home with us.

Even the bodies that house our souls won't return home with us.

What I believe returns home with the soul is spiritual current.

Which is the continuous flow of light in the soul

-compassion, goodness, gratitude, peace, kindness, joy, and love.

We are all born with spiritual currents.

However, our human experiences can either deem or dim that light.

The light in my soul was dim for weeks as I wrestled with despair.
In that place of misery, I thought of that brief moment.
I mean that moment when the truck struck me.
That moment when my world went black.
That moment I came in contact with death
and miraculously, something inside me cracked — the simple fact that I returned means I
am not done trading.

That realization made me grateful for this moment.

You see, life is a gift that is given and will be taken.
How we choose to spend our time here is our gift to life.
It is our way of saying “thank you life” for the gift.

So with the limited time on this physical world, choose good over evil, peace over
destruction,
compassion over lack of concern for others, justice over injustice, love over fear,
forgiveness over punishment, gratitude over ingratitude, kindness over hate.

Truly, the end of it all, what matters is the constant flow of light in the soul that will make
our world better here and beyond.

Life is a market-place. We all have come to trade.
When we are done here, our souls will return home.

Imuetinyan Ugiagbe writes: “Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, I never learned to read as
a child because I was born with cataracts, which is a clouding of the lens in the eyes. My
mother knew something wasn’t right with my vision when I was just three months old. She
could tell that my eyes lacked focus and shared her concerns with my father, but he
dismissed the problem by saying I was just coming into the world and should be left
alone. Unable to read, I found solace in listening to stories. I looked forward to those cool
nights when the lights went out and the children in the neighborhood would stroll down to
my compound to listen to the tales told by my uncles, aunts, and neighbors. The morals of
these stories were what gave color and brightness to my dull world. I learned about
kindness, respect, goodness, compassion, selfishness, gratitude, and jealousy. Also, the
characters, which were often animals with human qualities, were either physically
impaired, orphaned, and/or neglected. What always intrigued me about the plots was that
tragic circumstances often became extraordinary victories by the end of the tale. The
process of how the main characters overcame their obstacles gave me comfort as a little
girl.

At the age of six, I underwent my first cataract-removal surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital in
Lagos. After the operation, I was given double-lensed glasses. My eyesight was better but
only slightly. I could see people smile but only if they were steps away. I could see large
print but only when it was held close to my eyes. I still could not read the small print in
books. In 2002, at the age of 14, I moved to the Bronx, New York with my mother and
siblings to reunite with my father, who by then had been living in the States for six years.
After several visits to different ophthalmologists, I learned the first surgery had been
botched: The surgeon in Nigeria had not placed an artificial lens in my eyes after
removing the ones I was born with. I also found out that the vision in my left eye was far

worse than the right. I couldn't see out of it at all. With support from my college professors and other faculty, I was able to obtain a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Cazenovia College in upstate New York. I learned early on that I wanted to be a storyteller. The journey hasn't been easy, but it has been worth it. I have produced TV stories for Voice of America and I share most of my current work on my YouTube channel.

My greatest goal as a storyteller is to tell stories that will ignite positive change in others' lives, just as the stories I heard as a child brightened my dull world."