

MENTORSHIP CONVERSATIONS.

The 366th day of the year 2016 was a day forever to be engraved on my mind. It all started out as a small genuine interest towards AKAD Africa and what it is that they do, and the countless lives that they have impacted around and beyond through the work of young people whom I thought couldn't be able to achieve a lot while within their current age bracket. On this day I attended the 12th mentorship conversations which was held at the Ministry of Works Sports Club in South C. It was my first visit to AKAD and tensions were high. Who was I going to meet? Will I fit in? What if I don't have ideas that might match up to the current members? What will I share about what I have done to impact my life and the community that I live in day in day out? Well, the more I asked myself these questions the more I wanted to know more, the more I became hungry for knowledge, the more I started looking at my life deeply and thinking without a box. Thanks to Rev. Dr. Julius Weche and the peer mentors that I was able to meet and greet, I am glad to say that it was a success and that a lot changed in my life.

The day was kicked off by a team building session, which actually helped relieve the slight tension of meeting new guys who have been to greater heights. It was led by one of the peer mentors, Boniface Omina, a young charismatic guy who took us through various exercises that enabled us have a sense of teamwork and learn about others within a short period of time. One valuable lesson that I learnt from the exercises that we did was that there is more than meets the eye. By this I mean that is so easy to downgrade oneself with regards to how they think and forget that they have the ability to do something that can actually change their lives and even the lives of other.

On the next session we were graced to be spoken to by Michael Mutie, who talked to us about his journey through High school through to joining AKAD and eventually receiving a full scholarship to go and study at the African Leadership University. He shared to us how ALU operates in terms of how they are taught. He shared the 7 Meta skills which are acquired throughout their time at the campus. They were leading self, leading others, entrepreneurial thinking, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, managing complex tasks and communication for impact. He also covered the Leadership core which they covered in the first year of study which includes data and decisions, communication for impact, entrepreneurial leadership and projects. He also talked about his initiatives namely: Lead the Change Initiative, Give 1 Project and the ClimART campaign that is based in Mauritius. Through all these I was able to learn that it is difficult when you are starting out but when you are able to conquer at that stage, it becomes easier to continue doing more great things. As a leader it is important to raise someone who will be part of a project that you may start. They are there to ensure that even

when you are not hands-on on the project, the project is able to move on and keep on attaining its goals and the vision that is to be achieved.

From the African Leadership Academy were Shawn, Josephat, Jesse and Che'nelle. Shawn shared his story of how he got the privilege of visiting the Silicon Valley for a period of six weeks. He met various top personalities and CEOs to share one of his many ideas which are to benefit the energy sector in Kenya and Africa. Josephat also shared into detail his story of how he joined the ALA immediately after his high-school studies at the Lenana School. He shared his many accomplishments such as attending the prestigious Aspen Ideas Festival in the US and having the chance to meet the US secretary of state John Kerry together with other top personalities from companies such as CNN, New York Times among many others.

Catherine Njeri also shared her experience at the African Leadership University where she studies together with Michael, how she was able to give back to her community through a clean-up activity for her estate. She said that it was very important to be focused in what you want to do, and build networks that will enable you to achieve the dream that you have. Being fearless was also a key element in her story as it was what enabled her and others overcome the critics, setbacks, and be able to take certain calculated risks that enabled her achieve her dreams.

What I learnt that day made me look at how it applies to my own personal life. The many ideas that I gave up on, the many strategies that I burnt down that I had written down and the dreams that I gave up on due to the conditioning of our current society: Working to achieve the mediocre Kenyan dream. However with the new friends that I made, the mentors that I have been blessed with who have experiences on the things that I desired to do some time ago. The knowledge that I have acquired I will use it to work on my ideas, which I thought were not that great. Starting small but thinking big together with Just do it are among the strategies that I will involve throughout the whole process of being the change in my life, my family, my friends, my neighbours, my community, my city, my country and my continent.

I am forever grateful to the team at AKAD for all this and many more opportunities, ideas and interactions that will follow this year and the next years to come.

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