

Lagos State Government
Education District IV Eko@50
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“To Live with or To Live For” by Dr. Ama Onyerinma

Last week, I was having a conversation with a mentor about a variety of topics. At the end of our discourse, I was left with the following thought, *Which is essential, “What We Live With or What We Live For?”*

When I received this generous invitation to participate in the Eko@50 celebration last Friday. I pondered what it meant for me to be in Lagos as we celebrate Eko@50. Once again I returned to the thought, *Is it what we “Live With or Live For”... Which truly matters?*

When I was young my mother told me, all five fingers are not equal yet they all play a role in how we use our hands to manipulate objects and perform tasks. In the same vein, we are all different and yet we must co-exist in the city known as LAGOS.

As we celebrate the city we call home, a place which has provided so much for many and considerably little for others, I recognise all of us in this megacity is “Living With” something... an ailment, poverty, lack of work, no job skills, disenfranchisement, emotional and physical unrest, lack of housing and/or health care, security concerns, a sense of not belonging/isolation, abuse, transition of loved ones, disappointment, broken hearts, physiological challenges and vulnerability.

The point is each of us is living with something or somethings and let's be honest and we spend much time dwelling on "*Living with.*" The awareness and acknowledgement is essential because it is a part of the human experience but it should not be the definition of our existence.

All in all, the true catalyst for a better life is what "*We Live For*" and it is important as citizens to recognise and understand our personal survival and development rest with us...individually and collectively. Our teachers, mentors, protagonists can guide, support and advice but the work necessary for success rests with us.

Some of us will be around for another fifty years whilst others may not be so opportuned, but what we do with our lives and the beautiful Tapestry we create by knowing what we are "*Living For*" begins in the present as we move into the future. Life is a process hence the process of living is in the NOW not in the dreams of the future.

I encourage everyone to think about what "*We Live For*" What is the value you can add to your life which inherently will add value to your family, community and society? Are you an artist, a writer, inventor, entrepreneur, teacher, scientist, medical doctor, legal counsel, advocate or speaker? Do you yearn to do something different but you don't know how to accomplish because you are focused on what you "*Live With*" as opposed to what you "*Live For*"?

When you understand “LIVING FOR” is the VALUE CREATION of your Life then you can begin to take the steps necessary for achieving success and living to your fullest potential. This is key to pursuing and becoming the person you are meant to be. Personal value is the commodity we add to our lives. It is what we share with our family, colleagues, community and society. It ensures the continuity of a people...society.

Value Creation is your passion...your purpose...your mission. When you understand your purpose then you can pursue the true course of your life. I am not going to promise you it would be smooth path without hiccups...that would be a lie. I will say, however, you must have a vision in order to achieve your mission. You must never give up on the path to achieving your purpose. You must try all avenues to achieving what you are “Living For” whilst keeping the vision firmly planted.

As a child, when I complained about the unfairness of life, my mother would state, “Life is like a rose stem...smooth then thorns.” The thorns are the obstacles put in place to see if you can hold unto the The Vision....getting over each thorn is a Goal...overcoming the thorns and persevering (staying the course) along the stem (the path) as you strive for the soft, fragrant Rose petals is the Value Creation. All of these items; Purpose, Vision, Goals and Endurance ensure you become viable and respected citizens.

Let us strive as citizens of Eko to treat each other with kindness and respect irrespective of our differences understanding each of us has a right to be here. Each of us has the right to exist. Each of us has the right to live to our

fullest potential not manage, not cope with, not beholden to, but to “Live For”...to aspire for EXCELLENCE in our personal lives regardless of our vocation. What you “Live For” should reflect EXCELLENCE and create VALUE.

I want each of you to leave today with a singular question, *Am I “Living with or Living For?”* I hope it is the latter. If you have not figured out what you are “*Living For*” then make it your life PRIORITY to discover this. There will be times you shall find yourself leaning into what you “*Live With*” but remember to step boldly into what you are “*Living For.*”

I thank the Lagos State Education District IV for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I strongly believe the survival, and continued development, of Eko rests on the shoulders of all citizens irrespective of age or gender. The greatest gift we can give ourselves as we enhance our city of aquatic splendour is “*Living For*” thus ensuring that Itesiwaju Eko L’ojowa Logun

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