

"To the one-and-only...amazing, fantastic...charismatic and purposeful, Alex Okoroji! YOU, are a shining STAR."

- Shawn Anderson (#1 Best-Selling Author)



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Chapter 1- 4

uncovered!

The **NAKED** Road from *Timid Girl* to
Confident Woman...

ALEX OKOROJI

UNCOVERED!



The NAKED Road from Timid Girl to
Confident Woman

Alex Okoroji

The BRAG Media Company
Lagos. New York. London.

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Dedication

*All the darkness of the night, is no match for a
single candle that refuses to die out.*

“This book is dedicated to all the Truth-Tellers, Radicals and Truth-Seekers around the World. Life and relationships require truth. Thank you for not being afraid to honor your truth.”

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Foreword

To the one-and-only...amazing and fantastic, charismatic and purposeful, Alex Okoroji – YOU, my friend, are a shining star in this world...not just there, but everywhere your face and voice are allowed to go. You, are one awesome “Go-getter”! You have the ability to create...and create...and CREATE.

Like little girls wanting to grow-up and be like Oprah in the U.S, there are undoubtedly little girls wanting to grow-up and be like “Alex” in Nigeria. You, Alex, are definitely a rare diamond of a person: extremely talented and massively bold. That is the **perfect** combination to make something awesome happen with your life.

Where others dream and wish...YOU dream and DO. My prediction for you? Your future is going to be 100x more awesome than anything you have already lived.

Thank you for your awesome inspiration and your kick-ass “Live-the-Life-You-Love” style. I sense your greatest days are still to come. Keep the awesomeness rolling and keep leaving footprints that change the World. You are a STAR!!!

x Alex Okoroji

**– SHAWN ANDERSON (#1 Best-Selling Author &
Founder of Extra Mile Day + Extra Mile America)**

Preface

What would your life look like if you could operate each day freely, without restriction?

Everyday, I meet so many people (online and in person) who are prisoners of their own mind. They are caged by their own fears, restricted by their own negative thoughts, chained by their own experiences and limited by their own imperfections.

Of course, there is another group who are seemingly functional and operating, BUT only at a tiny fraction of what's possible for them. They can do bigger and better things, but their current status, decisions, actions or choices are a result of the many lies they've been fed about themselves and beliefs they have projected as their own.

Most of us are so involved in these false projections, that we fail to understand life for what it is. We become completely caught up in the illusion of perfection.

The enlightened few, on the other hand, who know better – live their lives in the light of complete awareness – that what most of us perceive as

“reality” – is only but a passing fancy. As a result, it helps them face the world and material accomplishment with a certain detachment, yet exuding compassion and wisdom, while the rest struggle upon the stage of vanity, fighting everyday for approval and validation. Still, having the wisdom to know that perfection is an illusion, does not mean that we don’t do our best and aspire – even with the twists and turns that life dishes us – Instead, like a trained actress who plays her role, knowing it’s only a character, we can engage in our own daily performance, with a little more freedom because we know that our failures are not the totality of who we are and what we represent.

I have written this raw and honest book with so much freedom, in the hope that the wisdom I have gained from my own personal life experiences can help you strip down all of your excuses and GIFT you Freedom. The freedom to operate at the highest level of your authentic best and be the highest expression of your brilliance, talent and greatness. I share my experiences and the mindset I had navigating different aspects of my life, from how I envisioned and treated my body to the limited beliefs I had about love, relationships, sex, money, career, religion and ofcourse my many hits and misses. I share how my old mindset has shifted from what it was during my days as a timid girl believing that I wasn’t good enough, to where I am now as a confident woman living and thriving in her brilliance.

The truth is that your worst day in Freedom, Truth and Total Awareness of who you are or what you want out of life – is better than your best day living in Bondage, Lies and Dysfunction.

I know this, because I have lived on both sides of the fence...

Even though our Life, work and relationships require TRUTH. Sometimes we let our truth hold us back, instead of empowering us with the freedom to move forward.

I found out, there is a powerful connection between Truth, Freedom and Greatness. I know this because being NAKED is the deepest level of freedom and self awareness a person can ever experience.

It is the most exhilarating and liberating experience you could ever have – most probably because when you are NAKED, you feel free, and liberated enough to move around without the baggage or barriers restricting you or holding you back from living your best life.

The moment I stripped down, got NAKED and faced my truth square in the face, I uncovered a big myth called “**perfection**” and understood that my idea of perfection was what was limiting me. I realised, that perfection is a myth, that doesn’t exist and will NEVER exist. I found freedom from owning that truth and understanding that no matter where I come from or what mistakes I have made, I still have everything it takes to be anything I want and I hope

that after reading this book, you too will uncover the freedom you need to BE EVERYTHING you want and much more.

If you enjoy reading this book, please share the love and tell others about it or go to **www.UncoveredTheBook.com** and buy a copy as a special gift to someone you love. *I have also created a powerful (12 Week Companion Guide) called THE NAKED JOURNAL that will serve as a weekly support guide with writing prompts to push you, to explore yourself on a deeper level and uncover the very best of who you are.*

Introduction: Uncovering The NAKED Road...

...When I think of the word NAKED – I see a **revelation** of truth. An expression of freedom. It is the ability to gift yourself the freedom to reveal that which is as bare as the buttocks of a new born.

Strangely, the first piece of non-fiction I ever wrote in 2008 was titled “NAKED EXPRESSION”, the weird part is that I didn’t even remember this, until very recently, when I received a comment on FaceBook, that made me read back an old note archived at the bottom pit of my many unfiltered musings – In that note I was recounting the fire incidence that took away our family property in 2005, left us completely homeless and changed my principles and entire value system.

I could have sworn that I only started stripping my covers in 2012, after the realisation of my failed

marriage and another long term “on and off” relationship that left me constantly broken – but I guess that’s not exactly true, because I may have fully come into my naked psych, after the demise of that marriage – but I think etched at the core of my inner soul had always been a woman seeking to reveal her awesomeness...and UNCOVER her brilliance bare butt NAKED for the entire world to see.

If you had asked the teenage me what I thought of the word “naked”, I probably would put my hands over my genitals and cringe at the mere thought of your eyes gliding my bare skin down to my hairy snatch.

Shuu!! Go away dirty soul. You want to see my vagina, don’t you?? Spoilt you! How dare you? I see you wanting to get a front row seat to peek at my nipples...and run your roving eyeballs all over my rounded ass and that mole I have on the inside of my back. Yes, the one on my back not my forehead.

I know it – and now I’m conscious, because I think you are also judging me, observing that I don’t have that lovely space runway models have between their thighs. Atleast, not anymore.

But as I grew older I realised that no matter how covered up we are in public, with people on the outside, every time we step in the bathroom to wash our bodies, we **uncover** ourselves and are faced with the TRUTH. Right there staring us in the face – the truth about our flaws, weaknesses, imperfections,

scars and thoughts -That no soap, water, body scrub or conditioner can wash away or hide.

We may choose to powder up, cover up, dress up, mask up before the world, but we can never hide our nakedness from ourselves. And for as long as we live with ourselves, we can either accept the truth, use it to win, or risk living a double standard fooling others but never ourselves.

And as I journeyed in my mind, pondering over my epiphany, over that long naked road from the timid girl, I used to be. I realised it is okay to be transparent about one's physical and emotional *Imperfection* because even the most BEAUTIFUL people stand naked before the mirror. And if they are honest with themselves they may see some flaws, parts of the body that need improvement... so also with the mind.

Living NAKED and uncovering myself has become my most valuable strategy for surviving the harsh realities of life. It means that I am not ashamed to REVEAL and present myself, the way I really am. (No pressure, no cover ups). That if I uncover my TRUTH, highlight my own weaknesses and laugh at my own silly mistakes; I have taken away the ULTIMATE power from others, to even MOCK me, because I have EXPRESSED a common truth. That I am not perfect, and neither are they. And sometimes it takes being honest, transparent and open about where you have been...so you can GROW towards where you want to go.

That's something I have embraced and I encourage others to do, because to be NAKED is not half covered up, artistically covered up or stylishly covered up. It is **not** the revealing of a portion of the TRUTH. It is truth as it is, 100% bare, no barriers, no covers – which is why I started the naked movement, promoting **The NAKED Philosophy™** – to gift people around the world, the *freedom mindset* they need, to challenge their fears and the illusion of perfection, because until we bridge that illusory gap between PERFECTION and IMPERFECTION – we will always hold on to the thoughts, that we are not good enough.

1

Expression is a Sign of Strength...



I grabbed my virtual pen to write, and for the first time, I am stuck...STUCK? Yes, you better believe this long winded pipe mouth of a woman is stuck, because I almost couldn't figure out where to start in defining this now amazingly beautiful life, I have begun to embrace in the last five years.

You are probably wondering "Okay, so your life is beautiful Alex...Great Job that you have it all well and good. However, that's just not my cup of

cappuccino”. Yes, I get you... But! Wait a sec... What you probably may not realise – is that my life isn’t perfect – not by thirty four yards of the brightest African Damask you can find in the market, it isn’t... but it hasn’t stopped me from thinking it’s still bloody amazing. I’m so AMAZING – Well, because it’s all in the mind, right? Everything we do. What we achieve, what we believe, and how we present ourselves all come down to what we are constantly thinking and brewing in our minds.

Are we sowing seeds of doubts? Are we letting those centuries of limiting beliefs poured into us from our diaper days fester in our pretty heads?

Are we building layer upon layers of the most expensive foundation- think the perfect shade of Mary Kay, MAC or Iman... right on top of our acne of limitations and blemish of weaknesses?

Are we letting society define who we should be – Or are we empowering ourselves to go for GOALS and embrace all the immeasurable challenges that we encounter along the way?

Are we coming out battle ready, clutching our weaknesses close to our lace panties, yet holding on to our strengths as we beat our chest with pride, knowing we are not in any way ashamed to conquer our personal devils and reach for the finish line, ready for greatness.

While thinking about that, I decided to do a bit of research out of curiosity. I wanted to know what other people felt about me – for the heck of it.

Oh, just so we're clear, I've long stopped caring to be validated – validated by imperfect bull-shitters like my former self, but it's still necessary sometimes, to take a few cautionary steps back – PAUSE a little and then ask “How far have I come?” Because, if you have a roadmap to where you are going, and know just how far you have covered in your laboured journey to only God knows where, you can indeed visualise the rest of the journey ahead, and carry along, EVERYTHING it will take, for you to get there.

So I sent out a WhatsApp message on my phone, as I started to write – I wanted to know what other names, people will call me if they had the chance to christen me, a second name. The feedback was overwhelming... A Film-maker Frederic said, “*Alex, I'll call you Wonder Woman...*” An Actress and Colleague of mine – Queen Blessing said, “*Alex, I will call you Brave...*”. Prince Felix said “*Alex my dear, you are nothing short of an Enigma...*”. Yemi Blaq, an award winning actor friend of mine said “*Tornado*”, and Victoria said “*Sexy Genius*”, “*Queen of Naked Movement... A One Woman Riot Squad*” ... Ha ha ha... I couldn't help bursting out in laughter.

Geez! These people certainly had names for days. Crazzzzy people – The truth is that, I have been called many things. “*Brilliant, Talented, An Inspiration. A Woman in the eye of times*”. I have even been called “*Hurricane Alex*” by a famous Nigerian Musician ... Hahaha... But if there was anything I

picked from the names they called me, they all alluded to the fact that I have indeed, earned the right to write a book like this, and share my unconventional thoughts and my journey from self doubt to greatness – with others.

So who is this now confident thirty-four year old, strutting her NAKED Philosophy for the entire world to gawk at? Well – asides from being an all-round creative, thanks to my musician father for catching my mom, putting a ring on her finger and shooting his artistic sperm down her fertile ovaries...I am here...Alexandra Adaeze Okoroji – A One Woman Tornado who lives in the heart of Africa and has built an impressive 13 year career as a Nigerian Actress, Writer, TV Personality, Author, Speaker and a 24 hour Boom box...He he he...*(I have been known to talk for days)*. Being the host of a popular international talk radio show, isn't helping matters. I'm constantly talking and talking.

In fact, I have this funny theory, that I'm probably the right person to stage more dialogues between countries at war...my chirpiness is consuming, Infectious. I have never planned a ten minutes meeting with anyone, that didn't somehow last longer. And I have my gigantic phone bills to show for it. I can't imagine someone having the strength to plot evil next to me. My talk energy is over powering, draining...hopefully in the most positive way.

I'm starting to think I could in fact end terrorism.

Seeing how I have so many times been responsible, for talking an armed robber out of shooting me or someone else in the picture, all in my dreams, of course! Ha! I know it sounds ridiculous but it's true. I've had so many dream sequences of me saving the day – Bring in A-L-E-X-A-N-D-R-A – Defender of Mankind. Yup! I stand by the greek meaning of my name.

I am almost confident about my abilities to talk myself out of almost any situation, including the one time a couple of police men stopped me and my camera crew on our way back from a TV shoot, for a program called Mega-Vision – I had been hosting on television, back in 2007. I guess after 30 minutes of talking with the policeman and him realising I was in no mood to pull out a dime to bribe him for **nothing**, he finally let us go. See – just let me do the darn talk.

I am the Queen of Expression and I advocate 100% for more people to express themselves. It has saved many assumptions, failing relationships, increased employee salaries, got leaders to be accountable, and has saved many lives in distress. It even propelled my ex-husband to finally pick up the mantle of responsibility for our son, (even if, for just one minute). Okay, that's still work in progress. But at least, in the last two years, he called two or three times to speak to our son. Ha ha. Somebody please shout Alleluyah!

I believe the gossip from gist mongers, plus that silly unauthorised article that trended in the

newspapers and gossip blogs, might have finally motivated him to take action. But that's news for another day.

See *unexpressed emotions* = Dead Outcome and No Results. If you want something, you ask for it. If you feel something, it's okay to say it and by all means – please show it.

Think of the regrets you have for all the things left unsaid, things you could or should have communicated and articulated, but never did.

My mantra is “Expression is a sign of STRENGTH – not weakness”.

Yeah, how can telling someone you love them, be considered “weakness”? How can showing one's gratitude or remorse – not come from a place of intense strength? I had to learn that.

I also had to teach myself how to be vulnerable, how to strip off the ‘ice princess’ mask – the one I wore 24/7; the one that made me unapproachable, unreadable, while covering up my true feelings and worrying about people taking me for granted.

I had to stop living in fear of what others would think, or how what I say will be perceived. Once I overcame that fear, I discovered how powerful and precious my gift of the gab really is.

Two years ago, as a guest on The Ms Reason Show in the US, I told the amazing host, Marie Summers that I'm not a weak woman who needs to learn how to be strong... But in fact, a STRONG woman who

is learning how to be vulnerable. – {The underlining reason for why I advocate for Expression}.

We are constantly told to be strong, to keep it in, SUCK it up, bear it all, don't complain, tolerate the things we can't handle and not shed a single tear.

And if you think deeply, it's most probably the number one reason for why there are so many broken people with suppressed emotions, who never got a chance to exorcise their demons and ghosts from the past.

But I have learned that vulnerability is emotional exposure. it is the core of the heart, the center of meaningful human experience... and sometimes, strength isn't in how tough you are on the outside, but how courageous you are to exhibit and express your vulnerability and transparency, especially in a world... where many people mask who they really are, what they really want and how they really 'feel' about life. Many!!!

I can't help but respect a person, who is not afraid to EXPRESS love, even when they know the other person might NOT reciprocate and love them back. It takes courage. Damn IT!

Or someone who is not ashamed to sincerely APOLOGISE for their wrongs, without being prodded because their conscience and relationships are way more important than their EGO. That also takes courage and yes, strength.

The one who is not embarrassed to ASK for help, because their determination to resolve a problem,

achieve a goal or reach a destination is far more important than the FEAR of rejection, failure or the mockery they might attract. Oh dang, that surely takes courage.

So what if we gave ourselves freedom to “ask questions”, “seek answers”, “show empathy”, “feel regret”, “give trust” or even “express love”. What if we gave ourselves the freedom to put ourselves out there and experience “HAPPINESS”.

Although we could easily be hurt, attacked or harmed, but rather than protect ourselves from impending disaster, we take a leap of faith knowing it's impossible to experience genuine emotion, without taking any risk, because expressing vulnerability is the only bridge to build AUTHENTIC connections.

Now speaking of connections – I have a plan – a great plan on how I intend to charm the pants of Jesus... Ha ha! I will do that if for any reason, I get the sneaky signs that I may not be making it over to the cool side of heaven.

See, I'm working up a great conversation for how I intend to convince the supreme “Gee” upstairs, to move me in with the good guys. Yee Ha! Just imagine me negotiating heaven with God, sincerely expressing my fear of burning in hell.

“Hey Holy Gee – I've got a deal for you, sir. Can you sit this African Chick with the cool guys? Pretty please... I promise to sing, shout, dance, twirl my waist and scream Hallelujah as many times as you wish”.

“I promise to make heaven rock wild...because wherever I am, I light up the freaking place”. Boom! I promise to light up heaven.

That’s what I am. I am light. And – If you ask me. I’ll say my life has been a “lit” expression of brilliance.

In the meantime, I am enjoying being the proud mother of an amazing eight year old boy, whom I love more than I love my “almost” perky left breast, the only thing other than my job – that has somehow managed to stay ‘consistent’ in my life and not disappoint those who literally glow from peeking at my now famous cleavage.

Truth is, I have learned that disappointments are the training we all need to acquire a steel backbone to help us manage all of life’s challenges and to be honest, now that I think of it, I’m thankful, very thankful for the many lessons.

Geez! I can honestly think of the many times I could easily have given up on myself, but I never did – as we will say in Nigerian Pidgin English “Dem no born me well...” Ha ha ha. In other words... “I DARE you girl, I dare you to quit...” and woe betide me, should I be a failure, a failure to myself, my family and even my generation?

No bloody way in IMO River. Could I even forgive myself, if I ended up a failure to my lineage, to the incredible legacy that my father built?

Yeah, don’t roll your eyes. As an African – whether that means anything to you or not. It is a cultural belief we have here as a people from a fatherland,

that we must uphold our father's name & values. That IS THE BIG challenge.

It is a big challenge to sieve between your own goals, YOUR own desires, and your own identity separate from the expectations that society has of you. It may be a path that may have been created for you to walk through, but not necessarily a path you 'want' to follow. I've been learning so much about myself and how I have dealt with the curves that life throws at me.

In some way – I have become a voice for women – a champion for women without wanting to or seeking to.

When you have been featured in over 250 media outlets around the world or become a “women mentoring women's mentor” for a reputable transformational organisation, or when you become an ‘*International Ambassador*’ for a global movement that promotes empowerment for women and girls, or when you become the ‘*first African woman living in Africa*’ to have your profile listed on the world's largest video library for women's wisdom, or when you get to speak live all the way from Africa – at a “*Women's Success Summit*” happening in another continent, or serve on the *Advisory Executive Council* for a Global Women Forum happening in far east Asia and even get honoured with an Iconic Woman Award; or when you suddenly get ranked as one of the “*Top 250 Most Influential Women in the World*” and you see your name listed week after

week, amongst the world's most respected, celebrated & adored powerhouse women the world over, it suddenly starts to dawn on you, that you actually have become a FORCE for women – And I'm not even a feminist.

Surprised? Many are, when I tell them. They think just because I'm self – sufficient, strong and vocal...or because I encourage and teach other women to be...that I advocate for “women supremacy” of some kind.

I am not an advocate for women supremacy. I am a humanist who believes we are all equal. Men and Woman. We all bring something different and unique to the table and that is what makes us special and important – because we need each other. A man needs my vulnerability and intuition...and as a woman, I need the man's strength and his logical mind. We both complement one another. We both win.

It gets tiring listening to the gender war – actually war of any kind that promotes prejudice, division or supremacy. Your race is better than mine. Your religion is better than mine. Your gender is better than mine. Your political views are better or that your sexual orientation is.... wait – yeah, better than mine. It's so ridiculous. It makes me want to SCREAM. How can we not see how time wasting it all is?

Nobody ever gained by dividing or subtracting. We gain by adding, by being inclusive, by reaching out,

embracing, respecting and understanding those who hold views or orientation that is different from ours.

I want women to be empowered...greatly, but I also desire the same for men. I would never want my son to think his gender is less superior or more...Or that somehow he has become more important, simply because he has a **penis**– or less important because well, nobody can whip up enough sympathy for his gender.

I like to be strong and illimitable, but I'm also not ashamed to take off my pink lacy bra and cheer for the men's team, because I want them to win too.

I see how – women have been conditioned to believe that being tough is the only way we can earn respect, that we must hide any traces of cracks, scars or blemishes that will leave us vulnerable. That we have to prove – we are who we think we are, by “demanding” respect from other women or even the men folk.

Truth is, you can't make those kinds of demands. You have to somehow earn it. I have never seen a man disrespect a female “achiever” like him-self. NEVER! Instead, I watch daily as men gain respect for women who are making things happen – because well, you can't take a crown away from a **Queen**.

Perhaps if we changed the conversation from demanding equality and we start to empower little groups of women wherever they are with the *freedom* to find their rubies, find their voice, find

their passion, their purpose and embrace their flaws and weaknesses, perhaps if we focused more on mental reforms instead of the social and political reform that many are unable to grasp, because of their limited mind-set – we may actually change the results.

Remember, it's all in the mind...every single action is a product of our thoughts, and our thoughts are the very important waves in our mind, whether you feel rich or you feel poor, whether you feel educated or you feel uneducated, whether you feel beautiful, sexy, intelligent, strong, enterprising, unstoppable OR not.

It all comes down to how you *visualise* yourself – If you think you are, well you are... If you think you are not, I'm sorry... then you are not! And that is a truth I am happy I discovered.

EARLY LIFE

Growing up, I was treated like a Princess, you can tell if you understand the meaning of my middle name – Adaeze (in my native Igbo language, it means “*first daughter of a king*”). My father, despite being very educated with several degrees, holds two different chieftaincy titles.

Yes, I am his first daughter, first child in a family of 8 (Including 6 children), let's just say, I grew up very fast. Went to the best schools... Enjoyed being the cynosure of every teacher. They loved me. I was Brilliant, Gentle, Respectful... wasn't much of a talker... Are you surprised?

Well, as a child I rarely spoke much. I had been taught to speak and answer with my eyes, because we were always hosting guests, celebrities, extended family and all sorts of visitors at home, my mom found ways to communicate without saying a single word to us in their presence. She only had to look at me and give me the sign.

I'd always been the quiet child, whose mother spoke with her eyes, (*Dang! My mom was a stern disciplinarian growing up*). I dared not argue or reply. I would just nod my head in compliance, like a cute Agama lizard and do whatever I was told. Her eyes could read "Leave Now" or "Don't Drink It" or "Stop That Noise!" Honestly, it could range from a million and one directives and I had learned how to interpret it and conform. And I never had to talk. I only have to look for the things you are not saying.

In fact, I think that style of communicating still haunts me till this day, because you might be talking to me now, but I'm still looking for a sign. I'm looking for the hidden message that your words are not conveying.

If you cursed at me, I never said a word back. I hated confrontation.

I still hate confrontation...except now, I defend myself and I'll be throwing back in your face, every single vocabulary at my disposal (Okay, I'm just kidding but you know what I mean – I talk now.)

That's how quiet I was. Didn't have too many friends and certainly not enough time doing what

the average child spent their time doing. I mean, kids my age were ruining their Barbie dolls, and pretending Ken was their prince charming coming to sweep them off their sandy little feet and choose them over pretty doll Barbie. Ha ha ha, yeah right!

I must have had an insight to the truth. Who would ever choose a fugly toothy mean girl down my street? But hey, that's none of my business. I'm just going to bury my head in Dad's newspaper and try and make out half of what these cluster of alphabets mean.

Yes, I was a little nerdy like that. I wanted to be smart and brilliant...and maybe pretty, yes I was pretty...but I wanted to be *"Pretty come get me, let's kiss dammit..."* and not *"Pretty come hate me, stay away please..."* and if I learned anything about the mean girls club. I really was the girl 'other' girls just hated (and for no good reason, unless they could see that God had assigned for my future, a set of triple D cup breasts and a fat round ass...Ha! I wonder why?!) ...and to top it all, my father was a famous musician. Ha, rear the beef in – Medium rare... Hahaha.

I think that was it – The fact, that I was the daughter of someone famous and was treated nicely by the adults and teachers, made my classmates hate me.

Now, some of the girls didn't like me much – but hang on a second, the boys were enthralled by me.

Oh! I had nothing but nipples and certainly no idea

what “Coochie Coochie” was. I was just glad to have a certain group of the homo sapiens find me “friend worthy”, even if the boys scuttled amongst themselves to sit beside me in class, or they offered me their wafers (you know those crunchy creamy things they put in your mouth, darn it) and Oh! Their soda drinks – yes a few times I would drink from their bottle, it was nice to have them watch me gulp it down....Did you say I’m a little tease. Yes I was – Even if one or two offered to teach me simple maths, just so he could brush his tiny body against mine.

I liked the attention I got, and it certainly made up for whatever I was missing from those raggedy ass girls.

Yes! Those little tiny schmucks who never invited me to play...C’mon! Don’t feel sorry for them. I’m finally calling them all the names I couldn’t back in the day.

You see, I didn’t choose my parents. I didn’t ask to be born to a famous musician and I certainly didn’t ask to be given preferential treatment. I didn’t ask for any of that. And I couldn’t understand why anyone would hate me just because I didn’t come from a poor background. I wasn’t poor, but I still lacked certain things. Like seeing my Dad at PTA meetings or Opening day at school – No! My Dad never came to any of those.

In fact, I can count the number of times my Dad ever visited me at school, ALL on one hand!

And when I got to college it wasn’t any different.

Well yes, I didn't experience too much of what students go through in Federal Government Colleges here in Nigeria. The hard life college students are subjected to – I was a Mini Celebrity if you call it that. Popular with the Teachers and the Seniors and everyone wanted to be my friend – but then it also made me wary, because I never knew who really liked me for ME. And as I flash back on the days when women were girls, thinking about it makes me miss those days.

I really miss that time...the days of hot PANTS, open back tops, micro mini-skirts, platforms and my TINTED red hair...

I miss the days of wearing my permed hair dressed in ANITA BAKER, Evelyn King and having Mama-Mayowa, the local hairdresser sticking my head between her thighs as she plaited my hair for school. Yikes!

I miss the days when I had three best friends, an under-ground girl band and lots of male CRUSHES.

Oh how I miss those days... The days I wanted to be Beyonce of 'Destiny's child', a member of the '702' group or even the lead singer of the British band 'All Saints'...

I miss the days of dancing the traditional 'Atilogu', 'Ati-ero', 'Igbo cultural', 'Yoruba cultural dance' and the many dance events that involved borrowing my mother's traditional FISH EYE wrapper.

I miss the days I was the PRINCESS of pink house, CAPTAIN of the blue house, a CUP BEARER in green

house and finally march past QUEEN for the green house during our inter house competitions....

Or was it the day I won the 'Most Attractive Girl' in the boarding house, or when I was awarded the 'Most Beautiful Girl' in the entire school, and those silly wankers miss spelled the word '**baeutiful**' on my award plaque...yet I was so excited to be crowned the most beautiful in a high school, when even more beautiful mixed race girls where like white on rice.

I miss the days of EXPRESSION and FREEDOM...days when I was the only junior in the MUSIC club, DRAMA club and PRESS club.

Oh how I miss those days, days no matter which school I was in... I danced for LIFE and sang for JOY.

Days when I mimed to Janet Jackson's "I Get So Lonely" or Ginuwine's 'Pony'.... The days when Keith Sweat's "Nobody" had me wondering what my first time would be like and who would be the lucky boy.

The days when I thought 'Pinks' first album was the bomb...TLC was crazy sexy cool and LAURYN HILL was the second coming of Jesus...Holy Christ, that woman was a triple threat – amazing singer, actor and rapper...and she could write for the universe.

I miss the days when I used to SNEAK my dad's copy of Billy Ocean, Stevie Wonder, Al Green and Donna Hathaway to school... The days when I could sing every song on radio, word for word and re-enact

every MOVIE on television, line for line... Oh! Those were the days.

The days when 'School Fathers' wanted to be boyfriends, 'Boyfriends' wanted to be 'Lovers' and love was a picture of only one man – Yemi, I imagined I would love for the rest of my life. Yeah, Right!.

The days when I thought I would be a DOCTOR and my ART was just a hobby... Days when I passed 'Physics' yet hated it... but failed 'French' yet I loved it. Ha!

The days when "Adaeze" was easier to pronounce than "Alexandra" for some people ... Days when Daddy and I solved further mathematics or cooked coconut Rice with boiled peanuts. Yeah! Those are the days I miss!

I miss the days I was BOLD enough to walk up to another FEMALE and innocently say "Hey I like you, Can we be friends...?" Yes, that's how I met my childhood best friend... Nthenya.

And days I could easily say "No! I don't want to be your girlfriend" Sorry... That's right! I remember saying that as well.

Days it was okay to date for a full year without SEX...and being a VIRGIN was such a big deal. Ha ha... ha.

The days when Mama Junior was my neighbour, Aunty Meg, was my God mother and Coca-cola never made me FAT.

I miss the days I used to trade in my morning

BREAD in exchange for SUNDAY rice at the boarding school, pleated skirts were SEXY and school boys were cooler than Brad Pitt. I miss those days.

Days when everyone loved to read my little short NOVELS, debate was a fun time and 'English' was my favourite subject after BIOLOGY of course... (*Who didn't think about The Male Reproductive Organ*) Oh I did... and I miss those days.

The days when managing my Mother's business was a major part of my life, Fashion designing was a SECRET talent. And I wasn't afraid to manage a business with 22 staffs all older than me... Those were the days.

The days when I thought I would be Happily Married at 21 with 4 kids and the Perfect husband. Yeah, yeah – Dreams. Those were the days.

The days when RESPONSIBILITY was keeping an eye on my younger ones and freedom was a nice evening stroll on 'Unity Drive'...

The days when writing 'Poetry' was easy peas and writing songs felt as easy to me as breathing... The days when Acting on STAGE was another wholesome world but a world completely different from the career I have now. I miss those days...

The days when 'one million braids' were so cool and I didn't give a hoot about buying Brazilian hair because I had my own real "20 inches" tucked underneath...

The days I wore an extra small, and my B-Girls were the perfect C cup... oh! Those days!

The days I could drink raw eggs, eat four noodles, a bowl of ice cream and my stomach will still be flat as an ironing board... Yup!

I miss those days we didn't have Blackberry, mobile phones, skype or even internet... Yet I NEVER missed a dear friend.

I miss the days I was young, innocent and yet so free. Free from PAIN, responsibilities, challenges and STRESS.

Today, I really miss the days of my youth...the YOUTH we take for granted because we assume we will always have it. No matter whether we are 60, 50, 40 or even 20 – there was a time in our lives, when the world just seemed easier for us.

So many years have passed and I have evolved a lot from the person, who had all these many talents, DREAMS and desire to conquer it all...but it's okay to remind myself that I once lived...and I can LIVE again.

And even today, it's weird to look back at the road – that little girl of yester years has travelled – And how far she has come. Life is strange. The things we work for, fight for, are sometimes the same things that depress us and bring us down.

One will experience many situations that demand you ask yourself pertinent questions all the time.

For example – years ago, I could never attract a media comment without the headline or caption being something like *“Former PMAN President’s Daughter – Alex Okoroji does this...”* or *“Tony*

Okoroji, Former Musician & Coson Boss's First Daughter – Alex Okoroji was seen at...” it was almost like I didn't have an identity of my own.

It was like I couldn't attract my own respect – That I was only relevant if they could tie me to my father.

The first time, I saw a headline without his name, was like my rebirth. Geez! Finally someone sees me whoop! I'm not walking in his shadow... Alelulia!

My Dad had made a comment, two years ago. He said, *“Everywhere I go, everyone is asking of you. They keep asking of their friend, Alex. “People used to say that's Tony Okoroji's Daughter, Now they say that's Alex Okoroji's Father...”*.I laughed, it was rather interesting hearing him say that way.

So yes, it was difficult building a brand, building my identity. I got special and preferential treatment, people were always polite. If I found someone who wasn't. it was attractive in a way, because it meant they didn't give a hoot about my last name, and that was cool – but then again, that also is a warped mind-set, a destructive way to find validation and look at oneself.

The now adult version of myself, only wants to be surrounded by people who deeply care and respect me, including my achievements, because they have taken a lot of guts and hardwork on my part. And I won't tolerate or keep up false appearances, or go along – just to get along.

Think about Miley Cyrus, Paris Hilton...and many children of famous people and celebrities. They are

either depressed, doing drugs, alcohol or just rebelling. It's fun to get attention on the outside, but it's rather lonely on the inside.

So I learned early on to build my own value system, and choose the kind of people I wanted to keep in my circle, the friends I make...and what I considered to be deal breakers.

CAREER TRUTHS

I grew up in a creative household with love for the arts. My father was a performing & recording musician and my mother was a fashion designer, and as you can imagine, it made our home filled with a library of music, movies, books, catalogues, magazines and fashion accessories. I remember one of my father's first Valentines gifts to my mother was a Mills and Boons novel published in 1975... I think... And I found it in a pile of book clutter, when I was 14 and I kept it among my personal reading collection. But it was his bestsellers, by Agatha Christie, Danielle Steele or even James Hadley Chase, that excited me the most.

Like I already mentioned earlier – In Junior High, I was the only student in three clubs – (the *Drama Club*, the *Music Club* and the *Press Club*) all at the same time.

My journey to the place of purpose, had me representing my school in inter school debates and inter-lit dance offs. I mimed, choreographed, wrote short stories, performed drama sequences, created art designs and entertained my entire school.

Despite graduating high school in the sciences – the “Arts” was where I had always truly, belonged.

Discovering my passion for acting, happened right after I saw Lauryn Hill in the big screen musical – “Sister Act” in 1991 – A line Whoopi Goldberg said in the movie captured my heart.

After that, I knew when I looked into the mirror, the only person I saw staring back at me, was an Artiste. And I had given myself the permission to act, sing, write and do every creative thing I wanted to do.

But the real light bulb moment came many years later, in 2005 when I mysteriously participated in the maiden edition of a Reality TV Show for Actors – Amstel Malta Box Office (AMBO). To be among the top 10 people to qualify from over 20,000 entries nationwide, go through all the amazing trainings; performance classes and to hear my acting coach RMD, say in an interview, that I would be the last female standing or to hear international film director, Jeta Amata talk about how captivating my eyes are in front of the camera. It was the boost I needed, to follow through on my passion.

And I knew that I had to decide if I was going to become an Entertainer or an Artiste. What’s the difference? The difference is that an entertainer performs for the applause, while the artiste performs for the love of Art. If you know me, then you already know that I do everything strictly for the love of art. I am not here to impress anyone –

not anymore. Ofcourse through the years, my art has grown from a passion into a career. A career that has totally evolved over the years...As I have transformed from just being an artiste who performs, to one with a mission, what I now call an “Expressionist” – because I use all these different mediums of the Art to not only express myself, my talent and my message – whether in front of the Camera, on a Microphone or through my Writing – but most importantly, to also empower people with the freedom to express their own truth, their own talents and their personal greatness.

So apart from being an Actor, and the former Host, of two day-time television shows, I love being a Writer, (penning screenplays, songs, poetry and prose), I love writing books, and God I love writing my blog, contributing to international publications, even now publishing my own global magazine called, **BRAG!**

I love producing and hosting my own International – *Globally Syndicated Radio Show* – THE NAKED TALK w/ Alex Okoroji, which has over 4.8 million listens and counting as well as the illuminating and stimulating conversations with my guests. I recently created a self development hub – **The NAKED Philosophy**, and a VIP Mastermind for Influencers – The BRAG CLUB as a support group for my digital media and publishing company serving a handful of high impact clients around the world. Creating membership platforms where creative individuals,

influencers, small business owners and aspiring achievers can learn “the EAT Process” of the Naked Philosophy, or use THE BRAG Factor to expand their business and re-invent themselves for success has been one of the best things I’ve done.

I didn’t wait for anyone to give me the opportunity, I went on to create my own opportunities. But like every job, there are challenges. Sometimes, being a woman in the Entertainment industry can be challenging, both as an African woman and a single mother. A single mom who already has her job cut out for her – playing multiple roles, as Mum and Dad.

We all know a woman has to work several times harder than a man, to truly earn her respect in the Entertainment industry.

Even as a Creative Entrepreneur, there is the general prejudice that a woman probably only needs the “fame” and not the money...or that if a woman is building a significant brand, she must be giving *sexual favours* or will be open to giving sexual favours for opportunities. And many will test you to see, where you belong.

Holding on to my values, while being compared to other seemingly successful people – without cutting corners, can be tough. And most times, my hard work, creative ideas, business sass and dedication is ridiculed, by defining me simply based on how I look and who they think I know. That for me is a challenge.

I'm glad that I knew the value of having a mentor during the early days of my career, and understanding that mentorship is very important to a person's growth, even though to be honest, I'm not sure my mentors knew how important they were to me, because I really was a mentee from a distance.

Having the sheer privilege to know someone or a group of people you can reach out to, for guidance or even model or replicate their winning strategy, is super important for a person's career growth. I am always inspired by men and women who are driven, passionate, don't take "no" for an answer and can just make things happen. I have realised there is always something I can learn from people like that – who I meet on a daily or see from a distance.

I've had a few mentors. Two of which have been a real influence. I remember when I first joined the movie industry in 2005, My coach, one of Africa's finest and most respected iconic actor – Richard Mofe Damijo (*popularly called RMD*), believed in me as an Actor and a writer, encouraging me to write the first screenplay I ever attempted for a movie, an amazing story which I created, ended up giving actress, Stella Damasus a nomination for her performance at The African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) in 2009. Many people don't know this though, I went from being called "Alexandra" (my birth name) to just "Alex" on the reality show, simply because he said "*I'll call you Alex – That*

sounds more Sassy“. Ofcourse I tried to remind him when he was a guest on my radio show years later, that he literally created the name brand “Alex Okoroji” .

RMD was a fantastic acting coach, and to be honest I adored him like any sane upcomer would, and was grateful to have the support and encouragement of a man as qualified and generous as him.

I remember something he said to me almost 12 years ago – Actually, he said to the 10 Actors in the room that day, and maybe to the millions of Nigerians watching the reality Tv show on Television that year, in 2005.

Maybe he says it all the time to his students, but its one of the best advice, I have carried with ME travelling down the road to success. He had said then...

“There are no small roles, only small Actors“

That statement drives home a point that an actor is not defined simply by how big or small the role, scenes or character he or she gets – but the quality of their delivery. It has been the bane for my positive approach to opportunities.

Naturally, over the course of my career I have *reinvented* that statement to fit it into everything else that I do. In fact it is because of that singular statement that I BRAG and celebrate every opportunity given to me – no matter how big or small.

NOW I say “No *small opportunities, only small minds...*” the words might have changed but the principle from RMD’s advice, is still the same.

And I’m so grateful for having the privilege to take something valuable from him and from the many people I get to work and collaborate with, around the world.

No matter where I am now, I trace it all back to him. Sometimes we need that one person who believes in us, even on those days when we disconnect, days when we forget or fail – we can cast our minds to the FAITH that person had in us and tap from it.

Just like I tap some faith from my Dad... because I have learned great lessons from watching him manage his personal brand, building a formidable career in the Entertainment Industry, as he continuously reinvents himself and has sustained his relevance over four decades.

From his early days working as an Artist A & R in an International record label EMI, to becoming a famous musician, being an administrative leader in music management, becoming a renowned author, global speaker and one of the leading voices on Intellectual Property and Copyright Management in Africa...and weaving it all so seamlessly – that it set a fantastic example for how I too could coordinate all my different creative endeavours and **blend** them in a way that feels organic and authentic to me

I have also picked up similar habits, work ethics and values...

And because I have great antecedents, people transfer the respect they have for my father to me. But it also creates a lot of pressure, because the expectations for me to live up to his incredible legacy, is high. So rather than focus on the big shoes I have to fill. I chose to take the freakin' shoes off and leave my own foot prints on the sand of time.

Just knowing that I can always go to him with questions, and ask for his advice, even if I don't always have to agree or do everything he says – is super priceless.

Priceless is also connecting with other influencers from around the world, on a daily and having a community of people who truly value and support my work. Nothing beats receiving a personal email, or text written to me from a guest, a show listener, a blog reader, a TV or movie fan sending me screenshots of a film they saw or a social media follower, thanking me for impacting their lives.

That for me is the biggest reward – beyond the fame, awards and good fortune. The joy of having people reach out to me daily and give me, first person account, of how I positively influence their lives – is what I live for. It is what drives me.

2

Your Network is Your Networth...



Even though I came from a comfortable background, I have always known the importance of working and earning, from watching my mom wake up every day at 4am to get to work at the Supreme Court of Nigeria. A job she did for 15 years until she decided to take control of her future and chase her love for fashion.

My earliest memory was accompanying my mom & walking in to a fashion accessory store called

“Trimskey” in highbrow Surulere, here in Lagos, Nigeria.

And been blown away by the myriads of unique designs in patches, buttons, zippers, pocket squares, shoulder pads, collars, capes and so much more elegant accessories that went into making beautiful clothes...some buttons even cost so much it could have been my entire school fees for a year.

To see the owner and her children who were graduates of top universities in the UK, working for her and running this massive store like an empire, I knew I wanted to do same.

I guess my 11 year old mind wasn't the only one that caught the entrepreneur bug.

My mom wanted the same, and so she quit her job, got a shop space to start her own accessory store in our neighbourhood, and guess who followed ...ME. I had offered to be her part time sales girl and work during my holidays.

I remember the first 200,000 naira I sold for my mom in the year 1992. I counted the cash myself –with my tiny fingers that ended up working at the speed of a counting machine.

I think it was three days after we opened the shop. I had convinced some customers out of town, who had come window shopping, to buy some machines, for putting diamond studs on jeans.

She couldn't believe it. It was ten times more than her salary as a civil servant at the time.

In fact, she closed the store that day at 2pm and

told us to go home. She had sold enough for the day, NO! Enough for the entire month, or even the quarter – Hee he he.

I have always known the value of working for my own money and being financially independent. I started working at the age of 11 and have worked ever since, running my mother's business for 12 years and growing it into a formidable business, creating designs, managing 22 staff all older, and working up a new branch – before I decided to go after my own art and chase my own passion.

Of course as an Artiste, the reality starts to hit you, because leaving a steady income to try and build a career as an Actor, can be rather frustrating.

There are no standard monthly incomes. You earn as you work. You don't work, enough, you don't earn enough...And sometimes, you don't earn anything because you are just hungry to get your foot in the door, and many filmmakers will take advantage of the hunger you have to make it, and survive in an industry – that doesn't really give a shit about you or your goals, just so you can get your face on as many movie posters as you can.

And for some actors, it means “many-a-roles”, but no real income to show for it.

So I figured I could try a different approach, I badly wanted the winning prize on a Reality TV Show that showcased an Acting Academy that a malt brand was creating, Amstel Malta to be exact.

It was going to be the first international

collaborated reality TV project in Nigeria and I wanted to be part of the maiden edition. I was bored with my life and needed a getaway.

Let's just say there's a lot I could do with the winning prize money, 2.5 Million Naira was a big deal 13 years ago. So, I took part in the reality tv show, got past a series of auditions, made it to the final 10 housemates from over 20,000 entries nationwide, got Nigerian TV viewers to fall in love with me and received my first big cheque I had ever personally made- for my participation on the show, even though I didn't win the big prize money...

I got more money than the standard A List actor ever got for their first 10 roles in the business (at the time)and I thought I was going to invest that money, but, instead I blew it.

By the time I was done splitting the money between my mom, my five other siblings and everyone else who reminded me of how they voted for me on the show, nothing was left and those were the first signs of my lack of respect for money.

Of course, that particular instance wasn't big a deal. I always had everything I needed, and was generous to a fault. If you wanted and I had ... I gave. That's me. I don't think twice about it. I don't come up with excuses... I just give, but then you start to ask yourself, if that is really wise.

Never having enough money to save for a rainy day, because I was generous to a fault and never

needed much as a single lady, until I became a mother... and after my separation from my husband, everything started to change. I had an extra mouth, a six month old baby to feed– all by myself.

I was now mummy and daddy. And I needed to act as such.

Some days I was confident, and other days I was scared shitless, because I didn't know what Ray and I would eat or how we would make it through the week.

And even though I had a family not too far away, and a father I could depend on, I was too ashamed to ask. Too ashamed to say to anyone, that I couldn't even raise my son, by myself, too embarrassed to ask for help or for food.

In fact I would prefer to ask a stranger I just met, than to ask anyone who knew me well, because I wanted to cover up my shitty excuse for a life. I had made that damned decision to come back home, and I never told anyone what really went wrong.

I never told my family of the incessant emotional and verbal abuse I experienced (*imagine being called a witch, a slut, a fool and other unprintable names everyday*), or that I had been kicked hard in my stomach only 3 months after having my son through a caesarean section – (a pain I bore for 4 years until that area of my abdomen started healing) or those few times, I was almost strangled from his road rage or slammed inside our moving car with my 3 months old strapped to my chest, or was it that heavy slap

that STAMPED the impression of his five fingers on my face for hours, a shock that broke my reverie, sending me packing to a dingy hotel in the streets of Accra, as I planned how I would make my exit back to Nigeria and pick up the pieces of my life or the many times I was accused of the most ridiculous unimaginable things.

I couldn't tell anyone because, well, I hear many people predicted in the confines of their kitchen table conversation, that our whirl-wind romance wouldn't work, and those who were rooting for us, would have found it hard to believe that the ever smiling 'supposedly' calm gorgeous looking man was in fact, an insecure temperamental monster. How would they even believe me?

I also thought of all the nice men who had proposed to me or showed interest in me, laughing at me, big time for rejecting them. There was a long train of them. Yikes , I had ignored them all and married the "foreigner" – What a shame! But I think on top of it all, was my fear that people would see me as WEAK and as a woman with poor judgement for picking a man who eventually treated me like crap.

So I never said anything. I kept quiet and struggled in silence... I would cry and cry, and eventually sleep in a pool of my own tears.

No one to talk to, nobody to share my pain with. Even the two or three friends who initially rallied around me with money for diapers, baby food or just

my utility bill – I still imagined them laughing behind my back. I didn't want to talk and play the victim – because I also imagined that one day, we may end up resolving our issues and I wouldn't want to publicly dent his image and then make up with him after stabbing him behind his back. So I kept quiet.

I was alone. My father didn't speak to me for the first six months. He hated that I had moved back to Nigeria and wanted to get a place of my own, without my so called 'husband'. I think secretly, he was worried about his image, about what society would say, what the media and press might conjure – and how that will rob off on the entire family.

In truth I don't blame him for worrying, no father, and certainly not a man as respected or as famous as mine, wants to be the father of a laughing stock –the father to a young lady who couldn't keep her marriage. In the igbo land, marriage is like a PHD, and if it fails you lose your respect.

To put it In the African context... It may as well be the woman's fault.

See, men don't get vilified for being divorced, for having many wives, concubines or children the number of a basketball team – but women?

In the domestic area – We catch the blame for almost everything. It's our fault for not being able to keep his penis in ONLY our panties.

It's our fault he eats outside the home, like there's some special thing you can do to impress your own values on another human being.

It is our fault we have ambition... And if it is not our fault, oh lordy lord – we MUST have done something terrible, to make the man want to leave us. Yeaaaaah!

I remember someone asking me “Why is your son’s father not paying his school fees, Alex what did you do to him?” Whaaaaat? Can you just imagine the level of shallowness?

Okay, what did HE not do to me? Still, did I abandon my child, his child – Our child? Have I not been responsible for our child?

It’s like saying that the relationship I have with my son, has to be dependent on the type of relationship I have with his father. That somehow, my son should suffer the consequences of whatever kind of relationship we have.

And if his father has nothing to do with him, it’s certainly because I must have done something wrong to him, and not because the man himself is acting irresponsible.

But that is the society we live in. A society that doesn’t think...yet sets unrealistic standards and conjures meaningless theories and prejudices that we all soak like garri.

As I wallowed in silence, I thought about my financial situation, stuck with my baby...and trying to figure how best to make this situation I had never planned for, work out.

I didn’t need to say much, at least to my family, because not one of them ever saw or heard directly

from my ex-husband ever again, and I think it was his blatant absence and nonchalance that laid the foundation for the views many intelligent people might have of him. I have tried to not malign him in anyway. I gain absolutely nothing from doing so, but the truth needs to be told for posterity sake.

So while a good lawyer friend of mine, kept telling me to file a case and sue the fuck out of him, for some good money, (money that he would need to work his entire life to provide) – I kept telling her and myself **ONE naked truth**, I wouldn't need his damn money, if I had my mine – and rather than focus my time and energy on ruining him, and trying to get little of what he has, I chose to focus on rebuilding my life, and establish a career that would provide me the income I needed to take care of me and my son.

And so I started to rebuild. I got back on a few television soap operas including one of the regulars I had been filming before I got pregnant and took my hiatus, like “Spider”. Gosh I must have been in and out of that TV Series, a few times. I started teaching myself new things...I wanted to explore new avenues. Yes, I needed to make a living.

Some days are better than others, some days, I struggled – with turning my fame into income, struggled with building a dynamic template that replicates the cash stream, especially as a working Actor in Nigeria.

You either had to have another source of income, business or step in to the filmmakers cubicle,

because as an actor, you are just a contractor – You are given a role, you get paid, you do it, you get the heck out.

No financial investments there. No creative control. No sales funnel. And it certainly is a structure that is dependent on too many people, who somehow affect your overall contributions.

You don't get to work, unless there is a production with a part for you. You could be super talented...and still end up a good actor, in a bad film. And worst of all, you don't exactly represent your own authentic voice.

You could be a leading actress for 20 years and no one could know the real you, trust the real you or build a connection with the real you...because over time, the audience is faced with the ever changing characters you play, or the stereotyped roles the industry has adorned on you. Or just the monster, the media has created out of sensationalising you.

So as much as I love being an actor (and will always be) – working in front of the camera, I knew I was faced with three options.

1) Invest my entire time/life looking for quality roles, the kind of stories I want to tell, at the risk of never working EVER (because good stories are limited).

2) Take up whatever acting gigs I am offered and dilute my brilliance for commercial success.

3) Take a Break and *Reinvent* myself...

Ha! What do you think?

Well, I asked myself an important question.

What was my real intention, what was my real goal...what was in fact, the bigger picture I wanted to create?

It started to dawn on me, that I only wanted a *medium* that would allow me to communicate my brilliance to people and influence the World, yes “the world”, not just my Country or the African Continent.

I didn't want to be that MUTE little girl who only took signs or directives from others. I wanted to IMPACT and Impact loudly with my own authentic voice.

Then, I asked myself, was acting in films, the only way I could achieve that goal and of course I realised it wasn't.

So I decided to start embracing my other gifts-Talents I had left dormant – like my writing and my speaking...I knew if I wanted to influence people and create impact, I would have to be honest and share the things I had learned the hard way.

After all, you can only sell a product you have in stock. I had gained barrels and barrels of wisdom from my failed marriage – and I could pass it on to others, and maybe...Or maybe not, make some bloody good money in the process. So I took option # 3.

I started journaling my feelings to heal my soul, and the writing gave birth to my blog, the blog gave birth to the radio show, and the radio show gave

birth to my webinars, books, summit, academy, speaking and more. And as my naked philosophy started catching on to the rest of the world, the naked movement grew in to a Global brand, I had carved a global message – my message.

Suddenly, I started to realise how big my network had become, here was little me – one woman in Africa, reaching people in the different parts of the world with my blog, book and radio, something I couldn't do with my acting, I mean what are the chances of people watching my home-grown soap operas or films at cinemas in China, India or Canada? Tell me, what are the chances? 0 – 3? 2-5?

Err... Is that how I'm going to impact the world? On a 2-5... Ha! Naaaa.

So I realised the value of technology and bought myself a new mini laptop, something I could carry around. And suddenly, I realised how my little Ideapad had become the best investment I ever made. I joke about it all the time. But the truth is, I can no longer imagine my life without a computer, a phone or the internet.

Everything I do is connected to it. I sit in Africa and I make things happen from here, because technology enables me.

It was not the most expensive laptop or the most popular brand at the time – A simple *Lenovo Dual Mode Touch Screen Notebook*, and it didn't cost me too much.

It was not even one tenth, the price of my car or

my house rent. But It put the roof over my head, food in my mouth and provided me gas money to move my car and pay my numerous bills. I used it to implement my ideas and create the kind of impact some millionaires have never dreamed of...

Yes, having money is good, but it's not bigger than having ideas... Brilliant Ideas, because Ideas create the money, money doesn't create the ideas...and to have the power of media in my hands, to be able to shape the thoughts of others and spread whatever good message I want, I started to understand how wealthy I had suddenly become. I had super powersand it was in my creativity.

In the past for you to own a radio show, TV station, newspaper or print publishing of any kind, you had to be a powerhouse institution, but with the advent of new media and social media, I had become a **powerhouse influencer**.

This little investment in a piece of technology – my laptop and mobile phone, have helped me write my blogs, connect with my show guests, host coaching classes, meet new people, communicate with people around the world and build a virtual community.

Having it made me realise, that WEALTH is not really the amount of money sitting in our back accounts – It's actually the accumulation of “goodwill” currency, the value of our network, our investment in people...the people we know, that know us and can make something happen for us.

And when I woke up one fine morning to the

prospect of a major book collaboration with 21 unstoppable women from around the world, or to have my good friend Maxwell Iveyin Texas, continually recommend me as a guest for top radio shows around the world (*a service that costs others, hundreds of dollars every month*), or to see photos of myself and my virtual summit speakers sprawled up on a huge billboard on the 42nd street in the heart of New York Times Square in USA, a surprise gifted to me – by one of my friends and New Media Queen, Madison Jaye... Just knowing I didn't pay for it, I didn't solicit for it. I didn't even know I could be in Africa and have my billboard in a big commercial city like New York... far away in another continent. Or when a respected lawyer friend of mine, who is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) offers to handle the legal framework for my trademarks and registration of my media company, all for FREE – It reiterates that popular saying “**Your Network is Your Net Worth.**” And that for me is true wealth.

Today, when I look at how much investments, I have made in people and how much goodwill, I have acquired over the years. It is worth more than any money in the bank. It is the kind of genuine wealth, I now strive for – because the goodwill that comes from building the right kind of valuable relationships and investing your own skills and resources in others – is the kind of wealth that doesn't deplete.

3

My Body is a Temple, Yeah Right...



Having the mental posturing, of not thinking of wealth as just physical cash has completely changed, the way I work. It's now all about relationship building for me, Investing my time, energy, ideas and principles in empowering others to find their purpose.

I ask myself... What can I do for you? And maybe that might trigger you to ask yourself too, What you

can do for me? Or even better, what we can do for each other? So we can both *WINT*ogether.

It is with this mind set, I set out on my day, for a meeting with a senior lawyer friend of mine, George... I had walked into where he was waiting for me and he said...*"Wow, Alex you look good. Looks like you've lost some weight, did you lose some weight?"*

"Did I?" I asked myself. I never know how to respond to comments like that.

Sure, I'm happy I still look attractive today... Praise Jesus, but really it does get too much for me.

I have struggled with my weight like most women, one minute I'm sexy and my abdomen is a wash board, and next minute you can use my arms as a rolling pin for your corn flour. One day my butt is firm like the Brazilian rock and the next day, my neck is jiggling like a friggin' yoyo in competition with my yam thighs. And I have to admit I miss the days, I could walk around stark naked at home, confident of a body that rocked, the days I could get away with not wearing a bra, and mesmerising other women on how I'm magically able to pull off wearing the most risqué attires, with a certain elegance – And many have wondered.

Not anymore. No low V Necks, No Backless, No Thigh Slits...and certainly no mini-skirts...Okay that's a lie. I still wear them, but now only in the confines of my home.

It's been a while since I let a man see me

NAKED... Like really see my body with the lights on. I am not particularly fond of these stretch marks on the lower part of my belly, or the bikini slice from the C-section that's finally starting to fade. Someone please say Alleluia. Whoosh! I miss when men will stare and say "*Wow Alex, you have a beautiful body*". They still do...though, but I feel like it's a little diminished... I always think it's because they haven't seen – the faint marks on my hips or the ones struggling for attention on my bum.

Geez, I used to have the most supple skin, barely any blemish on my face, except for one tiny pimple that shows up- once every month, just before my red visitor appears. In fact, it's how I know it's almost time to get ready for some discomfort in the next few days. If anyone had told me I would go from wearing an "extra small" to wearing a "medium" and then a "large"... I would hand them a gun and tell them to "shoot me". Yes, I could have bet on my life – it would never happen.

I was a skinny little tweeny – a size 6 for an African girl and then moved up to 8, 10 and now a size 12. And many African men do like a little flesh on their women. Still I have to worry about how that balances up with my career as an Actor, because for an Actor your body is your working tool and the camera is a very mischievous device – parks on ten bloody pounds on you. Thank you mate!

You see, pregnancy really does take a toll on a woman's body. Honestly our mind shifts from "ME-

Mode” to “Baby-Mode”... most of the “first time moms” who struggle are not really thinking, *Geez, I can't wait to get back in the gym and lose the freakin' pounds...* They are just thinking about their new born, feeding, nurturing and caring for their little baby – I know I did. I think everyone thought I was going to be one of those “New Century moms”, Feed my baby a bottle of milk and get back in the gym to face my acting career.

But no, even if I wanted to, I couldn't... I had a caesarean and struggled with pain from that kick in my abdomen, plus chronic back pain from the spinal block and epidural given to me during surgery. So even though I used to teach Pilates at my mother's fitness club years back, and used to do “600 to 1000 crunches” a day (no joke) or 3 sets of 200 counts on my core exercises per day. I could barely reach a single set of just 20, without wincing like a cow on slaughter. And so I took advantage and breast fed my baby till he was 11 months old.

I can say the sacrifice paid off. Of course my breasts are not as perky, as they used to be, the left one might even be an inch or two higher than the right one, but I would rather have that and a healthy child, than perky breasts and my legs constantly pacing down the emergency room for his sake. I can count the number of times, I have been in the hospital with my son.

Actually, he only recently took his first shot for the first time in seven years after the initial

immunisation, and that little domestic incident that had him sticking beads inside his ears – yikes! He has NEVER had more than a minor cold or a sprouting tooth. And I bless God for this.

Do I think breastfeeding him helped? Absolutely! And for that, I am thankful... Thankful that I could contribute my body in a way that is useful to someone, other than a man with adult teeth.

Even though, I sometimes struggle with industry standards.

I remember a few times, I would audition for a role in a movie, and get the part... And then two days before the shoot, they would apologise and give my role to one particular “light skinned” actress. The first time it happened, I just thought – okay... she’s probably friends with the director or he has the “hots” for her... and then it happened three more times, with the same actress and then, a film director made reference to her skin colour, and I started thinking... “wait a minute, are light skinned actresses now the preferred choice?”

Oh yes, they were... And that starts to make you feel out of place... If not inferior. I mean, I’m not dark, like really dark skinned. But I’m not fair skinned, either. I’m just milk chocolatey, or is it “caramel skinned” and I love that I’m not extreme in my shade.

But somehow, someone ingrained in our minds, that fair skinned actresses were more attractive and get booked more jobs, so it became a trend for

actresses to either 'bleach' or lighten their skin or forget about having a movie career.

Now, I'm glad I never embraced that trend, because I knew if you put lights on me... I would glow like crazy, but I guess technically it was an expensive practice for a home grown movie industry, that survived purely on personal investments, from movie makers who didn't have the extra money to invest the bulk of their budget on lights or shooting angles for dark skinned actors, they needed actors that simply made their job easier, and were cost effective and so started a **silent** discrimination.

And while I struggled, for not being light skinned "enough" in my *career*, I was struggling in my *relationship* for not being dark skinned enough too.

Yes, It's weird. I know... I had been dating another actor who I was engaged to at the time, I call him TIGER... (It's not his real name – It's the pen name I gave him on my blog, after he had blessed me with a number of wild hickeys all over my face and neck).

I didn't have a ring on my finger, but he had asked me to marry him and even spoke to my parents about it and we picked a tentative month. I think everyone knew we had plans to get married...but here I was constantly questioning what he was doing with me. He evidently liked tall dark skinny women and we talked about his preference for them, all the time.

So what was he doing with me?

I am not tall... I'm 5"6 to his 6"2... I'm not skinny, I've got way too much meat on my ass and my 38 double D's give me away, all the time. And I'm certainly not dark skinned. So what the hell did he see in me? I looked nothing like his fantasy, his dream... Sure I was intelligent, I knew he was attracted to that. But I also knew some dark skinny tall and very intelligent women who were his perfect fantasy... And that was where my insecurity found a home.

Every day, I would sneak through his phone checking who he was talking to, flirting with, trying to figure out what she had that I didn't. I didn't even want to be light skinned enough for a movie role anymore. I just wanted to be dark skinned enough to win his heart. And win him forever.

I stopped using any lotion – hoping I would darken, skipped meals in hopes to lose weight, tried sexual positions for the sake of it, to get our freak on, learned to cook meals like agonyi beans, his ex-girlfriend would cook so perhaps the way to his heart might actually be through his stomach, I tolerated so much. Hoping he would somehow see me and love me the way I loved him.

I stayed hung up – on that for years, seeking, prodding, hoping and challenging myself to win his approval, his love. It was almost like I wasn't beautiful until he proved that I was. Even when, he would write me a text and say, "*Hey Gorgeous... how are you*" In my head I scoffed, I never believed him,

because I imagined he also thought his dark skinny flat chested ex-girlfriend was also “gorgeous” and how could we both be gorgeous if we looked nothing like each other. Hahaha.

I remember the number of times he would ignore my breasts, the one thing everyone else noticed first. He would say “*I never know what to do with a breast...I’m not a breast man*” and I’m thinking to myself, how can any man not be attracted to my lovely melons. Whoosh!

So you can just imagine how “unsexy” I felt. We had sex every day, he was a sexual man, but that was it ... just SEX. I was having sex, yet feeling completely unsexy.

He would rather have sex from behind, because he preferred to stare at my rounded buttocks, than to have me on top, cow girl or him missionary, because at the time, looking at me **lovingly**, sparked nothing for him, at least, not as much – as the picture of him taking me from behind, conquering me, as I competed with his imagination, with all the perfect and sometimes imperfect women in the hundreds and hundreds of pornographic films, he was addicted to watching and I fought to wean him off.

4

Love is Freedom...



After struggling with my quest to earn Tiger's love, for years – I had to ask myself. How can this be love? How can love make someone become a shadow of themselves?

See, I've always liked the idea of a committed relationship whether it is the MONOGAMOUS sexual kind where we are just screwing each other senseless, no more and no one else... or its the "I dig you let's see where this goes kinda commitment", where we are smacking LIPS, fondling each other's body parts but nothing more, out of sheer respect

for one another or ‘the ride or die’, Bonnie and Clyde movement, (*You’ve got me and I’ve got you*) until one of us gets totally fed up with LOVE, and walks out of the relationship amicably.

One way or another, I’ve always given myself to one person at a time. It was either you had my HEART or well, just my body... but whatever the case was, It was simply a “you and I equation”.

However temporary, I never did any sharing, at least not on my part – because I’ve always thought the ability to be LOYAL to something or someone, regardless of the timing, circumstance or change in agreement is a reflection of one’s true CHARACTER. And anyone who really knows me, knows I never get involved in anything unless I was completely 100% comfortable with my choices and for that I’ve been wired to stay committed to those choices. I went to BED last night with this very familiar quote in my heart “*To love is to recognize yourself in another*” ~ Eckhart Tolle. And woke up this morning trying to analyze if I recognized a bit of myself in any of the men I fell in love with, in the past.

And where I stand in my understanding of what LOVE actually is.

I spent eight years LOVING a man who never loved me back (*at least not in the way I wanted*), one year dating and marrying another man I never really loved 100%, and 17 years after it all – reminiscing about the only man who truly did love me – yet I walked away and somehow broke his heart, because I couldn’t

stand the pain of being locked out emotionally. Whoosh!

I have only really been in love three times. I have come close a few other times, but not quite there... not even with my ex-husband, the father of my child.

I wanted to be in love with him, I tried to...but it didn't quite happen that way for me – something was missing, perhaps on the outside we looked a pretty good pair, but on the inside we were quite disconnected and had nothing in common except for our job, as actors.

Truth is I let something that should have stayed just a sexual relationship between us, become more than it should have. But I don't regret it or I wouldn't have my beautiful son. So cheers to that.

Still, I think of my first love, Yemi. I had met him when I was 17 years old going on 18... He was 8 years older than me, and way more accomplished. And when I think of love from his corner... and compare it to the love any other man has shown me – theirs pale in comparison to his.

And here's a **TRUTH** – I now understand better, 17 years after...

See, before now – I never understood how my first boyfriend -Yemi, could love me so much, and not ever get JEALOUS or suspicious of the other men vying for my attention. I never could get why he was so understanding with me... why he was so PATIENT, to the point, it rattled me or why HE was never

uncomfortable being around other men he knew wanted to be with me...

Not even once. Geez! I guess I must have gotten some of my openness from the *freedom* he gave me. I mean I could tell him anything, even though sometimes, I was lucid – other times I was just an enigma, but he knew how to **DRAW** me out, in a good way... and make my heart skip in a million beats.

I never understood why he always treated me with the utmost respect, like a WOMAN, and not a little girl, even though I was just a 17 year old girl, going on 18 – that he could simply take advantage of. I mean – He was 8 years older... wiser... had been in the world... And was the most gorgeous man, I had ever seen at the time, as gorgeous in his **MIND** as he was in person... Whoosh! Many-a-lady his age wanted him, Damn, they did... Who wouldn't? I did the first time I saw him... though I didn't think I stood a chance. I only just finished my final exams and was graduating high school. He had played basket-ball in Belgium, well read, well travelled, spoke several international languages, had a good sense of humour and a weird chuckle to fart for... I still have a hard time getting my pidgin to match the sweetness of his personality. And oh, he loved rock music – Weird!! Yup! But I loved it.

He could have me anywhere he wanted... A-N-Y-W-H-E-R-E but, he NEVER did! Despite how much he loved me, how much he **wanted** me. He never did.

Instead, He always chose to wait – till I was ready. Even when I thought I was ready, right after my 18th birthday. I was ready to give myself, but still he thought I wasn't.

He wanted my first time to be beyond memorable...

We found other ways to make love, show love and communicate our desires for one another, but we never went ALL the way. To me – this was real Art. The Art of love. At times, he would joke about how he would NEVER be able to let me, go... once we sealed it all the way...(and no, he wasn't messing with anyone else – at least, so I believed). He simply waited. And waited he did – till we were no longer a couple.

Yet we still were... still are... in the heart of it all... **UNSPOKEN**, in the shadows – But there! And possibly the only man, who never gave me any reason whatsoever to DOUBT myself, doubt him, his intentions or his actions. Because I understand what real love looks like and feels like, whether he was, in the same space with me, or not. I was HAPPY. Happy knowing wherever he is in the world. I somehow had a secure place in his heart. Forever!

Now, That's Love!

I guess that's why so many years later, I felt jinxed – Reminded of his parting words that no one will ever love me like he did.

And truthfully, no one ever did. It wasn't a CURSE. It wasn't a bitter statement. It wasn't something he

said out of anger, pain or bitterness. It was simply a statement of TRUTH. He said we were soul-mates – I don't know...but I know It would take a man with possibly far more heart, pure fire and a tough cranium to dig me truly. But not many men are really aligned in that particular order. Perhaps, he knew that.

He also knew I needed to **GROW**, to go into the world, come into my own... and see LIFE for what it is. And he never judged me, even though several people told him that I would break his heart. That I would find someone else, someone younger, somebody new and dump him.

He never held it against me – And God knows, I didn't walk away because I no longer loved him. Whaaat?? I loved him far too much. It wasn't LOUD. But it was there, everywhere... so much so that I was scared of my own feelings, so much that I preferred to BREAK my own heart... than let him do same to me when he finally realised I was too young and not good enough.

Sometimes, I think he should have stopped me, begged and cried...I probably wouldn't have listened...And he didn't, because He knew he had to let me GO. Let me learn about life's curves.

Oh I sure did, the hard way!

And no one ever did love me like him, not in that same GROWN zone, that mature kind of love, devoid of tricks, games, lies and manipulation many people

are used to. Just a love that's pure, transparent...and **NAKED!**

He set such a high STANDARD. So high the men after him, never understood why I always wanted to be treated with the same level of TRUST, respect, openness, freedom and transparency.

They never understood why I never held anything back or why I wanted them to value my PRESENCE.

I remember how he used to write me emails almost every day and say how honoured he was that I was his "little woman" – because I could pick any other man I wanted, yet I chose him. Whew! Those words humbled me every time I heard him show me gratitude... Humbling??? Yes, very humbling actually, especially coming from a man who I considered to be wiser than me at the time.

Imagine a tall dark handsome man – honoured to have me in his life, because he understood that LOVE was a gift and he valued it.

Nothing gets me like a man, who's not ashamed to be completely **EXPRESSIVE**. A man who helps you to wear your crown, like the **Queen** that you are.

Even now, after several failed relationships, I have learned my biggest lessons about love, from being by myself ALONE.

From taking time away from dating, from being by myself, having my own space, replaying some good ole memories and discovering certain truths. Truths like – You don't have to be with someone for you to love them or for them to love you. Nah! (Remember,

those days when we all forced ourselves – or rather forced the other person to stay... to TRY to see us, accept us, really SEE us for who we are). It's not even necessary.

And even if they are no longer a part of your life, they are not allowed to walk away and take away your happiness with them, No way!!! Because true love does not POSSESS – It actually LIBERATES. It sets you free.

So, If you love someone, like you really do... don't keep a closed heart. Set them FREE, let them wander. Don't box them in, limit them, impose on them or take away their freedom to be who they really are, or at least who they aspire to BE, because in freedom, their happiness is vital, And it's your responsibility to equate it with your own happiness.

And that may sometimes mean that **YOU** are not even, a part of the equation. And that's okay.

Yes, it's okay... because in recent times, I too have made that sort of sacrifice.

Four years ago, I let the one I loved for eight years – go his way. FINALLY! I was tired of being Tiger's back pocket woman. I was done with the roller coaster emotion. Today we were together...tomorrow...we were just friends, *but with benefits*...yesterday, he was IN LOVE with me...today, he loves me, but isn't sure if he is "in love", Still, he wanted all the benefits of a relationship.

And the truth is I gave it ALL to him. But I was

unhappy – Unhappy that I had stopped my life for him. I had no real ambition. Oh sure, I had goals but they took a backseat, because on top of everything else that I wanted – my number one goal was to WIN him. To have him in my life – LOVING Me the way Yemi used to love me. Even, if it meant tolerating his ex-girlfriend constantly being in and out of the picture, or the other actresses he was also sleeping with.

But at some point, I realised I needed to value myself and FOCUS on all the other goals, because I was no longer going to wait around for him to miraculously ‘bump his head’ and love me the way I knew I deserved. I had to respect myself, told him I was done – and moved on to focus on building my brand.

And as I moved forward, building and slaying my goals – I suddenly received a mysterious text message from my ex-husband congratulating me on my speaking gig at the WVSS 2016. I thought “Wow... Okay, what’s going on here mister...”

Then he called me that same day and asked that he speak with our son – “What? Are you kidding me?”. Again, I thought to myself... But I nicely handed over the phone to Ray – of course our son didn’t know the man on the line. He was confused, and he asked me – “Mummy, who is speaking?”. “It’s your Daddy, Ray” I said. “My Daddy?” he asked repeatedly. I felt ashamed – My son didn’t recognise his own father – because he was only a 6 months old baby, when we

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