

**TRANSCRIPT OF LESLIE NELSON COMMENCEMENT SPEECH AT UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2014 – GREAT HALL, LEGON
NOVEMBER 8TH, 2014**

GOOD MORNING LEGON AND CLASS OF 2014!

FEELS REALLY GOOD TO BE BACK ON CAMPUS TODAY

TO THE PLACE THAT MADE ME TO THE PLACE THAT MOULDED ME

TO THE PLACE WHERE I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF

TO THE PLACE WHERE I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND WHO I AM AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WHO I WANTED TO BE

I FEEL 41 YEARS YOUNG TODAY BEING AMONG YOU, AS I GRADUATED FROM HERE 17 YEARS AGO

I HAVE BEEN AROUND THE WORLD SINCE THEN.

LIVED AND WORKED IN THE US, EUROPE AND BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM BACK HOME IN GHANA

ON A LIGHTER NOTE, I REMEMBER THE PROPHETIC ADVICE CERTAIN FINAL YEAR STUDENT (WHO WILL FOR TODAY

REMAIN NAMELESS) GAVE ME ON MY FIRST WEEK IN LEGON:

- **FIRSTLY**, NO NEED TO GO TO LECTURES FOR FIRST 2 WEEKS – IT'S ALL ABOUT REGISTRATION!
- **SECONDLY**, YOU CAN GATE CRASH ANY PARTY ON CAMPUS -- IT IS AN UNWRITTEN RULE!
- **THRIDLY**, IT'S OK TO HAVE MULTIPLE GIRLFRIENDS -- JUST MAKE SURE THEY ARE IN DIFFERENT HALLS !

AND YES CLASS OF 2014, THESE ARE THE PRINCIPALS ON WHICH I BASED MY 3 YEARS AT LEGON....

ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE, MORE RECENTLY I WAS APPOINTED GM OF GE'S POWER BUSINESS ACROSS AFRICA

FOR THOSE FOR YOU WHO DO NOT KNOW GENERAL ELECTRIC (GE) IS ONE OF THE WORLDS LARGEST GLOBAL

COMPANIES WITH MORE THAN \$100 BILLION IN REVENUES AND 300 THOUSAND EMPLOYEES GLOBALLY

IN AFRICA ALONE WE WILL DO CLOSE TO AN ORDERS NUMBER IN 2014 THAT IS CLOSE TO THE GDP OF GHANA

BUT I WILL NOT SPEND TO MUCH TIME SPEAKING ABOUT MYSELF AS TODAY IS YOUR DAY, YOUR MOMENT

MY BIO IS INCLUDED IN THE BOOKLET AND MAKES ME APPEAR SMARTER THAN I AM AND MORE ACCOMPLISHED

THAN I EVER WILL BE BUT THERE YOU SEE WHAT I DO AND HOW I MAKE AN HONEST LIVING

TODAY, I AM HOPING TO LEAVE YOU WITH SOME THOUGHTS. SOMETHING YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU AND MAYBE

GUIDE YOUR THINKING AS YOU START YOUR JOURNEY

YET IN COMING HERE IT WOULD BE NEGLENT OF ME NOT TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR VICE CHANCELLOR, WHO HAD THE VISION (ONE MIGHT SAY COURAGE), TO INVITE ME HERE TODAY AND INDIVIDUALS WHO MAKE THIS PROUD INSTITUTION TICK. BY THAT I MEAN THE LECTURERS, THE JUNIOR STAFF, THE ADMINISTRATORS, THE SECURITY GUARDS AND EVERYONE WHO WORKS AND SERVES THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

-----THEY DESERVE OUR GRATITUDE SO LET'S GIVE THEM A COLLECTIVE ROUND OF APPLAUSE -----

SO LOOK I HAVE PUT TOGETHER SOME THOUGHTS FOR YOU
GRAB A PEN, TAKE NOTES, THEY MAY BE WORTH SOMETHING ONE DAY
FOR PURPOSES OF TODAYS SPEECH LETS CALL THESE THOUGHTS **THE NELSON 8 RULES OF WISDOM:**

#8

BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE. DEFINE YOUR OWN FUTURE

BROADEN YHOUR HORIZONS

TAKE ON TOUGH ASSIGNMENTS. DONT ALWAYS DO THE EASY STUFF, TRAVEL. EXPLORE
CHALLENGE YOURSELF AND BE READY TO SIEZE THE OPPORTUNITIES WHEN THEY REVEAL THEMSELVES

10 YEARS AGO WHEN I WROTE THE ESSAY TO APPLY TO BUSINESS SCHOOL I MENTIONED THAT IN 10 YEARS I WANTED TO GE THE MD FOR A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY IN AFRICA. AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT I MADE IT IN 9 YEARS.

THE LESSON HERE IS IF YOU SIEZE THE CHANCES WHEN THEY EMERGE YOU CAN DIRECT YOUR OWN FUTURE.
THINK BIG. STAY FOCUSED AND ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYE ON YOUR DREAMS

#7

IT'S OK TO HAVE A CHIP ON YHOUR SHOULDER. NO MATTER HOW SUCCESSFUL YOU ARE YOU HAVE NEVER ARRIVED AT THE FINAL DESTINATION

STAY HUNGRY TO SUCCEED AND EXCEL. ASPIRE TO BE BETTER TODAY THAN YOU WERE YESTERDAY AND BETTER TOMORROW THAN YOU WERE TODAY. KNOW THAT NO ONE GIVES YOU ANYTHING JUST BECAUSE YOU WANT IT.

YOU HAVE TO EARN IT AND THEN TAKE YOUR ENTITLEMENT.
REMINISCE ABOUT THE PAST BUT STAY MOTIVATED IN THE POSSIBILITIES OF TOMORROW

#6

ASPIRE TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE AND THE ACHIEVE THE IMPROBABLE

WE ARE LIVING THROUGH AN AFRICA RENAISSANCE RIGHT NOW. ALLOW ME TO ILLUSTRATE THRU EXAMPLE.
10-12 YEARS AGO THE COVER OF THE ECONOMIST MAGAZINE THERE WAS A PHOTO OF A CHILD SOLDIER AND

CAPTION **"THE HOPELESS CONTINENT"**

2 YEARS AGO THAT SAME MAGAZINE HAD CHANGED ITS TUNE AND HAD THE CAPTION **"AFRICA RISING"**

OH, WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DECADE MAKES.....

IF THIS INDEED IS OUR TIME AND THEY SAY TIMING IS EVERYTHING THEN YOU ARE ENTERING THIS WORKFORCE
AND GRADUATING AT THE RIGHT TIME TO BE SUCCESSFUL. DON'T LET YOUR OPPORTUNITY SLIP AWAY

#5

REMAIN HUMBLE. STAY GROUNDED. TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT

DON'T BE TOO PROUD TO ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT. IT HAPPENS TO US ALL SOMEDAY

EMBRACE YOUR WEAKNESSES AND NEVER LET SUCCESS GO TO YOUR HEAD

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE ABOUT YOURSELF AND BE CAREFUL NOT TO LOOK DOWN YOUR NOSE AT OTHERS

IRONICALLY, MANY PEOPLE DEFINE THEMSELVES BY HOW SOPHISTICATED THEY THINK THEY ARE OR HOW

SOPHISTICATED THEY BECOME AS ALMOST A PERVERSE A METRIC OF SUCCESS

THEY DEFINE SOPHISTICATION AS HOW MANY PLACES THEY TRAVEL TO, MAYBE WHERE THEY GREW UP OR EVEN

WHAT THEIR PARENTS DID FOR A LIVING....I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY

TO ME, SOPHISTICATION IS DEFINED BY HOW YOU TREAT AND RELATE TO PEOPLE. IT'S ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO

COMMUNICATE AND ONE'S ABILITY TO SHOW EMPATHY. THE ABILITY TO COMMUNNICATE AND RELATE TO

PEOPLE UP AND DOWN THE SOCAIL LADDER

FROM THE CHAIRMAN IN THE BOARDROOM TO THE LAYMAN ON THE STREET AND DO SO SEAMLESSLY AND

EFFORTLESSLY. DO SO WITH SINCERITY AND CONVICTION. THIS IS THE DEFINITION OF SOPHISTICATION AS

DEFINED BY THE NELSON RULE #5

#4

TAKE SOME RISK IN LIFE. DO IT WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG WITH VERY LITTLE TO LOSE AND NOTHING BUT UPSIDE

DON'T BE TOO AFRIAD TO FAIL.

TOO AFRIAD THAT SOMEONE WILL LAUGH AT YOU IF YOU TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND IT DOESN'T WORK.

LEARN TO SHARE, TO COLLABORATE. IT LEADS TO INNOVATION.

THIS IS THE SKILL THAT WILL MAKE YOU ONE DAY.

IT'S YOUR ABILITY TO WORK IN TEAMS & GET THE BEST OUT OF OTHERS THAT WILL BE AN ASSET IN THE FUTURE
THE CAPABILITY TO LEVERAGE OTHERS AND GET SCALE AND SCOPE. COVER MORE DISTANCE. TRY MORE THINGS
THIS WILL INCREASE YOUR PROBABILITY OF WINNING IN THIS COMPETATIVE GLOBAL WORLD

#3

BEWARE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRY NOT TO DO THE DUMB STUFF

I UNDERSTAND SOME OF YOU MAKE HOME VIDEOS AND THINK YOU ARE IN HOLLYWOOD, NOLLYWOOD OR
WHATEVER. JUST ONE SUGGESTION TO YOU HERE
PLEASE BE CAUTIOUS. DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN THE MOMENT AND DO SOMETHING THAT WILL HAUNT YOU ONE
DAY.

TRY NOT TO DO THE SILLY STUFF AS TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET HAVE NO EXPIRATION DATE.

TELL THE PEOPLE COMING UP BEHIND YOU NOT TO DO THE SAME

#2

I LIKE TO KEEP THIS ONE SIMPLE. WHEN NO ONE BELIEVES IN YOU, BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

BELIEVE IN MAGIC. BELIEVE IN THE IMPOSSIBLE AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE
AND ONE DAY IF YOU TRY AND FAIL AND FALL DOWN. GET UP, DUST YOURSELF OFF AND KEEP ON MOVING

WHEN I THINK ABOUT AMAZING THINGS. I THINK ABOUT THE BUMBLEBEE. YES, THE INSECT

YOU SEE THE BUMBLEBEE IS NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT

YOU SEE, IT'S ROUND AND NOT AERODYNAMIC

ITS WINGS ARE TOO SMALL FOR ITS BODY SIZE AND ITS BODY TO MASS RATIO DO NOT LEND FOR DOING THE

THINGS IT DOES. IT SHOULD CRAWL AND NOT BE ABLE TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

YET WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT THE BUMBLEBEE DOES WHAT IT DOES.

IT SLOWLY ELEVATES AND DECIDES TO FLY ANYWAY.

AGAINST ALL ODDS IT DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE

BUT THINK ABOUT IT CLASS OF 2014. THIS IS WHAT WE DO IN AFRICA EVERYDAY....THE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE AND
MAKE IT POSSIBLE. AGAINST ALL ODDS WE SURVIVE ON LIMITED FINANCIAL BUDGETS, FIND A WAY TO OPERATE
WITH CHALLENGES OF INFRASTRUCTURE, POWER, CONNECTIVITY, SUB PAR HEALTHCARE AND TRANSPORTATION.

YET STILL WE GROW AND STILL WE SURVIVE. BELIEVING THAT THE IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE INDEED

#1

**RETAIN YOUR NETWORK OF PEOPLE YOU MEET HERE. YOU'RE FRIENDS AND YOU'RE CLSS MATES.
THEY WILL BE YOUR "X FACTOR" ONE DAY**

IT'S THIS EXTENDED NETWORK OF PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM THAT COLLECTIVELY HOLD THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS
NEVER FORGET THIS.

MY CLASS MATES ARE MINISTERS (NOT SURE IF THAT IS A GOOD THING NOWADAYS)

THEY ARE CEO'S AND MANAGING DIRECTORS

THEY ARE LAWYERS WHO ARGUE AT ELECTION PETITIONS

THEY ARE TEACHERS AND YES THEY ARE PREACHERS

THEY ARE THOUGHT LEADERS AND CHAMPIONS OF INDUSTRY

YOU KNOW, CLASS OF 2014 AS I CLOSE TODAY SOME FINAL THOUGHTS COMES TO MY MIND,

SO I ASK YOU TO STAND UP, YES STAND UP !

SPEND A MOMENT. LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT. LOOK TO YOUR LEFT

REMEMBER THE FACES IN THIS GREAT HALL AS THEY WILL BE YOUR EXTENSION TO PLACES YOU CANNOT GO
ALONE

IF, AFTER THIS SESSION ONE OF YOU STARTS AN NGO OR A CHARITY -- THEN IT WAS GOOD THAT I CAME THRU
TODAY AND I KNOW I MADE A DIFFERENCE

IF, ONE OF YOU TRIES TO START A BUSINESS RATHER THAN WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE -- THEN IT MEANS YOU
LISTENED AND I AM HAPPY TO HAVE BEEN HERE

IF, ONE OF YOU FORMS A CONSORTIUM OF FRIENDS AND HAS A BUSINESS IDEA AND BEGINS TO SOURCE
FUNDING -- THEN THIS WAS A MORNING WELL SPENT

IF, JUST ONE OF YOU, JUST ONE OF YOU FEELS YOUR LEVEL OF AMBITION HAS INCREASED AS A RESULT OF MY
COMING -- THEN ME BEING HERE HAS NOT BEEN IN VAIN

SO CLASS OF 2014, WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE AND SOMEONE ASKS “WHERE YOU ARE GOING NOW”?
TELL THEM YOU ARE NOT GOING “ANYWHERE”YOU ARE GOING “EVERYWHERE” !

AND CLASS OF 2014, WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOU “WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW”?
TELL THEM YOU ARE NOT DOING “ANYTHING”YOU ARE DOING “EVERYTHING”

YOU ARE GOING “ANYWHERE” AND “EVERYWHERE”. DOING “ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING”
ASPIRING TO LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT BOUNDRIES AND YOU WON'T BE PUT IN A BOX

YOU SEE, AT 41 YEARS OF AGE, I AM HALFWAY THROUGH MY JOURNEY BUT YOURS IS JUST ABOUT TO START
AS I LOOK AT THIS CROWD OF FACES I SEE A FAMILIAR MOSAIC OF CHARACTERS FORMING IN FRONT OF MY EYES
A WOVEN TAPESTRY THAT CREATES AN IMAGE THAT IS TRIED AND TESTED AND NOW SO CLEAR TO ME.
YOU ARE YOUNG. SMART, AMBITIOUS, IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS
THE CHOSEN AND THE FEW

LEGONITES, LET THEM REMEMBER YOU WERE HERE TODAY

MAKE SURE THIS GREAT HALL WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN AFTER YOU HAVE GONE

GIVE YOURSELVES AROUND OF APPLAUSE THEY CAN HEAR AT THE MAIN GATE AND ALL THE WAY TO THE END OF
THIS CAMPUS.

YOU DESERVE IT

I AM PROUD OF YOU

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME TODAY

THANK YOU ALL FOR LISTENING TO THIS PROUD GRADUATE OF THIS UNIVERSITY

GOOD LUCK OUT THERE BUT I KNOW YOU WILL BE FINE

GOOD BYE

GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

----- **THE END** -----