WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ ISSUES
Not a Cliché
Women’s History Month 2016

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY 2016
March 7

WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE
March 16, 2016

Roundtable Discussion: EDUCATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP with Onyeka Onwenu
March 23, 2016

Details on pages 5 & 6
Dear CROSSROADS Readers,

Throughout the month of March, we marked Women’s History Month to celebrate women, to observe the ground won by women and men in their fight to bring fairness and justice to gender issues, and to take cognizance of what is left to be done.

In a series of events, we screened films, held roundtable discussions, and hosted panels to dissect the issues facing Nigerian women, while seeking solutions to problems still shared (page 5). Many women and several men whom we hosted are actively taking steps to bring these issues to the fore, and it is only right that we all play our roles in exploring solutions and putting them into effect. We recognize that many of the problems faced by the Nigerian people will be solved when no member of the community is held back from the opportunities created by education and its inculcation of critical thinking. That is why we have continuously taken a strong stand against every action that seeks to exclude the girl child from receiving an education, particularly those harmful acts perpetrated by Boko Haram.

According to the National Emergency Management Agency, 54 percent of the population inside Nigeria’s internally displaced camps are made up of women and girls, a large percentage being victims of the insurgency that has plagued northeastern Nigeria for several years.

In this edition of Crossroads, we look at the issues that are still being addressed or desperately need addressing (page 7). We show you some young Nigerian women who are contributing to righting the wrongs that have been ingrained for much too long (page 12), and we show you how we are making a difference in the education of Nigeria’s female students. Enjoy!

Ambassador James F. Entwistle
The observance of “Women’s History Month” may sound like an annual ritual, but the concerns frequently raised during the month about the growing threats against women and girls across the globe are real and in need of urgent solutions.

Women’s History Month in the United States grew out of a weeklong celebration of women’s contributions to culture, history, and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978. Presentations were given at dozens of schools, hundreds of students participated in a “Real Woman” essay contest, and a parade took place in downtown Santa Rosa.

A few years later, the idea had caught on within communities, school districts, and organizations across the country. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring the week of March 8 as National Women’s History Week. The U.S. Congress followed suit the next year, passing a resolution establishing a national celebration. Six years later, the National Women’s History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March.

Just like the celebrations that have expanded from a week to a month, the focus has also been broadened from celebrations to calls for action in tribute to generations of women whose struggles have put women and girls issues on the front burner.

In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring March 8 every year as International Women’s Day. The reasons for this resolution were: “To recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.”

“Living free from violence is a human right, yet millions of women and girls suffer disproportionately from violence both in peace and in war, at the hands of the state, in the home and community. Across the globe, women are beaten, raped, mutilated, and killed with impunity.” Amnesty International reported.

Every day, all over the world says Amnesty International, women face gender-specific persecution including genital mutilation, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and domestic violence. At least one out
of every three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

As women throughout the United States joined their counterparts across the globe in observing March 8, 2016 as International Women’s Day, attention was focused on Nigeria, where about 219 Chibok school girls abducted by Boko Haram terrorists on April 14, 2014 remain in captivity, while thousands of women and girls have suffered violence as victims of conflicts and insurgency.

Thousands of these victims now live in camps for internally displaced persons in different parts of Nigeria. In its annual reports, Amnesty International observed that women and girls are uniquely and disproportionately affected by armed conflict. Women bear the brunt of war and are the vast majority of casualties resulting from war.

Rape and sexual violence targeting women and girls are routinely used not only to terrorize women, but also as strategic tools of war and instruments of genocide.

Sexual violence against women and girls during conflicts has escalated in Africa, especially in northeastern Nigeria through rape, forced marriages, and coercion of young girls by Boko Haram to become suicide bombers.

The United Nations Children’s Education Fund and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees have rightly observed that “sexual violation of women and girls erodes the fabric of a community in a way that few weapons can. Rape’s damage can be devastating because of the strong communal reaction to the violation and pain stamped on entire families. The harm inflicted in such cases on a woman by a rapist is an attack on her family and culture, as in many societies women are viewed as repositories of a community’s cultural and spiritual values.”

In an article published in 2012 by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Information Programs as part of the book Women in the World Today, Dyan Mazurana, a research director and associate professor at the Feinstein International Center of Tufts University, said women “suffer the effects of violence before, during and after flight from a combat zone. They are at heightened risk of diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. They are affected by the resource depletion resulting from armed conflict. They join, or are forced to join, armed forces or insurgency movements.”

To raise further awareness on these issues and call for action in eliminating violence against women and girls, the U.S. Embassy in Abuja and Consulate General in Lagos held a series of activities in March 2016.

U.S. fashion entrepreneurs Melanie Elturk and Ahmed Zedan joined a panel of Nigerian experts on the eve of International Women’s Day to share their experiences building a successful online business. Five years ago, the husband and wife team founded Haute Hijab, a fast-growing brand of conservative Muslim clothing that connects fashion and faith. They began their three-city Nigerian tour with an event March 7 at the U.S. Embassy to encourage a diverse group of women and men to build their dreams into businesses and network among each other for support.

Fashion entrepreneur Binta Shuaibu, businesswoman Zainab Mustafa Jaji, and consultant Oyewole Oduwusi joined the panel to offer a Nigerian perspective alongside Melanie’s and Ahmed’s narrative. Binta’s detailing of the success of her fashion house Vintage Collette, Zainab’s stories of mentoring others through the African Women Empowerment Program, and Wole’s discussion of his support of the Blossom Learning Centre provided concrete examples of successful business and social entrepreneurship.

A capacity crowd in the Embassy’s Ekiti Hall challenged the panel with questions and comments, including the role of women in business in a traditionally patriarchal society. Melanie responded that history, both secular and religious, was filled with examples of smart, talented women equal to their male counterparts. She said that women interested in starting their own business needed
As the world awaits the emergence of the first female U.S. presidential nominee from a major political party for the November 2016 election, Onyeka Onwenu has urged Nigerian women to make education an important tool for progress. “It is never too late to achieve your dreams,” said the former Director-General of the National Center For Women Development to more than 100 participants at an EducationUSA gathering in Abuja to celebrate Women’s History Month. Onwenu highlighted issues facing women in today’s society such as domestic abuse and unequal pay, and called on women to never give up their dreams, ensuring lives that would make a difference and leave a lasting legacy. Ms. Onwenu stressed the importance of dreams not having a deadline and the value of education.

She announced that she still has plans to go back to school to study law.

U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Maria E. Brewer addressed women’s issues and encouraged the participants to use the forum as an opportunity to express their thoughts on challenges facing women. Information Resource Officer Linda Parker highlighted the importance of women’s development in a society. “Time after time, study after study, the evidence shows that nations that educate women and girls do better economically,” she said.

Simi Afolayan, a member of EducationUSA Advising Center Abuja shared a poem by M.J. Maldock, “Because We Are Women,” and the event concluded with a very vibrant discussion on overcoming challenges.
It’s been inspiring following Secretary Hillary Clinton’s campaign for the 2016 presidential election. When I think about her race for the White House and all her years as a public servant—dating back to her election to the U.S. Senate—I can’t help but ponder how far women have come in their struggle for equal rights. The struggle for women’s rights in the United States has been long and arduous, but it took a consistent push and strategic engagements—beginning with the 1848 convention in Seneca Falls, New York—to achieve results. There is still a long way to go, but one key achievement of the women’s rights movement in the United States was the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote. Nearly 100 years after the 19th Amendment, America is on the verge of what could be a vote for the first female President of the United States. Fascinating!

All over the world, women continue to advocate for full inclusion of women and girls. While some progress has been recorded on issues like girls’ education and maternal health, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve full participation for women and girls.

Women’s sexual and reproductive rights are key components of their fundamental human rights. Today, Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. Even though statistics from the “No Ceiling Report” shows that mothers in Nigeria and in sub-Saharan Africa are 37 percent less likely to die from complications in pregnancy than in 1995, it is still unacceptable that, for reasons that are preventable, a mother has to die in the process of giving life. There is need for more government intervention on maternal health to address maternal mortality.

In the global workforce, women continue to be underrepresented at all career levels. According to a 2013 World Economic Forum Human Capital Report, only 60-70 percent of the employable female population is in the workforce versus male participation rates in excess of 80 percent. Additionally, women make up only 35 percent of the average company’s workforce at the professional level and above. Guaranteeing paid leave for working mothers is one way of supporting women’s full participation in the workforce, ensuring that women have the opportunity to progress in their careers. Some countries, especially in Europe, have institutionalized paid paternity leave to give husbands the opportunity to support their wives fully. While countries like Belarus, Sweden, and Slovakia give 52 weeks or more of paid leave to mothers, the United States is still one of two countries—including Papua New Guinea—that does not provide paid maternity leave!

Today, one in four girls is married before her eighteenth birthday. The case of child marriage is particularly prevalent in developing countries. According to UNICEF, almost half of the world’s child brides will be African by 2050. In 2003, Nigeria passed the Child Rights Act, which increased the minimum age for marriage for girls to eighteen. Yet 13 states (mostly northern states) have not localized the Child Rights Act. Early child marriage is preventing millions of Nigerian girls from achieving their fullest potential. Even though data show a nine percent decrease in the number of early child marriage since 2003, the situation is still very dire and needs urgent intervention.

One of the drivers of early child marriage is lack of education. While progress has been recorded in recent years, an estimated 31 million girls of primary school age are still out of school, and sub-Saharan Africa contributed largely to this number. Two-thirds of the world’s 774 million illiterate adults are women. Education is key to overcoming some of the deep-rooted disparities in any society, and promoting equal access to education at all levels for women and girls is a priority to achieve full inclusion.

In her 1995 remarks at the UN conference in Beijing, Secretary Clinton stated that “human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights”. More than two decades after her statement, we are still behind the curve on closing the gender gap. Last year, the global community, by embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), made a commitment to end poverty, combat climate change, and fight injustice and inequality by 2030. Gender parity is a big component of the SDGs, and most of the targets are hinged on women’s empowerment.

Undoubtedly, some process has been made to advance the cause of women and girls. But now, more than ever, the global community must move from words to action to ensure that women’s and girls’ issues are not an afterthought, but take center stage.
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power traveled to Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria on April 16-23 to highlight the growing threat Boko Haram poses to the Lake Chad Basin region.

“As some of you may know, we came on the request of President Obama to see firsthand how the ongoing campaign to combat Boko Haram was going,” Ambassador Power told reporters at the State House in Abuja after meeting with Nigerian President Mohammadu Buhari on April 27.

Ambassador Power also attended a #BringBackOurGirls rally at Unity Fountain to amplify the plight of the 200+ Chibok high school girls who have spent two years in captivity at the hands of Boko Haram.

According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, Boko Haram is one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world. It poses an acute threat to civilian lives and to the Lake Chad Region comprising Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria. The group’s increasing lethality and relationship with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are also grave cause for alarm.
After engaging with Nigerian government officials and civil society, Ambassador Power traveled to the northeastern state of Adamawa to visit a settlement camp for civilians displaced by Boko Haram’s violence and participate in a series of activities at the American University of Nigeria (AUN) in Yola.

Approximately 7 million people are suffering displacement, deprivation, and disease from the consequences of armed conflict in Nigeria, including 2.2 million internally displaced persons. As a result of the prolonged crisis, communities who have generously hosted internally displaced persons have also exhausted their resources and find themselves struggling to make ends meet. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are nearly 190,000 Nigerian refugees who have fled to Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—countries whose citizens have also suffered from Boko Haram attacks and consequent displacement.

At AUN, Ambassador Power hosted a town hall meeting with students and took questions on human rights and U.S. humanitarian efforts in combating Boko Haram. She announced nearly $40 million in new U.S. humanitarian assistance to support people whose lives have been affected by Boko Haram’s violence. This new funding brings the total U.S. humanitarian assistance for the Lake Chad Basin humanitarian response for 2015-16 to more than $267 million.
U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Maria E. Brewer participated in the grand opening of Curves Fitness Center in Abuja. Brewer joined Emma Esinnah, Nigeria Country Director of Curves International, and Esther Otenaikie, franchisee, to celebrate the Curves franchise launch. In her remarks, Brewer said that the launch of Curves Fitness Center in Abuja marks an opportunity to bolster a new fitness franchise industry in Nigeria and to promote women’s fitness and health. She noted that the world’s largest fitness franchise plans to open an additional 200 centers in Nigeria in the next five years, creating 2,000 jobs for Nigerian women.

The opening of Curves is an example of how the U.S.-Nigerian partnership benefits the Nigerian economy and extends quality services and innovative solutions for Nigerian citizens’ well-being. For women, the fitness center fills a void, allowing women who might not otherwise use the gym to take advantage of all the resources available to stay fit, healthy, and empowered in a supportive environment.

Curves International, also known as Curves Fitness and Curves Women, is a women’s fitness franchise based out of Waco, Texas. Founded in 1992 by Gary Heaven and his wife Diane, Curves has about 10,000 locations in 94 countries worldwide and over 4 million members. Curves fitness and weight loss facilities are designed specifically for women, although in some states, men are allowed to join. Curves provides a unique combination of strength training with sustained cardio-vascular activity in a 30-minute workout regimen. It also administers meal plans and personal coaching. Curves International is known as the fastest growing franchise and the world’s largest fitness franchise located in over 94 countries with 7,000 centers. Curves entered the Guinness Book of World Records in 2005, as the fastest growing franchise in business history.
On March 3, the U.S. and Nigerian governments joined General Electric (GE) to launch a new mother-and-child health initiative that would expand access to pre-natal screenings to more than 2 million expectant mothers across Nigeria by 2020. The Healthymagination Mother and Child Initiative will help reduce preventable mother and infant deaths. The $20 million endeavor will also address maternal and child health challenges among health workers in Nigeria by training midwives, nurses, and other health professionals in the use of the portable ultrasound (Vscan Access) screening tool to determine at-risk pregnancies. Dr. Osagie Ehanire, Minister of State for Health, presided over the ceremony and was joined by Dr. Ado Mohammed, Executive Director of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency; U.S. Ambassador James F. Entwistle; and Terri Bresenham, GE’s President and Chief Executive Officer for Healthcare and Sustainable Solutions.

“"The U.S. government is committed to engaging in effective and innovative alliances with the private sector to support Nigeria’s critical development needs,” said Ambassador Entwistle. "We are proud to collaborate with GE to bring quality health services to millions of women and children in Nigeria,” he added.

The Healthymagination initiative will target 1300 midwives and pre-natal primary health caregivers with over 100,000 hours of training over the next three years in maternal and child health care. Six states plus the Federal Capital Territory are being targeted.

GE’s portable ultrasound Vscan Access, launched at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2015, is a system designed for front-line workers in low-resource settings to help improve maternal health.

A comprehensive training will start in May, followed by ongoing mentoring and grading in the field by qualified trainers and clinicians. With the gradual ramp up of the program, expectant mothers will begin to receive the Vscan Access screenings in June at participating primary care clinics and general hospitals.

This partnership will allow the U.S. government and GE achieve their shared objectives and support some of the health challenges facing Nigeria.
A lot has been said about the promise of the African continent, especially the power of the youth, and the participants in the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African leaders are an eloquent testament to much of what has been said. However, much of the promising story of the continent is told from the masculine point of view. Well, let me introduce you to four amazing young ladies from Nigeria, participating in this year’s Mandela Washington Fellowship, who are doing amazing work to address some of the challenges facing the planet, especially women.

Olumidebola Ajayi

Tobi was born with cerebral palsy, but she has since transformed this into a motivating factor that pushes her to influence her environment positively. She obtained a bachelor’s and master’s degree in law, and serves on the think-tank team of Benola Cerebral Palsy Initiative, an organization that advocates for persons living with disabilities, especially persons with cerebral palsy. Shortly after graduating from law school in 2008, Tobi served on the presidential committee that drafted the policy document on “Persons with Disabilities for the Nigerian Vision 2020:20:20” and helped establish the Lagos State Disabled Persons’ Rights Board. Tobi will be trained at the Presidential Precinct in New Jersey on the civic leadership track of the fellowship.
Fatima Oyiza Ademoh

Fatima is a lecturer at Baze University, Abuja. She is also the founder of Ajima Youth Empowerment Foundation (AYEF). Raised in an agrarian community, Fatima aims to promote agribusiness as a solution to unemployment by providing renewable energy solutions in rural communities to help farmers overcome the problem of storage and increase their earning on their yield. Her organization, AYEF, currently partners with U.S. African Development Foundation and Power Africa on an off-grid energy project to generate biogas electricity for two rural communities in Abuja. During her spare time, Fatima volunteers with the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Foundation to provide mentorship and entrepreneurial training to budding business owners. She will be trained at the Energy Institute of the University of California-Davis during the fellowship.

Adaora Uche-Ugwonna

Still on women in agribusiness, Adaora is a farmer from Enugu State. Her company, Pledge Farm and Agro Services Ltd., creates jobs by providing credit sales and free business training to women. She founded Job In Our Hands, also known as Project JOIN, that educates and encourages unemployed youth on ‘agripreneurship’ and the use of resources within their communities to create jobs and reduce unemployment. Adaora holds a certificate in entrepreneurial management from the Enterprise Development Centre of Pan-Atlantic University in Lagos. Pledge Farms has an annual turnover of about N13 million creating over 200 jobs and has helped over 20 women out of poverty through credit sales. Adaora will be at University of Iowa under the business and entrepreneurship track of the fellowship.

Nkechi Ohwone

Nkechi is an electrical engineer by training. She currently leads the team that implements and promotes the Edo State Open Data Initiative, the first sub-national open data platform in Africa. Unfazed by the male domination of the technology space, Nkechi’s passion for solving social problems using information technology spurred her to set up SabiHub, a virtual platform where she mentors IT entrepreneurs and promotes open governance. Nkechi is heading to Arizona State University for her training in public management during the fellowship.

It is said that when you empower a girl, you empower a whole community. These ladies are making great contributions towards addressing societal issues such as inclusion, transparency, employment, and renewable energy. And women are the biggest victims of these societal issues. Speaking at their pre-departure orientation in May, Ambassador Entwistle said, “You all are beacons of hope for Nigeria and Africa.” Indeed, in these ladies I see hope.
The abduction of the 276 schoolgirls from their dormitory in Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, North East Nigeria, on the night of April 14, 2014 is one that has gripped the hearts of many and captured the world’s attention. This, and other activities, has brought to fore the audacity, depth, and extent of Boko Haram’s brutalities. The girls, popularly called the ‘Chibok girls,’ have become the symbol of the plights of the girl-child and the challenge of education in Nigeria, as well as the entry point to conversations on the security landscape in Nigeria and the sub-region.

In response to this unprecedented atrocity, the #BringBackOurGirls cause was birthed as a pressure group, advocating for the rescue of the Chibok girls, and other abductees who, in their thousands, are in the enclaves of these savages. The cause caught the attention and solidarity of prominent personalities across the world, including First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama, Pakistani girls’ education activist Malala Yousafzai, and popular Nigerian and foreign entertainers, among several others.

In a quest to ensure the Chibok girls are brought back, some countries, including the United States of America, pledged support to the Nigerian government, which has materialized through intelligence gathering, training and capacity building, supply of equipment, and logistical support.

Worthy of note is the continuous efforts of the United States Congress, especially Congresswomen Frederica Wilson and Sheila Jackson Lee, who have repeatedly advocated while mobilizing their colleagues with a view to escalating the need for the

Bukky Shonibare writes on the girls who were taken from Chibok two years ago, taking a close look at the ones who escaped and the new lives they are living.
United States to prioritize every possible avenue to assist Nigeria in the efforts to bring back our Chibok girls. Suffice to mention that among several strategic engagements, these two congresswomen and some of their colleagues have visited Nigeria and were received by #BringBackOurGirls group at Unity Fountain. We will not forget, also, the continuous engagement and solidarity of the U.S. Mission to Nigeria.

Of the abducted 276 girls, 57 courageously escaped. Well-meaning philanthropic individuals and organizations have commendably supported the girls in redefining their lives for the better. At the outset, even until now, the escaped girls suffer untold post-traumatic stress disorder, manifested through panic attacks, nightmares, flashbacks, and survivors’ guilt. I recall meeting some of them in Washington sometime in March 2015, even though they had started picking up their lives, they still worry about the security of their families, as well as the well-being of their friends, while some still feel guilty that, in escaping, they left their friends behind.

Of the many effects of the escaped girls’ sad experience is the uncertainty of what the future holds due to their disinterest in seeking education, as schooling is considered a risky and deadly venture. This not only affects the escapees, but other girls, boys, and parents who now have to grapple with the choice between seeking education and staying alive. However, thankfully, 23 of the escaped girls are attending the American University of Nigeria on full scholarships, some in other institutions within Nigeria, while 10 are currently on scholarship in the United States.

The recent visit by the Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations, Samantha Power, achieved, hugely, a reiteration of solidarity and support of the government and people of the United States, in ensuring the Chibok girls are brought back. Power’s assurance to the parents of the Chibok girls that “the United States is in this for the long haul” is yet another uplifting affirmation.

With the recent ‘proof of life’ video, there seems to be a renewed hope that the Chibok girls are alive. This development, including the fact that the sect has been “technically defeated,” means the international community has an opportunity window to pull its weight behind the Nigerian government to ensure the girls are brought back. However, for the #BringBackOurGirls movement, the struggle continues until our girls are brought back, safe and alive.

Bukky Shonibare is a strategic team member of the #BringBackOurGirls movement. She is also the Founder of The Light Foundation, under which she coordinates “Adopt-A-Camp” and “Girl Child Africa”. Bukky is a 2016 Mandela Washington Fellow.
We take a look at the experiences of four ace female students as they share the invaluable advice they received from the EducationUSA Advising Centers in Abuja and Lagos, while they sought admission into U.S. colleges and how they have fared since gaining admission. Anastasia is a scholar at University of Evansville, Indiana; Joannah is pursuing a chemical engineering Ph.D. at UT Austin; Simi is an incoming freshman at the University of Pennsylvania; and Adebola is at Temple University.

**Anastasia Ago**
*University of Evansville*

Coming to the United States of America was a dream that is now a reality. I became a member of EducationUSA in September 2014. Before I became a member of EducationUSA, I was denied a visa when I went for my interview. I was sad, and thought that was the end. I was scared of rejection when my mom told me I was going to apply again. Fortunately for me, I got to know about EducationUSA before I set up an appointment with the Consulate in Lagos. Becoming a member of EducationUSA was the best decision I made concerning schooling abroad. I was opportuned to have Mrs. Margaret Anyigbo and Mrs. Chinenyere Uwadileke as my counselors. They both helped a great deal and taught me valuable lessons. They always told the students to be themselves and not somebody else. They encouraged us to always stand out in the crowd. “Try to be the purple sheep among the flock” were their words exactly. They both made me understand that no matter what dreams we have, the key to achieving what we want is to be determined and focused and every other thing will fall into place. I am now a biology major and I plan to go to medical school.

**Joannah Otashu**
*Ph.D. Candidate in Chem. Engineering, University of Texas at Austin*

The one-year period I spent at EducationUSA Advising Center while concurrently completing my NYSC assignment caused a remarkable change in my entire life. Through the guidance of the affable advisors at the center, I opted to apply straight for a Ph.D. degree in chemical engineering. I probably would not have known the possibility of getting admitted into a renowned institution in the United States for a Ph.D. degree (with just a B.Eng.) with all expenses paid in full had it not been for the advisers at EducationUSA.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the grueling process my advisors at the Abuja centre ensured I passed through helped hone my skills and abilities. Having to write several essays over and again, meeting deadlines, and keeping communication with prospective institutions produced a more matured, organized, and articulate Joannah. Truly, the mere process of completing an application to an American university causes an obvious change in a person. My family and friends are witnesses to this.
EducationUSA Abuja is unique in that the center as a whole shares in the dreams and aspirations of their students. The advisors made it their personal duty to ensure my success and walked the extra mile when it became necessary. I am glad to have received the EducationUSA Opportunity Grant, a program put together by the U.S. government to assist highly talented, but low-income students to cover the upfront cost of securing admission and settling in the United States. Not only am I currently pursuing my Ph.D. in chemical engineering where I am not paying a kobo, the Opportunity Grant actually paid for all my tests, application fees, and even my flight to the United States.

Simi Aremu
University of Pennsylvania (Incoming Freshman)

From choosing the right schools to searching for scholarships to writing good essays for school applications, EducationUSA created a platform for me to be led by great advisers all the way.

I appreciate all the advisers for encouraging me in my school search. Even though I lived in Kaduna, I was never left out in any bit of the action. Applying to 18 schools was no easy task, but the advisers at EducationUSA Abuja had me equipped to put out an application that revealed my strengths and showed forth the person I am on the inside.

I have to say that I am eternally indebted to Aunty Sade and the other EducationUSA advisors for believing in me and giving their unwavering love and support all the way. Thanks to EducationUSA and its great advisers, my next line of action is to perform at my absolute best at Penn to pay them back for their kind assistance. I can now dream dreams bigger than me and one of such dreams is to find myself on the list of Penn’s notable alumni in the not-so-distant future.

Adebola Duro-Aina
Temple University

Don’t give up! I remember the rigorous essay workshops I had to go through to learn to portray my ideas clearly as an applicant and the whole college application process itself. So many times it felt like an unending process, but it is such a profitable one. Through the EducationUSA Advising Centre, I learned skills such as speaking up in the midst of a crowd, and being confident and deliberate about pursuing my goals. I moved from a shy girl to one bold enough to now lead an organization at my college.

One of the most important things EducationUSA teaches applicants is to think outside the box and to seek the extraordinary. EducationUSA students are never limited and always seek to overcome challenging situations, which is a skill honed through the rigors of the application process. These tips from EducationUSA have helped me immensely when handling school projects and coursework. I am currently a bioengineering and biomedical engineering student at Temple University and I plan to go to medical school.

The EducationUSA Advising Centers in Abuja and Lagos provide quality, timely, accurate, and unbiased information about all accredited U.S. higher education institutions for persons wishing to study in the United States. For more information about EducationUSA and study opportunities in the United States, please visit http://www.educationusa.state.gov

Locations:

Abuja
Embassy of the United States of America
Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Central District Area, Abuja
Telephone: 234-09-4614251/4241/4335/4298
Email: AbujaEducationUSA@state.gov
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/EducationUSA.Abuja

Lagos
U.S. Consulate General
2 Walter Carrington Crescent, Victoria Island, Lagos
Telephone: 234-01-460-3801/302
Email: lagoseducationusa@state.gov
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/EducationUSALagos
Education in the United States represents a tremendous opportunity for thousands of Nigerian students. However, in order to qualify for this unique opportunity it is important that prospective students obtain the proper visa.

First you must gain admission to a qualified academic institution. With over 4,700 eligible college level institutions to choose from throughout the United States, it is in your best interest to conduct your own research to find out which school is the best fit for your academic needs. Once you are admitted, you must register with the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) in order for your school to issue an I-20 form to you. Please note you will have to pay a fee to register with SEVIS.

Once you have an I-20 student petition you may submit your visa application and schedule a visa interview. At your interview, a Consular Officer will review your application and I-20 to confirm you are admitted to a qualified academic institution. They will also determine if you have sufficient academic preparation and will complete all of your studies. They will also ascertain whether you or your family has sufficient funds or income to cover the costs of attending school.

Once you satisfy these criteria you will be issued either an F1 or M1 student visa allowing you to live in the United States for up to two years while you attend school. Once you have your student visa, however, the following are some important things to remember:

1. You must always have a valid I-20 student petition to enter the United States and you should keep it with your visa and passport. If your I-20 is lost or destroyed, promptly contact your school to have another issued as soon as possible.

2. Your student visa allows you to enter the United States 30 days prior to the start date listed on your I-20. If you miss the start date listed on your I-20 do not attempt to enter the United States until you have contacted your school to obtain an extension letter or a new I-20.

3. If your course of study lasts longer than two years you will need to renew your visa. Your renewal is not automatic and is contingent on demonstrating that you are a student in good standing. Make sure you afford yourself plenty of time to renew your visa and schedule your visa interview well in advance of the expiration of your current visa. One of the simplest ways to renew a student visa is to use our drop box renewal service. Log on to http://nigeria.usembassy.gov/niv_dropbox.html in order to learn more about this service.

4. You cannot work outside of your academic institution as a foreign student in the United States.

5. When you graduate or end your studies for any reason you must depart the United States within 60 days.

Although these requirements may sound daunting they really are quite easy to follow and most universities and schools operate an office for international students in order to provide you with the information and assistance you need. You may also learn more about education in the United States at https://educationusa.state.gov and http://nigeria.usembassy.gov/student_visa_faq.html. We wish you the best of success in your academic future.
Our Visa Interview Process
Here are the steps to help you prepare & anticipate our expectations

**Screening**
Please arrive half an hour before your appointment. You will be searched and your reservation confirmed.

**Security**
No electronics or liquids are allowed. Time saver tip: leave bags, belts, & heavy jewelry at home.

**Check In**
You'll need your passport, DS-160 confirmation page, MRV fee receipt & appointment letter.

**Fingerprints**
We will need your passport.
1) Left four fingers
2) Right four fingers
3) Both thumbs

**Intake**
Be prepared to give your passport & a passport photo. Time saver tip: upload a qualifying photo with your online application form in advance.

**Interview**
What to give the officer:
For B1/B2, just your passport.
For F1/F2/M1, passport & I-20s.
For H1B/L1/P3, passport & petition.
American Corners provide access to general, substantive and accurate information about the United States to interested parties. Materials in the American Corners cover a wide range of subjects pertaining to the United States, such as its policies, society, education and culture. Free, open access is provided to all materials.

Presently, there are 11 American Corners in Nigeria:

**ABUJA**
Chief Bola Ige Information Technology Center  
C/o National Center for Women Development  
CBD, Abuja

**BAUCHI**
Professor Iya Abubakar Community Resource Center  
C/o Bauchi State Library Complex  
Abdulkadir Ahmed Road  
GRA, Bauchi

**CALABAR**
Cross River State IT Village  
37 Ekpo Archibong Road  
Calabar

**ENUGU**
No. 53 Udoji Street  
Ogui New Layout  
Enugu

**IBADAN**
Nigerian Society for Information, Arts and Culture, Leventis Building  
54, Magazine Road  
Jericho, Ibadan  
Telephone: 02 753-5838

**JOS**
University of Jos  
11, Murtala Mohammed Way, Jos

**KANO**
Kano State Library Board  
Murtala Muhammad Library Complex  
Nasarawa, Kano

**LAGOS**
29, Gafar Animashaun Street  
(off Ajose Adeogun St.)  
Victoria Island, Lagos

**MAIDUGURI**
University of Maiduguri  
Library, PMB 1069  
Maiduguri

**PORT HARCOURT**
Donald E. U. Ekong Library  
University of Port Harcourt  
Port Harcourt

**SOKOTO**
Usmanu Danfodiyo University City Campus  
Sultan Abubarka Road  
Sokoto

For more information, visit  
http://nigeria.usembassy.gov/am-corners.html