FLASH NONFICTION

Changing the Story

by Ekow Agyine-Dadzie



"Remember Your Roots" by Matthew McCain

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I come from a place so small it is not even on the map: Awutu Oshimpo in the Central Region of Ghana. A quiet village with red dust, bare feet, and people who have lived through too much to dream big. This is where I grew up. Not with my parents, but with my grandparents. They gave me stories instead of toys, and prayers instead of promises.

My name was Stephen Kabinko Agyine-Dadzie. It still is in some ways. But now I use Ekow Kebenko Agyine-Dadzie. One name was given with love. The other came from correcting records. It was my grandfather's decision to use my Fante name, "Ekow," instead of my English name, "Stephen," when I was about to register for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). "Ekow" means "a boy born on Thursday" in the Fante language. Kabinko was also corrected to Kebenko, an ancestral name passed down through generations. This change was my grandfather's way of connecting me to our family before he passed. To honour this, I updated my ID and academic records to reflect the name I carry now. The real me is somewhere between the two names. A boy who struggled in junior high and felt like his BECE results had closed the door to the senior high school he had dreamed of. A boy who looked at failure not as the end of the road but as a sign to look within.

When my grandfather passed, it felt like the only person who truly understood me was gone. He had been a retired school headmaster. He often called me to sit beside him just to talk. He never shouted or rushed. He believed in taking time with what matters. After he passed, my father tried to take over that role. He guided me through senior high, not just as a parent but as someone who saw that my battles were not always on the outside. Sometimes they were deep inside me.

In my village, most boys stop school after senior high. Some go into small jobs. Others turn to drugs. A few dream but often give up too soon. I kept moving. I kept learning. I kept believing. Not because I was special. But because someone had to change the story. Someone had to speak out when others stayed silent.

Now I work as a strategic advisor and solution consultant. I also teach in classrooms as a tech advocate and work with data to help others make better decisions. I have connected my past and present through learning and creativity. My work is about using knowledge and technology to guide people, solve problems, and tell meaningful stories.

My English is not perfect. But my words are real. For me, language is not about rules. It is a mix of village sayings, quiet classrooms, internet cafes, and wisdom from those who are gone. I write how I speak. And I speak from memory.

That is why this piece matters. Because I do not want to act like someone else. I want to show what it means to grow up with little but still give everything. I want to show how old names can carry hope into new days. And how, if you cannot find your place on a map, you

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make one from your memories.

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