

Interview with Mamalette.com

I am very pleased to have Yemi Elegunde in this guest post interview about his memoir, Time Will Tell. I first read about his book on a UK website and I was so impressed with his story, I asked to interview him in a guest post.

Can you tell us about yourself?

Thank you for taking such an interest in my story. My name is Yemi, I am 47 and I live just outside of London, England. I have a 14 year old daughter Shaya. My father is Nigerian from Abeokuta and my mother comes from Clarendon in Jamaica, they met in England. I work as an IT sales manager and I am also an experienced football referee.

You have written a very touching story, I have to admit I cried a lot while reading the book. Why did you write Time Will Tell?

“Time Will Tell” is the result of years of anguish in my mind; it covers the topic of International Parental Abduction which is when one parent takes their child or children away to another country without the knowledge or consent of the other parent. This happened to me and my sister Bisi when we were 7 and 5 years old respectively. We were taken from England by my dad to Nigeria where we lived for a total of 14 years. We didn’t see our mum again for over 11 years and only saw her for a period of one month in that entire 14 year period. I wrote the book because I had so much on my mind and felt compelled to tell my story.

Who is this book for?

The book is for anyone who loves to read true stories of course but the topic of parental abduction is an important one. So the book is also for parents to show them the effects their decisions can have on a child and finally there is also a message to the children about the importance of not holding grudges with your parents indefinitely.

What was the hardest thing about writing this book?

To be honest the book was a joy to write, it became very therapeutic for me. The hardest parts were my decision to tell my story to the world and also telling both my parents that I had written the book.

You wrote in your book, “Did my parents realize how much psychological and mental stress their actions caused 5-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son.” You

also wrote, 'I didn't understand why my parents had fallen out of love.' What advice would you give parents today who no longer get on with each other?"

I will be 48 in just under two weeks' time, so it's over 40 years ago that my dad came home and told me he was taking me and Bisi out for the day, yet I remember it vividly. I put my life in danger so many times because I felt rebellious and could not understand why we had been taken away. Sometimes we as parents think that the child is too young and that they will not understand. I believe it's best to talk to children and explain our decisions. Children need both their parents, naturally not all relationships work but please do not deprive your children off the love of one parent. It can be harrowing for both the child and also for the left behind parent. Nobody wins ultimately.

What was it like to show the book to your parents?

Now that's a very good question. Fortunately both my parents were proud of me for writing the book. My mum read it whilst always having a towel beside her, she cried so many times. I was more worried about telling my dad that I had written the book but he was also very supportive. He told me that if it's true then he had no problem at all. In fact he helped me with dates and the answer to the biggest question in the book.

It seems you have reached a place of healing and peace after such a traumatic experience. Do you feel writing about your story has helped you to heal?

Writing "Time Will Tell" is one of the best decisions I have made in my life. It helped me to discover myself, it helped me get closer to my parents and as I said earlier, it was very therapeutic for me.

In the book you mentioned that you did not see your mother for 12 years, 'I had forgotten what it even felt like to have a mum.' How are you able to still get on with your father after he took you and your sister away from your mother?

I was angry with my dad for sure. In fact when I finally left Nigeria as a 22 year old man in 1988, my father and I did not talk again until my daughter was born in 1999. Even when I did call him in 1999 he didn't want to talk to me, so we didn't talk for a further two years. I am keen to lead by example towards my daughter therefore it became ever more important for me to talk to my parents. I am not the kind of person to hold grudges and my dad did make sure that we had a good education and he loved us with pride. I am so grateful that we were able to reconcile.

Your book has been getting a lot of buzz, you've been on BBC News and have been featured in numerous book reviews and interviews. What do you hope to accomplish with this book?

If my book could have an impact on people's lives and help to raise the awareness of International Parental Abduction, I would be a very happy man. Most of all I just want readers to read and enjoy the book.

You wrote in the book, that you have decided to give your daughter a better beginning. What do you mean by this? Also has your experience made you want to be a better father?

My dad made mistakes and he was only human, we all make mistakes, I just want to make sure that I learned from my experiences and had a better relationship with my daughter. That includes in communication and the show of love.

How can our readers who are based in Nigeria, get a copy of your book?

The book is available from my publishers www.troubador.co.uk as well as from Amazon.co.uk in both paperback and kindle format. It is also available in iBook format from the Apple iTunes store. In the future I hope to find a good local books distributor in Nigeria.