

Nigerian Women Interview

Racheal Ayuba

Note: Racheal is her first name, Ayuba is her husband's first name. Racheal recently completed her teaching practice (student teaching) for a degree in home economics education and is waiting for university bureaucracy to process her degree. She is currently running a tailor shop out of a room in her house as she takes care of her infant son. Racheal's husband, Ayuba, had polio as a small boy that left him paralyzed, only able to walk on his hands. Ayuba has completed his education, earning a law degree from university. In partnership with an American, Ayuba developed a ministry that builds wheelchairs free of charge for individuals who cannot walk, largely due to polio or amputation. These wheelchairs are made with gears similar to a bicycle so the individuals can use their hands to propel the wheelchair. Racheal's father was a policeman, so she was raised in a number of different towns across the middle-belt of Nigeria.

Demographics

1. Age: 33
2. Age at which married: 32
3. Children: Joseph (8 months)
4. Education: Completed NCE in home economics. Working on the degree in home economics education
5. Husband's profession: Coordinator of Beautiful Gate Center for the Handicapped.

Behavior

B1. Daily Schedule:

- A. *What is your daily schedule?* Long before 6 I am up to boil the bath water, set the charcoal and boil water on stove for bathing. I wash plates after that I clean up the rooms. When the water is ready and Ayuba is up, I give him the bathing water while I prepare breakfast. After that I will come in and carry my baby for bathing. After that I take my bath and take my breakfast to eat. That is step 1. Those days when I went to teaching practice [student teaching] I had to go before 8:00 because the teaching starts at 8:00 so I employed somebody to carry [baby-sit] the baby. I would go there, close work by 12:30 and come back home. The next thing is to rush to the kitchen to prepare for lunch. Sometimes I sew, so I will go to my sewing machine to sew clothes while waiting for lunch to be ready. When it is 3:30, I put water [to be heated] for bathing for the evening bath. Before 6:00 we normally have our bath for the night. I first bath the baby before myself. The next thing is to go to kitchen for dinner. If I have any outstanding work, I will just do it. The schedules it varies sometimes by activity. Some days I may go to plait my hair, got to market for shopping, it is something I must do that day. Sometimes I wash the clothing, and these things, extra work but not every day.
- B. *What activities do you spend the **most time** on each day?* The sewing because at different intervals I enter room and sew. I take time to bake when there is an occasion, a happy birthday cake [for a fee]. Sometimes I bake our bread for breakfast. At different intervals I sew. Sometimes I take the whole night sewing. If I have clothes to deliver fast-fast. There was a wedding two Saturdays ago that I didn't go to bed until daybreak. So when baby cries I go in and breast feed him and then I go back to work.

B3. Responsibilities around the house

- A. *In your household, what duties are you responsible for?* They are interwoven. I do basically all the cleaning – all these ones I mentioned I do. I have people help me fetch water, sometimes help me wash. This nanny is helping me wash.
- B. *What duties are your husband responsible for?* Wow. In the house, nothing. (*note: he is, after all, paralyzed*)
- C. *When he gets big, what duties do you expect Joseph to be responsible for?* I wish that he washes plates, clean house, wash clothing especially his own, he should be able to tidy up his room, put the toy back in its place. I want him to be around when I am cooking. I don't want him to be a typical boy child. My youngest brother he can do everything. I don't want my child to mind his own sex until he gets a career.

B4. Holidays

- A. *How do you celebrate festivals?* New Year, Easter, this love – I enjoy Valentines. It is just a special meal and exchange gifts, not a public holiday. Christmas. Then our birthdays.
- B. *For major holiday celebrations, what role do you have in the ceremonies?* Ayuba doesn't like celebration, so I plan without his knowing so it is a surprise. His last year birthday he never knew we were celebrating. I did the baking, cooking, buy the chickens, and invited his friends without his knowing. After Sunday service he said he was going to work. When he got there, I called and I told him that his friends are in the house so it was a surprise. He said for the first time in his life he was celebrating his birthday. Most cases I do secretly. The baby dedication was a celebration so we both planned. [I was at the baby dedication – they rented an outdoor canopy and plastic chairs for people to sit and visit and served rice and minerals to the visitors.]

B5. Money

- A. *How do you earn money?* Sewing, baking, mark WAEC [West Africa Examination Council, the entrance exam for college]. Other little work I get.
- B. *What do you spend money on?* Sometimes some little things for myself – clothing, accessing, feeding, if you need to buy small, small things and he's [husband] not there, I buy food. Baby consume so much – I like picking the baby clothes, I am picking, picking, I can't help myself. As he is growing, his clothes are growing smaller. Sometimes out of my budget I get the rice, beans, fish, palm oil, clothing, wrappers, this additional profit keeps us going.

Values

V1. General Societal Views

- A. *What makes a good woman?* Let me reason it this way. If you live at peace with your neighbors and in-laws, reach out to people you meet. Having a peaceful family, doing all these activities with balancing. Be able to live peacefully at home.
- B. *What makes a good man?* It depends on what the partner needs from the person. A good man, I expect him to be a good man and expect to be a very loving, caring person. Give you at least some time to be there for you and provide you with security, protection. Somebody you can trust.

- C. *Think of differences between men and women. What are things that women should do that men shouldn't?* It varies according to culture. There are some instances the boy learn how to cook, some cultures that is not acceptable. They see it as entirely unacceptable. In my home we all worked together so there is not much difference so the difference may come when we get married. He decides he doesn't want to do this and this. My husband, now that we have a baby, I want him to have good time with his child and wife. Be able to bring at least some support to the family, feed the family, and stand for us where there is need.
- D. *What are things that men should do but women shouldn't?* In African countries, in our house the way my mother brought me up, they ask the brother say, all the boys and girls, we do together. Some special people like my dad he says this is her day off so he will cook, dish the food, wash the plates. In real life African context, man does not cook, sweep the house, keep the house. Their duty is to bring the food and health. This, our generation of women, try to do the same thing. Sometimes the man, he be posing big asking the woman to give him the food. A man should bring food home. Should protect the family, take care of their health and extra things while the woman does the child bearing and do other household things.
- E. *Do you think it is better to be a man or a woman?* If you look at African culture, better to be a man because women suffer so much. I joke if I come back, I will come back as a man because men have ease, women struggle. You are a women, they belittle you, they put you below him as in somebody who is answerable to him. He is not carrying his cross carrying his responsibilities. The women do more than the men. He looks for food, I look for food, isn't it better to be a woman. There are some exceptional people, my father, he tries, Ayuba, he tries. You see women carrying concrete, women they are the laborers just to make ends meet. If you ask the children, it is their mother that raised them. Their fathers are alive, but useless.

V2. Rites of Passage

- A. *When is a girl considered an adult?* How we are taught, when they start to menstruate they become a woman because at that time you have to take care. If you mess around, you really become a mother then. If you go down to the primitive people, even at 15 they give their daughters to marry. Ideally, a woman starts from 18 years.
- B. *How did your life change once you became an adult?* When you get married, in society here the belief is once you are married they give you prestige, they look at you as responsible. As it is, when I was married at 32, they say this old woman already. If you are still single at that age, what is this you have been doing all this while? Silly, silly nonsense life to not get married. When you become a woman, from then a society, they give you prestige. And lots of responsibility.

V3. Marriage

- A. *Did you look forward to marriage?* [At this point, Racheal didn't want me to type a verbatim response. She talked about how as a young woman, she had dreams that she wanted to achieve. Because of this and hearing her aunts and friends talk about the bad parts of marriage, she was adamantly against having a husband. However, when she turned 30, she started to feel great societal pressure on her to be married. Racheal described a few situations where younger women who had children were given

- preferential treatment, which hurt her. She said that people also suspected that she was getting her money from other men and prostitution. At this point, she decided that she needed to get married.]
- B. *How did you find your husband?* I come to Jos to see my mother's friend who was sick. I normally would have slept in Bukuru [a town that has grown into Jos] but I decided to stay with my friend in Jos. When I arrived, my friend wasn't there but her door was open so I went in. She was outside. I was tired so I wanted to stay inside but she forced me to come out. Who did I meet when I came out but Ayuba. [Ayuba was in his car, so it was not apparent that he was handicapped.] I was careful about men and all I said was "Hello." He asked what my program would be the following day. I said that I was going to visit my mother's friend that was sick. He offered to be my driver and I said that I would not pay [for public transport]. The next morning before I left, though, my friend said that guy was here. I said I was not going to leave the house. My friend kept pursuing me to go with him, and she was helping me get everything, bath water, clothes, cream. When I went outside, he was in his car and I just greeted him with "Good morning." Before he started the car, he was like, he told me his name, age, where he comes from, then he told me that he is a Christian. That was the first time somebody introduced himself as a Christian. I was only nodding my head. The next, he said, "As you can see" [and motioned a wave of the arm across his legs, which are very small due to polio. It is obvious looking at his legs that he cannot walk on his legs.] He could see the disappointment on my face, so I tapped him on his thigh. He drove me. The bank was down, but Ayuba was so patient to wait from 8:00 to 2:00. I say sorryo. Ayuba waited in the car busy, doing papers, sleeping on the steering wheel. That was the first day we met. The next day he called and took me and the day where I need to go. He asked for my address. I didn't want to give my address. He pursued it, and he complimented my handwriting. Then I took my brother to Madugeri [a town a few hours away from Jos] so he could get acquainted with the university. When I was in Madugeri, Ayuba called. I didn't remember his name. He asked "Where are you." I said Madugeri. He said he was at my [parents'] house. Before I knew it, he was in Madugeri. I had to leave my brother, so we went back to my parents' house. He spent the night at the house. His [high] character is what kept me. I found all the character in Ayuba. Jackson [the man she almost married before Ayuba] was the container while Ayuba is contents. I had to choose an empty container versus the content.
- C. *How much was your bride price?* N60,000 then in my culture he has to bring kola nuts, 2 wrap skirts, 2 crates of minerals, 2 bags of salt, 2 cartons of biscuits [crackers], sweets – mint, chewing gum. He is supposed to make clothing for me and my mother, 2 mats to sit on, 2 blankets for my grandparents, a dress for my dad and mom. In my own place, he is supposed to bring 12 dresses but he didn't make up to that. We didn't do my own. He is supposed to bring a complete outfit with the bag, shoes, underwear...He is supposed to bring set of 4 boxes and then make the clothes to put in the boxes. There was no money so he put 3 wrappers and 1 small lace, shoes, a bag, and I made the wedding gown. That's it, then make-up, small.

V4. Children

- A. *How many children do you want to have?* I thought initially have a whole team of football [i.e. “soccer”] players, both boys and girls. As I went through only one, I know I can’t have that many. Just today I was thinking 4. I was previously thinking 6, but he [Joseph] gives my head to be spinning. I don’t know if I will reduce again. It is diminishing... A mix of boys and girls.
- B. *What are things you want to teach your boy children?* I like music, let him play music. I want him to learn that apart from doing housework because there is comfort in music and sometimes when you are in trouble but if there is melody in heart, you won’t think of the trouble. Melody in heart, it is there like a shock absorber. Something that just keeps him growing. I want him to grow in the grace of God because that is the most important, everything is just addition. My mother really kept us well, she is a good Christian woman. I can see other people where the parent didn’t train him well. That is the most important thing I want them to have.
- C. *What are things you want to teach your girl children?* Same. Even though girls are more intensive, more of female kinds of things, dressing, the girls have to dress very sharply. I want to teach them very, very well on the fear of God because everything else will take shape. Sex education is very important. I want to teach all my children but mostly girls because they are the ones who will be cheated.
- D. *How much school do you want your boy children to have?* I want all professors in my house, boy and girls. I am aiming at that for myself. I am aiming at a professor as my limit. I want my children to be very, very education. With education you are free from killer disease. When illiterate, that is a deadly disease. An illiterate, you will see illiteracy in him in behavior, reasoning. Education is not only to be in school, but to pass through school and allow school to pass through you so you are transformed.

V5. Community

- A. *What activities do you do with other women?* In the church I attend women fellowship. In the society, Home Economic Teachers Association, I do advocate that. Most of home economics is female. We have men but very few. Sometimes when there is occasion, another person close to me and we invite to each others’ house.