



Evolution of an Educator: My Journey from a Nigerian Student to an Academic Leader in America

Joel O. Nwagbaraocha

FriesenPress (Oct 8, 2019)

Hardcover \$34.99 (230pp)

978-1-5255-4625-9

An accomplished professor asserts that his worldview was expanded through his higher education in the inspiring memoir Evolution of an Educator.

Joel O. Nwagbaraocha's memoir *Evolution of an Educator* draws on extensive documentation to focus on the power of education to address civil rights issues.

Facing his impending retirement from university teaching, Nwagbaraocha reflects on formative and social impact issues throughout his education and career. Twelve chapters and three appendices are filled with reports, letters, studies, and lists created during his time as an academic administrator and professor. Detailed sections also cover Nwagbaraocha's contributions as a consultant for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), primarily in the American South.

The most engaging passages in the book are filled with personal descriptions and observations about Nwagbaraocha's extraordinary life, including stories about his early education in Victoria (now Limbe), 50 miles from the foot of the Cameroon Mountains. His travels to Nigeria at age fourteen, during when he squeezed together with others on a wooden board in a merchant truck, are effective in conveying his fright. Other sections create a sense of immediacy and direct connection, as when Nwagbaraocha discusses feeling alone in a foreign country, missing his family, and needing to adjust to American food.

The inclusion of detailed documents and dense academic language results in objective reportage but slows movement through the text. Complex questions about relating pluralistic ideologies to conflict situations in Africa are raised via Nwagbaraocha's doctoral dissertation; some are shown being resolved through academic dialogues in Nwagbaraocha's work in African Social Studies programs. Elsewhere, extended lists and in-depth studies are included, and the book itemizes Nwagbaraocha's college objectives for enhancing education and intellectual engagement at HBCUs. The text shows how those objectives were met, as well.

The book includes three appendices; its photograph album is a welcome visual element. Its images are grouped at the end instead of complementing related text, but they are still a personal touch within an otherwise very fact-driven text. They have strong storytelling power, ranging from Nwagbaraocha's graduation to newspaper clippings covering a civil rights march to Nwagbaraocha's college presidency, helping to reveal him as a man with increasing confidence and ease. The book ends with an implication that higher education can have a significant impact on fostering personal growth and strength.

Evolution of an Educator is a memoir that traces an accomplished professor's exposure to international community, culture, diversity, and educational methods.

ANDREA HAMMER (November 2, 2019)

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