

The Quiet Odyssey: Navigating the Silence Within

Consider taking time and making space to forge connections with yourself amid the chaos of law practice and life.

BY EMIL OVBIAGELE

When was the last time you slowed down to hear your thoughts? To converse with self, undisturbed?

Not just in those fleeting moments of quiet, nestled between daily tasks and silent prayers of strength. Not merely in the pauses between breaths or whispered “woozas” with your eyes tightly shut as you pretend to catch some inner peace in bits of 30-minute meditations.

But with your eyes wide open, fully immersed in the unfettered reality of the world as it unfolds around you for an extended period?

February marked a journey of solitude and celebration as I ventured alone to Portugal and England to commemorate my birthday. Spanning six days, the trip was anchored only by the thrill of watching my beloved soccer team, Arsenal FC, compete in Oporto and London. Beyond these exhilarating matches, my itinerary remained open, unburdened by a schedule or obligations.

No family, no friends; it was a journey of one – a pilgrimage to self of sorts, selfish and selfless. This wasn't about traveling or vacationing in the conventional sense. I'm no stranger to traversing the globe and new places for leisure, work, and everything between. Yet, this experience stood apart.

For example, as I navigated the familiar cobblestone paths of London once more, everything seemed to shift – the architecture, the ambiance, and my perceptions.

My senses sharpened. My appreciation deepened. My introspection heightened.

No matter how you cut it, traveling with others, whether they're the closest of friends or the most cherished family members, inherently involves a melding of experiences. As beautiful as these moments are, they become collective rather than personal. Each experience is diluted

and shared among the group, leaving little room for individual reflection.

In the noise of shared enjoyment, vibrant notes of personal discovery can be obscured.

But this time, the usual distractions faded away, allowing me to fully engage with my surroundings and myself.

I could stare at and see the man in the mirror. In portrait mode. No filters.

You see, navigating through the maze of roles I embody – entrepreneur and founder of various ventures, attorney, father, husband, brother, son, professor, leader, and the designated “answer guy” – my days are spent dealing with the flames of endless demands.

Nine times out of ten, each ring of my phone or chime of my email heralds yet another call to arms. The onslaught of requests and pressures can stack up like a never-dissipating snowstorm, blanketing space and time. Moments of true sustained tranquility become as rare and sought after as the sun's appearance in winter



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– those luminous intervals that offer clarity and a breath of fresh air.

Now, this isn't a complaint. I'm genuinely grateful for the array of roles I'm privileged to play. Moreover, this reflection goes beyond the often superficial and nebulous debate surrounding the overused and underwhelming notion of "work-life balance" – a term that has lost much of its meaningfulness to me.

Aboard my return flight home, as the lands and sea below bled into one another, I was struck by a stark realization:

In the waning moments of our existence, as we draw our final labored breaths, we shall be confronted by a profound truth – the individual we most ardently wished to understand, to spend our fleeting moments with, is the very person we've neglected the most – ourselves.

This short reprieve, though marked by solitude, was far from lonely. It was an odyssey into the soul, a foray into the uncharted territories of my essence. Without external demands, I found the space to listen – not to the world but to the stirrings within my heart.

Did I solve the complex equation of life? No. But I got closer to the mystery. I uncovered a landscape as rich and varied as the places I visited. I peeled back layers of thoughts and dreams long buried under the piles of case files and demands of the world, each revealing facets of myself previously obscured by the incessant hustle and bustle.

This is not a call to abandon our duties nor a plea for a life of contemplation removed from the world's demands. Instead, it is an invitation to forge moments of connection with oneself amid the chaos. It is a reminder that the most profound journey is the one that leads inward.

Let us not wait until the twilight of our lives to acquaint ourselves with the person we've been, the person we are, and the person we may even long to be.

In our relentless pursuits, let us not forget to live – to draw breaths deep enough to bring us closer to our truest selves. **WL**