

today's

# WOMAN

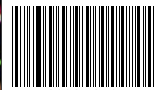


*Vera  
& Jolomi  
James*

*inside*

Vera Speaks Of Her Ph.D And How  
Jolomi Is The Wind Beneath Her Wings

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# WHAT'S *Love* GOT TO DO WITH IT?



Vera James recently snagged a PhD in Educational Management from the University of Lagos and as she picked up a hard earned degree, she chose to celebrate the winds beneath her wings, Jolomi, with whom she marked ten years together, this past March. This sought after consultant in the education sector says she sits atop her chosen profession because of the support from him. And here she shares her journey





## 1. WHAT WAS GROWING UP LIKE?

I am one of six children of Chris and Jessica Uwubanmwen from Igbanke, Orhionmwon LGA of Edo State. Growing up in Lagos in our very small but comfortable apartment, we shared lovely memories. My education career path was quite interesting, I wanted to study Economics but had a tough time getting admission for reasons that were not academic. I finally got on a Pre-Degree programme to study Mathematics Education, with the hope to get an interfaculty transfer. My HOD after so much pressure from me agreed to release me if I passed all my 100 level courses. I did pass but when I went back to him, I got the greatest shock of my life! He said to me, “What a beautiful result you have and you want me to release you to another department? I must be a fool to do that, so during convocation, while HODs are bragging

about the 2:1 graduates, I will be looking. My dear, this is where you will be and you will excel, just go and continue with your Maths Education, you hear?” Immediately he said this, I burst into tears. The rest they say is history. And yes, I got the 2nd best result in my department upon graduation.

## 2. HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS AND WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?

Success to me is simply INFLUENCE, and in all modesty, I have achieved this in countless ways. First as a primary school teacher, I made learning Numeracy fun for all my children. Then as part time lecturer at the Corona College of Education, I became a model to my students. Though very firm, I mentored a good majority of them. Today I run a consulting firm working for several institutions in and outside Lagos, some on Pro bono. This is in addition to

sitting on the board of several NGOs, and teaching Sandwich Students in the University of Lagos.

In everything I do, I strive to make positive impact. Much of which I will be doing in my soon to be launched website. However, I still see myself in full academia, actively participating in the teaching, research and community service value chain, both locally and internationally.

### 3. WAS CONCLUDING YOUR PHD PROGRAMME A RELIEF?

Oh yes, it had been a roller coaster with many highs and lows, though it was an amazing time all together. The project-based approach I adopted helped me understand systematic processes even more. Most interesting was my thesis, which was on Programme Completion. It is a problem that the University system has given little or no attention to, as it has become almost normal for Nigerian

students to spend more than the stipulated number of years in attaining their degrees. Availability of data was another major challenge. Like with most researchers in Nigeria getting data for my very sensitive area of research was as hard as getting ice in the desert. Still I am glad that I spent less than 4 years on my programme - 3 years and 7 months precisely. I remember the day I got my Senate approval, my HOD called me a record breaker. Apparently the first to get a PhD in the shortest possible time in my department in over 20 years! This sounds like magic. But it happened because God placed the right people in my life: my husband, and some wonderful Professors in my department.

### 4. IS THAT WHY YOU SAY YOUR HUSBAND IS 'DA BOMB'?

Absolutely! He is everything and more in very practical ways. He encouraged me to get off paid employment so

I could concentrate on my programme, making a promise to pay me my salary monthly, so I could focus. This, he did consistently for over 3 years. While in paid employment, payday was 25th of every month, and he made sure I got paid, at the latest by 23rd.

PhD study is very cost intensive, especially in Nigeria with very limited access to grants. So Jolomi, my husband made sure I got all financial resources needed in good time. He was my proofreader, first audience and critique before any defense presentation. He prays for and with me, and daily loads me with words of affirmation.

He ensured I had no chores at home to take my time, not even cooking! At every point in time there was food at home, made by him. When I say no chores, I mean every chore you can ever think about, even my personal shopping. If you look at me head to toe, at every given time, it is courtesy my husband. Everything I wear, is picked and bought by him, all I

do is be a good model (laughs).

### 5. 10 YEARS ON: WHAT MAKES YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND SPOUSE SPECIAL/UNIQUE?

His genuine love for me. Jolomi did tell me on our wedding day that he would serve me forever and his goal is that I remain happy with him. I dare say I was not the average young lady because, I agreed to marry him when his monthly salary was barely thirty thousand Naira! Still every month, I'd find him spending all on me, and NOTHING on himself. He had 5 shirts he wore to work weekly, yet he made sure I had everything he could afford at the time. We rented an apartment, though with 3 bedrooms, it had just one restroom. In our first year of marriage, we had only a bed, a fan, one I-pass-my-neighbour generator, a stove and a few stuff around the house we had got as gifts from family. They'd seen the potential and huge





asset he is and cheered us on from get go. The past decade has been amazing for me and this is beyond mere words. My husband is selfless, mature, godly, affectionate, faithful, hardworking, loyal, kind, reliable, intelligent...all that. He has made submission easy for a very stubborn and strong willed individual like me.

## 6. WHAT'S THE SOURCE OF

## YOUR JOY AND HOW DO YOU SUSTAIN IT?

God, God and God again. I would not say I have worked that hard for it personally, but I keep it going on purpose. Marriages don't work by chance but by a deliberate commitment to consistently do the little things that may not matter in another marriage but are simply indispensable



in yours. I give kudos to my husband for doing a lot of the hard work, although he tells me I am worth it. Anytime I try to give him accolades, he says, 'it is SOFT work,' whatever that means. Lol

## 7. WHAT IMAGE DOES 'WOMAN ON TOP' CONJURE VIS A VIS YOUR VISION?

It brings to mind an image of a woman who has excelled and will continue to excel in life, one who will make tremendous impact in the educational sector in Nigeria and the world at large, simply because she is passionate about children and education in general! A woman who will review her efforts daily and look for ways to improve, not resting on her oars... All these summarise me!

## 8. SHARE MAJOR LIFE LESSONS TO LEARN FROM.

a. Don't expect much from people: I have had some persons I trusted so much but

when God exposed them, it was a rude shock!

b. Be mindful of your association: Keep friends who are comfortable in their skin and are happy with where they are. Such friends can relate with your successes because they have theirs. That's what I define as iron-sharpening-iron.

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