

# Rising Above Limitations: Unlocking the Potentials of Nigerian Youth

*Being a text of a Speech Presented by High Chief Oluebube A. Chukwu, Ph.D., at the Methodist Youth Conference, Mbala Isuochi on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2025 at Emmanuel Methodist Church, Circuit Headquarters, Mbala Isuochi.*

Protocols:

1. It was **Nelson Mandela** of South Africa who said ‘everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do’. One may ask these central questions: What is limitation? Why are people limited? And how can people rise above their limitations? Limitation is anything that holds you down physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. The fastest way to rise above your limitation is to believe in yourself and to develop and live by the mantra: ‘I CAN DO’ spirit. Napoleon Hill, the celebrated author of **Think and Grow Rich**, submits: ‘whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.’

2. Thus, rising above limitations is a necessary condition for success. As a young person aspiring to leave footprints in the sands and hearts of human historicity, if you refuse to rise above limitations, it may lead to:

- Limited creativity or loss of innovation and Progress in various fields.
- Societal issues including lack of employment and Poverty of purpose or purse or even both.
- Missed opportunities and unfulfilled aspirations.
- Developing an entitlement mentality or increased dependency on others for support, instead of embracing self-sufficiency.
- Stagnated personal and professional growth opportunities for skill development and self-improvement.

3. Benefits of Rising above Your Limitations

When you rise above your limitations, you will experience numerous benefits, including:

### Personal Benefits:

- **Greater Sense of Purpose:** Pursuing interests and passions can give you a sense of purpose and clear direction.
- **Absolute Resilience:** Developing coping mechanisms can help you to handle future challenges with courage, high sense of resoluteness, determination and grit.
- **Improved Self-awareness:** Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses will help you to make better informed decisions and become a highly self-motivated person.
- **Increased Self-Confidence:** Navigating challenges can boost your self- confidence and self-esteem.
- **Leadership Development:** Rising above limitations can develop your leadership capacities and communication skills.

### Professional Benefits:

- **Creativity and Innovation:** Embracing challenges can boost your innovative thinking and problem solving complexities.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Building quality relationships with your mentors and peers can expand your professional networks. More network, more impact plus more money to your pocket.
- **Superlative Productivity:** Developing strategies, skills and competencies can improve your efficiency and performance.
- **Career Advancement:** Rising above limitations will lead to new career growth and exploring new opportunities.
- **Community Engagement:** Overcoming your challenges can lead to enhanced social responsibility and community engagement.

### Societal Benefits:

- **Breaking Chains of Poverty:** Rising above your limitations can lead to breaking cycles of poverty, poor generational patterns and disadvantages in your bloodline. Because an unfortunate inherited trait you do not transform in your lifetime, you will transfer to the next generation unfortunately.

- **Improved Civic engagement:** Young people who rise above limitations can actively become more engaged in the society.
- **Social Progress:** Rising above limitations can lead to significant progress and impactful social change.
- **Economic Growth:** Rising above limitations can lead to economic growth and transformational development opportunities.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Embracing various perspectives and experiences can promote empathy and understanding.

#### 4. Key Challenges Faced By Nigerian Youth

- **Insufficient Access to Education:** Limited access to quality education, especially in the rural areas.
- **High Unemployment Rates:** There is high level of unemployment among graduates and the youthful working class.
- **Poverty:** Many youth live in extreme poverty in Nigeria and this is limiting their opportunities to think creatively and rationally. Nigeria at the moment faces significant poverty challenges. According to World Bank, about 40% of Nigerian population live below the poverty line, and this translates to about 87 million Nigerians living in poverty. Greater percentage of young people are affected by this sad reality.
- **Inadequate Skills and Competencies:** Many young people lack the prerequisite skills for the job market. Sadly, many of them are highly unemployable, because they do not have the skills required for the available jobs.
- **Insecurity:** Security concerns in Nigeria such as banditry, unknown gunmen, Boko Haram insurgency, and other security issues affect youth development. Ongoing security challenges have displaced hundreds of thousands of Nigerians and disrupted economic activities.
- **Brain Drain:** Many youth in a consistent consistency emigrate seeking better opportunities overseas. Many wouldn't have left if there were resources, opportunities and supportive environments in Nigeria.
- **Corruption:** Widespread corruption is our bane in Nigeria; it perpetuates inequality and hinders development and opportunities.

- **Limited Access to funding opportunities:** Insufficient or difficulty accessing capital for business growth and entrepreneurship development.

5. 6 Notable Global Icons That Rose Above Their Limitations:

Due to want of time and space, I will limit my analysis to six personalities:

- **Elon Musk** (of South African descent): As a celebrated innovator and investor, he overcame numerous limitations to be a gift to the world; by revolutionizing the tech industry with companies like SpaceX and Tesla.
- **Malala Yousafzai:** Born in July 12, 1997. A Pakistani film and television producer and female education activist. She is a strong advocate for girls' education and gender equality, who vehemently opposed Taliban restrictions on female education in her home country. She was shot in 2012 by the Taliban who tried to assassinate her. In 2014, she became the youngest recipient of Nobel Peace Prize in history. Today, through Malala Fund, she is working with global network of activists and leaders fighting for girls' right to education.
- **Nelson Mandela of South Africa:** South African Politician, nationalist, socialist and anti-apartheid activist, who spent 27 years of his life in prison for fighting South Africa's apartheid system. He stood trial four times and was arrested on several occasions. He faced numerous setbacks that were meant to break him, but he remained firm and refused to give up the struggle for black emancipation and African renaissance. From 1994 to 1999, he served as South African's first black democratically elected Head of State. His Presidential reign focused on dismantling the legacy of apartheid by promoting racial reconciliation.
- **Maya Angelou:** She is an American civil right activist, writer and poet who overcame poverty, trauma, and racism to become a literary giant. She is best known for memoir, written in 1969 'I know Why the Caged Bird Sings'.
- **Stephen Hawking:** An English theoretical cosmologist, physicist and author, who was paralyzed at the age of 21, from head to toe, yet he defied all odds by revolutionizing the field and thus became one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists in the history of

humanity. He invented black holes and made significant contributions to theory of relativity and quantum mechanics.

- **Saidy Brown:** She is a South African HIV positive activist, who is using her large social media followings to fight HIV stigma, and change perceptions of HIV. She was born with the virus, which claimed her parents and left her an orphan at a tender age. Yet she refused to give up and continues to be a sign of hope and courage to others till date.

6. 7 Biblical Figures That Rose Above Their Limitations:

- David, a man after God's own heart faced limitations of fear, giant Goliath, and personal struggles, yet he resisted every attempt to give up. He trusted God. He believed in himself and in God, he remained faithful despite his limitations. At the appointed time, he used his sling and stone to defeat the Philistine - Goliath (I Samuel 17:45-50).
- Joseph rose from Prison to palace; he faced limitations of betrayals, false accusations even from his own brothers, and imprisonment. But he refused to give up, he trusted God and remained faithful to Him. He found favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison (Genesis 39:21) and rose to become a trusted advisor to King Pharaoh (Genesis 41:39-41).
- Esther also known as Hadassah, the queen of Persia and Medes, risked her life to save Jewish people from annihilation. She was courageous in approaching the king without being summoned, defying Persian law. Her act of bravery, courage, remarkable character, strategic planning and trust in God's providence led to the downfall of Haman, who plotted against the Jews (Esther 4:11-16, 5:1). She salvaged her people against all odds. Esther was an orphaned Jewish woman, who was raised by her first cousin, Mordecai (Esther 2:7).
- Job endured suffering; he faced limitations of fear, despair and loss. Yet, he refused to curse God, rather he maintained faith (Job 13:15), and experienced total restoration and blessings from God. 'Those who hope in the Lord will renew their

strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint' (Isaiah 40:31).

- Apostle Peter, moved from the state of denial to leadership; he faced limitations of fear, denial of Jesus, and personal struggles. Thereafter, he repented, accepted God's forgiveness and became a leader in the early Christian Church. Jesus told him 'Feed my lambs' (John 21:15).
- Apostle Paul persevered through persecution; he faced limitations of imprisonment, severe beatings, and oppositions. Yet, he refused to give up, rather he remained resolute, strong in faith, continued spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and wrote several letters of encouragement to God's people.
- Ruth faced limitations of loss, poverty and social challenges. Yet, she refused to give up, she was such a loyalty to behold. She showed loyalty to Naomi, worked hard and became a part of King David's lineage (Ruth 1:16).

## 7. Strategies That Will Help You to Rise above Your Limitations

These above challenges can be perfectly addressed through wonderful initiatives like:

- **Access to Resources:** Ensuring that there are adequate access to resources for young people to explore in the areas of networks, funding opportunities, development and technology.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Connecting young people with skilled mentors and relevant professionals for guidance, support and direction.
- **Community Involvement:** Promoting social connections and community engagements that will boost support and networking opportunities.
- **Access to Opportunities:** Providing opportunities for career development, volunteerism and internships.
- **Positive Role Modelling:** Fostering influencers and positive role models that will connect, network, raise, equip and inspire youth development.
- **Skills training and Academic Excellence:** Providing vocational skills development and education.

- **Setting Realistic Goals:** Youth need to set smart, measurable, realistic and achievable goals.
- **Networking:** Youth ought to embrace and explore networking opportunities, and these will facilitate connections with industry experts, professionals and peers in various spheres of influence.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Young People need to come up with scalable visionary ideas that will enable them to partner with organizations, governments and communities.

8. Nigerian Youth can rise above their seeming limitations and achieve greatness with the right support, skills and mindset. To make this possible, they need to explore with grit, determination and courage various areas of development, including:

- Professional development such as career exploration, mentorship and networking, skill or vocational training and certifications, entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Personal development such as leadership and communication skills, emotional intelligence, time management, goal-setting, self-awareness and self-reflection.
- Creative development like arts, music, storytelling, writing, publishing, content creation, design, technology, and creative industries.
- Physical Development including fitness and wellness, sports, health education and nutrition, mindfulness, mind-body connection and outdoor activities.
- Emotional Development such as mental health and wellbeing, empathy, compassion, self-care, regulation and stress management.
- Intellectual development especially critical thinking and problem solving, academic pursuits, STEM research and innovation, critical enquiry and ethics.
- Social Development such as cultural exchange, activism and social responsibility, social networks and relationships, volunteering, community engagement and building quality relationships.

9. By consciously determining to rise above their limitations, Nigerian youth can achieve their goals, unlock their full potentials, develop fulfilling lives and make sustainable impacts in the society.



10. Before I leave the stage, may I challenge you with this golden quote attributed to Washington Irving ‘little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune; but great minds rise above them’. My dear Young people, **do not be subdued by misfortunes you experience on your existential journey to the top, rise above them.**

11. The eternal word of God reminds each and every one of us: ‘For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’ (Jeremiah 29:11). Do not be afraid and do not forget that the plan of God for you is to make you become a better version of yourself. God is interested in your prosperity. God wants you to rise above your limitations. So, rise above them!

12. Therefore, soar like the eagle you are! Zoom to the top, where life is less congested! Thank you for listening and may God bless you.

Oluebube A. Chukwu, Ph.D., mnipr  
August, 16, 2025

**OLUEBUBE  
A. CHUKWU**