

Africa Storytelling Challenge— Notable Submissions: In Tome Bafor's Words

Committed to championing scientific innovations and advancements, Bafor is affecting change in her community and throughout Africa—and this year's judges of the Africa Storytelling Challenge lauded these impressive efforts. Recognized as a runner-up in this year's contest, Bafor shares her essay submission below.

My primary area of research is on reproductive health. I am currently working on leiomyoma (uterine fibroid). This is a widespread condition in Nigeria and Africa and globally as well, which causes several disabling issues. It leads to infertility, pain, hormone imbalance and general discomfort. There is currently no cure except through surgical intervention. My research currently looks at the relationship between oxidative stress and leiomyoma. Oxidative stress is a condition which occurs in the body when certain chemicals in the body are oxidized which changes the primary function of the chemicals. These chemicals that have been changed are then available to cause injury within the body and can also lead to tumor development. Foreign compounds in the body such as plastic metabolites (compounds released from plastics) can cause oxidative stress and cause development of fibroid. I am working at the moment to establish a relationship between plastic metabolites and fibroid. I am also working to see how intake of easy to access remedies such as antioxidants e.g. ascorbic acid, can contribute to the regression and management of fibroid.

This will improve fertility and reduce the pain and discomfort associated with the condition in women. The importance and impact of this research is of several dimensions. This research will bring new knowledge to the society, enlightening on the possible relationship between plastic exposure and development of fibroid, which can lead to behavioral changes particularly in African countries regarding plastics use. This research will also evaluate treatment of fibroid with antioxidants and will also evaluate reduction of plastic metabolites levels by use of these antioxidants. This will provide new treatment options for women with this condition and also provide a cheap, affordable and sustainable means of managing the condition. This can also provide treatment relief for women in rural areas unable to afford surgery or other expensive procedures. This will additionally impact the prescribing nature of physicians to include antioxidant therapy. The impact scale of my research is wide and far-reaching.

My motivation comes from a personal need. I was diagnosed of uterine fibroid at a young age before I delved into research and was told there was no cure except for surgical intervention and that surgery will

not prevent a re-occurrence. I also discovered that several women had been diagnosed with uterine fibroid and this has led to infertility and miscarriages. While for yet other women, they experienced severe pain and discomfort leading to poor quality of life and poor work output. This inspired in me a desire to establish my research in reproductive health specializing on female disorders. I decided to use my research to search for new treatment options for female reproductive disorders and perform research such that the society benefits from my research. I am also motivated by a desire to contribute to the sustainable development goals on women health. If every one of us contribute in our own little way, sustainable development goals can be successfully achieved.

I am a firm believer that stories of science particularly stories of women in science, be shared. When stories of science are told and shared, it inspires fellow scientists creating a positive ripple effect. It brings a much-needed awareness to the world and immediate communities of the hard work and effort scientists put in to make the world a better place. In addition, winners of these awards are further motivated to continue in their research and impact lives of people. I have had few opportunities to share my stories which includes the pain, tears and sweat I have had to put in as a woman in science from a developing country, to train and develop my skills such that I get to a stage where I can make a difference in society through my research. At each of those times when I have had to share my story, it has always been a satisfyingly rewarding experience and I had consistently received comments from women in similar situations about how inspired they were, and others told me how my story kept them going through difficult times.

The content and views presented here are those of the individual Challenge participant.

About the Africa Storytelling Challenge

The inaugural [Champions of Science—Africa Storytelling Challenge](#) took place between May and August 2018. Open to all scientists doing innovative work in Africa, the contest drew more than 100 submissions. An independent selection committee of scientists, policymakers and science journalists reviewed the applications and selected the winners. Each winner will be awarded \$5,000 and will have the opportunity to share their stories at the 2019 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Washington, D.C.