

BECOMING AN

Angel
of
Change

LIFE CHANGING STORIES
TO HELP YOU DISCOVER YOUR
STRENGTH, YOUR UNIQUENESS,
AND YOUR PURPOSE.

BINETA NGOM

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*Your past is your foundation,
it makes you strong.*

*Your present is your unique
gift for a better future.*

Bineta Ngom



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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father, Ady Ngom. We only lived on earth together for four years, and yet you have shaped my entire life. Thank you, and rest in peace.

To my dear mother, the woman who truly loves me and supports me unconditionally—thank you for always being there for me.

To my children—thank you. Your love and support keep me going; nothing is more important in my life than all of you.

*"It always seems impossible
until it's done."*

-- Nelson Mandela

Each and every one of us is on earth for a purpose that must be discovered to be fulfilled. While some people easily discover the meaning of their existence and share it with the world, many of us ponder why we're here.

For most of my life, I've meditated on the struggles I've endured and reflected on my life's true purpose. What am I to do with my time on this beautiful, yet imperfect planet?

Over time, I did find it, and the people closest to me are very much a big part of my accomplishments. So, thanks to Mother, my children, and my family for allowing me to share our stories with the rest of the world, for in my culture in Senegal, West Africa, we believe that what happens in the family must stay in the family. I hope that by sharing my stories, I will inspire others to become angels of change in their homes, in their communities, and around the world that we love and share.

INTRODUCTION

This book is composed of three parts:

1. The first part is a collection of stories that have shaped my life and pulled me through my purpose. I experienced fear, uncertainties, pressures, and profound struggles that have threatened my life after my father's sudden death.
2. The second part is about my life in America. I call this the "Immigrant Life," which is about the unknown, the disconnection, the misunderstanding, and the journey to fulfillment, but also the awareness I experienced that took my life to a whole new direction.
3. The last and third part of my book is called "From Learning to Sharing," what I learned from part one and part two that I wanted to share with the world. This part is the essence of my book. It is a call to action for people to *be* more, to *have* more, and to *do* more for the world to be a better place for all of us.

WHAT IS AN “ANGEL OF CHANGE”

“Angels of Change” are people who believe they are born to serve regardless of race, religion, gender, or any other limiting belief that can stop them from serving humanity.

My *raison d'être* can be traced back to my mother, a widowed woman who lost her husband at the age of twenty-eight. She never went to school, never worked outside of our home, and managed to raise five children alone. The most powerful tool that helped her overcome her dark moments was a simple set of beliefs she learned from her parents. I shared these beliefs in part one of my book, chapter 2.

When I looked at my mother, with all she was going through, I could only dream that God would give me the power to change her life so she can be happy again; it was painful for me to see her striving to make a living. But when I looked at my neighborhood, we weren't the only ones struggling. Eventually, my dream to help my mother expanded to my neighbors as well. Almost every one of them was struggling in some way.

My desires sparked a feeling of excitement—my imagined world of having the power to make a difference seemed so real

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that it inspired me to take action. I became a social butterfly in my community, running errands for the elderly, helping them clean their homes, and paying them visits to talk about life and hear their pearls of wisdom.

When I secured my first job a few years later, my desire to help grew, and I was grateful for having something to share with my family, the single moms, the widows, and the orphans living in my community.

Then real life intervened. It seemed like there was always something that came between me and my dream, pulling me apart from it, and while I fought to hang on and do what I loved, things were getting harder and harder. My responsibilities and obligations were growing, but my resources were stagnant. I finally stopped trying to help everyone in need and started to think of ways to increase my income. I put my dreams on hold, hoping and planning that one day I would have the opportunity to fulfill my vision.

Years went by, and I was given the opportunity to visit the United States of America. I had to leave my son and my family for the first time in my life. That decision was one of the hardest things I have ever done.

In the States, however, a new journey started—a journey of highs and lows that I never thought could teach me so much about life. I went from the small and nurturing town of Bargny in Senegal, to one of the most beautiful and diverse cities in America, the City of Angels. Los Angeles became my dream

home, a place where I found opportunities that would open doors to a better life.

My life as an immigrant was full of surprises, frustration, and confusion, but it helped me discover my true self and gave me a clearer vision for my existence on Earth. Through my pain, I was inspired. I decided to stay in America. In that journey of improving, I discovered that I cannot change any situation in my outside world without changing my inner world.

I was not raised to distinguish the inner from the outer world of life. I knew nothing about thoughts, the mind, and their relationship with our physical outcome. I thought that nothing could be changed and that anything that happened to me was God's will. No wonder I was frustrated. I thought I was powerless, not knowing that I was God's best and most powerful creation on Earth. I started to gain awareness and used anything I could put my hands on to change my way of thinking and living. Through my journey of defeating ignorance, I found that the way to freedom is knowing who you really are.

Through my mother's lessons and my own encounters with the sunrises and storms of life, I learned and developed powerful tools that guided me to a fulfilled life. I realized that there is nothing else to do in life, for me, but to serve humanity in order to be fulfilled.

When we discover our purpose, we find our way and our strength. Then, we can end any discordance and disharmony

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in our lives. We all have life stories, something that inspires us to do something great in our lives. In every one of us, there is a book that we can write and share with the world. I found mine, and I don't want to die with it. *Becoming an Angel of Change* is a story of overcoming adversity through determination, commitment, and an overwhelming desire to inspire others.



PART

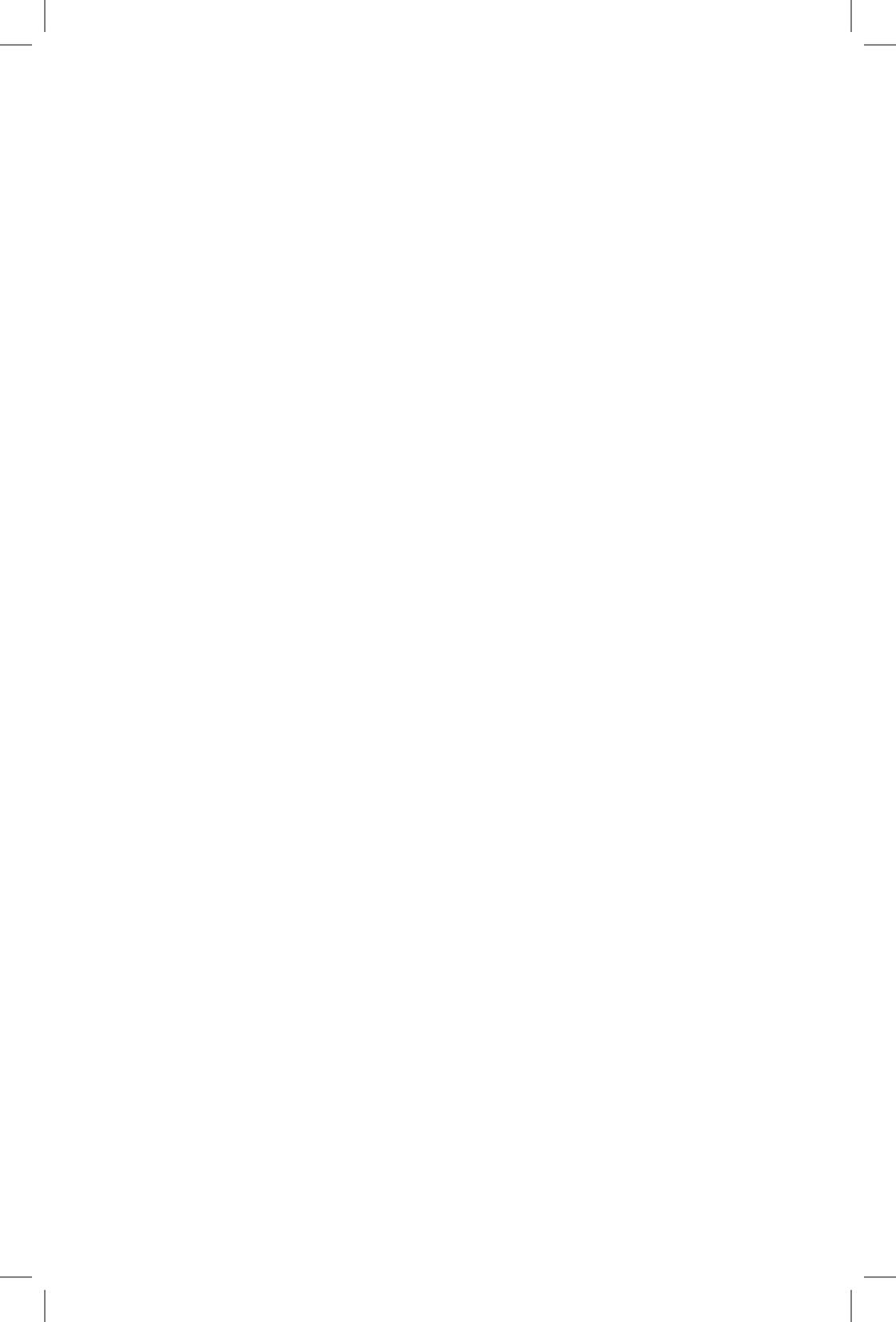
I

Stories From My Childhood

These experiences are a part of the building blocks of the person I am today. They have transformed my life in great ways.

*"Beautiful souls are shaped
by ugly experiences."*

-- Matshona Dhliwayo



CHAPTER 1

Feeling the Grief

*"It is not the length of life,
but the depth of life."
-- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The Unexpected Death of My Father

Lots of memories may elude me as I increase in age and experience, but one that will always stay, even if I try hard to cast it out, is an incident that seemed to modify my childhood and has defined who I have become today.

It all started when Papa passed on. His name was Ady Ngom. He was only thirty-four when he died. I was nearly five at the time and barely remember him, yet he shaped everything in my life. When I look at his portrait, I see a tall and frail man full of dreams and eagerness to make change. My father suffered from stomach aches for a long time but never wanted to stop his activities to take care of his wellbeing until it was too late. He put everyone else before himself.

Papa was the principal of the school in Bargny, our small hometown located fourteen kilometers east of Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The school combined elementary, middle, and high school. Everyone in Bargny admired and respected Papa; he was very much a fixture of the city. He founded the Youth Club, where most of the young men and women in the town gathered to play soccer and participate in many other cultural activities like music, dance, and comedy. It was a safe place for them to learn and grow, and to find opportunities that help them reach their full potential. The Youth Club center, called “Foyer des Jeunes,” was father’s second home, and even when he came back to our house at night, parents were there, waiting for him to talk about their children’s progress at school.

Our house was also the gathering place on weekends for everyone from the national athletic scholarship program to other sociocultural groups in Senegal. Papa’s mission was to help people, no matter who they were or where they came from.

Outside of the school and the club, my father was also responsible for his family—all thirty of us, including his parents, brothers, sisters, cousins—and, of course, Mama, and their five children. Life was beautiful; we were growing, happy, secure, and eager to learn.

Mama's Grieving Period

When mama became a widow at the age of twenty-eight, she had her family and community around. My elder brother Abba was ten, my sister Aram was eight, I was almost five, my brother Mamadou was three, and my sister Aida was just six months old when Papa left us. Mama had no formal education and had never worked outside the home.

A lot of aspirations and expectations we shared with Papa died with him. While he was alive, Papa had been in the middle of constructing our new home so we could move out of his parents' home. The ongoing construction had given Papa and Mama high hopes, and we had all been looking forward to a new life in a new environment when the cold, appalling hand of death snatched Papa away from us. Due to the incomplete state of the house—missing doors, windows, and protection walls to stop animals and burglars from entering the house—we couldn't move into it. We had to move from Papa's family house to Mama's family house.

Mama had to observe the custom and traditional ritual of a widow, grieving for three months and ten days. The same tradition also required her to stay home through the course of the mourning period. During the day, she would sit in the living room with the visitors who had come to grieve with her and console her, each trying in their own way to inject calm words of comfort and fortitude. At night, with the visitors gone, she was free to walk around the house. Eventually, when the day had gotten weary and everyone had gone to sleep, she

would lie on the mattress beside us on the living room floor and surrender to the heavy hands of the night.

Since I was only five years old then, it might sound unbelievable to say that I can still remember hundreds of sympathizers flowing in and out of my grandparents' house for almost a month. A large tent was set up in my grandfather's courtyard to accommodate the guests. Papa's death left people feeling as if their guiding light was gone. For the first few days, friends, family, and neighbors came by to talk about how my father had been a godsend to them, having helped them out in times of difficulties, while many claimed he had touched their hearts with invaluable kindness and uncommon benevolence. It seemed like all of Bargny had lost a gem and savior.

My grandparents persuaded the visitors to pray and thank God for Its will instead of crying and talking. They made sure that traditional meals like fish or meat and white rice topped with vegetables like cassava, carrots, cabbage, and others were prepared for the visitors who came from near and far to support and pray for us through our difficult time.

According to Senegalese culture, neither Mama nor the other adults were supposed to tell us kids about Papa's death. The horrible happening just was not discussed, and Mama wasn't even supposed to cry in our presence because of how we would feel, and the horrific images that would be created in our subconscious. During the grieving period, we didn't see Mama very much since our aunties were taking care of us; we played around like normal kids. Our cousins were around to

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play with, plus we were constantly surrounded by relatives, and stayed at Grandpa's place most of the time—crawling on him, jumping on the bed, rolling on the floor, and giggling endlessly.

There were times I playfully ran into the big living room, where Mama was surrounded by people. I would see her wiping her cheeks in utter melancholy, and even though she could probably feel my keen eyes on her, she would conceal hers from me. It didn't occur to me that something greater than her was constraining her to keep her motherly gaze away from me. It felt very lonely and empty at night when everyone had left, and we were alone in the two rooms in Grandfather's house that served as our bedrooms. The atmosphere seemed strangely tense, and I could see the sadness boldly written on Mama's face. Her big eyes were red, and one could tell an ocean of tears had channeled through them. Whenever we asked about Papa, she answered that he had traveled far away. Unlike before, we didn't play games at night anymore, there was no laughter, and the environment was subjugated into abject gloom by our father's death.