

'Law Practice is not for the Indolent'

My name is Rafiq Anammah. I obtained my LLB from the University of Nigeria in 2009 and, thereafter, proceeded to the Nigerian Law School where I obtained my B.L. I was called to the Nigerian Bar in 2010. I did my mandatory NYSC programme with the Delta State Ministry of Justice, Asaba. I was in the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of the Ministry.

I am a member of the Dispute Resolution Practice Group of AELEX. Before joining AELEX in 2014, I worked with the law office of C. O. Okwusogu (SAN) & Co. and later with Chudi Obieze & Co.. I am also, a trained and certified arbitrator, mediator and conciliator. I am a member of the International Bar Association (IBA), Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK), and the Institute of Chartered Mediators and Conciliators (ICMC).

My areas of legal practice span aviation, maritime, property, taxation, and telecommunication laws.

I enjoy reading books and listening to music, during my leisure time.

Have you had any challenges in your career as a Lawyer, and if so, what were the main challenges?

Some of the earliest challenges I faced as a Lawyer, were during my first few years at the Bar. I found it challenging to respond to several court applications or processes at the same time, considering the time limitations set by the various Rules

Dispute Resolution Practice Group of court to so do. However, with experience, I have discovered that if I prioritise the applications or processes, I can comfortably respond to them without putting myself under undue pressure. Secondly, I have to stay alert at all times, to ensure that judgements are not obtained and execution levied against our clients without my knowledge and without the process. This can be very taxing, when your practice spans several States of Nigeria like mine does. Thirdly, as a litigation lawyer, I spend a lot of time conducting



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legal research, preparing court processes and appearing in court. It is often times difficult for me to create sufficient time to relax with friends and family, and this sometimes affects my personal life.

What was your worst day as a Lawyer?

My worst day as a Lawyer, was a day when a Judge delivered a ruling in an application that I had filed. Regardless of the fact that I knew that the law and the facts were on my side on the issues I had canvassed before the court, the decision went against me for inexplicable reasons.

What was your most memorable experience as a Lawyer?

My most memorable experience as a Lawyer, was when the court delivered judgment in my client's favour in a case involving a matter of negligence, before the Abuja High Court.

Who has been most influential person in your life?

In my personal life, the most influential person has been my aunt, Dr (Mrs.) Abutu. She is a staunch Christian. Growing up under her watchful eyes, she ensured that I took the path of Godliness and shunned social vices. The values she inculcated in me, have contributed immensely in making me who I am today.

Professionally, the most influential persons in my life have been two of the most perfect gentlemen I have ever come across, the late Obiekwe Okwusogu, SAN, and Chudi Obieze. Before his sad demise in 2016, Obiekwe Okwusogu was the founder and principal of C. O. Okwusogu & Co., a Lagos based litigation law firm where I started my legal practice in 2011. I admired his humility and simplicity. Even as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, he would insist on carrying his bag himself when we appeared in court together. That made a huge impression on me. I never saw him insult any of his staff or colleagues. Chudi Obieze is the founder and principal of Chudi Obieze & Co, a litigation law firm in Onitsha. I admire his calmness and doggedness in pursuing any cause he undertakes and believes in. He would always take his time to vet any draft you presented to him, and would never castigate a junior colleague for any mistake done. Instead, he would correct the mistake calmly, and move on as if nothing happened.

Then, the partners at AELEX cannot be left out. These are very ambitious and hardworking individuals, who have excelled in their specialised areas of law practice, and who have practically proven that a law practice can successfully be run like a business entity, which it ought to be. I have learnt from them that a law practice should not be managed in a tardy and nonchalant manner; that law practice is also a business and should be run as such.

the privilege of seeing and hearing of the exploits of distinguished lawyers from my Hometown, Onitsha, like the late Chief Chike Offodile, SAN,

who was a one-time Attorney-General of the Federation, late Chief P. O. Balonwu, SAN, and many others. I saw the prestige these individuals had, and the respect they commanded in the society by virtue of the fact that they were Lawyers, and I made up my mind to be like them. There was also a law court that is close to my house in Onitsha, so I had easy and early contact with the law, by sometimes going to court to watch legal proceedings. With all these factors, I had to settle for the study of Law and I am glad I did.

What would be your advice to anyone wanting a career in Law?

My advice to anyone contemplating studying Law, is that it is a good idea. However, Law is not for the indolent. To successfully study and practice law, one requires utmost commitment and concentration. It is only in rare cases, that a new entrant into the profession would start making huge earnings. The first few years, are usually challenging for the young Lawyer who is just trying to find his or her feet. However, if the young Lawyer can persevere, and he gains the requisite experience and competence, he would notice his earnings grow with time and life may become easier. So, if the aspirant has a "get rich quick" mentality, then the legal profession is the wrong place for him or her.

If you had not become a Lawyer, what career would you have chosen?

I would have chosen to be a Lecturer, because I love teaching. I may have also been a Footballer, as it remains one of my hobbies.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

In ten years, by God's grace, I hope to have become a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, with several law texts and articles to my name. Also, I hope I would have contributed my little quota to the society, by handling some cases pro bono for the indigent, and teaching law courses in some universities, even if I do it gratis.