

## **Tayo Agboke**

### *ELI 2000: Emerging as Individuals*

When I first found out about ELI, I thought it was something I wanted to do. However, I almost did not apply for it. I filled out the application on the last day it was due and waited in anticipation for an answer. ELI has been a positive experience in my life. It has helped me to experience new things and change my way of thinking; it has helped me to become more direct, open and sincere; and it has introduced me to new, interesting, and wonderful people.

Through ELI, I have experienced many different things and have been introduced to new and different ways of thinking. The new and different experiences I had include working on a community service project with 25 of my peers (with help from our instructors and mentors) and working on an individual leadership project. The numerous and diverse speakers that taught the class each week brought with them unique perspectives. The speaker that I found most enlightening was Lance Brunner because his presentation awakened new emotions in me. Lance Brunner's session was about Mindfulness. The way he taught was attention grabbing. It focused the whole class's attention on what he was talking about. I especially like the point he made about thoughts being impermanent and how we should not let them control what we do. But I believe that a thought is as permanent or impermanent as everything else. He also clarified what it means to be disillusioned and how people take the wrong meaning from it. (Taking away an illusion is not always a bad thing.) Rhonda Strouse, the first presenter, helped us to analyze what qualities we have (good and bad) and how to improve on them. I liked this because, it was a means of self exploration.

Other new experiences I had included working on an individual project from creation to finish and working with members of the class and mentors on a group community service project. For my individual project I chose to work on voter registration. For my voter registration project I organized two Voter Registration and Information days. My project was successful because five people have registered to vote as a result of it, and hopefully this will make the electoral process more democratic and empower these people, of whom I am one. This project has turned me on to politics and I will be more politically active as a result of it.

For our group community service project we went to the Bob Brown House, a home for the elderly and handicapped. Each member of the class had a vital role in the class. (Although at one point I felt that all the people in my group were dumping too much work on me, everything turned out for the best.) When we all started to lose focus, Lauren, one of our astute and caring mentors, reminded us that we were going to the Bob Brown House to brighten other people's day, not to finish a project schedule. Partly as a result of ELI, I learned to become more courageous, honest with people at all times, and appreciative of how uniquely wonderful people can be. This expresses how I feel about letting my light shine and being true to myself.

When I began this class, I would always take a pass on whatever my heart told me to do, but through the transformation I am going through, I follow my feelings and do not conform because I am prouder of who I am - not who I want to be.

The activities that we have done in class have helped me to view people differently and appreciate each individual's unique qualities. I have taken it to heart when

different members of ELI have said that I should always be honest and sincere when dealing with other people. This is a lesson I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

The third and perhaps the most important thing I got from ELI is the opportunity to meet, interact, and become friends with some fantastic people. Getting to know all these people was an educational process in itself. Each student in the class had his/her own unique and special qualities. The individuals that I met through my leadership project and the group project helped me very much in my evolution as an Emerging Leader (Individual). I have become fond of all these people, and will know and work with a lot of these individuals throughout my college career, and maybe life.

Through the experiences I have had in ELI, such as the weekly sessions that featured speakers on diversity and individual ethics, and working on individual and group leadership and community service projects, I have learned to look at things from different perspectives and experienced new and different things that I will carry with me and use the rest of my life. Some of the things you don't plan on, or do at the last second can turn out to be the best things that happen to you. I am glad I filled out that ELI application. Thank you guys for a great experience and a great year.

See you in the hall ways!