

# MY NAME IS GIFT OF GOD

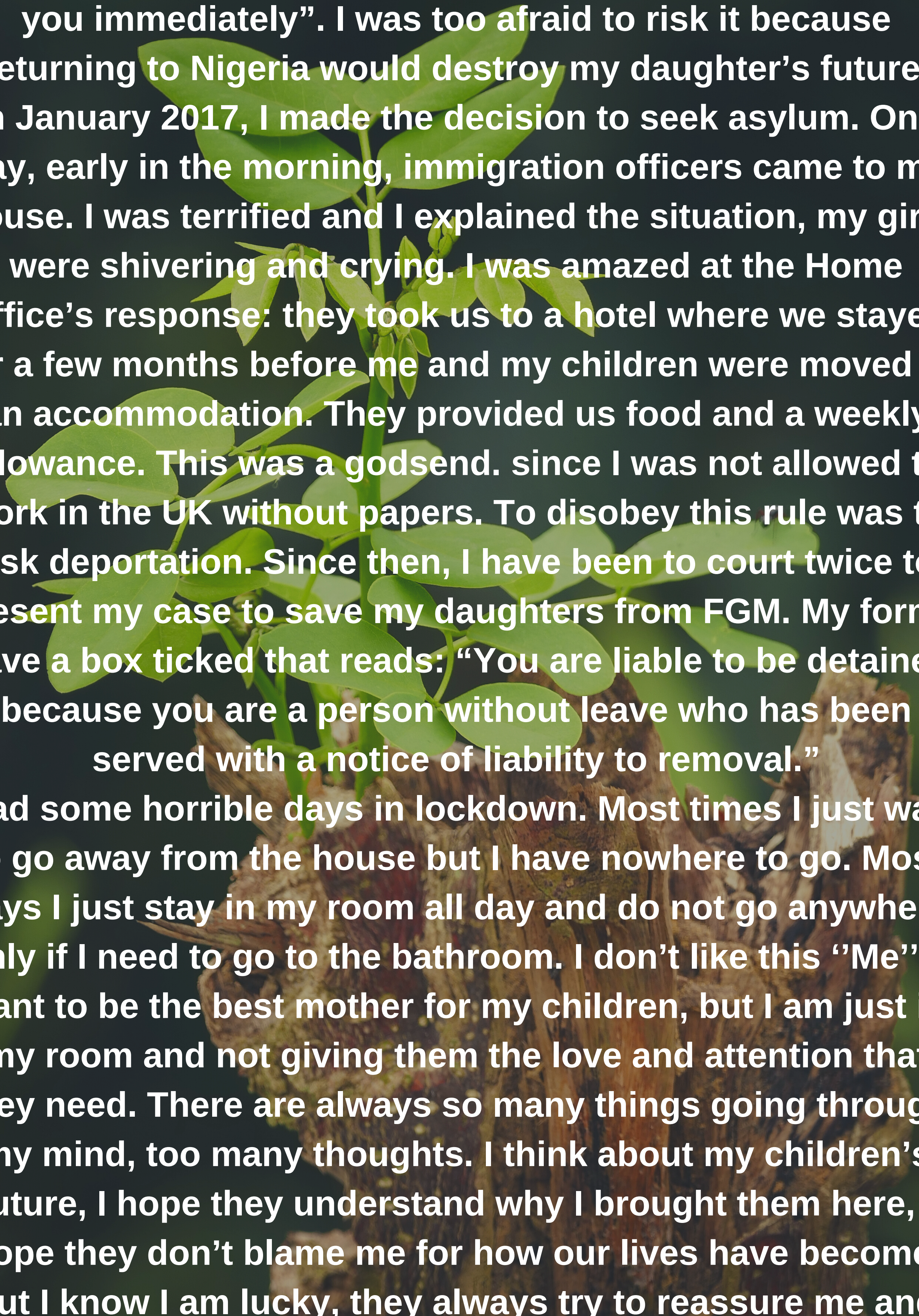
My name means Gift of God, it was given to me by my parents and I like my name. People say I am fun, outspoken, and confident.

When coronavirus came to the UK, I was very scared and anxious because it is a deadly disease that has no cure. I think a lot in lockdown and I stay at home all the time, my mental health goes downhill. I have lost my motivation. I don't see people, I don't talk.

I wanted to make myself busy by cooking African food but the price for ingredients has gone up, I thought maybe it's because of Corona. I live in a SERCO accommodation because I have children, otherwise, I would have been homeless. We have rats in the house, something is leaking always, I wonder why the landlord doesn't care about his house.

## About me:

When I came to the UK with my two little girls, I found lodging in Manchester, a dismal house divided up to accommodate many flatmates. We shared one room, with a shared toilet down the hall for all the flatmates. I realised that I could not even afford this dwelling for long before the money runs out. It was also a struggle trying to enroll my children into school because I did not have the right document, but I was finally able to enroll them in school. My little daughters' teachers called me into the school one day, they had noticed that she did not have basic supplies, including lunch money.



I explained the situation to the school that I had fled from my country and was advised to go to the Home Office and apply for asylum, so I would receive government support. But few people warned me not to do that “because they will deport you immediately”. I was too afraid to risk it because returning to Nigeria would destroy my daughter’s future. In January 2017, I made the decision to seek asylum. One day, early in the morning, immigration officers came to my house. I was terrified and I explained the situation, my girls were shivering and crying. I was amazed at the Home Office’s response: they took us to a hotel where we stayed for a few months before me and my children were moved to an accommodation. They provided us food and a weekly allowance. This was a godsend. since I was not allowed to work in the UK without papers. To disobey this rule was to risk deportation. Since then, I have been to court twice to present my case to save my daughters from FGM. My forms have a box ticked that reads: “You are liable to be detained because you are a person without leave who has been served with a notice of liability to removal.”

I had some horrible days in lockdown. Most times I just want to go away from the house but I have nowhere to go. Most days I just stay in my room all day and do not go anywhere only if I need to go to the bathroom. I don’t like this “Me”. I want to be the best mother for my children, but I am just in my room and not giving them the love and attention that they need. There are always so many things going through my mind, too many thoughts. I think about my children’s future, I hope they understand why I brought them here, I hope they don’t blame me for how our lives have become, but I know I am lucky, they always try to reassure me and they understand the sacrifice.

**One day in quarantine I wrote this poem:**

**Today I am down  
I have not really been feeling myself in a while  
I have lost a lot of confidence.  
Most time I didn't have the motivation to speak  
to my friends,  
I just wanted to be on my own.  
I think about my daughter and feeling proud  
that she got an offer to go to do nursery at  
university  
but she can't, cause she doesn't have the  
status  
The only thing I could do was  
celebrate her 20th birthday  
I cooked her a nice meal  
and wished her a bright future!**