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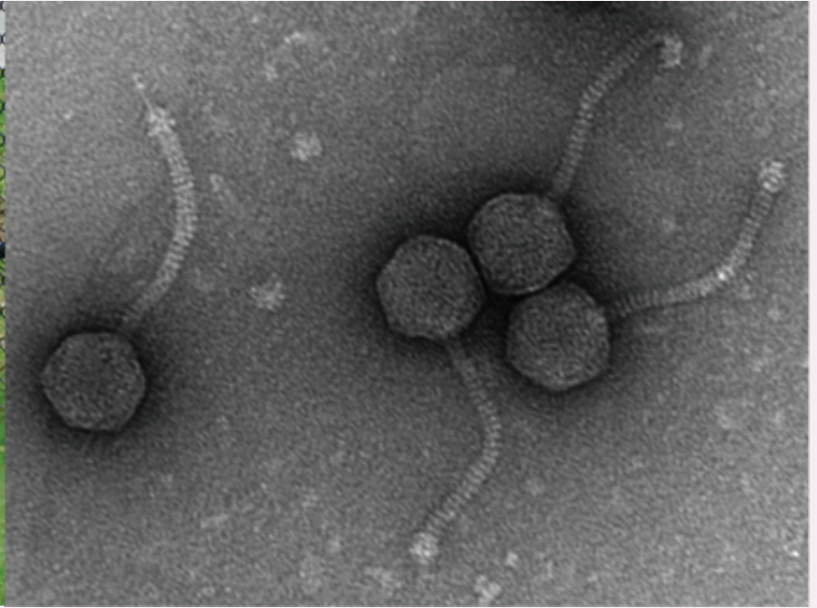
“Kí lō fé ẹ̀ tōbá dàgbà”

Sope Oguntuyo

From my childhood in Nigeria, to now, adults have asked me, “Kí l fé ẹ̀ tōbá dàgbà” (translated from Yorùbá: “What do you want to be when you grow up?”). This age old question has been floating around the frontal lobe of my brain and the mind of countless other individuals faced with the same introspective question. Perhaps, others already have or soon will receive the question in another language as well. In my youth, I thought of the possibilities: law, medicine, science, or even engineering; from the sciences, biology and

astronomy captured my attention. Ironically enough, it was not until my exposure to the microscope that my view of biology was broadened.

When I was younger, I was able to peek through the eyepiece of a flimsy microscope to observe stationary cells. Although these observations revealed a static image, it set off a dynamic pathway as I quickly absorbed information about the phospholipid bilayer, the nucleolus, and numerous other



Digging for soil samples to isolate a phage

cellular organelles. However, I was only able to retain the names of those cell parts, and not the role they played within the cell. In my earlier days, the microscope was an object of amusement and enjoyment for me; but, in high school, my perspective of this apparatus was put into focus, and I began to develop an appreciation for the valuable instrument. In AP biology, the class was given the opportunity to view live paramecium and algae. Eagerly, I began the quest to find the paramecium, but I became disappointed as the simple organism eluded the microscope's focal point. After instructions from the teacher to adjust the position of the slide, I was able to swiftly find the hairy one-celled organism. This invigorating experience and my overall experience with prior biology courses increased my desire to pursue biology and search for knowledge in this vast and mysterious field. The microscope not only exposed the haven of these diminutive creatures to me, but it also displayed the intriguing world of the scientific field to my eyes, which held a potential career field.

With these positive encounters, I confidently came to UAB as a biology major looking to expand my field of vision in the sciences. With the aide of the Science and Technology Honors Program's Quick Connections, I was able to get in touch with Dr. Sunnie Thompson –the Principle Investigator (PI) of the Microbiology laboratory– through Dr. Marla Hertz. This meeting culminated in getting me involved in a research lab as a freshman on December 1, 2010. At Dr. Thompson's laboratory, I was given the privilege of working on a project regarding the effect of cellular stresses on Internal Ribosome Entry Site (IRES) mediated translational activity, which is another means for translation to occur within an eukaryotic cell. Some cellular mRNAs utilize the mechanism of IRES dependent translation to make some cellular proteins, and several viruses are known to use IRES mediated translation

to make viral proteins. Before the conclusion of the spring semester, I was able to present my findings thus far at two poster presentations. Currently, I am performing research regarding Ribosomal Protein S25 (RPS25). RPS25 has been found to be essential for IRES-mediated translational activity. So far, I have been exposed to a plethora of new scientific instruments and techniques, yet there is still a connection that I will always have to the microscope.

This semester, I felt nostalgic using a microscope. More specifically, I used an electron microscope – not a flimsy light microscope – for an experiment in the Phage Genomics course (BY 213). The microscope allowed each member of the class to visualize his/her novel phage that was isolated from a soil sample and worked with throughout the course of the class; moreover, one lucky phage from the class will be fully sequenced and will be analyzed in the spring semester. Regardless, thus far in college, I have drifted from my naïve view that equated biological research with microscopes to one that appreciates other aspects of biology with my research experience in Dr. Sunnie Thompson's research lab and the Phage Genomics course.

However, the microscope will always be a scientific tool that I will always value dearly in regards to the memories held as I peered through the eyepiece and gained knowledge from those observations. My gratitude belongs to Zacharias Janssen and Anton Van Leeuwenhoek for their individual contributions to the invention of the light microscope. With an early exposure to this instrument and numerous others due to my research experience, I can confidently state that I would like to pursue biomedical research.