

A WHITE CAP for Florence

By Jordan Monson Wright

(Based on a true story)

Thirteen-year-old Florence Onyejekwe reached her usual spot in the crowded outdoor market in Onitsha, Nigeria. The street was packed with sellers calling out to busy shoppers. Women balanced bundles on their heads as they walked. School had just ended for the holidays, and Florence knew her friends were enjoying the break from class. But Florence spent her holidays selling bitterleaf here at the market. It was her only chance to earn money for her school fees.

Florence did not complain, though. After all, her mother spent



long hours at the market every day selling yams to buy food for the family. Mama worked so hard. Her parents both did. But without an education, there was only so much they could do. Florence was almost finished with primary school. Perhaps if she could continue her schooling, she could get a good-paying job and help her family.

When she returned home, Florence found her parents and asked, "Do you think I could go to secondary school? And maybe university?"

Mama looked at Nnam (dad) and shook her head. "University costs so much more than we have," said Nnam.

Florence looked down at her shoes. She didn't want Mama and Nnam to see how disappointed she was.

A few days later, Florence stopped at the hospital to pick up some medicine. The hospital was almost as busy as the market, though not as loud. Florence stared at the nurses in their crisp, white caps. She pictured herself in a uniform like that, helping the sick and taking care of babies in a



big hospital. Perhaps *she* could become a nurse.

Florence knew her parents were right—getting an education would be hard. But Florence knew how to work hard. She decided to try.

No matter how many chores filled her day, Florence made time to study. She passed the tests for secondary school, and Nnam borrowed enough money for her to go. Later she found out the government would help pay for her nursing school! Her dream was within reach.

But when it came time to begin nursing school, Florence felt a little doubt. What if nursing was too hard? What if she was lonely? Florence bowed her head and prayed, *Dear God, please give me the strength to go to nursing school and work hard.*

At nursing school, Florence learned to give medicine and keep tools clean from germs. Sometimes her patients got better, but sometimes they didn't. Florence prayed often for courage. After three long years, Florence graduated with the award for best student. Her dream had come true! She got to wear the white nurse's cap, and she was able to earn money to help her family.



Many years later, Florence visited a small branch in the Ghana Accra Mission. Her husband, Christopher Chukwurah, was the mission president there. Florence met some children in the branch who couldn't always go to school. They weren't sure what to do with their futures. They reminded Florence of herself as a child. *What can I say to help them?* Florence prayed silently.

Then she felt a clear prompting. *Tell them about your life.*

Florence thought about her life. She had worked in hospitals in Nigeria and the United States. She had married a good man, and together they had found The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She had become a mother. Now she was helping missionaries stay healthy and work hard. Heavenly Father had helped her become a nurse. He had helped her do so much more than she had imagined was possible. He could do the same for these children.

Florence looked at the children and smiled. "You know those white caps that nurses wear? I saw a cap like that and decided to become a nurse . . ." ●

The author lives in Michigan, USA.



Florence Chukwurah (born 1946) has worked as a nurse in Nigeria and the United States. She and her husband joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and served together in the Ghana Accra Mission. While talking about getting an education, Florence said, "I decided to be serious with my schoolwork. I made up my mind to work hard."

