

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah

Ghanian athlete, disability rights activist

“Don't let anybody put you down because of your disability.”

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FIGURE 1 COURTESY OF MODERNGHANA.COM

Background Information

Born: 1977

Emmanuel Yeboah was born in rural Ghana in 1977. At birth, he was missing his left shin, resulting in a physical disability. During his childhood, Yeboah faced bullying and isolation. He later left school to financially support his family.

Yeboah's Resistance

As a teenager, Emmanuel wrote a letter to an organization that supports disabled athletes called the Challenged Athlete Foundation.ⁱ He wanted to complete a 380-mile ride around Africa for disability rights awareness. In addition to the requested bike, the organization's founder also sent Emmanuel \$1,000. Yeboah also wanted the Ghanaian government's support. Royalty did not welcome people with disabilities to speak with them. Emmanuel's meeting with the king was the first time a differently abled person had entered the royal palace. With the king's support, Emmanuel began his national tour. He made frequent stops to spread awareness about the mistreatment of people with disabilities. During the tour, he also spoke against the Ghanaian government's discriminatory policy on disabled people.

As international media learned of the bike ride, Emmanuel earned recognition and many awards. He has used his earnings to create the Emmanuel Education Fund in Ghana. The organization provides children with disabilities with educational opportunities and healthcare. Additionally, the fund provides wheelchairs to those in need. Yeboah is an athlete ambassador for Right to Play International. In 2003, Yeboah received a tailored prosthetic leg. Since then, he has competed in various marathons internationally.

Achievements

Yeboah received the Challenged Athlete Foundation's Most Inspirational Athlete of the Year in 2003. Additional honors and awards include the Life of a Maverick Award in 2005, and Nike's Casey Martin Award. The Casey Martin award is granted to individuals who overcome physical, mental, societal, or cultural challenges to excel in their sport.ⁱⁱ Yeboah was selected to represent Ghana in the 2004 Olympic Torchbearer Relay.

Essential Questions

1. How did Emmanuel resist the unfair treatment against people living with disabilities in Ghana?
 - a. Do you think his idea was a good one? Why or why not?

2. Ghanaian royalty did not usually speak with or allow people with disabilities inside the royal palace. The government also had unfair laws against people with disabilities.
 - a. As a person living with a disability, should Emanuel have accepted their support for his bike ride? Why or why not?
 - b. How did Emmanuel resist the government during his bike ride?

3. How did Emmanuel's international recognition impact people with disabilities in Ghana?

4. ***"Don't let anybody put you down because of your disability."***
 - a. What does this quote mean to you?
 - b. How can you ensure that your classroom or school treats people fairly despite their physical ability?

ⁱ <https://biography.jrank.org/pages/2836/Yeboah-Emmanuel-Ofosu.html>

ⁱⁱ Ibid