

Newsletter

ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF CHARLOTTE & SURROUNDING AREAS

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March 2023 / Vol 3

Women's History Month Edition

"Even when people come into the store, they are not only buying an item and leaving, they ask about my kids and family. I am proud to be in Charlotte. I have met great people that I consider family. I have met people that have taught me what respect and love truly means."

-Tsige of Nile Ethiopian Restaurant

"One of my favorite quotes is 'confidence is what allows you to open a door when you have absolutely no idea what's behind it.' I didn't know what was waiting on me when I started the business. So Go confidently in whatever your passion is!"

-Tina of Enat Ethiopian Restaurant

I believe being a woman helped me through my business journey. This industry is difficult for both men and women but my mother has taught me to be strong and smart through any and all life challenges.

-Yodit of Abugida Ethiopian Restaurant

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Community Highlight- Women Entrepreneurs in the Queen City

In this special, Women's History Month edition of our ECAC Newsletter, we will highlight the women that have shaped the Ethiopian cuisine culture right here in our Queen City.

We would also like to take the opportunity to wish all the women of our community a Happy Women's History Month!



**NILE GROCERY &
ETHIOPIAN
RESTAURANT**

Enat.....
ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT



Upcoming Events

**Annual Community Health Fair
Saturday, May 13th 2023**

OurBridge For Kids
3925 Willard Farrow Dr, Charlotte, NC 28215



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ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION OF CHARLOTTE & SURROUNDING AREAS

Community Highlight - Tsige of Nile Ethiopian Grocery and Cafe

Q: Tell me your name and a little about yourself- where did you grow up, what was your childhood like, family dynamics (as much as you are comfortable sharing), education?

I met Zeray (my husband) in school. He had the opportunity to move to Russia for higher education. He then moved to Germany where I joined him. We had our first son in Germany. In 1991, we obtained a Diversity Visa (DV) and moved to the United States. I started out making injera and it has now grown to what we know as Nile Ethiopian Restaurant and Grocery. I opened up this business in 2005 to be able to support my children and family.

Q: How did you get into this line of work? Did you always know that you wanted to be an entrepreneur?

I have always had a passion for cooking growing up. Nolawi, my oldest son, has asthma and I couldn't work outside. I used to make injera in the house to be able to take care of my family. That is how I started this business.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge throughout your entrepreneurship journey?

When I first started making injera, I used to have to do it at nighttime. I would take care of the store-front during the day and make injera at night. Because of the sheer volume, sometimes I used to be up until 5am in the morning by myself. Even though it was challenging, I did it with love.

Q: Do you think being a woman in this industry has made it easier or harder for you?

I think being a woman has helped me in this industry. I am happy to be a woman. I have seen how hard working I can be. The strength of being a woman motivates me to take care of my family.

Q: What kind of impact, if any, are you hoping to leave in our City?

In Charlotte, the family we were able to make and the love that I received from the Charlotte Habesha community. Even when people come into the store, they are not only buying an item and leaving, they ask about my kids and family. I am proud to be in Charlotte and I have learned a lot of good and bad from being here. I have met great people and have met people that I consider family. I have met people that have taught me to respect and love.

Q: Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

My father is the most influential person. My father is 98 years old and still living. He is the most hard working person in my life (even to this day). My mother passed away when I was about 4 or 5. My father used to wash my hair, feed me and was the main caregiver. I used to be sick a lot and he took great care of me. My father is strong and has taught me to be strong.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 20 years from now?

In 5 years, I still see myself at Nile and in the same business. I want to find help and grow this business. Same in 10 years (grow the business) and possibly own my own space. In 20 years, I see myself in retirement in my home country (God willing).

Q: As we celebrate Women's History Month in March, what advice do you have for young women who might want to run their own business one day?

You have to be able to face the challenge and tell yourself that you can do it. You should set a goal for yourself. For example, when injera batter gets messed up (even at 3AM), I have to face it. The heat affects my body and creates painful blisters but even then, I have persevered through the challenge. I have the goal of raising my children so I have to do it. Having a goal and sticking to it is important. I also advise the younger generation to utilize the available technology to advance.

Q: What does being an Ethiopian American mean to you?

I feel that have freedom in the United states. Seeing what is going on in my home country of Ethiopia right now, I am happy that I am able to raise my children in the United States. I am able to speak my mind here in the United States. On the same token, especially at our age, I would love to be in my home country, going to churches, and visiting family and friends. There is nothing like being home. The feeling of being Ethiopian American is a mixed one.

Q: What has your connection with Ethiopian Community Association of Charlotte (ECAC) been like? How can ECAC support you and what would you like to see the ECAC do within the community?

I would like for ECAC to unite the Ethiopian community together and celebrate together. I want us to be one. There are lots of people that don't know about things like health insurance, life insurance education. I also love seeing the youth participate and I want to see more of it.

Q: If you wrote a book about your journey, what would you title it and why?

I lost my mother at a young age. If i was to write a book i would title it around my mother. I would call it "Tiguh Enat", which means "Devoted Mother"

Q: What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

I would tell her about my challenges. I have faced challenges since I was about 4 or 5 (when I lost my mother). I would tell her that even though bad things will happen, she should focus on the good, learn from it and grow. If you keep looking back and second guessing yourself, you will not move forward. I look at each day and say "what have I done today" and look forward to tomorrow. Today is today and tomorrow is another day and I have to look forward to that. You should make goals and stick to them. I want to win every day. I do not want to look back and regret the past.

Q: If you had to describe yourself using one word, what would that be and why?

*laughing... this doesn't seem like a question for a Habesha. It is hard for me to classify myself using one word. But i would have to chose "Positive."



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Community Highlight - Tina of Enat Ethiopian Restaurant

Q: Tell me your name and a little about yourself- where did you grow up, what was your childhood like, family dynamics (as much as you are comfortable sharing), education?

Tehetna is my real name but a lot of people don't know that. I was born in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. I came to the United States at the age of 10. Living in Ethiopia, my siblings had small businesses, which means I saw how the business world was. We had a family friend in Charlotte. July 15, 1998 is the year we moved to Charlotte, NC.

After living in Maryland few years, we moved to Charlotte July 15th 1998. After graduating from Winston-Salem State University, Summa Cum Laude in health care management, recession was bad to find a job. That's when I decided to go back to school for a two year program at UNCC in non-profit organization. I wanted to open a business to be able to fund my non-profit later down in life. My parents are my biggest influencers. My dad was big on education and my mom always had an entrepreneurship mindset, which influenced me heavily.

Q: How did you get into this line of work? Did you always know that you wanted to be an entrepreneur?

I didn't always know that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. My older siblings are entrepreneurs. Starting a business is not easy but I have the support and the motivation. I didn't know I wanted to be one until after college. When people say representation matters, it is very true. My siblings were making it and working hard so I looked up to them. They made it look easy.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge throughout your entrepreneurship journey?

Starting the actual business has been my biggest challenge. Finding a location, finding capital, and the question of am I doing it the right way? After getting the business started, finding good staff and labor was hard. I have been constantly feeling unbalanced. Especially during the time of my dad's passing.

Q: Do you think being a woman in this industry has made it easier or harder for you?

There is a stereotype that women belong in the kitchen, but in this business, I'm required to wear so many hats and the hardest thing is it requires a lot of physical labor. There is also the question of "Do I have time to start my own family if I am always at work?" As a woman you are expected to be all of these things- a wife, a mother, and an entrepreneur.

Q: What kind of impact, if any, are you hoping to leave in our City?

Introducing Ethiopian food and culture on a large scale. Teaching the generation to come that "You can do it too". I am also the only black owned business in Optimist Hall. This has a big impact without realizing that I am making an impact.

Q: Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

Both my mom and dad. I don't think I would have this work ethic if it wasn't for my dad's strict discipline. He told us that time was money. My mom's push and continuous support is what gave me the courage to start and sustain my business. I named the restaurant Enat, because it was my mom's push to start. She taught me how to make everything I know. This business taught me how rich and beautiful our food and culture is.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 20 years from now?

In 5 years, possibly opening Enat Number 3. In 10 years, I hope to have a team and these businesses are able to run without me in it (self-sustaining). In 20 years, I would love to be a humanitarian and travel the world and I don't know what will happen with Enat at that point. I want to focus on non-profits because ultimately that is what I think my purpose in life is.

Q: As we celebrate Women's History Month in March, what advice do you have for young women who might want to run their own business one day?

One of my favorite quotes is "Confidence is what allows you to open a door when you have absolutely no idea what's behind it". I didn't know what was waiting on me when I started the business. So Go confidently in whatever your passion is! Stay ambitious, don't be afraid to go the extra mile. Always get a mentor or go for the internship opportunity, learn from other people especially their mistakes. Don't give up on your dreams just because no one else believes in it! Lastly, nothing worthwhile comes easy.

Q: What does being an Ethiopian American mean to you?

Woofff.. Learning to balance two cultures. It is the core of my identity- being Ethiopian. My parents gave me the opportunity to visit back home so we never forgot where we came from. It gave me a different perspective. It gave me ideas for my business. If it wasn't for me being Ethiopian, I wouldn't have this opportunity to introduce my culture to the US. I am able to make a living out of it in the United States.

Q: What has your connection with Ethiopian Community Association of Charlotte (ECAC) been like? How can ECAC support you and what would you like to see the ECAC do within the community?

My dad was involved with the ECAC. I remember being a kid and going to an event (first time I saw that many Habeshas in one community). There needs to be more outlets for the community. I would like to see more in-person events to gather all of the Habesha community to be able to have the space. One thing I noticed is that there are a lot of adopted Ethiopian kids. I think it's important to make sure they have a place where they can be connected to their culture. It's hard to run an organization when people are busy with their personal lives but it would be nice to see two or three events in a year. I think these newsletters are also a nice way to introduce the organization and it's nice for others to see children, youth and even adults highlighted and know they can relate.

Q: If you wrote a book about your journey, what would you title it and why?

Discipline- it is what keeps me going. It was taught in our family at an early age. It takes discipline to be an entrepreneur in my opinion. I think discipline is what keeps me going. There are days where I wanted to quit, where I wanted to walk away but discipline is what keeps me grounded.

Q: What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

Don't be anxious and enjoy your youth. Be present in the moment. What's meant for you, will be. Give time some time.

Q: If you had to describe yourself using one word, what would that be and why?

Persistent. I have three favorite words: Discipline, Consistency and Persistence. In that order because you can't have consistency if you don't have discipline. On bad days, consistency is key. Hard times may make you want to quit. Persistence shows you that hard work on your bad days will pay off and that is rewarding. These three are what I try to live by.



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Community Highlight - Yodite of Abugida Cafe

Q: Tell me your name and a little about yourself- where did you grow up, what was your childhood like, family dynamics (as much as you are comfortable sharing), education?

My name is Yodite, I was born and raised in Ethiopia and my family moved to the US in 1997. I grew up in Addis Ababa with my two brothers and sister. My childhood was blessed with love and laughter.

Q: How did you get into this line of work? Did you always know that you wanted to be an entrepreneur?

Growing up, I was surrounded by family who had business like my father, my mother, and my older sister. So as a young child, I was always taught to have something of my own. I grew up in the restaurant industry, from serving to managing restaurants in Charlotte, NC. It has been embedded in me to eventually open my own restaurant and manage business. This led me to going to school to get my degree in Business Management from Winston-Salem State University.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge throughout your entrepreneurship journey?

Although managing and owning a business has been my dream career, it has its downs as well as its ups. One of the many challenges is keeping up with the ever-changing market. One of the biggest challenges was of course the Pandemic. This was a challenge not only for me but for the world, but we pivoted in ways that allowed us to not only stay in business but grow into a stronger business. I am a firm believer in "everything happens for a reason".

Q: Do you think being a woman in this industry has made it easier or harder for you?

I believe being a woman helped me through my business journey. This industry is difficult for both men and women but my mother has taught me to be strong and smart through any and all life challenges. She has given me the tools by watching her succeed in a foreign country without the tools needed to succeed. I have watched her create/find the tools needed to always come out on the good side of any battle which gave me all the lessons needed to sharpen my tools. Plus, anyone that knows my mother knows I got my cooking passion from her. I hope to be as good as her someday.

Q: What kind of impact, if any, are you hoping to leave in our City?

I am hoping my journey will allow other immigrants to be motivated to follow in their dreams. My hope is my journey will inspire others to step into their journey and keep going against all odds.

Q: Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

The most influential person in my life has been my mother. It is obvious I stepped into her shadow by learning how to cook and use her long standing skills to get me where I am, whether that is in my career or life in general. She is one of the smartest and most resilient women I know.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 20 years from now?

Top on my list is to make Abudiga into a franchise, as well as being able to reach as many people as possible. Allowing the world to learn about our cuisine as well as my rich culture. And of course, be as great as my mom.



Q: As we celebrate Women's History Month in March, what advice do you have for young women who might want to run their own business one day?

My advice to everyone going down this path is to 1: Make sure you do a deep dive into your business (research, research, research...). Understand the business you are getting into by researching online, talking to your local business owners, city local officials, etc. 2: Have a mentor, I think this is key to having a successful business. 3: Have a good support system, this is not a solo game, support system is another key tool to running a successful business. Lastly 4: "Hang in there", nothing comes easy and definitely not the restaurant business. But keep pushing against all odds, don't quit, and know in every entrepreneurship there are "the best day ever" as well as "the worst day ever" it's a battle of the two so HANG IN THERE.

Q: What does being an Ethiopian American mean to you?

Being Ethiopian-American is a point of pride I hold close to my heart. It means I have a responsibility to educate others about my country. That is my favorite part of my daily task; educating my customers about Ethiopia. I hope to continue to educate those with less knowledge about Ethiopia.

Q: What has your connection with Ethiopian Community Association of Charlotte (ECAC) been like? How can ECAC support you and what would you like to see the ECAC do within the community?

Unfortunately, I have not had great involvement with the Ethiopian Community Association of Charlotte but am happy to change that in the future. I would recommend having more community outreach programs that will allow us to attend and have more visibility (in person meetings). Also, holding meetings in Ethiopian established businesses for more visibility. Also, we have a lot of Ethiopian customers that inquire about how /where to find the community but we do not have a point of contact to provide. I recommend having a business card/ flyer placed at every Ethiopian establishment.

Q: If you wrote a book about your journey, what would you title it and why?

Ethiopian Diaspora

Q: What advice would you give your 15 year old self?

I would tell her "brace yourself and enjoy every day, don't be in a rush to grow up, hang in there."

Q: If you had to describe yourself using one word, what would that be and why?

Blessed



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