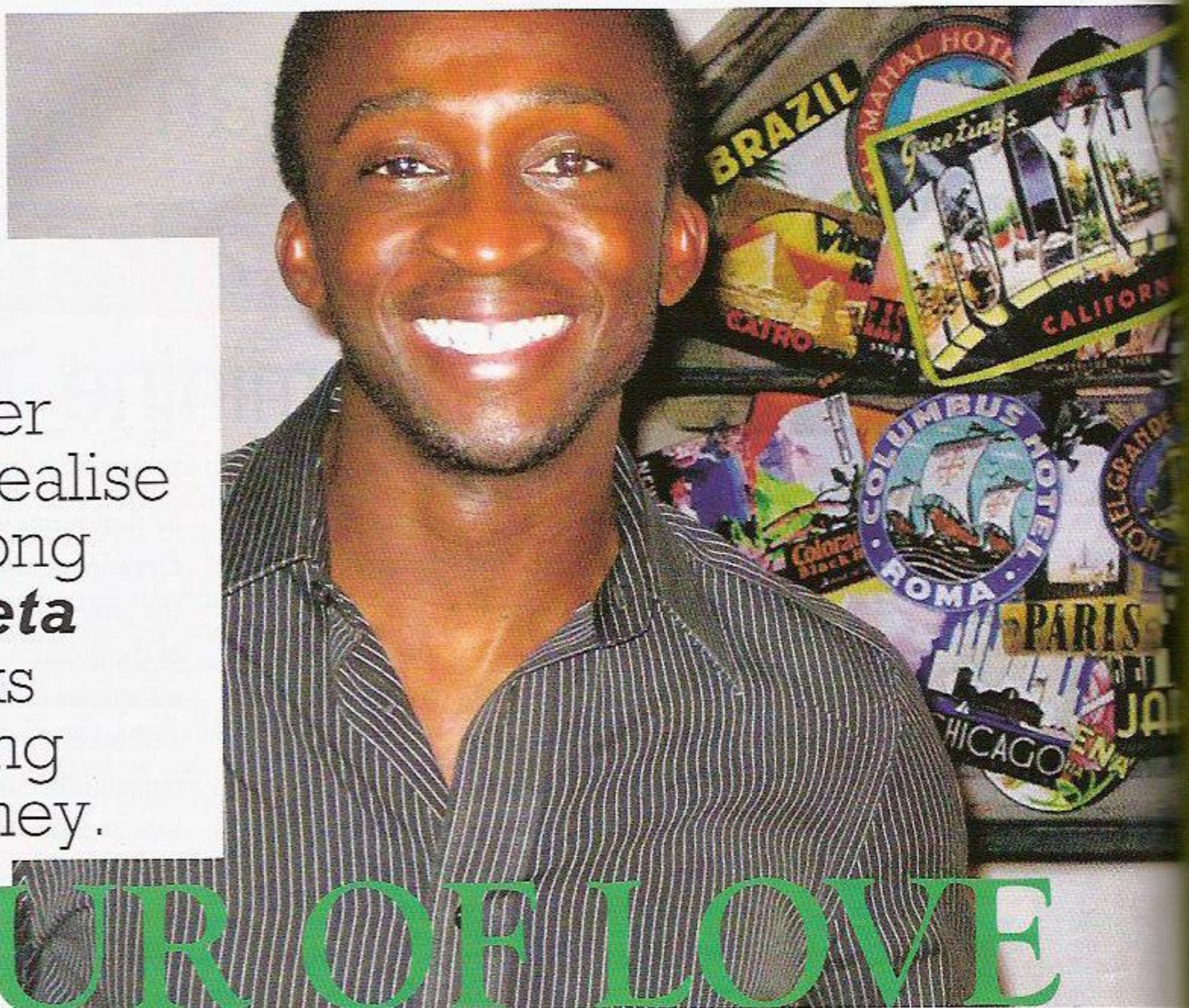


It took his sister's labour to make electrical engineer **Temitope Ojo** realise he was in the wrong profession. **Syreeta E Akinyede** tracks the up-and-coming filmmaker's journey.



LABOUR OF LOVE

As early as I can remember, I liked to combine stories with pictures. I recall sitting with my younger brother and telling each other 'movies' straight out of our imaginations. I drew my own comic books to bring these stories to life." But with a mechanical engineer as a father and a nurse as a mother, pursuing his passion for film didn't quite fit the bill. So Temi went on to study electrical engineering in California in the US.

After graduating, he worked as a product engineer at a Silicon Valley semiconductor company, where he was involved in the production of sophisticated integrated circuits. But he soon realised that hard work wasn't enough. "In corporate environments, politics can be everything." Feeling stressed out and under-appreciated, Temi took some time off in 2005 and went to visit his pregnant sister. When she went into labour, he waited nearby. As the hours passed, he experienced an awakening.

"Experiencing my nephew Seyi's birth helped me realise the urgency

and finiteness of life. I thought about what my sister had just gone through to give birth to her first child; the first of the next generation of my family. Then I thought about my life, and how hard it must have been to give birth to me. Immediately I found a huge respect for mothers everywhere. Then I thought about me, and the stress I was experiencing in my career at the time. I felt angry I was letting these things get to me." In that instant, Temi decided to follow his heart.

He quit his job the next day and enrolled at film school and MBA School, pursuing both graduate degrees concurrently. By 2009, he had an MBA in marketing management and entrepreneurship and an MFA (Master of Fine Arts) in motion pictures and television directing.

Success as a filmmaker followed soon after. His short film, *Renouncing Angelica*, won the Festival Director's Award at the Gold Lion Film Festival, and also won the Short Film Category at the ION International Film Festival in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

"*Renouncing Angelica* contains emotional themes reflective of my own personal experience," Temi says.

"Being in love, where our connection with another transcends affection and becomes our purpose, can be reaffirming. However, if with no warning, the relationship dissolves without explanation, we may be left with nothing but anger and resentment. But towards whom? I sought a creative way to channel this energy and *Renouncing Angelica* was born out of the process. Making this film taught me that, in the story of life, the protagonist and antagonist can often be the same person. I hope that, in watching it, the audience is reminded of their humanity, and the personal commitment that love is that there is a healing power in forgiveness of self, and of the other."

Temi incorporated the importance of bone marrow donations into the story to raise awareness of leukaemia. "I like to use my work to shine light on social issues that may need some attention."

He has completed two more short films and is currently working on his first feature-length film. "I believe I already have a strong filmmaking voice but, as in life, the value of what is spoken by a voice is only as good as the character of the speaker. I seek more exposure to life to inspire and influence my art." **E**

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