

Ohemaa Nyanin: A journey off the court
By Eva Endahl
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Ohemaa Nyanin doesn't always know what her days will look like. Tonight, she is still at the office at 7:30 p.m. on a Thursday, waiting to be interviewed by a group of college students.

Nyanin is an American University graduate. She walked onto the school's division one women's basketball team as a freshman, but her ambitions took her off the court following her junior year, when she quit because she wasn't content with her playing time. "It helped me miss the sport," Nyanin said, "but I think that it was probably the best thing for me."

American is a small D1 school, and Nyanin had her hands in many different things, both on and off the court; Nyanin liked getting involved wherever she could. "It prepared me very well for all of the different jobs that I've had since then," Nyanin said.

Today, Nyanin works for the New York Liberty, a WNBA team based in Brooklyn. After just a short conversation with Nyanin, it's clear why she's made it so far at such a young age. She's gregarious and incredibly driven and has been the youngest person on every staff she's been a part of. "My GM jokes that I run the team, which is a joke but not really," Nyanin said.

Nyanin's job responsibilities are far reaching. She does everything from game day and practice operations, to contracts, to player benefits and insurance. Nyanin says she even has to make sure the players got home safely after not making the playoffs this past season.

After a short amount of time at the New York Liberty, they were bought and consequently moved in late April, shaking up Nyanin's coworkers and routine. "Differences are traumatic, just because we had no institutional knowledge starting April when the organization was bought," Nyanin said, "We had to create and execute in a very short time."

Thinking on her feet is something Nyanin is used to at this point. "Coming to the WNBA where you're working with elite athletes on a daily basis and not really getting a break from that was pretty jarring. But I'm still standing!" Nyanin said with a laugh.

Nyanin felt comfortable being interviewed on difficult topics, like sexism and racism on the athletic field. "There's this continued positive reinforcement that women can play sports in an exciting way that can capture the audience," Nyanin said. "The brands now are putting their money where their mouth is and supporting female athletes." Nyanin was referring to two of the new Jordan Brand athletes who signed this year that are New York Liberty players. "That is huge for a male-focused brand to continue to open up their branding to females."

In terms of racism both on and off the court, "What I've learned is that you allow people to show you who they are through how you interact with them," Nyanin said. Despite obstacles, she still has a bright outlook on her career, and the state of women's basketball.

As for the future, Nyanin doesn't see herself in her current position forever. "I'm really interested in the intersection between philanthropy and sports," Nyanin said, her

real passion is something she defines as 'social entrepreneurship'. She yearns to create her own position in the world, marrying community service and the WNBA.

While most fans have heard of Michael Jordan's charity, the Charlotte Hornets Foundation, Nyanin says it's difficult for other, less high-profile players. Many want to give back to their communities, but don't know how, and there aren't many individuals who can help them. Nyanin sees an opportunity here. "Being around elite athletes the past five years, I ask them 'what is it you want your legacy to say/be?' and they have good answers," Nyanin said.

Nyanin continues to see opportunities where others do not, which is why she is already successful, and will continue to be. Summing it up perfectly, Nyanin concluded with a lasting thought, "However I can help somebody or be helpful," Nyanin said, "that's what I'm gonna do."