**Interviewer:** Thank you for joining us for this interview. So, (erm) since I've gotten your consent to record, so we start the interview now. So, before we start, there are 6 sections in this interview and there are questions under each section. So, I'll just start with section one, demographic information. The first question is, can you tell us your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 11:** Yeah, thank you. My age is forty... I am 48 years. By July, I think… okay, 48 years currently, so that would be 49 by July. Okay, that's fine, 48 years male, country of origin is Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Can you tell us, can you tell us your highest level of education and what country did you obtain your degrees from? So, if you have degrees in Nigeria, and if you have in the US, you can just tell us.

**Participant 11**: Highest level of education currently is masters, Master of Science degree, and this was obtained in the United States. I also obtained degree in Nigeria, Bachelor of Science.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. How long have you lived in the US, specifically in Maryland?

**Participant 11: I** started my journey in the US in Maryland. So, that's 15 years ago, and I'm still living in Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Can you share with us your current profession or job title?

**Participant 11:** My current profession is IT profession.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what was the profession in Nigeria before you migrated?

**Participant 11:** My profession is IT now as well, but that's network engineering.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that. We'll quickly move to section 2. Section 2, we look at, push and pull factors. These are factors that influence the reason why people migrate to other countries. Under this section I have 4 questions. I will start with the first one. What motivated your decision to migrate to the US. Were there specific factors in Nigeria

that pushed you to leave e.g. economic, social, and political challenges?

**Participant 11:** I can say I've always loved United States, and when I see the opportunity of the visa lottery, I keep trying it. And after some years it clicked for me and my wife. So, we migrated.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. What… the next question now. You may have touched on that a little but let me still ask. What attracted you to the US and Maryland in particular?

**Participant 11:** Erm, so, what attracted me to the US. I think I see the US as a place as a greener pasture and I found myself in Maryland because of the person that, I mean, let me put it this way, my host was in Maryland that time, and he's still in Maryland now. So.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you're more like you felt like you had a support system in Maryland.

**Participant 11:** Yeah. So, I came to where I know somebody that I can stay with.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Last question in this section. What challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 11:** During the migration process?

**Interviewer:** Yes, it could be challenges while you are in Nigeria when you got here and even after you got here, the whole migration process.

**Participant 11:** The migration process was smooth. It cost us a lot of money, but we were able to get that then and getting over here is just like for everybody. It will take some time for you to get to your feet. You want to get your driver's license. You want to get your green card; you want to be able to get all those things in place before you can say you start looking for a job. So we went through the normal initial process that everybody has to go through before they can start seeking their first

job in United States.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. I think you've touched on that, this next question, what challenges have you encountered during the migration process. Okay, or do you have anything to add to that?

**Participant 11:** Just like I said, the migration process was not bad. From Nigeria, you know the DV Lottery is kind of smooth. We have to go get the results. We to the… me and my wife, we go to the embassy. We did the interview, the normal interview, though they see us as a young couple, but they have no doubts about us. So then, after that, we migrated like we have. We have a need of, you know, quite some large sum of money then, but we were able to get everything sorted out. So,

those are, those are just the little things that I can remember about coming over from Nigeria. So, getting over here is always a kind of challenge about settling down.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** So. So, that's really nothing much about the challenges. But yes, if anybody tells you that he migrated without any challenge, or he didn't encounter any issue. I think he’s (erm) he’s not telling 100% truth.

Interviewer: Yeah, I quite agree with that.

**Participant 11:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank, you.

**Participant 11:** You're welcome.

**Interviewer:** We'll go to Section 3, professional experiences. Please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the US.

**Participant 11:** (Erm) So, in Nigeria, by, I can say by destiny, I graduated as a bachelor of a Agric from… and along the line I was able to switch over to network engineering section during my NYSC-National Youth Service Corp). That was when I took some training in IT. And there I was able to step into the IT field. I wasn’t really getting good pay. But you know I was glad that I made the decision. So that was just the little things about my career in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Would you be able to share how many years you worked in Nigeria before you left?

**Participant 11:** I worked for some years. I worked…before I left, I would say I worked like 3, 3 to 4years.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Thank you so much. Next question, how will you describe your current career trajectory in the United States? I mean, how has your career evolved since you moved over to the United States?

**Participant 11:** Oh, yeah, it's been busy. Yeah. Because when I got over here, I had to start with minimum wage, then which is $7.25, and I remember I worked somewhere in Downtown Baltimore where cars do park. I don't know if that location is still functioning now, but the cars did park there, and I was a cashier. So, I helped the cars to... I run their tickets. I ensure they make payment and all those things. So, then from there I switched to, I did some exams, and then I started working with the State of Maryland. Then I did that for some years, so after that, then I got back. I renewed my professional certificates I have from Nigeria, but in the course of trying to get Job with it. I met some people that told me about some other IT program here which is on a cyber security line. So that was how I compare how they make more money than the network engineering section. I mean IT line. Then I started training in that. Then I would drive for over an hour to the training every Saturday and I did that for like 3 months. So that was how I started planning towards changing my career. And after about one year after that training. Sorry after that training, a few months after I have my certification in that cyber security field. Then after about a year, I think I fully got into IT by getting an IT job, and I can say that was a turning point in America.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, okay, thank you for sharing that. That's quite interesting. It's obvious that back in Nigeria you were able to switch from background in Agric to IT, and then you came over to the US. You started in something totally different from agriculture and IT and you have also been able to switch back from different jobs back to IT now in the US. Yeah, thank you for elaborating on that. The next question is, how well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 11:** Ahm my skills and qualification, you mean back in Nigeria, or what I have been doing here?

**Interviewer:** No, your skills and qualifications over time. Because what? So, to put it another way is, there are people that maybe have a degree in maybe engineering or accounting or agriculture and they came over here, and they are not able to utilize those skills in those fields because they have not been able to get jobs in that line that they had qualified academic., they had academic qualifications in and the professional skills, so they may find themselves in healthcare. So, people like that say that, oh, I wish I'm able to get a job that is in the line of my professional skills and experience, and of course, maybe academic qualification. But in your own case it looks like you have had education and training in IT, and you are working in IT at the same time.

**Participant 11:** Oh, yes, my skills and qualification in Nigeria are not really, I think, when you say IT, IT has different areas.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 11:** So, the IT I did in Nigeria is completely different from (erm) cyber security. But when I include that in my resume, I put it like my background in network engineering. Whosoever sees it will know that okay, this person has some background in some other areas of IT which is very, also, very important in the cyber security aspect of IT. So, and I always put it like, this is something that’s giving me a kind of edge over to have some understanding of what some people don't understand in cyber security. So, and I'm sure if you want to hire someone you want to look at okay, this person has an understanding of this and understand this as well. So, you want to believe that okay, this person will be more useful in some areas, and he can always be an asset to your team. So, I can say that those qualifications work for me. My BSc is not a qualification that has worked for me, but it is a qualification that has built me up to be a strong man and I know my BSc, I'm one of those people that wanted to study medicine, but we found ourselves in a Agric. So, along the line I finished it. I was just thinking that yes, I'm building myself up here, and when I'm stepping into the world outside, I'm ready to exploit opportunities that await me. So, that was the mindset I graduated with from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and I'm glad I have that mind set. So, over time all skills and qualifications like they always say that no knowledge is lost. So, I will say, all skills and qualification over time have built me up to be where I am in my little way today.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that. That's quite interesting. Next question, what barriers have you faced in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications or workplace discrimination. And what strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 11:** Yeah, one of the barriers is when you get to the United States. If you want to step into something you try to connect for most of us that have bachelors, master’s from Nigeria, we try to connect if what we've done in Nigeria is useful here. And one of those things is I did my result with WES. So, I did the what's the name now? that they have to do it to the credit in United States. So, I converted my bachelor's to the equivalent in the United States.

**Interviewer:** Okay, evaluation.

**Participant 11:** Evaluation. So, I did the evaluation. I applied for master’s in information technology in the United States with the BSc in Agric, bachelor of Agric from Nigeria. It was recognized, and I was able to do my master's in IT, and I finished it United States. So, I still tell people up till now that they should just source information. So, about the licensing, I have a lot of IT certificates…

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 11:** …which is very okay, my field, because the IT certificate, we help you to show that you have the skill sets for the job role. So, you have to read for the certification, even after going for the

regular training you have to read for the certification and pass their proctored exam. So, these are all those things that I've done over the years, and I think I'm not sure I've sat for any certificate in the last 3 years now, but before then, up to like 2021, I think I have over 10 IT certificates. So, I just keep reading and just doing certifications. So licensing, yeah, very important, those are qualification is global in IT.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** That IT certificate is a world certificate, so I understand it, and I went for it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 11:** The workplace discrimination, I don't have a workplace

discrimination, but it's normal that people, everybody have the way they speak so, but what matters is that when you are loaded upstairs, when they know you have what they need they will surely hire you to work with them.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 11:** And it’s…when I realized that the way the people where I came from, the way they talk we talk fast sometimes our people don't understand us, that I realized that you have to speak slow and steady and people here in United States, they will understand you better. And you have to have clarity of your words as you are speaking. So, those are the things I've learned about here and I adopted it. And it makes me, my working with the people in United States. It made me overcome those challenges. So, I think I've included the strategy that need to overcome the challenges like the strategy of getting the license, certification and all those things.

**Interviewer:** Yes, very well. Thank you for providing that extensive response to that question. Yes, you've actually answered the question very well, thank you for that. We quickly move to Section 4, cultural assimilation and social integration. How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland, have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated?

**Participant 11:** So, in a factual world, Maryland is a place where you have a lot of your people around you. So culturally, I think I feel like I'm always in Nigeria because I have a lot of my people that will speak the same language and even my dialects like I have people I call. We can stay on the phone for hours speaking our dialects. So, and when I get into work, sector or people that don't speak my language that we have to speak English, yeah, I do. So, I feel like I'm in a…my experience in a cultural about the cultural assimilation is awesome, it’s good and I don't really have any kind of thing that make me feel not fulfilled in that area.

**Interviewer:** Okay, Thank you. Still about cultural differences, I want to ask a question. This question is more specific about professional setting, you know, professional setting in terms of, though you mentioned something about that, about communication at work and communication with your friends. That provides that context from, you know, cultural integration. You have the support, people from familiar backgrounds, same culture. Then, you've learned how to switch between that setting and when you get to a professional setting. But is there any other context you want to provide in terms of how you have navigated cultural differences in professional life? That's a separate question. That's why I'm asking specifically about your professional life.

**Participant 11:** I have navigated cultural differences in my professional life. I will say, in my professional life I've really been working with a lot of people that we are not from the same background or from the same area, the same country I migrated from. No, I've not been…. I've been working with people from different countries and a greater percentage of people that I've integrated with since I came to this country are the people that are born and bred here. So, like I said initially, integrating with people here is not something that is as smooth as integrating with my own people. The language is different. The culture is different, and I remember those times that I'll be addressing my superior like, “Sir”, you know those kinds of words that we use where we come from, or “Ma”, you know, and they will like tell me that “No, don't use sir for me. Don't use ma for me”

**Interviewer:** ‘Just call me by first name’ (laughs).

**Participant 11:** Oh yes, we see it as something kind of respect where I came from.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** Good morning, sir. Good morning, ma, you know, but the people here they will just want you to mention their first name like, good morning, John, you know. Good morning. Good morning, Debbie, you know.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** So those cultural…is kind of a little bit strange to me initially, because where I came from, I won't just tell my boss like good morning, you know. So, those are some of those things that are quite different. But immediately I understand how it works over here; I'm kind of okay. I sink into that, and I know how to relate with all my coworkers.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Last question under this section. Are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration, how well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 11:** There has never been any specific organization that I know that's really into, that has been into supporting my career. I've just been someone that relates with everybody that comes my way, and when I get information, I work on it. And when I have the opportunity to pass information across to other people. I also make sure I do that. I don't hesitate in letting out that information that I have, or in getting that information that could give me an opportunity. So, there has really not been a link with an organization in getting my career done. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Just to add to that, some people have said when they came in, things were a little bit difficult. They didn't have a soft landing, and they had to rely on their church, maybe their cultural organizations, maybe people from the same place in Nigeria who have a kind of a community. So, I'm glad you clarified that. But I just wanted to add that the experiences can be quite different for different people. So, yeah, we can go to Section 5 now, dual cultural and economic challenges. I have just 3 questions here, and I will go through them really quickly.

**Participant 11:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Question one, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States, how do you navigate these? I think you've talked about these 2 in previous questions.

**Participant 11:** Erm…

**Interviewer:** But if you have something to add now.

**Participant 11:** I think I have talked about that in some of the…(inaudible) yeah, there are a lot of, there are a lot of differences. That's the fact. You're dealing with different people, comparing people you've dealt with, worked with in Nigeria and people you are working with in United States. So, everything is different. So, I think it's important to understand the environment you are in. And when you understand the environment, you are, it helps you to know how to adapt yourself to the environment or to the situation within that environment. So that's just what I do that helps me to navigate any form of expectation, cultural expectation.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Next 2 questions, I ‘ll put them together. Have you experienced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria. What strategies do you use to balance these responsibilities?

**Participant 11:** Yeah, thank you for that question. Yeah, I experience that a lot like so many Nigerians living in United States. There are a lot of challenges about supportive friends, family back at home and I always do my best to do something for people in such a way that it will not be detrimental to my own living, to my family, to my health or my ability to pay bills in United States. So, that's the strategy I use to balance it. So, when people ask me something, if it's something I can't do, I do it. When they ask for a certain amount, I don't lie to people. I'm straight forward. whatever I can give from that amount I send it. So, if it's something that I can do everything I do, so I just make it straight forward. Then I always let people know if they have to wait till the end of the month, or they have to wait till the following month, I let them know so, and if they have to borrow it somewhere, I can give them when I have that money by the following month, I will tell them they can borrow it, I will give it to them. So, these are all the strategies that I just make sure I do whatever God has given me to do as a means of helping others.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much. We are getting closer to the end of the interview. We are in the last section now, section 6. This section, we talk about recommendations. And I have about 4 questions here. So, I'll go with the questions really quickly so that we can round it up. The first question here is, do you think there are policies or programs that help African immigrants, Nigerian immigrants in Maryland and in the US, and on the other side, do you feel there are also policies and programs that hinder the career path, career progress of Nigerian and African immigrants in Maryland and the US at large?

**Participant 11:** To me personally, there is no policy that hinders anyone in succeeding in the United States. The only thing that hinders people is the mindset to succeed.

**Interviewer:** Okay

**Participant 11:** So yeah, so if someone, there is what we call attitudinal cooperation. So, someone cannot be a failure unless you cooperate in your attitude to be a failure. So, someone cannot achieve success unless you have attitudinal cooperation with yourself to be a success. So that's the mindset. There now the environments. When I

say the environment, the type of people that surround you or people you talk with, people you share your ideas with, can go a long way to affect what you do. It can be a barrier, or it can be an encouragement to you for what you should do. Nowadays, I try anytime I meet people, and we 're talking, I always try to strike it up that try to understand how long they've been in the United States, and if they have their paper, and if whatever they are doing, and I have you meeting a lot of people that came here, even with the visa lottery, and for years, and they are doing something that you know it doesn't. You will think you will feel like they are not exploiting the American opportunities to enjoy American dreams. So, it's just about personality, about what people think about their life and what they think they can make use of in terms of the opportunity that falls everywhere in this country. So that's it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay, thank you. Two more questions. Now, are there policies or program, or let me say, what changes or support systems, do you think can be put in place to help highly educated, Nigerian and African immigrants succeed in their careers in Maryland, and the US at large?

**Participant 11:** So, one of the programs that could be put in place. One of the not one of the first things is that if those people that are migrating to United States. If they are ready to interact with people, they meet when I say they meet people that are already here for years. Now, if the answer is yes, now we now think of which type of group did they interact with, one of the things that people need to think of is, if you are a Christian, you go to church to mingle with your Christian brothers and sisters. If you're a Muslim, you go to mosque to mingle with your brothers and sisters, and I've always seen it that when you come to this country and you locate a church, they are always eager to help you to help you settle down. So, in the course of settling down you need to start finding what are those things where people are really succeeding in this country. And you need to start aligning yourself with those areas. Now, there are ‘Parapos’ like local organization of your people from your village. There are high school where you can integrate with the people that you graduated from the same high school in Nigeria, and there are our organizations like, maybe you have, people that you graduated from the same college which we call university in Nigeria or Polytechnic. So integrating with all those groups with the friends or people that host you, even the people, that host you might not give you the best advice, but when you integrate with people you start seeing people that are doing very well is, you will know you wouldn't see the type of houses they are living in. You will see the type of cars they are using. You see their lifestyle. So, if you are someone that really wants to succeed in America. You can decide to be closer to them. So far you are in the same group, and you can be so plain there's no need to lie can be so plain to them that you just came, or you have been here for 10 years or 5 years, and you doing this kind of job you don't really like it. You're just thinking about how to switch things, to live a better life.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 11:** So those are the things that I think can really help people to navigate their ways in America and live a better life.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. I'm going to ask you one more, the last question is going to be, if you have any additional comment or insight you would like to share. But before that I wanted to make a comment about your last the answer to the last question in terms of if there are things that need to be put in place to help people succeed in their career, immigrants that come from Africa and Nigeria. You talked about association there, you talk about you need to find the right people so that you can connect. You can see people. You can see the proof that these

people are successful in terms of what they do for living where they work and the kind of things they do. What would you say is that one thing that is the most important benefit to get from those kinds of associations. If you have to use just one word to describe that benefit that people can derive from getting to the right association.

**Participant 11:** Erm, I will use the word opportunities.

**Interviewer:** Opportunities.

**Participant 11:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you, because they have the proof that they've done it. Then they can guide other people to avoid the mistakes that can deny them those opportunities.

**Participant 11:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. Now that last question, if you have any additional comment on insight, you would like to share.

**Participant 11:** Oh, yeah, they just like I put like opportunities. I use the word opportunities because opportunities abound everywhere and when you belong to those organizations, we're not going to negate the fact that you've got to talk to some people, and they will feel on top of the world they might not want to relate with you. They might not want to share some information with you. You don't feel discouraged. You just move on to the next person and that former person you still, you know you keep greeting him. You keep you know relating with him very well. One day he will just see you that you're a very good person that he feels like really relating with. I've heard it, but people always say it that people are not ready to help each other so, but the question is, how many people have they reached out to and who have they told their story to and they have denied them any help. The reality there is that you might think someone is able to help. The person might not be able to help but the person might channel you to another person who might be able to help, this is what I've done so many times. If there's things that I can do by myself, then I do it. Help is not about money all the time.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** Truly, people call me and think that okay, when they arrive, maybe there will be somebody that will be giving them money to for some little things until they understand that it's not easy to just even get $50 from people here. So, until you have the understanding and the readiness to succeed in this country. Someone can get to this country today and continue with that same job that is starting today and can continue with the same job for the next 10 years.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 11:** If he didn't make up his mind to change. And another key thing about changing your career to what you think fits you in America is getting bored or disliking the kind of life that you are living and this I can think that is actually one of those things that keep propelling me when I worked in the first job that I told you in the car pack garage.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 11:** I knew I was struggling. I knew how, what I was making per week, and I knew the type of car I was using that was even having overeating and was just a problematic stuff for me. So, then I knew that I don't want this kind of life, even when I got the other job that I worked those 2 jobs close 11 pm, run to the other one, get up the next morning, sleep for like 4 hours and run again back to the first job the next day. So, when you see some kind of life that you don't like it’s a kind of something that should propel you to say No, I want a better life and when I start work, when I started working with the States, I, the people that told me about it. It was like, if it’s heaven on earth but when I got there I realized that I still have to work a lot of overtime in order for me to make a good living. And I, you know, have my family. So, I look at that kind of life. I don't like it. I keep telling myself that anything working 2 jobs because one job is not okay or working overtime that I don't like that kind of life. You can work 2 jobs just to maybe you want to get some things, or maybe the first one

you are doing is not really giving you any. I mean, if it's not stressful. there's nothing wrong in having 2 jobs. But when you are having a stressful job you are only working overtime because of the money, then it's not a good life. So that was why all my thinking was like, I must get out of this environment. Then I was thinking, where? What job will I get that I won't have to work, maybe 2 jobs or work overtime.

**Interviewer:** Overtime. Right.

**Participant 11:** So that was what make me finally start getting into, because I was also thinking of some other areas before I finally landed myself in this IT. I was thinking of some other areas, thinking of some other courses. But one of the first things I do is I want to check the salary for that pay when you mention anything to me, the first thing I want to know is, what's the salary? Not talking of overtime. But what's the actual salary per year. So, that one will give me a kind of a catalyst like maybe I

should do that thing or not.

**Interviewer:** Hmn.

**Participant 11:** So, immediately I hear the salary like this I will just, no…

**Interviewer:** It’s not worth it (laughs),

**Participant 11:** It's not better than what I'm doing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant 11:** So, these are what I think people can do if they decide to have the life that they love. The people, most people, they always say that they are just in America, they're just making money, they don't even have time to spend the money. Some people will say we're just in this country; we're going to work till we die, (inaudible) a lot of things, lambasting **(meaning complaining about their situation)** like they just keep retreating it and insisting as if nothing could be done. So, I feel like those are the best thing, the best way of getting out of a predicament to a current bad situation is to dislike is to hate that situation. Then you now look for okay, is there any better job out there or career? Then you work towards it. It can take you some years, but gradually. And one thing that really matters is to have a mentor in that particular thing that you want to do even business. So, when you have a mentor, when I got into IT too, and even in my process of interview, there are people I called. There are people that I've known in that field that I reach out to, so no one is an island of knowledge.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 11:** And I will advise people not to be too big to tell people, erm some people feel too proud to even let people know what they are going through. So that's just the reality and when you have it, also be ready to give it out. When people ask you, just let them know what they should do. This is what they should do. This is what they should do, and I've put a lot of people through to navigating their way into IT. So that's just my brief summary of that.

**Interviewer**: Thank you so much. It has been a very interesting interview. I want to thank you, and I appreciate your time and the invaluable input you shared during this interview.

**Participant 11:** You're welcome, sir.

**Interviewer:** Erm if you would like to receive a summary of the study findings once the research is completed, please let me know. I will provide a copy via email.

**Participant 11:** Okay

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I do appreciate your time. I will stop the recording now.

**Participant 11:** Okay, yeah, thank you.

**Interviewer:** Alright. Thank you.