**Participant 14**: Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for joining us in this interview.

**Participant 14**: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Since you are giving me permission to record. We will start the interview now.

**Participant 14**: Okay.

**Interviewer:** So, before we start, there are 6 sections in this interview. There is a set

of questions at times 4 times 5 under each section of the interview. So, I will start with the 1st section, section one. Section one is about demographic information. Here we have 5 questions. So, let's start real quick. The question one under this section is can you share your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 14**: I am 39, male, Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Did you say 39.

**Participant 14**: Yes, 39.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. What is your highest level of education, and what country did you obtain your degree from.

**Participant 14**: My highest level of complected education is bachelor’s degree. I have a master's degree, but that one is still ongoing. But the bachelors was completed in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay? So, you're in a master's program here in the US

**Participant 14**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. How long have you lived in the US Specifically in Maryland?

**Participant 14**: Yeah, I've lived in the US in this area, Maryland area for 5 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Can you tell us your current profession or job title?

**Participant 14**: Okay, currently, as of today, I am actually I would say, I'm self-employed because I focus on certain business that I do. And in addition to the business, which is, I buy stuff, and then I sell, ship to Africa like computer gadgets and laptops. But in addition to it, I do like Ride Shares, Uber and Lyft. That's what I do right now.

**Interviewer**: Okay, thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 14**: Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was your profession in Nigeria before you migrated?

**Participant 14**: Okay, back in Nigeria I worked with the State government in various capacity. At the point. I was like an Admin officer to the Environmental Protection Agency of my State, which is Imo State, one of the thirty-six states in Nigeria after that I became a consultant for the government to a private company, but we had a lot of projects from ranging from pest control to construction. So, it was like a very huge contract we have with the state government, and I was a manager in the firm. Yeah.

**Interviewer**: Okay. So, you left as a manager, we'll talk about that one in the subsequent section.

**Participant 14**: Okay.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. We'll go to section 2, Section 2, we will talk about push and pull factors. These are factors that influence or let me say that motivate people to migrate from their country of origin to another country. So, I will take the first two questions together. What motivated your…excuse me, what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States? Were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave e.g. economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 14**: Yeah, I would say, it's a combination of all of the 3 challenges you mentioned, the economic challenges the political was one of the most pressing factors, because at a point between 2019 and 2020, when I left, the rate of insecurity and kidnapping in the city where I lived became too astronomical. The situation, unfortunately, has not even improved up till date but those were the factors. It was really insecure. And then the fact that you couldn't even see any kind of government policy that is geared towards solving the problem was more frustrating. So those were the factors that prompted me to leave.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you for sharing that. The next question, what attracted you to the United States and Maryland in particular?

**Participant 14**: (Huh) It's a…I feel many of us grew up with the understanding or with the believe that United States is a land of opportunities, you know. And it was the most interesting factor about it and to be honest it has; it’s still the land of opportunities to be fair even though it's I mean that one is still nuanced. Yeah, it's just the fact that it's an example of where the system works, you know, where governments to an extent do their own part, you know, of the social contract that binds the citizens and the government it was just an easy decision. For Maryland here it was because I had some friends that I went to university with those that lived here. So, it was easy for me to come to an area where I have like a community.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The last question under this section. What challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 14**: Well, there's a lot of erm, there's a lot of cultural shock and challenges. First of all, I came into United States of America in 2020, and if you remember, that was the year of the lockdown, the covid, and all that stuff, so.

**Interviewer:** Yes, the COVID-19 year.

**Participant 14**: Yeah, it was a very difficult period, because it was really, really an unusual kind of period where there was lockdown you know, mainly indoors social distancing. If you, if you're outside, you have to put on a mask. Most businesses were not really open, fully functional. So yeah, that period was really challenging, and of course, coming from a different country with a different lifestyle, both in terms of the social lifestyle, in terms of the food, the weather, so many, so many differences, so many things that were just different from where I was coming from. So, of course, a combination of those factors would definitely be too overwhelming for somebody but with time you get used to parts of it, you know.

**Interviewer:** You get used to it. Okay?

**Participant 14**: Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. There is a section we will still talk about cultural assimilation and social integration. Well, let's quickly move to Section 3 professional experiences. A little while ago, you were talking about what you did in Nigeria. So, here, I just wanted you to share a little bit more specifically about your career trajectory in Nigeria before you relocated to the United States.

**Participant 14**: Yeah, I mean, it's much different. I like, I briefly mentioned earlier. I was in a field where I had a lot of people under me, I was managing and then handling different projects. And basically, you know, comfortable middle class, and by all standards, you know. And yeah, it was a career that was pointing upwards. So, yeah, I mean, we have our own challenges over there and but being someone that was forged by the system, you know, it was a part of my life, my life, to know how to navigate those challenges. But yeah, basically it was, it was a very interesting period where I handled a lot of projects and learned a lot of new stuff and worked with a lot of people.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. Thank you for sharing that. How many years did you work in Nigeria in total before you left?

**Participant 14**: I'll put it at erm, it would be about 10, 11 years, maybe 12.

**Interviewer**: Okay. So, you had a total of about 12 years of career and professional experience in Nigeria.

**Participant 14**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** And you said you left as a project manager.

**Participant 14**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Doing a lot of projects for government, and as a consultant to government.

**Participant 14**: Huhn

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 14**: Erm, I mean, from what I explained to you that I do right now, you could say that it's a complete opposite compared to where I was coming from. But yeah, it's kind of a little bit difficult to integrate, because first of all, coming from Nigeria or Africa, most times your certification does not really count here. That's the first one, and then even where it counts, there's a priority, of like, okay, there are people that are schooled here, people that are from here. So, the discrepancy is there, it's, this is not like a complaint, this is just an observation, you know. Yeah, it's the reality. And then again, you understand that nobody is stopping you from applying to certain jobs that you think you are qualified for, but the point is, the point is, the ability to get those jobs is, your chances are a little bit lower compared to people that were born here and schooled here. So, one of the factors that is, that is not openly stated, but is a reality is the fact that okay, sometimes, even though you're a native English speaker, but because for certain reasons, you maybe you don't have the accent you know, and they…I mean, you have a little bit of accent that is different. You know. It's also sometimes the interview ends before it starts. you know. And then it's also like certain. Yeah, these are certain limitations. But generally, the career trajectory it's kind of different. I don't know for lack of better words to use, which is why, sometimes you know, title like, get certain certification here, you know. That’s the point. That's the trajectory I’m in the process of getting some certification apart from the master’s degree that I'm going for. So yeah, that's that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, the certification thing that was going to be my next, no, okay, my second next question. If I can use that expression. I will move to the next question, but I wanted to put what I think, what I think I had you say in my own words, so that you can correct me if I'm right, and if I'm right or wrong. So, your current career trajectory in the US as it is, is you said, it is not like what you were used to in Nigeria. The comfort level is not the same. It's looking like now, here it’s a different terrain. The challenges are different. There's a new environment. And you are doing multiple things at the same time. Before I had you say you are doing some gig economy work. You are doing some personal business. You're also going to school at the same time. So, it's like you're doing 3 different things just to keep you focused which from my experience, many people I've talked to, they're in this same situation that they just have to be able to be up and doing, and go the extra mile to ensure that they're catching up, which can be challenging, and I think it's also inspiring too. So, I think that's what I heard you say in that question.

**Participant 14**: Yes, exactly. That's well summarized.

**Interviewer: Okay**, thank you for sharing that.

**Interviewer:** Let's quickly talk about your skills and qualifications. How well do you think your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current position or, yeah, the state you are in now. I mean the skills and qualifications you had before, do you think they are being fully utilized at the moment?

**Participant 14**: No, no, they're not. I mean as an individual, you always try to use your skill to the best of your ability where you find yourself, but if you're not in the right environment, you are definitely underperformed. So, to answer your question in a very short way. No, it's not being utilized.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Yeah. So, the next question is, what barriers have you faced in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, or workplace discrimination. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges? How do you manage these challenges?

**Participant 14**: Hymn, I mean in terms of the challenges, I know you mentioned a couple of challenges, you talked about workplace, discrimination and erm, and erm. I think I'm trying to remember the other 2 you talk about erm. Can you remind me of the other one, the first?

**Interviewer:** The first one?

**Participant 14**: Yes, please.

**Interviewer:** Licensing Requirements.

**Participant 14**: Okay. Yes, yes, yes. So yeah. I mean, I wouldn't say, okay let me talk about the workplace discrimination most times, you know. Yeah, I'll just put it this way. We know where we're coming from, right? And basically, most Nigerians are very resilient, you know. And I wouldn't say I haven't had the issue of workplace discrimination. I have definitely, you know, and there's some kind of stereotypes most times, but I've not let that, I won't let that hold me back, because, like I said. As a Nigerian, we're mostly resilient. That's how our educational system is and then our general lifestyle is meant to train us to by default, to be very strong people, and, you know, live above certain adversities. So, the way I handle it is knowing where I come from and then, knowing that I have a target, I have a goal I'm pursuing, you know. That's just it, you know, being focused and being focused on the goal and the end result and staying above water, doing the right thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Yeah, we can move to the next section, cultural assimilation and social integration. You said a little about it. If there's anything you need to add, or maybe to further explain, you have that opportunity under this section.

**Participant 14**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland? Have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated? How did you manage these cultural differences, whether it's in your personal or professional life?

**Participant 14**: Hmmn, cultural differences. First of all, the area, the Maryland area is, luckily, we have a huge a huge community of Nigerian and the other African diaspora, so it's not much of a culture shock to an extent, you know. That's the that's the first one, then the other one is, I could say in terms of the diversity, you know, there's a way you relate with certain people like your own people like the people you ‘re used to, you know, it's kind of different, you know. The simplest example I could give is maybe, in terms of you see, someone, let's say you, in coming from Nigeria we have a huge, a huge regard for elders and stuff like that, you know, you know, and then respect is a huge thing there, but here it's different. And of course, in workplaces you see, someone, and you say the way you greet somebody, and the way you do that back home is different. And the reason I'm saying this is because I used to have a colleague in one of the jobs I did here earlier my first few years, and he was way older than me, and I kind of accorded him some kind of respect the way I could give someone back home and he took…I think he took an offense. He felt maybe I was trying to mock him. He was like, hey! How are you shaking with both hands? I said, because you're old enough to be my father, and that's how I do with my father, he said he doesn't like that, you know. Sometimes I accidentally, unconsciously bow down while I'm trying to greet him, because actually he's really old enough to be my father. He's like no. So, he took it as an offense. I saw it as a cultural shock. But coming from where I come from is different. So, this is like the smallest example I could give you. I'm sure there's so many other stuffs, but it's not really coming to mind right now.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thank you for sharing that Yes, thank you for sharing, Let's go to the last question under that section. Actually, this one is about community networks and organizations. And are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration? How well have these organizations supported your career advancement.

**Participant 14**: Yeah, I think it's very important I mention this because I was reached out to by one organization, even though I didn't follow the process through. It's erm, I don't know. It's, I think it's Upwardly Global or so, I've I don't know if I, they are a group of people that are mainly immigrants. No, I just realized I know about them lately. They kind of… They kind of focus on what you're talking about right

now. It just came to mind to be honest; I would have mentioned it to you. So, they kind of reached out to me by email and said, hey, if you, if you are an immigrant, come, we'll see what you have. We'll give you a career coach. We will counsel you and also see how we can give you like a program to help you. That is going to be, like similar to what you studied or what you're doing. And you know they try their best to assimilate. But I'm not really gone too deep to know to what extent they are successful, but that is the only attempt, but it's they're not really visible, because, like I said, a lot of people don't know about them like, for example, it just came to mind right now, you know, you know. So yeah, so, but apart from that, there's not really, really, much community help like that, it's just every man to himself, to be honest. yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. It’s very important, it’s very central to this research, because when I talk to people, some people have mentioned, maybe like church, you know because when you're an immigrant and you come to an environment like this, you need information. You need support. You need networking.

**Participant 14**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** For you to be able to avoid making some mistakes. Maybe something that could take someone 5 years, if you have those resources as soon as you get in the country, you can really (inaudible) those years for people. Thank you for mentioning that I appreciate it. Okay, let's move to section 5. Section 5, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 14:** Do I feel torn between the cultural expectation…?

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think you've mentioned something a little close to that, erm cultural expectations of Nigeria and the US you know, like you mentioned before that coming from Nigeria there are certain norms, then if you moved over to this place, there are also some certain norms too. At times you want to make a decision, you want to act in a way, you are, you, kind of… there's a conflict. Which one do you think is more appropriate? I know you've mentioned something like that, except maybe you

**Participant 14**: Yes, yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** …further examples you want to share?

**Participant 14**: Yeah, I don't really know if I have further example, but definitely there is most times there's this divide, like, you know, you don't know, you know. Is this response appropriate for this environment, you know. Sometimes it's I mean, I might not be able to like pinpoint certain instances right but definitely, it's there's always it's. It's a huge difference. You know, the cultural expectation is different. And yeah, it's, I don't really have any particular example to give right now but of course, yes, there's a huge difference between the cultural expectation here and then over in Nigeria. Of course, we have globalization and you know, everybody is trying to like, the world is more like trying to like, cultural trends are evolving and moving from coast to coast, you know, but at the same time it's still it's still different, you know, like the example I gave to you and then another thing is, for instance, the, the certain-certain…erm I'm trying to use the right word, so I don't say what certain things that are permitted here that are acceptable as law might not even be, even be acceptable back home, you know. The example I could give, if it's not appropriate you can take it out, is, it took me a while to like, okay, understand the issue of the LGBTQ and how it is right here knowing fully well that coming from Nigeria it's different, you know. The first year it was more like a shock to me going to certain places and then, you see someone that's, you know maybe, like transgender and stuff like that, you know, not in a sad way , or in a derogatory way, not in a judgmental way, but it's just like, okay, this is not what you see on a regular street of Nigeria. But after the 1st year, the second year. It was like, okay, this is what is obtainable here. So that's fine, you know. That's just it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it's usually very strange, initially.

**Participant 14**: Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for giving that example, which is very, very good. The last question under Section 5: Have you faced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members back in Nigeria. What strategies did you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 14**: I mean supporting family is part of our culture as Africans, and as Nigerians particularly. So, it's something that we, that I was doing even when I was still in Nigeria and of course, there's this assumption that once you're in America, you're making a lot of money, so, if you were giving one in Nigeria, they will be expecting you to give like 10 or a hundred right now, you know. So, the pressure is there, the pressure is there. It doesn't matter what bills you have to pay here, you still have to take care of the responsibilities back home. And it's, it's called family tax, you know. You can’t escape it. It is a problem on its own, to be honest, it's, that's why you see, many of, many, most Africans here, they have multiple jobs. Because it's not, we are not trying to show off. It’s something that, it's something that we do. We are family oriented, where we come from. You can't afford not to take care of your family members. That's the truth, especially your parents and then your immediate family, siblings, depending on how you know, the relationship is but our parents are automatically our responsibility at a certain age so we can't run away from it.

**Interviewer**: Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much. We are coming to the end of the interview. We are on the last part now, section 6. Under this section, we talk about recommendations. Erm, I think there are about 3 questions here, yeah, about 3 questions. Let's talk about the challenges that African immigrants, erm even though we 're focused on Nigerians, highly educated Nigerian immigrants in Maryland here, let's look at the challenges they face. Do you think there are policies or programs that are already in existence here that kind of influence how successful highly educated immigrants can be? Or do you think these policies (It’s in two parts). If there are policies, you feel help people to grow when they come here as highly educated immigrant. On the other part, if you also think there are policies or programs that limit how people with high level of education and academic qualification, high level of education and professional experience coming from Africa, coming from Nigeria to live here. If there's a way you feel these policies in the how they grow when they come in. So, you can just talk about that briefly, before we go to the next question.

**Participant 14**: So, when you say, when you say policy, are we looking at the government, or are we looking at private sector? Are we looking at either.

**Interviewer:** It can be any, yeah. It can be policies, practices and…

**Participant 14**: Okay, so I feel like in the part of government, erm, I mean the US Government naturally, I think I don't know how, to what extent, they have tough resources available for immigrants. But I, to be honest, I think most of their energy is focused on the Hispanic community where they provide them a lot of help and in terms of both language and other resources. But apart from that, let me say, the major driving factor of that is the fact that those Hispanic communities, they are their community, their members of those communities speak out the ones that are Americans speak out, and they say, ‘Hey, these are our people’. They have some of them that have made their way into Congress, and they go there and lobby and say, okay, what can we do for this population? So that is what we're lacking in the African diaspora. We don't have people in the US government that says, okay, this is how we can help these other people that are here. This population is huge. We're talking about I think a few million people, not just Nigerians, Africans as a whole but you know we have a couple 100,000 of Nigerians scattered all over the place, and you know, even if they cannot put in a national policy there, they could look at the pocket of areas where we have large population for example, the DMV area, we have a huge Nigerian population, and somewhere, like in the Houston Dallas area, where we have another huge population, you know. So those areas could come up with specific policies. I don't think there is any right now but on the other side to the various countries like the Nigerian Embassy, Nigeria knows that they have a huge population here. I feel like it should come from their own parts too. They come up with something Nigerian center that is supposed to be a resource for Nigerians in the diaspora, but that Nigerian Center is just like a club. They don't really come up with any activity. You will not see any adverts about them trying to help the people out there. So, they have funds and they have resources. They have the ability to do this but they're not so on an individual basis, I've seen attempt, like I mentioned the Upwardly Global, the organization that is trying their best to help people from coming from the diaspora to professionals to like, help them evaluate your certificate. They take your resume, and they try to push and put you in a better position, but I don't know their scope. I don't know what budget they are working with. So, because, like again, if they are really funded and huge, they would be, have more presence like doing advert and so people can know more about them. A lot of people don't know about them. And the most important part of it is I know this is I mean (inaudible), but it's something I'm passionate about. That's why I'm bringing this right here. It's about the mental health part of it, you know. A lot of people are people, immigrants. They do multiple jobs. And you asked me a question about remittance back home, that is most of the reason. And they have a lot of targets, so, people that have actually lived their life. You know, had a long career, 10, 20, 30 years career in Africa before coming here. So, now they're getting a little bit older, and they're still stressing themselves till their old age, and then sometimes it takes a toll on them. It takes a toll on them mentally. We 've had so many cases of people collapsing in the workplace because you clock out from this job, you're going to the next job. You don't even have enough sleep in a week. So, most people, we've had cases of people having stroke, people collapsing, people having heart attacks, you know, and then the most, one of the most serious parts of it that we're not talking about is how it affects people's marriages, too, you know most marriages are collapsing. Most people are just living together, but you know they are not really couples anymore. But most of them are actually having collapsed marriage, because of these things, the pressure of trying to make a living is having on families, you know. So, to this end I used to, I was talking to a friend about a nonprofit that was focused on just mental health. And then, you know, you know, because naturally, the Nigerian man, the African man, does not believe in therapy or having that kind of assistance. So that's a big problem. You know, mental health. The nonprofit was meant to do that mental health advocacy and also try to get provisions for people to get free access to, you know, mental health help, and maybe bring it to them you know, in the churches or in their workplace or in their community that like, you know, that's one of the things, you know, basically. But yeah, I mean, I think I'm thinking I've gone off topic right now but just call me back, please. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yes, actually, you've not gone off topic. It's just that you've touched on the last question I wanted to ask, which is the kind of changes and support systems you think if they are put in place, it's going to help African immigrants, Nigerian immigrants living in Maryland and living in the US at large.

**Participant 14**: Oh, yeah, I think I just, I think my last answer, I touched it a little bit. And yeah, like, I said, the most important one is like you know, having those resources there to help people navigate their way. Hey, this help is available to you. You have a bachelor's degree. You used to work in this field. Come, let us show you how you can, what certification you can get you know. Sometimes the major challenge people are having is having to work and go to school at the same time, because sometimes you have got to pay bills, you can’t stop working. So, if we could also have, like, okay, this organization can loan you to make sure you have money for your upkeep while you're going to school, and while you're getting a certification when you start working, you pay back. That would also be a game changer, you know. And also, the issue of mental health is very important. Mental health is one of the biggest challenges that people are having. But we like, I said,

Africans and Nigerians don't like anything that has to do with mental health. We feel like we can handle it. And it's sometimes we can't really handle it. You know, we can't really handle it, and it's killing us, but we don't want to admit it. So that's that.

**Interviewer:** Hmm! Thank you so much for your time. I do really appreciate your time, and the insight that you shared during this interview.

**Participant 14**: You are welcome.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I would have asked one more question, which is the last question. If you have any additional comments or insight you would like to share but let me, not take it from you, if you have any additional comment or insight, please.

**Participant 14**: No, I think I've exhausted my insights.

**Interviewer:** I do appreciate it.

**Participant 14**: Yeah

**Interviewer**: So, if you would like me to send you a summary of this study findings once I finish the research, please let me know. I will provide you with a copy via email.

**Participant 14**: Yes. Yeah, I would love to.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. I'm going to stop the recording now.

**Participant 14**: No problem.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Participant 14**: Bye my brother!