**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for joining us for this interview. Since you have given me your permission to record. So, I've started recording the interview, so we can start now.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So, this interview. We have 6 sections in the interview. There are a few questions under each section, some 5 questions, some 4 questions. So, we will start with section one. Section one is about demographic information.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** The 1st question I have another session is, can you tell us your age, your gender and your country of origin?

**Participant 15:** Yes, 54 male, Nigerian.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, sir. Question 2. What is your highest level of education, and what country did you obtain your degree from?

**Participant 15:** Masters, Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how long have you lived in the United States? Maryland specifically.

**Participant 15:** 6 years.

**Interviewer:** Did you say 6 years?

**Participant 15:** Yes, 6 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And all those 6 years you've lived in Maryland?

**Participant 15:** Yes. Baltimore.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Next question is about your current profession or job title. Can you share with us your current profession or job title?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, currently, now I drive, I drive for Uber and Lyft.

**Interviewer:** Okay, you are in the gig economy. Okay, thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The last question under this section. what was your profession in Nigeria before you migrated to the US?

**Participant 15:** Financial Controller.

**Interviewer:** Okay? So, you were a financial controller in a company, in a private company?

**Participant 15:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We'll quickly go to Section 2, under section 2, we talk about push and pull factors, that is, factors that influence people's decision to migrate from one country or the other, so I will combine the 1st 2 questions into one, because they are closely related, and the question is what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States? Were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave, eg. economic, social, or political, challenges?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, basically, it was economic. Excuse me. Everyone knows that the United States economy seems to be better than you know what we have in Nigeria, and every rationale human being would likely want to explore, you know that kind of opportunity. And that was basically why I left Nigeria. It was for economic reasons.

**Interviewer:** Okay? So, there's another section that will talk about that. Maybe you'll be more specific when we get to that section. That is under, professional experience.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** But before we move to that section, I still have, I still have one more question under this section 2..

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** What attracted you to United States, Maryland in particular?

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What challenges have you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 15:** Yeah. I normally have some friends and relations that have all lived all their lives in Maryland, and I have visited once or twice before I decided to finally come to Maryland. So, I think family and friends in Maryland actually motivated my choice of Maryland. And concerning challenges, it was a normal process, you know, go to the embassy, do the normal applications and I travel down here. That's it. I really don't have any special challenges, you know aside the just normal, you know process of traveling.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Why I asked that question is because everybody’s situation is different. Some people come in and they don't have family or friends, or that support, that initial support. So, people talk about not having a place to stay, not getting the right information. It makes it more difficult for people to navigate those challenges. Thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 15:** You're welcome.

**Interviewer:** We go to section 3. Section 3, we talk about professional experiences. The 1st question here is, please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria. Before relocating to the United States, you said you said you were a financial controller. Can you walk us through your career path, the growth path that you followed for you to get to that level of a financial controller.

**Participant 15:** Yeah, Yeah, while I was in high school, you know, I made the decision to become an accountant. And you know that for anyone in Nigeria to even be admitted to any college for accounting or accountancy as a course of study, you must have a credit in English language and Mathematics. So, I have to struggle and make sure I have that. So, I got an admission into a polytechnic, Ondo State Polytechnic and after spending 4 years, I graduated and I did the normal National Youth Service Corp mandatory one year, serving the country in a way, and I did that with the Nigeria Gas Company limited, a subsidiary of NNPC, Ekpan, Warri, Delta State, and fortunately for me, I was attached to accounts department. We were basically, you know, working on reconciliation, you know, being a very large organization, we were doing reconciliations every day. So, I was actually doing the reconciliation of one of the commercial banks then. So, having completed my one-year mandatory youth service program I left for Lagos, Lagos, because it's like the New York of America. You know where all companies’ head offices are, you know, situated. So, it's always very fierce to get a job in Lagos, so I was lucky to get a company to work with a…(inaudible) Nigeria Limited. They're actually, into processing cocoa beans into cocoa butter, and cake which they ship abroad. So, I was in that place for like 2 years before I got another job into…(inaudible) house, which happened to be a five-star hotel. It was one of the most prestigious hotels then in Ikoyi. I think we hosted several important, you know personalities. I think we once had the Queen of England in the hotel once. So, I was in that hotel, I started as accounting officer, which is principally where a new accountant started and the company, and from there I became a supervisor, a manager, and eventually a chief accountant, and that is after spending like I think I was there for almost 16 years before I, you know, got to that position. So, I was there as chief accountant and as a financial controller you know, having supervised the accounts department and acted as the deputy general manager. So eventually, whenever the general manager is not around, I take charge, and that is like having over, you know, 120 staff to supervise and to chair the meeting, departmental meetings, and to also as a financial controller, I attended board meetings, and I think that was the highest level of responsibility, because going to the board meeting seems to be the biggest challenge in that job, because at the board meeting, it's only finances that is being discussed. And as a financial controller, you give the figures, and you cannot come around to give different figures at different board meetings, and for the fact that we're dealing with people from different backgrounds, you know, architect, you know, serious businesspeople, lawyers, and you know, financial experts. And you know, yeah, I think I have people from investment, and all the rest that were on board. So, it's always a very, very serious meeting for me and I was there, for, I think I was in that particular hotel, for like as Chief, as a Financial Controller for like 4 years, then I moved to another hotel as in the same position, too, as a financial controller. I was there for like 2 years, that is, at the Ikeja. It’s at Ikeja, Toyin Street (inaudible) hotel. Both hotels were under Accord managed brand. Accord brand. It's a popular brand in France. In most cases all the general managers are seconded by France, and so it's like we're just working with the French people. So that was my journey until I decided to resign my appointment, and, you know, move to America. So that was it.

12:13

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, thank you. That's quite interesting and very inspiring.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I see that you have background across oil and gas and hospitality industry. And you rose right from the entry level to the position of financial controller.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** How many years of total experience did you have in Nigeria before you moved to the US?

**Participant 15:** That’s erm, I think that's up to from 1999 to 2018. I don't know. That's about 25, 20, something or so or 20… I know it's 20 something, yeah, 2018 to..

**Interviewer:** (Inaudible)

**Participant 15:** To 1999.

**Interviewer:** (Inaudible) Let me…

**Participant 15:** (Inaudible)

**Interviewer:** Let me calculate that.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I wanted to say 29 years, but I don't want to be too ambitious. But let me see.

**Participant 15:** No, I don't think it's up to that.

**Interviewer:** Maybe 19 years but let me see.

**Participant 15:** Yeah (inaudible)

**Interviewer:** 2018 to 1999, yes 19 years. Okay.

**Participant 15:** 19 years, but don't forget that I worked in a (inaudible) before that, which is what I spent about 2 years in a (inaudible), and another one year in an accounting department in NYSC, so if you add those 3…

**Interviewer:** Yes, we're talking about 22 years now.

**Participant 15:** About 22 years, to be specific.

**Interviewer:** Okay thank you for clarifying that.

**Participant 15:** Yeah, and all in accounts and finance departments.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. I appreciate that. So, let's come down to the US here.

How would you describe your current career trajectory in the US?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, my case may sound a bit different, (inaudible) to Nigeria. Having spent, you know, those number of years in the accounts department. I think I'm somewhat not interested in office work in a way, in accounting work, because, you know, accounting is a special kind of profession, you know, in every department, our job is always interrelated, you know, the output of one person is the input of another person. So, we depend on as much as all of us are working towards that P & L. at the end of the month. So our job is, you know, we are rely on one another, and there's so much so much politics that comes with this person has, you know, I was somewhat tired of working in that kind of setting, and I desired to choose driving, because driving here, you know, gives me, you know, I don't want to say enough money, but it gives me what is really reasonable enough for me to pay my bills. Apart from that, I work at my own time. I don't have to…I don't have any email to respond to. I don't have any training to conduct. I don't have any budget to prepare. I don't have any reports to prepare, so I just feel I'm just comfortable taking people from point A to Point B, and I'm done. I just go back home, and I start the next day. As I'm speaking to you now, I have finished my morning, you know, ride. I'm home. I'm going to be home till around 5 or 6 or 7. Then I go out, do another 4 or 5 hours…(inaudible) I just don't just want to be part of… I'm not really interested in pursuing accounting as a profession as we speak right now, maybe sometimes later, or something but for now I’m just into driving, delivery, you know, moving from one point to another in this city.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. You have your own time. You manage your own time.

**Participant 15:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** That flexibility is very, very good.

**Participant 15:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, I wanted to ask, the next question I wanted to ask is about skills and qualifications. And the question is, how well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 15:** Of course, you know, all our life in account department is about you know, analysis. You analyze whatever situation, whatever circumstances, and you go for what you feel is the best. So, I would say that you know all I've done all my life still helped me in taking the decision that I you know I took, and what I'm doing now, and accounting is about, you know work on these figures, on that figure. You have a target you check if you know, achieve your target or not. So, my training in Nigeria truly helped me in what I'm doing now.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

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

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** One more question under this section of professional experience. I don't want to, I don't want to go ahead of you and say, maybe this is not so relevant, since you are working for yourself, and you manage your own time at your own convenience. But let me still ask, because there are a lot of factors, or there, let me say, there are many factors that I’m looking at under this next section.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** 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?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, this question might not be out of place in wherever we find ourselves. As long as we deal with the public it's almost the same in all, you know,field of endeavors, you know, as drivers, you know, I got to meet people every day, and I've met virtually all nationals, you know, in doing this job have, you know, spoken to, you know virtually all careers, you know, surgeons, pilots, professors, you know I met all these people, and in most cases we got into conversations, and we truly have, you know, good conversations which at the end of the day ends me good comment, good tips and good pay at the end of the day. I truly have not really have any challenges, typically because I'm doing this, and even if I was to be doing an accounting or finance job. I don't think I’m going to have so many difficulties. Maybe the accounting world might be a little bit different. Most of the recognized certifications here are the same thing that we, you know we go through in Nigeria, in fact, some people in Nigeria that are writing the same exam, the CFA, the ICPA, the CISA, and whatever in Nigeria it's the same, I would say the same models and the same whatever. And I truly haven't started any accounting, related job. Maybe if I have, I may have a contrary opinion, but for now the job that I do, I really don't have any challenges.

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

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Let's go to Section 4, cultural assimilation and social integration. I'm going to roll maybe 1, 2, or 3 questions into one. How would you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland? Have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated to the US Be it in your personal or professional life?

**Participant 15:** Honestly, having worked in an international, you know, company or international environment in Nigeria, in a way for those number of years, and those were hotels of, you know, international repute. We were always dealing with people from Europe, from America, from Asia, you know, Canada and all the rest. So, and most of the people that work together, the general managers are usually from abroad, you know. So, well I really have this way of dealing with you know, people that are not from Nigeria and getting to America, it's nothing different. I would even say it's a little bit easier, because the language, you know the most spoken language is English language, which were not like when we have some people speaking French in Nigeria, that we got to cope with. So basically, I don't think I have any cultural or social related problem. Here, I am you know, I have the ability to really relate with people and to really show some level of courtesy and concern to you know, people that I come across with, and I've got same back. I have not been, you know, discriminated against in any form or shape that I can recollect. I think I've been able to acclimatize very well with people.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. Very interesting.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The last question under this section. And let me say one or 2 things before I ask the questions. It’s about community networks or organizations.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** When people come around or when people come over, let me say.

**Participant 15:** Huhuh

**Interviewer:**

People try to look for support in one way or the other to quickly adjust so that they can navigate the landscape better, professionally or in terms of economic opportunities or looking for a job.

**Participant 15:** Huhuh

**Interviewer:** In your own case, are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration? How well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 15:** Yes, for anyone to, you know advance, you got to be comfortable, and you, be able to get that needed support when necessary. I would say that one, finance wasn't really a problem when I got here, I was able to you know, secure my apartment in 2 weeks or thereabouts. I was able to buy a car in less than a month, and I was able to, you know, get my driver's license. I was introduced to a church, Jesus Christ of Latter Rains Saints. They were very, very, very, you know, helpful coming around, you know, inviting us, and you know, showing that they are family even offering to give us you know, free food and stuff like that. It really, really helped us to settle down and don't forget that I said that I have family and friends too, so they were always available to give that, you know, advice, concern, and, you know, all the rest. So, it really helped us to settle down on time. So, I will basically say the church were, you know, apart from family, they really, you know, helped us, take us around, take us to places and stuff like that, and they gave us as much as food and whatever. So, it helped us to start well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay, thank you for sharing that. We move to Section 5.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** We look at cultural and economic challenges.

**Participant 15:** I thought…

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, I think you… (scrambled speeches), we touched on that to some extent, but this one is a kind of, maybe in a different perspective. So, the question is, do you feed torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this? Let me give you an instance. The cultural expectation at times can be challenging, because some of them are different in terms of the norms that you are used to in Nigeria, and the ones that you get here, and you realize that the norms are not exactly the same. At times you feel, how do I behave under this circumstance? Do I hold on to my cultural beliefs? Or do I quickly (laughs) adapt to the norms here because it’s a different environment. Have you found yourself in that kind of a situation?

**Participant 15:** Honestly, it wasn't the, even when there was little or some differences. It wasn't material enough to give me so much concern. Don't forget that I said I've worked with, you know, an international, you know, company.

**Interviewer:** …organization.

**Participant 15:** …organization and I've related with people of different, you know countries, you know, Colombia, you know, people come from all over the you know the world to work in that from Spain, from Colombia, from the republic of, you know, several African countries, even most of our meetings are done outside, you know outside Nigeria, you know. So, getting here, I already have an idea of how to relate with people. Yes, here it seems like people are not as fast as we want to be in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Hummn.

**Participant 15:** You know the pace seems to be a little bit, you know, slow, or the way they relate to some situations. Yes, you know, was, you know, a little bit, I begin to ask the question, why is it that they are not, you know you went to see someone, and the person is not coming out as fast as possible, or whatever. But I found out after some time that well, this is a way of life. We ain't going to change it. So, I quickly adapt to, you know, those little, little, stuffs, beside that for me, here and Nigeria almost the same to me. It's almost the same situation, the food in Nigeria, you can get the same food here, you know, and so the same church, even this church that I attend. I chose to attend that church because I already had, you know a contact with that church in Nigeria,

**Interviewer:** Oh good.

**Participant 15:** ...and the way they practice in Nigeria is the same way they practice here. So, it wasn't so so strange, and you know the same family values. You see people, grandma, grandma, you know. So, for me, they really, I wouldn't know maybe some other people, it might be of so much difference. But don't forget that I said I visited once or twice before I finally came, so it was easy for me to just integrate like that.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Yeah, thank you. It is clear to me that you had a very good amount of multicultural skills and experience and awareness before you moved over to this place.

**Participant 15:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. Last question under this section. Have you encountered economic challenges in terms of remittances or supporting family members back in Nigeria. What strategies have you used to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, luckily for me, my parents are late, parents from my wife are late. So, we, I really do not have much financial responsibility back home in Nigeria. So, I only have maybe few you know, sisters back in Nigeria, and they are also well to do so, I don't, for the fact that I am here with my family and my family. I really don't have to spend, send, so much money back to Nigeria like some people that are here alone and their whole family is back in Nigeria, and you know, when you don't have your parents back there, there's really no, nothing that will warrant spending so much money back in Nigeria. So, I work here, and I'm able to just take care of my nieces. So, the little that I have to send home, it's really not a big problem for me, and they are usually a way of, you know, sending money back home to Nigeria. You can do it directly through your bank. You can. Yes, majorly, through the bank. There are some apps that do that, you know. I have some investments in Nigeria, too, and when I have some proceeds, I take it back from there through the bank and some apps. I'm able to send it back down here. So the banks and the apps help us with, you know, sending something back and forth, and for the fact that I don't have so much financial responsibility in Nigeria. It's really never a headache for me while I'm here.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We move to the last section.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Section 6. We are looking at recommendations.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So, these recommendations are things that can help highly educated African immigrants that moved from Nigeria especially, to come to live in the US, particularly in Maryland. The 1st question I wanted to ask is about policies and programs. From your own experience and perception. Have you? Do you think there are policies and programs that help African immigrants to succeed or create barriers for them that slow them down. Yeah, have you noticed any policies or programs like that that exist, That are already in existence?

**Participant 15:** Honestly, I cannot be categorical. I can't say I know these particular policies that has hindered me for a person as a person from going, you know, forward! I think this country America, is so blessed by God and the country in a way, you know. help everyone that comes around. If you come into this country in 2 months you can, be driving. I don't think it's possible in some other countries. So, I think you, as long as you have your ITIN, you have social security, you can begin to apply for different kinds of jobs and if you are willing to work and you want to do the legal and stuff you are likely going to get some jobs. Thousands of people are in the nursing industry and all the rest. So, I personally cannot recognize whether there is a policy of government that is hindering the growth of immigrants here.

**Interviewer:** Immigrants, okay.

**Participant 15:** Yes, not to forget the fact that whoever is coming here will have you know have to check for the fact that yes, this is not my country. You are coming in, you are expected to go through some hurdles. As long as you are able to do that, then you'll be able to enjoy what you are supposed to enjoy, which I think is applicable to our own country. Nigeria, too.

**Interviewer:** Absolutely.

**Participant 15:** So honestly, I cannot say categorically that this particular program has hindered me, because if I want to do any, for me, now that I'm an accountant. If I want to do any accounting, tax, investment, you know, if I want to write my CISA today, I would be able to write it. If I want to write CFA today, I can write it. I don't think I have a limit to doing that. I don't think there's an organization that or a policy of government that says you cannot write this. Maybe I'm probably not or duly informed, but from what I find out.

**Interviewer:** From what you know. Okay.

**Participant 15:** After I tried to secure an admission into university to even study law, and they are not stopping me from doing that.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

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

**Participant 15:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So let me say 2 more questions. Now.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Then we'll call it a day.

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** The next question is, what changes or support systems or policies or programs would you suggest that can help highly educated African and Nigerian immigrants to succeed in their careers in the US or in Maryland. Is there anything like that that come to your mind?

**Participant 15:** Yeah, I think for anyone that is, you know, is going to be labeled or described as highly educated. It's a given that the person can, you know can thoroughly, you know analyze or look at the situation of wherever he’s going. There is a lot of information available online and one can, you know, relate to friends, brothers, and whatever I would say, such a highly educated Nigerian should make sure they have full understanding of what is obtainable here. For someone that is in accounts and finance, yeah you are likely going to be able to pick up Job here when you have the normal documentation that you needed to do that, and you are able to write all you know, you can write it in Nigeria if you want, you can come here to write the you know, the certification that you needed to do as long as you are able to do that and I think whoever is relocating from Nigeria to America should try as much as possible to come in with some funds because you're going to need to get a car. You're going to need to get accommodation. You need money for all this. So, if you're coming back from Nigeria, and you have a reasonable enough amount of money, or you make it available, or you transfer it here. I think one will be able to hit the ground running.

**Interviewer:** Hit the ground running. Yes, that’s the word.

**Participant 15:** Yeah. So, if you leave Nigeria without enough fund, it's going to be a challenge for you to have a proper accommodation here. It's going to be a challenge to buy a car, you know it's going to be a challenge to do, to even pay for any certification that you might likely need to do. But if you have all those things in place, why not? It would not be a problem to hit the ground running.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. I can now say at this time that the only question I have is if you have any additional comment or insights that you would like to share, and that will be it.

**Participant 15:** Yeah, all I would say is, if we eventually find ourselves here, we shouldn't forget the particular reason that made us leave Nigeria, to come here. We should try as much as possible not to do anything that is criminal or illegal and just, you know, be as helpful as we can to any, you know, Nigerian, that we come across. I make sure I do this whenever I run into any Nigerian, or even by extension, any African, and they decide to, you know ask me any question or whatever on how to, you know get settled, and whatever, I try as much as possible to give, you know, maximum information that I can. I do that almost on a daily basis, when I pick anybody up. I still did this yesterday, and I picked a guy up. So that is all I think I have to say as comments.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much.

**Participant 15:** You're welcome bro.

**Interviewer:** I really really appreciate your time, and the very interesting insights that you've shared in the course of this interview.

**Participant 15:** Yeah, you're welcome, sir.

**Interviewer:** If you would like to have a copy of this research findings after the research is completed, please let me know. I'm going to share with you via email.

**Participant 15:** Okay, I wouldn't mind to have a copy.

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

**Participant 15:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I appreciate your time.

**Participant 15:** You're welcome.