**Interviewer:** Thank you for joining me in this interview. Having given me your permission to record, so I'm now recording the interview and we can go ahead and start the interview. But before we start, there are six sections in this interview. We start with section one. Section one is about demographic information. There are five questions under this section, so I will just walk you through the questions. Let's just get at it right away.

**Participant 20:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** The first question is, can you share your age, gender and country of origin?

**Participant 20:** Okay, I'm 38 years of age. I'm male, and then I'm from Nigeria.

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

**Participant 20:** My highest level of education at the moment is bachelor's. I got a Bachelor’s of Science in electrical and computer engineering back in Nigeria. And yeah, that's what I did.

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

**Participant 20:** I've only lived in Maryland, so I've been in the United States for this year…this month makes it 2 years that I've been in the United States, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And you lived only in Maryland since?

**Participant 20:** Yeah. I've lived only in Maryland for the last 2 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The next question is, what is your current profession or job title?

**Participant 20:** I would request to skip that question.

**Interviewer:** Okay. About your profession, what was your profession in Nigeria before you migrated to the US?

**Participant 20:** In Nigeria, I was a network operations center front office manager.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We can go to section two. Section two is about push and pull factors.

**Participant 20**: Okay.

**Interviewer:** Push and pull factors are the factors that motivate people to migrate from their country to another country, or from one country to the other. 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 20:** The major factor that led to our migration to the United States was majorly the economic factors. We looked at how Nigeria was deteriorating in terms of the economic factors in Nigeria, and also the fact that the kind of the standard of life we wanted to achieve, even for our unborn kids at the time, because at that time we were just newly married, and then we wanted to seek a society that would, you know, that would give our children better opportunities. We wanted a society that would give us better opportunities as young people. We wanted to be able to take our career to the next level, take our life goals and life pursuits to like a better level. And there were a lot of things causing those limitations for us in Nigeria and the standard of living against the cost of living were not matching up. There were a lot of things that Nigeria lacked in terms of good medical care, good roads, power. All of these things played a major role to affecting the standard of living that we actually wanted to have and achieve. And knowing the fact that we're going to bring in new kids, like at the time, we didn't have a child. So, looking at the fact that we would want to have a child, how did we want our child to…what kind of society did we want our child to grow into, what standard of living, medical facilities, and all of that. Those were the things that made us look into projecting and trying to seek for better opportunities abroad. So majorly, I would say it's all about the economic, it was majorly the economic factor that led to it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I know you've already talked about why you chose the United States.

**Participant 20:** Hmm.

**Interviewer:** But what attracted you to Maryland in particular?

**Participant 20:** Emmmm, majorly, because we had more friends and mostly some of our friends and family members were here in Maryland, so it felt like a destination where we would be able to have, like an abode, like we’ll have familiar faces that we know, just the fact that we have more family and friends that had already migrated to the United States and are based in Maryland, it felt like a safe place to probably start from, so that's why we chose Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you.

**Participant 20:** You’re welcome

**Interviewer:** The last question under this section is, what challenges have you encountered during the migration process.

**Participant 20:** Ummmm, looking at… are you saying like, when I already got here or before getting here?

**Interviewer:** It could be before, during and after you got there. Just the migration process.

**Participant 20:** Emm, the major challenges we faced at first had to do with securing a date for a US interview, that was like the major crisis, that was like the major headache we had, because it was very much difficult to secure a date. And then, when we did eventually, the next phase was preparing yourself for your Consulate interview at the Embassy, which wasn't really much of a challenge, because we had all our acts together, we were prepared for the move that we wanted to do so everything that we were preparing for were just exactly going to the interview and saying it as it is, what our motives were. So the major challenge was just getting the date because it was like a big road to achieve an appointment with the Consulate in the Embassy for our visa interview, and all of that, so that would majorly be like the major roadblock towards our migration. And asides for that, coming over here, I think it had to do with settling down, first the weather, it was an issue we weren't so used to coming from, you know, Africa, Nigeria, where it's naturally always warm.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 20:** So, I think my wife came in before I did so she came in during the summer period, I came in between the period where we were leaving winter into spring. So I came in during that weather period, but still it was very, very cold for me at that time, so trying to adapt to the weather, trying to, you know, get a place to stay, and then, you know, trying to convert, always get to convert…the exchange rate was like a big deal, too, because.

**Interviewer:** Yeah

**Participant 20**: The money we brought in from Nigeria was really nothing, because if you look at the exchange rate at the time, it was as much as a thousand naira to a dollar. So, looking at that conversion at that time, it was like a whole lot of naira went down and it didn't really have any significant value to the dollar in terms of the exchange rate power. So that also played a major factor in our finances, and all of that. So emmm…but like I said, that was like the rough beginning of our transitioning, having to, you know, deal with the exchange rates in terms of naira to dollar, and at the time I moved I was still working with my company in Nigeria. So

**Interviewer:** In Nigeria

**Participant 20:** Yeah, so I still had to work for like another extra year in Nigeria, emmm from the United States working with my company in Nigeria. So it was a big deal sincerely, because the value of naira to dollar was so bad, so terrible and that was a major challenge for us.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We’ll go to Section three, professional experiences.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The first question is, please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the United States.

**Participant 20:** Emmm, so I've had like over 11 years’ professional career after the university, after college. I started working in Nigeria since 2012, and since 2012 I have been in the IT sector. I've worked as a field support engineer, I've worked as a technical support engineer, I've worked as a front office network operations engineer. I moved from there, I worked as a business analyst, all in the IT industry. From being a business analyst, I moved into incident management. From being an incident manager for a couple of years, I got promoted to being an operations manager and I was an operations manager for the last 3 years before I migrated. So I was an operations manager for 3 years, I was an incident manager for another 3 years, and then I had my role as a technical engineer, as a field engineer and also as a knock engineer. So yeah, I've had to move around like five to six roles in the IT industry in the last 12 years and I've only worked in the IT industry. I haven't worked any other industry aside IT, the telecoms industry.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. Thank you for sharing that interesting career journey in Nigeria. Having worked for over 11 years in Nigeria at different capacities at managerial level before you moved over to the US, so thank you for sharing that. How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 20:** Emm, I would love to skip that question too.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Since you're skipping that question, I don't know if this next question will be…

**Participant 20: N**o, it also won't be…

**Interviewer:** Which is how do you feel your skills and qualifications are being utilized in your current role?

**Participant 20:** Yeah. So that would also be skipped.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 20:** Because it plays a part with the second question.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** How about barriers in terms of professional landscape, licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualification or workplace discrimination, have you experienced any of those? Have you experienced any challenges in those areas, and if you have, what strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 20:** Funny enough. I have not had a situation where I've experienced workplace discrimination before, even both in Nigeria and even in the United States. I've not had to experience that before. So also for recognition of foreign qualifications. Emmm, I'm actually taking a couple of certifications. So far, I've taken two certifications in the United States in the last two years that I've been here, so I think I'm trying to like, you know, equip myself with, you know, like learning every day, because I realized that the United States is a more advanced market in terms of our profession. The level of experience that you've gathered in Nigeria, which is actually very significant but when you're coming to the United States, you're coming into a more advanced system, you're coming into a more advanced environment. It is quite necessary that you, whatever you think you know back then in Nigeria, over here it’s a different ball game, you need to learn, you need to, you know, like you need to start from the scratch. And that was like the first reality check for me, that whatever I felt I was in Nigeria, coming into the United States was like a humbling ground for me. I had to like, go back to the roots, like go back to getting this, go back to learning this, go back to learning that. And so that has been like a kind of barrier in a professional landscape, and I wouldn't say it's a barrier. I just feel like it's because you're coming into a world power country like the United States, right? And you're coming from Africa, you're coming from Nigeria, so the standard in which you've been operating on in terms of your career is going to be different from the standard that is placed in the United States. So you're going to have to work on yourself, you're going to have to go back to your roots, you're going to have to learn every day, you're going to have to open your minds to new things. And that's more like the challenge that you face in the professional field, in the professional advancement of your career, so it might not really be a barrier but at the same time it's like a challenge that you have to give to yourself for you to stay relevant in the market over here. So that's what I have been forced to realize moving over here. So that's it.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that perspective. We can move to Section four, cultural assimilation and social integration. How will you describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland? Have you experienced any cultural or social challenges since you migrated? And how have you navigated these cultural differences both in your personal and professional life?

**Participant 20:** Okay. So for me, obviously, I already knew what the lifestyle in the United States of America is like. So moving into Maryland, I was able to easily adapt to the cultural setting. I was able to understand, like, how it is to relate with different races of people. Like you meet an Asian today, how do you relate with an Asian, how do you relate with an American, how do you relate with your fellow African brothers, how do you relate with your fellow European brothers, and, like, you know, like, I didn't have an issue with cultural assimilation. And the fact that I also came into Maryland because I had familiar people. I had like friends that already migrated here years back, that were in Maryland. It was a good time to reconnect with them. I had, like family members that also were here. Also, my wife had friends here, my wife had family members here, so it just felt like a kind of reunion in a way. Like, oh, catching up with each other or getting to know what's up with each person, knowing each other's experiences, what they had to go through, how they had to transition, you know, it was an easy blend for us. It wasn't like a challenge at all for us in Maryland, so I think that part was really good for us to actually adapt with.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. So before I move to the next question, in other words, what you said was, you felt more comfortable with integration, assimilation in Maryland, because you already had friends and family members who already lived here before.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, thank you. The next question and the last question under this section is, are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration? How well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 20:** To be honest, I've not actually found any organization that has supported my career advancement, it’s sad to say, but in terms of career advancement, I have not been opportune to see or find one, and that is also a challenge because when you look at other races and you look at other people from different parts of the world that are in the United States, you see how people from the same place where they come from, support each other in terms of career advancement, and all of that. It's sad to say that for we Africans it's very difficult when it comes to career advancement, I don't think I have found any organization or any community network that has impacted me on my professional advancement or career advancement. I've only found network community, networks that had only evolved around social life, have only evolved around social gathering and getting to know each other or mingling around socially but it has not really impacted the professional advancement for me. Sorry to say that.

**Interviewer:** Yes, but that's very interesting perspective. Thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I appreciate that. Dual cultural and economic challenges, section five. Under this section, I will just ask you three questions. So the first one is, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 20:** Hmmm! Oh, yeah, I think I still really feel torn about the cultural expectations of both Nigeria and the United States, because from the fact that I've been born and bred in Nigeria, and I spent over 35 years in Nigeria. When you look at that, in terms of what the cultural expectations are as an African, as a Nigerian, it's a whole different ball game here. Like what the cultural expectation is here, how the way of life is here, how the things that are regarded as normal things, that are normal day to day living, is really not the same over there in Nigeria. So like you know, they say, when you're in Roman, you act like the Romans and all of that. So for me, I've been able to just find a way to respect everybody and respect their views and respect their opinions on every subject. I'm a very open-minded person, so trying to understand cultural values for people over here, and how they live their lives and how they do their things, it's for me I've been very open-minded to it so it's really not been an issue for me. It's just for me to understand who I am, what I believe in as a Nigerian, and what the society over here believes in and try to create a balance between both ends.

**Interviewer:** Oh, thank you. Thank you so much for sharing that. The next question which is the last under this section. Have you experienced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria? What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 20:** Oh, yeah, it's sad to say that I still have family members in Nigeria that feel like

they have high expectations of you, because you're in the United States. Everybody wants to have you, you know, send money back home. Everybody wants to be able to, you know, receive from you because they feel like, oh, you are over there in the United States, you have access to dollar, so you know you can always send money back home and guess what a dollar is like a 1,500 naira. So everybody feels like, oh, you have more money than them over there, so everybody wants to receive from you. For me, I've just been able to manage it by being myself and being true to myself, letting people know what I can do. I do not let anyone create any form of expectations for me. As much as possible, I would always give back as much as I can and when I can, but I have never been someone that has ever allowed anybody back in Nigeria to create an expectation of how to give, when to give and what I should give. So it has been solely my own decision, and this has been a decision that I would do or I would give when it is not directly impacting me negatively, or it's not directly impacting our finances in any way. It has to be me giving freely and me giving what I can give. So, though it's been tough, a lot of people would always feel like they want to get this, a lot of people want to plan their lives, thinking that oh, you're always going to give this, but I've been able to put them in their places. I think that's the best phrase to put like, put everybody in their places. Yes, I would support when I can and when I can't, I'm sorry I can't, so it's…because over here you have bills to pay on a weekly basis. You have bills to pay like every week in the United States, even abroad, everywhere. Your debit card or your credit card gets deducted for one particular bill or the other. So it's a very serious thing when it comes to finances over here abroad, so one has to be very smart when it comes to giving out to…

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay. Thank you for taking care of that question. We are getting to the end of the interview. We're on the last section now. Under this section, we’ll talk about recommendations. There are two major questions, and then there's a third one. So we'll start with one of the first two major questions. So having lived in the US, and Maryland for the past 2 years, from your own perspective, do you think there are policies and programs, that are already in existence, that are in place in Maryland where you live, that you feel in one part, help highly educated African immigrants to do well in their career? Then, on the other part, do you also feel there are policies and programs that are already in existence that kind of hinder highly educated African immigrants to do well in their career in Maryland here?

**Participant 20:** Hmmmm, I can't really narrow it down to Maryland.

**Interviewer:** Okay

**Participant 20:** But I would say, I think there are support systems that could help but unfortunately, I've not been able to benefit from. One of the support systems I would say, is, if there was a support system that could help Africans during their integration into the United States, in terms of creating, like opportunities in the job market, making it a little much easier to be able to, you know, find some opportunities a little much easier in the African community space. I think it would go a long way to helping a lot of people. Sometimes, you need to actually go through some very rough patches, rough parts, before you can actually even find your feet when you come in here, afresh to the United States. So for me…so that's why I'm saying I'm not really putting this into Maryland, so to say, because even in Maryland, I don't see any of that happening, I don't see this support system, really, that helps me as a Nigerian, or maybe helps a fellow Ghanaian or a fellow Senegalese. I don't think I've seen a structure like that. It's hard to say, but I see that structure within the Indian communities and some of the Asian communities, but as an African, I don't see that structure, which I feel like if there is a structure like that, it would help a lot of people who are transitioning into the United States, and who are professionals, not just people that, you know, are trying to just sneak into the country and just, you know, professionals that have values and have something that they can add to the society. If we have a system that could help them, that could make it easy for them to transition into the system, in terms of job, in terms of getting documents for them, in terms of helping them through their growth paths to their journey, I think it would be a whole lot of good.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm, nice. Very, very interesting perspective. Thank you for sharing that perspective. I think you may have answered the second question because you have been talking about support system, changes that you would love to see. And that's what my next question is about but you said some of these things are missing in the African immigrants’ community which we have seen in the Asian communities.

**Participant 20:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, the question I wanted to ask is, what changes or support system will you suggest in helping highly educated Nigerian immigrants succeed in their careers in the US? I just wanted to ask you if you are able to give me, maybe even just one example of this kind of structures you've seen in other communities that you feel are lacking in the African immigrants’ community.

**Participant 20:** Okay. Exactly one structure that I would think would make a whole lot of sense is the job market and it would take me into going into like the H-1b visa sponsorship, for example. If we have more Africans, more Nigerians, or more Africans in general like coming together to create more businesses, create more business structure, create more companies like, have some of these companies whereby you can actually, you know, employ some of their intellectuals from Africans like fellow Africans that are intellectuals, you know, it could make the pacts for sponsorship, like job sponsorship, easier for more Africans. Like, you know, the H1B is something that you go online, you go to USCIS, you fill in the forms, you pay for the documents, and you put yourself into the pool. But at the end of the day, you still need a company that is ready to sponsor you, you still need a company that is ready to file for you. So I feel like in this kind of situations where we know that the US market is a very broad market, and the competition is high but the number of people that are fished out for these visa sponsorships are very, very minute compared to the number of people in the pool, so I feel like if we have more Africans coming into business, more Africans coming into creating industries, having companies and ready to, you know, bring in your fellow intellectuals, your fellow professionals that could fit into different roles. I think if we can have something like this coming, because I see to be honest, I see it with the Indians, and I see it a lot, like a lot of Indians get these sponsorship jobs. And funny enough, some of the companies that sponsor them are fellow companies that are probably Indian companies, you know. So if we can have something like that in the African space, it's going to be a whole lot because and at the end of the day it's going to bring up progress, it's going to bring up a lot. I know Africans are doing well in the United States, I know Nigerians are doing exceptionally great, and I'm proud to be a Nigerian when it comes to that, because I know that we are strong and we are hardworking people, and we are very sound minded people, and wherever we are, we always leave our impact there. So at the end of the day, if these kind of opportunities are given to us or given to fellow Africans in that community space, I think it would help a whole lot of people during their transition into the US properly.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing that brilliant perspective. At this point I do have one more question left for you. But as you were talking about, and let me tell you the question, and then I will come back and ask you one thing before you answer that last question, and you can just summarize everything in one piece, too.

**Participant 20:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** But before…so the question is, if you have additional comment or insight. But let me bring you back to something you said when you were talking about cultural assimilation and social integration before. And this thing just crossed my mind now that you're talking about African immigrants, pulling resources together, doing businesses that can help to uplift people that are just coming, or younger generation of African immigrants. But there was something you said before when you talked about the strong social network and social interaction in African communities. What do you mean by that word of strong social interaction and social network among African immigrants’ community, and you said something a little bit about it that we have not been able to convert that strength into a very good support system for ourselves? Can you just explain that a little more? Then maybe you can just pitch whatever you have as additional insight or comment into that, too.

**Participant 20:** Okay. Emmm, so in that view and I'm going to try as much as possible not to…whatever I'm going to say is not going to come out in the wrong way. But what I'm trying to express in that statement is that I feel like when it comes to social gatherings, when it comes to hanging out like chilling…there's a birthday, there is like an event, there is a housewarming, someone bought a house, someone bought a car, it's Friday, I feel like the African community, and not only the African community, but because I'm an African so I'm speaking in that space, we connect more when it comes to social events. And the moment we have that event where we see each other, we check up on each other in that event and the weekend is over, we bypass, like everyone goes their separate ways, and before we get to see again, it probably might be when there's a next event. But what I'm trying to say is, if we are able to make good use of the energy in terms of, that we put in when we have social events in supporting each other. I know very well that Africans we are naturally competitive; the next person might not want the next person to be, you know, as much as they are. The next person also wants to be that “oh, I came into the United States first, I should be at this level.” Some people don't have issues with someone who came in doing better than someone who's been here for 10 years. Some people don't have those issues, but a whole lot of people have issues with the fact that oh, you just came in you should go through the whole face of challenges that we had gone through before we got to where we are. So in that way it restricts the kind of information that Africans share within themselves, it restricts the kind of opportunities that they give to each other. So if we can convert our social energy to our professional support system, whereby we want to help each other grow like ‘asap’, like the mistakes that someone who has been here for 15 years made within the first five years, you're trying to help the next person not go through that same mistake, you're trying to pitch the person to different opportunities where they don't have to go through the kind of struggles that you went through, I think it will go a long way. And don't get me wrong, there are some people that do that, there are some people that help each other at the early phases, there are some people that try as much as possible to say, “oh, do this job, you could do this, apply to this, put yourself in this space, do this thing, do that.” There are some people that do that but in the whole large scheme of things, I think we can do better in helping each other grow and pushing each other into those professional spaces where we can, you know, at the end of the day uplift ourselves. So that's what I was trying to say in the real sense, not like I was trying to throw shade to anybody. But that's the point I was really trying to buttress in the scheme of things.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. Do you still have additional comment or insights that you would like to share?

**Participant 20:** Oh, no, no! I think I've been able to say…like touch on the major things that I actually wanted to say. I don't think I have anything extra to say.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I want to specifically thank you for the last insight you shared. When you're talking about converting, social strength, social energy to something more career focused, more professional networking to provide opportunities for all African immigrants. I appreciate that insight, and I also appreciate your time, taking time out tonight to be with me in this interview.

**Participant 20:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate my time here, too, because this is like the first time I've ever had to have something where…have had like a chat, or like an open chat like this, where we can touch different aspects of transitioning from Africa, from Nigeria, over here, and what the experiences have been. It's like the first time I had to really, really look into like, how did I really perceive things when I got here like… So I'm also glad to have been able to jump on this call with you. So I also say, thank you for this opportunity.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, you're welcome. I appreciate that. If you'd like to receive a summary of these research findings when the research is completed, please let me know, I will provide you a copy…

**Participant 20:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** …via email.

**Participant 20:** Yes, I would love to.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. I will stop the recording now.

**Participant 20:** Okay. Thank you.