**Interviewer:** Thank you for joining us in this interview. After seeking your permission to record, then the interview is being recorded now. So we are going to start right away.

**Participant 21**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: But before we start, I just want to let you know that there are six sections in this interview. Under each section, there are a few questions, under each section, some four questions, some five questions, some three questions. So we’ll start with section one. Section one is about demographic information. So I will go ahead and start the question one under this section now. So question one is, can you please share your age, your gender and your country of origin?

**Participant 21**: Well, my age, 47 years of age, in June that I will be 48. In July, sorry.

My country of origin is Ghana.

**Interviewer**: Okay.

**Participant 21**: And I'm a male.

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

**Participant 21**: My highest education is PhD in biomedical engineering and biotechnology, that’s the highest.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 21**: I obtained it in this country, in America, from University of Massachusetts, Lowell.

**Interviewer**: Okay.

**Participant 21**: But prior to coming here, I had a bachelor's degree from Ghana’s University of Cape Coast. So I came to do my master’s and PhD here.

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

**Participant 21:** Well, US in general, I've been here for about 18 years. In Maryland, I have been here for 10 years 7 months.

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

**Participant 21:** Currently I'm a health physicist, and that's my title, a health physicist.

**Interviewer:** Okay. What was your profession back in Ghana before you migrated?

**Participant 21:** Well, I was a research assistant in the University.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 21:** Right after I finished the university, I finished college, and then I got a job within the same university.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We’ll quickly go to section two, push and pull factors. Section two, we’ll talk about push and pull factors, factors that influence people or factors that are responsible for why people migrate from their country of origin to another country, or from one country to the other. I have four questions here, so the first question is, what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States? Were there specific factors that pushed you to leave, e.g., economic, social, political challenges?

**Participant 21:** No, there was no economic or political challenges that pushed me to come here. I came here voluntarily because of further studies. I had wanted to get my PhD. Yes, you can get PhD in Ghana and in the university over there, because I even started master’s over there. However, I had wanted to get it outside the country. And so it wasn't America specific, I applied to other countries like Canada, UK, even Norway but the US is the one that went through the way I was looking for in getting master's program, and I came to do it over here. So it wasn't economic or any other factors like political or other things. It was by choice.

**Interviewer:** It's just an advancement of academic pursuit.

**Participant 21:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I think you've answered a little bit of the next question. I wanted to know what attracted you to the US and Maryland in particular but since you said you already lived in Massachusetts before, so maybe if you have anything to add to, why did you move to Maryland. There has to be some reasons why you came to Maryland.

Participant 21: Yes. So okay. So whilst I was in Massachusetts, at that time I was still doing my PhD and I got a job at this side, in DC., Howard University, so that made me move to this side.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. The last question under this section is, I want to know if you encountered any challenges during your migration process.

**Participant 21:** Well, I did not encounter any major problem, it depends on how you define it, in coming or in staying here. Not necessarily major, it was just within my PhD program that I had a couple of challenges. Other than that, not any challenges maybe integration or any other form. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, I still have a section about cultural assimilation and social integration. We’ll probably talk more a little bit about that later. Let's quickly go to section three. Section three is about professional experiences. Please can you share with us your career trajectory in Ghana before you relocated to United States? I know you mentioned that you started as a research assistant, and you came over to the US for a doctorate program. Are you able to…

**Participant 21:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Maybe expatiate a little bit about that.

**Participant 21:** Yes, as I said, after my undergrad, I got a chance to work at a university as a research assistant and then I started the master's program over there. But when I got opportunity where I moved here, and it has been from moving from the Academia to a research institution that is not basically a university, and what I do is more or less, I don't focus on research, I focus on customer service, providing services. So I provide more of services than I'm researching in my current institution. Though I do research on my own with my former professor. So that's what I do, not as my main job or as a job, but as something that…as a passion that I keep moving.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for explaining that. I think in answering that question, I think you've talked a little bit about your career trajectory in the US too. That was going to be my next question, so I don't know if you have anything to add, other than that we can skip that question and move to question three.

**Participant 21:** Okay, you can move.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Question three, a lot of highly educated African immigrants that move over to the US, find themselves in situations whereby, with the high level of academic qualification, professional skills and long years of job experience in Africa, they find themselves in situations whereby they have to move to jobs or careers where they are not able to utilize those skills they've acquired back in Africa before they came to the US. In your own case, it seems like you were in academics, and you came here for academic purpose, and you've been in that line also. But do you in any way feel that maybe your skills and qualifications or let me say, how well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current position?

**Participant 21:** Well in my current position because I have a wide range of background or experience, it's one side that I’m utilizing at work. So that's one of the issues because my background is in physics and I’m also in health physics, and then in biomedical engineering. So if you are looking at the broad scope of different fields, then you can see my current position, I'm underutilized in terms of the ability, but I am not underutilized because I have a degree in that and I intentionally…it's something that I decided to do. So, it's not like you have a degree, and you are working in the field that is not related to what you have acquired your degree in. The only difference is that my job doesn't require a PhD to do, you can have master’s, or even a bachelor's to do but the PhD brings a little bit high level. So if there is anything to be done and they are looking for someone, then they will get back to you. That's the only thing. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The next question is about the barriers that people face when they move over to the United States. People talk about how they have challenges in the professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, and even workplace discrimination. And in your case, I want to ask if you have ever faced any barriers in these three major areas in terms of licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications and workplace discrimination. And if you have, what strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 21:** Well, starting from qualification, maybe recognition because I did physics and physics is a universal language. So whether you are in Ghana or over here, there's nothing restrict you and whilst I'm not using the physics directly, because I'm using the health physicist knowledge I acquired over here to do the work. So my qualification and my work environment, it doesn't like…nothing that I'll say I got a trouble with. Then coming to the side of licensing, yes, my profession required…is not…there is certification if you want to have certification. However, if you have PhD, you don't necessarily have to get that certification. The NRC, that is Nuclear Regulatory Commission waived any position, if you're going to the highest level position, maybe radiation safety officer, or something of that sort. If you have a PhD wherever you go, it is not…you are not expected to, but if you have it, it's fine. Do I want to? Yes, I would get it along the line. So it is just for professional sake you want to have it, but it is not something that limits my capability of working because that's not what limits me. Now when it comes to discrimination, well, there are things that I’ve not spoken for years. Have I gone through some things before that is real, a sign of discrimination? Yes. When I was working in a consulting company and it was my certificate that was used to secure the, what do you call it, the contract.

**Interviewer:** The contract, yes.

**Participant 21:** But along the line, because when they are submitting the name for contract and all those things… (can we pause a little bit and come back, because it’s as if my wife is calling me)

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yes.

**Participant 21:** As I was saying, so like it was my resume, let me use that word, the resume that was used, as a person that has more experience in that field and then we began to work but the environment are people that don't appreciate people of color. And so they told my boss that, my supervisor in that case, that they don't want to see me there. They try to say they haven't seen me doing this, doing that, doing that. And I said, “what, I've been doing your work and everything I've been sending to you as a supervisor, you have been reading it and say, go ahead. Yes, you are doing that, you are doing that…everything, so what are they doing?” And then they want to…so the company wanted to pay me 2 weeks’ pay and for me to sign some document and I said, “no, take your money. I'm not signing anything. Just take your money, and I'm not going to take you into any law court, just take your money and go.” So I left the job. So it's kind of thing…I've also gone through a situation whereby someone, although the person is…where I was talking about was white populated dominant (inaudible)…but this one was our own fellow black Americans, whereby the person was a junior staff who wanted the position that I had and connived with somebody for them to use some flimsy excuses to fire me so that he would take the position. I remember meeting that person at my current job, and it’s as if the earth should open for her to sink (both laugh).

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm

**Participant 21:** So I walked to her one day and said, “I have forgiven you, and I have forgiven your friend who you connived with.” She said, that's sweet. (laughs)

**Interviewer:** So it's a small world indeed. You met after several years.

Participant 21: Yes, small world indeed. The funny thing is that at my current work, she was supposed to report to me and it was tough for them. Even the consulting company that I worked with, that they also came out with that, came and got a contract within my current job, and they were supposed to report to me. So the only thing is that when you are working for the government, if you have worked in a certain company, then you shouldn't be reviewing the documents. So that was the easiest way to make (inaudible)

Interviewer: To get out of that situation.

Participant 21: Yep, but when they saw me, as if the earth…the two different things in getting revenue by the two different groups, they all came under my feet in the same company.

But I don't have a heart of retaliating against it. But it was not sweet, it was not good, because the first one because they fired me, it took me more than 8 months to get a job and that was kind of a painful situation, and this one took me, I think, 4 months or so, but in all things just as a believer, sometimes, everything works together for good so you just can. Other than that, yeah. So.

**Interviewer:** Wow!

**Participant 21:** As for challenges you, you may go through one thing or the other. In the academic, it was a different ball game altogether.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. Thank you for sharing that experience

Participant 21: So real discrimination exists.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you.

Participant 21: In the academia and in the work field.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that. We’ll go to Section four, We'll talk about cultural assimilation and social integration. You've talked a little bit about this, but I'm going to combine the first three 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?

Participant 21: No.

Interviewer: And how have you navigated these cultural differences in both your personal and professional life?

Participant 21: Well, I wouldn't say kind of culture differences been too shock to me, or was it a problem? No. There are certain things naturally it will be a shock, especially language usage. There are some words in Africa, we don't use it wrongly or just like that. But over here, somebody can use it and curse words you will hear people saying it here and there. But that's not…that's the way people live but for me, and in the professional level there was no cultural shock to me. It was just living my life normal.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 21:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that. The next question is about community networks or organizations that support immigrants when they move over to the US. In your own case, I want to ask if there were specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration and how well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 21:** No, I haven't had any organization to support me in any form, in any fashion.

But when it comes to, let's say emotionally, and as a believer, I go to church. So church has been at least, a place that you go for upliftment. Other than that, I wasn't engaged by the Church. It’s not there to support me in terms of any other thing, apart from encouragement you receive from your fellow believers, and your pastor.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Participant 21: There's nothing like financial go through. Yes, there has been a time, I remember, one of the occasions whereby during summertime, as a student you cannot work anywhere and financially, it was tough for me to pay my rent and I remember one of our pastors, you may even know him, Pastor Ati. At that time even I was in Massachusetts, he sent me a money of…I met him in New York for convention, and then he asked me, and I told him my situation, he gave me a check of 500. I will never forget that, that helped me during that summer period.

**Interviewer:** That's a lot to give in the US.

**Participant 21:** Yes (laughs). That's the one thing that I would say about that. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that, too.

**Participant 21:** Yeah

**Interviewer:** We move to the next section, section five. We’ll talk about the dual cultural and economic challenges. There are two questions under this section. The first one is; do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of your home country and that of the United States? And how do you navigate this? Are there times, you feel like, oh, should I, what wisdom do I use here, what judgment do I use here? Is it the norms back in Africa, back in Ghana, or the norms and values here in the US?

Participant 21: Well, culturally, I would say, I go by my norms that I was brought up, that's the only thing. So the values I was brought up back home is what I live, but flexibility you adapt to where you are.

Interviewer: Hmmm

Participant 21: Yeah. So I would say that.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. The last question under this section, have you experienced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family back in Africa? What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

Participant 21: Yes, this, I will not call it, it's a challenge but it's still a responsibility. For example, my mom is alive and for that matter, she needs to be taken care of. So every month I ensure that she gets what she needs. Yes, when you know, when you get married you just need your wife to be or your partner to accept the responsibility. So my wife is very gracious in helping me, and even if the month is over and I've not sent it, she would say, “have you sent money to mommy?” And I'll be doing that. So it's a responsibility, I don't take it as a challenge. The only thing is, you look back and you see your other family members like my brother's son, my brother's daughter, sorry that was for me to help in her education back home, in that my brother helped me when I was in college back home. At that time, he was well to do so he helped me, so in the return, and personally, even if he did not help me, and if I'm at a position to help his daughters, I would have done it so they are the people that even as I'm talking, if there is a need they will call me, and I will be helping them. So I wouldn't take it as a big thing, because I've informed my wife about the need to help, and my wife also is open to that. So it's not a big challenge, as long as I have the means to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. We're in the last section of this interview. Here we’ll talk about recommendations. And I want to frame the question in a way that will be able to capture your, not just your own personal or your own individual experience but what you have seen in the highly educated African immigrants’ community in the US since you've lived in the US for a total of 18 years now and as someone who is very much involved in the church community, too. The way I want to say the question is, what peculiar challenges do you…have you noticed, have you seen among the highly educated African immigrants in the United States, maybe in Maryland, or maybe in the US in general, based on your own experience, based on your own interaction, having lived in this country for 18 years.

Participant 21: Well, there are a few things that maybe I’ll talk about is that…especially those who were educated highly over there before coming here.

Interviewer: Hmm!

Participant 21: Their expectations, some of them crashed because maybe your field, your experience might not be applicable to this side, then that is a challenge and the notion that some people have before coming was also opposite. And then also I've seen people that when they finish school because of the field that they chose, the challenge of writing may be professional certification before they can get into job field and maybe looking for a teaching (inaudible) to be a professor. Some of them, it takes them some time based upon certain things that you may not be able to explain the reason behind that. So that is the only thing. So expectation is one of the problem, that people had a big expectation coming here and also the demand from maybe from home, the pressure of get something to help, maybe if you have some people to help back there becomes the burden of a lot of people. So my recommendation will be, people being patient and then wait for appointed time. There are people that also take advices, involving in other profession to get their feet on grounds before getting into their main profession they want, which is a good idea. So it's all about diversifying your portfolio to make you marketable as well. And as I told you of my background because I have a wide background in physics, in medical physics, and then in biomedical engineering. And I didn't plan for that but by, whether coincidentally or by divine means, as I faced a challenge in a department, I switched to another department, gave me the opportunity to have a broad background so it makes you have the choice in job market to get something to do. So at times people need to a look at the job market and be willing to advance themselves in any other thing.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm

**Participant 21:** To enable the person to have more choice. So that is one thing, that I will say

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that perspective. You have kind of touched on changes and recommendations and what kind of support systems that can be put in place, but I want to ask it in another way.

**Participant 21:** Okay, the support system. I think I haven't talked about the support.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I wanted to know what kind of changes or support system do you think if these changes and support system are put in place, these things can enhance the career growth of highly educated African immigrants when they move over here. It could be maybe a policy or a program, or it could also be, maybe things that can be done outside the sphere of government itself.

**Participant 21**: Actually, I'm not involved in politics, so I don't know what could be done politically or state wise. But I think if the population of the African immigrants are more than your voices can be heard.

**Interviewer**: Right.

**Participant 21**: And then, if there are some programs like, see now the only program that we're even, when they talk about diversity and inclusion or diversity equi…

Interviewer: Equity and inclusion.

Participant 21: Equity and inclusion, people think about only the blacks, but the people that take advantage of it are women, especially white women and the Asians, they got more advantage. But let me tell you most of the time when a job opens, an African is the last choice, when they don't have any other person. So that too is not necessary, was there just for formality but I don't see it as, unless there is a specifically codified that they need people of color to come in. With these circumstances, it may embed the system. But I think one thing that the Africans can do, or the blacks can do for themselves is to be more of...understanding and united, not united for evil, but for good, in terms of educating each other, helping each other. For times, you will see more of collaboration in the side of the Chinese, more than in Africans.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 21:** And sometimes your fellow African, if you are advising the person, the person thinks that you are guiding him for bad. I remember advising my own countryman as he came to stay with me and working at Walmart, and I told him, Walmart said, they can help you give you scholarship going to college, I said, you came here, you have your green card. You want to do your master's, not undergrad. Walmart cannot and will not give you scholarship for your master’s.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 21:** And, for that matter, look for a job that you have a good insurance and from there you when you start doing your master’s, you will understand. The person moving around even in the church, telling people that I am like…because I didn't have green card by then…as if I am jealous, and I'm trying to give him bad advice because I heard the scholarship will be given. So all these things put people off in helping each other, and it's like we don't help each other. And people are also afraid to help each other because you may think that somebody can put you in trouble for no reason, and all those things are there. So it's for us understanding that competition for good is nice, but not competition to pull your fellow one down, and if we understand each other, and that will help. That's what I would say.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you for sharing that perspective. I do appreciate your insight, your contribution, and the time you have given me this evening to talk about these issues, the issues that are central to the core of this research. I really appreciate your time and if you like to have a copy of my research findings when I finish, please let me know. I will provide a copy via email.

Participant 21: Okay I'll be happy to take a look at it.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time. I'm going to stop the recording now.

**Participant 21**: Okay, you can stop it.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Participant 21:** Yeah.