**Interviewer:** Thank you for joining me in this interview this evening.

**Participant 24:** Thank you for having me, Kunle.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. This interview, first of all, having got your consent to record, so this interview is being recorded now and before we start, I want to let you know that we have six sections in this interview.

**Participant 24:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Under each section, there are a couple of questions, some four, some five, some six, under each section. So, we can start with section one, section one is about demographic information.

**Participant 24:** Okay. Great.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, question one is, can you please share your age, your gender, and your country of origin?

**Participant 24:** Sure. I am 46 years. I'm a female, and I was born in Lagos, Nigeria.

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

**Participant 24:** Sure. So, my highest level of education is a master's, I do have a master's in business administration, and that was acquired in the United States here. Prior to that, I have a bachelor's in estate management from one of the prominent universities in Nigeria. So those are the two countries where I received my education from.

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

**Participant 24:** Wow! Okay, so I came into the country, I migrated here in 2009.

So that will be about 14 years now. (Correction: This is actually 16 years, 2025-2009=16)

**Interviewer:** Yes, 14 years. (Correction: This is actually 16 years, 2025-2009=16)

**Participant 24:** Yes, and 14 years also in Maryland. (Correction: This is actually 16 years, 2025-2009=16)

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you've lived in Maryland since you moved to the US?

**Participant 24:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. What is your current profession or job title?

**Participant 24:** Alright, I'm a technical project manager or a content management professional. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The last question under this section is, what was your profession in Nigeria before migrating?

**Participant 24:** Okay. So, I worked in a telecommunications company in Nigeria. That was my last job before moving here, and while there, I was IT project coordinator and admin executive.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. So, you've always been in project management?

**Participant 24:** Yeah. So, most of the…again, even if it was not in the title, most of my daily job functions had to do with elements of project management, or project coordination.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. We'll get into a little more details about that later.

**Participant 24:** Sure.

**Interviewer:** We’ll move to section two. Section two, we will talk about push and pull factors. Push and pull factors are factors that make people migrate, leave their country of origin to another country, or generally factors that are responsible for people moving from one country to the other. The first question under this section is, what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States?

**Participant 24:** Hmmn.

**Interviewer:** Were there specific factors in Nigeria that pushed you to leave, e.g., economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 24:** Alright. So primarily, the main reason why I migrated to the United States was as a result of marriage. So, my spouse at the time was in the US or living in the US and I was living in Nigeria. So, I had to relocate to be with him so that the family can be, you know, located in one location, you know, in one place. So, versus us, travelling back and forth.

So that was really the main thing, it wasn't really about the economic, social, or political, you know.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** It was just specifically for, you know, marital reasons. We had to, just, you know, be together in one place to be able to build a family together.

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

**Participant 24:** Sure.

**Interviewer:** You may have answered the next question. Well, let me still ask, in case...

**Participant 24:** You can still ask (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, the next question was…because you already said, because for family reasons, you had to move to the US so that the family can be in the same place. So, the next question was going to be, what attracted you to the US, and Maryland in particular, in case you just have something to add to it now.

**Participant 24:** Sure. So, when I relocated, at the time my spouse then was living in Pennsylvania, right. He came to Maryland for an IT course. And again, I just didn't want to just be…it was meant to be like an IT course for like maybe 3 weeks or something like that. So, I was like, oh, one month. So, I was like, no, let's go together, you know I would, I mean, I just don't want to stay by myself, since I just came in.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm

**Participant 24:** So, we came to Maryland, for you know I came to support him while he was having that course, and somehow, within the space of that, you know, first few weeks we stayed in Maryland, I kind of…it wasn't like I had any major experience living in Pennsylvania, right, but it's just the fact that I felt, oh, Maryland looks like promising. It's in the DMV area like DC. Maryland, Virginia, you know, axis. And then, if we're thinking of IT jobs, you know this particular state may look more viable than being in Pennsylvania, and so we then decided that we would just, you know, stay in Maryland and not go back to Pennsylvania.

**Interviewer:** Pennsylvania.

**Participant 24:** Yeah. So that's eventually, you know, we ended up moving our stuff down to Maryland. And then we started a life here.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. One more question under this section.

When people move from Africa, of course, any part of the world to the US, people talk about different challenges they faced when they moved. Some people talk about when they got to the US, they didn't have some form of any support system, or they didn't have families that lived here before, so that kind of presented a different challenge for them. For some other people like you that someone was already here before they came. The challenge may be there, but it might be different in your case, what challenges would you say you encountered during the migration process?

**Participant 24:** Okay, that's a great question. I would speak to it in two parts. So just family support, first of all, right. I know, you know, I had my spouse here at the time, but the fact that I, you know, left everything behind all that I've known, you know, for about 30, you know, years to then come to this country, that was a lot. And my parents, my siblings, you know, I didn't have that immediate family support being here. So that was a bit challenging for me. It was just, you know…I just felt like there was nobody else to lean on to except, you know, on my spouse, at the time. So that was challenging. Good thing that I had, you know, some sort of support system here being that my spouse was here but truth be told it was a big challenging, not having a job, you know. How do I put it, you know, like I've always been working all my life, so to say, I mean when I started working, I've not had any downtime in my career, and so, having to come here and not like, have a job, you know, that had brought in that stable source of income for me that I could contribute, you know, kind of like, it took a toll on me. And so I just didn't like the fact that I didn't have, you know, some sort of income, like I was earning and bringing something in at the time, and so in my mind I just knew that I couldn't just sit or settle for anything I had to, just, you know, be up and about and keep on with the application process just so that I could get a job, at least, you know, start bringing in some sort of income, contributing to the family’s purse and then, you know, eventually grow from there and then the other part was, there was some cultural shock, you know the more…

**Interviewer:** Wait. I'm sorry I didn't intend to cut you short. We have a dedicated section for that

**Participant 24:** Oh, for that

**Interviewer:** For culture and social integration.

**Participant 24:** Okay, yeah. So, I hope the two answers, the two points I brought up, made some sense.

**Interviewer:** Yes, absolutely. Thank you for sharing that experience. Yeah, we can move to Section three.

**Participant 24:** Sure.

**Interviewer:** Section 3, we’ll talk about professional experiences. You already mentioned earlier that you did some project management work in Nigeria. I wanted you to share with me your career trajectory in Nigeria before you relocated to the United States.

**Participant 24:** Sure. So again, I mentioned that I had graduated with a bachelor's degree in estate management. So, my first job, you know, official job was actually in the real estate industry and I did that for about, you know, entry level about 9 months, as a sales retail consultant, you would say. And then after about 9 months, I shifted from the industry, I moved from real estate into telecoms. I started out as a customer service representative, and then I did that for about a year. And then, after that I promoted to the administrative department where I was the, you know, an admin executive and slash project coordinator and overall, I was, you know, in that telecoms company for about six years, and so kind of that was where I was on the space and the level of experience I had, working in both the real estate and telecommunications company industry while in Nigeria, before relocating to the US.

**Interviewer:** Okay thank you for sharing that experience. When you were talking about it, I was trying to calculate the number of years, it seems to me like it's close to about 9 years of your total experience in Nigeria before you moved. Please correct me if I'm wrong.

**Participant 24:** So graduated in 2002 and then I came to the country in 2009, so that was…

**Interviewer**: Oh, that’s seven years.

**Participant 24:** 7 years, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. Yeah, my math skills are getting rusty now (laughs)

**Participant 24:** (laughs) It's okay.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for clarifying that. Yeah, you had experience in real estate, in

IT and project management. That's a kind of very interesting career background in Nigeria.

**Participant 24:** Yeah, telecoms to be specific. Telecoms and IT, I look at them as like brothers and sisters, you know, they kind of feed into each other, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant 24:** Yeah. Indirectly.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, having talked about your career trajectory in Nigeria, the next question is, how would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 24**: Hmm! That's a very deep question. And I would say first of all, that I am thankful, you know, for the opportunities that had presented themselves. You know, opportunities that I got exposed to. In 2010, you know, the last quarter of 2010, I eventually, you know, got a job in a telecoms company in the US. And one thing I wanted to say is that I came in with this mindset that it's a global world, and skills are transferable. And for me, I felt like there was no point in, you know, people, the mindset then was, you know, when you come you have to start from the scratch, I agreed but I felt like the 7 years’ experience I was coming into the country with was not something, you know, to just shove aside, it's really very relevant. And so before leaving Nigeria, I did some research. I found out that, okay, while I'm working in Telecoms Company, that we had some roaming partners, you know, in the United States here. And so, for me, I first started out by looking for jobs with these roaming partners that we had, that included, you know, like T-mobile, Verizon Sprint, you know, that was my focus. So, I was kind of like targeting that industry, so that at least I could transfer the skills that I've gathered, be it, in the customer service, or even in the IT project management, project Coordinator. You know, I could flow into it, so that's the mindset I came in with. Obviously, it was not easy, you know, those couple of months, you know, looking for jobs in this specific industry. So, I started out, in the meantime, I just felt like, okay, instead of, I know this is where I'm targeting but I can't just sit idle by without doing anything. So, people were telling me then that oh, it's the nursing, or the medical field was way to go, and I just said, no, that’s not my calling. That's not me. I didn't like anything that has to do with blood or accident, and things like that. I can't just stand this. I'm like, no, that's not who I am, and so I couldn't do that. But then, when the pressure was much, I started thinking, okay, what in this medical, you know, space, that which role, which position can I fit into? And I found out that okay, I could tolerate, you know, Pharmacy (laughs) Oh, my goodness! And so, I was like, okay, what are the job, what are the entry levels? I found out that you could be a pharmacy technician, and you needed a pharmacy technician certification. And so, within that space, while I was still looking for, you know, the IT job or telecoms job, I actually spent three weeks in studying. I did my research, found out what I needed to do to be qualified as a pharmacy technician so I could work in the pharmacy, you know, entry level position. And so, I did three weeks of you know, training, read the materials, practiced, and all of that. The last week, the 4th week I took the exam and I passed. So now I became certified pharmacy technician, so then it was now left to me to then go apply for jobs at the various pharmacies to then, you know, prove to them that I was bringing something to the table. Luckily, I was able to get an interview in one of the prominent pharmacy companies. And I was able to get a pharmacy technician job for starters. I obviously showcased and I brought to the table, you know, my customer relations skills. Obviously, the knowledge with, you know, the field knowledge that I learned from being from the pharmacy technician certification. And so, I started working with that and then during that course of that process, I finally found a job with one of the telecoms company. I tried to keep both going at the same time like, while obviously, while I put myself on part time or as needed with the pharmacy right? And so, I would go to the telecoms job as a customer service representative, you know, in the evenings, you know, every other day I would go to the pharmacy and work till late. But by the time it was like spring or so of 2011, I found out that I couldn't sustain, you know, maintain both jobs. So, I put myself on as needed and somehow, I fell off the radar with that pharmacy company, and then I just continued with, you know my customer representative job. So now, focusing on your question, now coming back to my trajectory, so started out as a pharmacy technician and then going into the telecoms company as a customer care representative. And then I started building myself, you know in that area. I look for opportunities to improve my skill set, I took some professional certification while I was there. By the third year, I was promoted to a role that, you know, did a lot of business analysis job description, even though that was not the job title but that's what we did, and then, you know, ended up staying about 6 years with Telecommunication Company, and then I found that that you know I was capped where I was and I needed to…I had this hunger to learn, I had this hunger to keep moving forward in the career, and so when I couldn't get anything, I tried to network within where I was if I had to go to the project management job. During that course of time, I had my PMP (Project Management Professional) certification but I felt that if I had to transfer to their, you know, project team, it would require me relocating to New Jersey, which was where the PMO Project management, you know, office was really resident at the time, and I couldn't do that, because obviously I had a young family and so I eventually started looking outside of the company and as fate would have it, I eventually found a business analyst job in an IT company, technology company. And you know, I continued from there as a business and systems analyst, then I moved on to being a senior business analyst and then you know, after a couple of years, I eventually became a project manager and then now a technical project manager. So that has been my, you know, career trajectory within the US if that makes sense. I know I said a lot, but I hope you can see how I started out with, this is where I'm going to but in the meantime, what can I do just to get myself busy, get some sort of income coming in. So, from pharmacy technician to customer care representative, you know, with a telecoms company. Then from there, as you know, a business analyst within the Telecoms Company. Then from there, I moved into a full-blown IT technology company as a business system, analyst and senior business analyst and technical project manager. So that's what I'm currently doing right now.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that. That's a very insightful and very interesting career growth since you came to the US, and that's quite inspiring, too. And you talked about starting from something that is totally different from your background in Nigeria, temporarily.

**Participant 24:** Exactly (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Then you went into telecoms, from telecoms you now went into full IT project management. Well, the next question I wanted to ask is, how well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 24:** Oh, wow! Right now (inaudible)

**Interviewer:** Because for some people, they have a different background totally, and they're not able to transition to what they were doing for years in Africa or in Nigeria before they moved over. So, it's kind of difficult to say, oh, I'm really utilizing all the skills, knowledge, and experience I've acquired over the years in my current position, but it seems, like your case is different.

**Participant 24:** Yeah, again, I started out with that mindset, and I think that it's really a mindset thing. It's a global world and skills are transferable, no experience should be, you know, shoved under the carpet, it can always be utilized depending on how you navigate with it. So, you know, I said the customer service, we have both internal and external customers.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** I was bringing that experience to the table. I worked in a real estate company right? Obviously, I'm not working in real estate right now, but with my day to day interaction, I had potential clients, potential tenants, potential buyers and I had to navigate, how to market to them, you know, what we had, the properties that we had available, whether for rent or for sale. That client management experience is something that I'm still using currently right now, because even in the IT, you know, technology space, I have my clients, that I have to understand what is driving their business, what is driving their needs, what exactly they are looking for, and then take that piece of information and come up with a solution that will work for them. That skill set was brought from Nigeria as well.

**Interviewer:** Alright.

**Participant 24:** Because, you know, when I meet people that are having, you know, housing needs, they're looking to rent, or they want to purchase, I ask them the deep questions, what kind of family are you supporting? What kind of lifestyle do you have? What kind of…what's your budget like? Those are the things that I use right now. When we talk about even project management, you're thinking about scope, what work, you know, you're talking about budget. So, these are things that I would definitely ask someone who wants to purchase or rent a property and you will know what their budget is, same thing, I'm looking at, you know the projects that I have, and understanding what the budget is for this work, you know, and how we can still remain profitable even while providing solutions to the client. So, I said all of that to say that, I don't believe that any skill is not, you know, should be pushed aside. Those skill sets are, you know, some of what I brought to the table here. You know. I remember that interview with the interviewers at the telecoms company, and the last question they asked me, after asking my background and stuff like that, they were like, well, you know that you're overqualified for this entry level role. And I said, I understand but there is, you know, at this point I have to start from somewhere, and I'm willing to learn. You know, I'm willing to get integrated into the system coming from Nigeria, Africa. It's a different culture versus here. So, the opportunity that I had working in the pharmacy helped me navigate day-to-day interactions with you know, the people here that I'm now, you know, living with and integrating with. So that interaction kind of helped me build a level of, you know, comfort, you know. And obviously, that helped me integrate easily and by the time I transition to being a customer care representative over the phone, I already have learned how to build a rapport, you know, with people even in person here. So, it's interesting but every aspect, you know every experience I had, I took one skill set from there that I'm currently using in my job right now. Did I have to take some additional certifications to, you know further buttress and build up my skill to make me more marketable, and you know, better here, and you know, be a good fit for whatever job it is I’m looking for, absolutely. Just so that you're aware I have about six professional certifications.

**Interviewer:** Wow!

**Participation 24:** I started out with having while I was at the Telecoms Company, I was going to school, and, you know, helping myself learning, just acquiring. I just believe that opportunity when it meets preparedness, makes you the right candidate.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmmm

**Participation 24:** And so I had my ITIL foundation for the IT service management. I have my professional in business analysis, PMI PBA certification, I have the PMP project management professional, I have my MBA, I have my certified scrum master, I have my certified scrum product owner, and I also have the, so actually it’s even 7, governance (both laugh) and compliance in the cyber security IT space. So I'm a lifelong learner, and I always feel that there's a need to improve yourself. When you go in front of the marketplace, somebody else out there also has the same experience that you have or similar experience, but what sets you apart from the other person? I feel things like certification puts your foot in the door, they make the recruiter, or make the hiring manager know that you're willing to learn, and it doesn't matter if it's a new role that you're getting immersed into, just that demonstrating to them that oh, my goodness, this person has gone to school and acquired all this knowledge and keeps learning, shows them that, yes, you have a teachable spirit and that goes a long way in, you know in the marketplace, that goes a long way in, in business, you know, that goes a long way for any white collar job that you might be looking for. So that's the kind of mindset I come in with that no skill is lost.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn. Thank you so much for sharing that very interesting experience, and very inspiring, too.

**Participant 24:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** My next question, I wanted to ask about professional landscape, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications. When you answered the last question, you've touched a lot on licensing requirements, you talked about having several professional certifications, plus having an MBA. I would say, you were over prepared for the position, so I won't say you had it easy, but because you were over prepared, it wasn't too difficult for you to get in, and you have proved yourself over time, too.

**Participant 24:** I want to say something though; I have my own challenges…(inaudible)

**Interviewer:** I was going to ask…so the next question I was going to ask is about challenges actually. So let me rephrase the question, I think you'll be able to answer that question here now. And why this question is very central to this research is many immigrants come in like that, like I said earlier, they were trained in other fields, they were in different professional setting before, and when they came over they had to like start all over again and do something that is totally different from what they've done for years back in Nigeria. So, the issue of licensing and certification and recognition of phoning qualification becomes very challenging for them to navigate.

**Participant 24:** Hmm.

**Interviewer:** I will not excuse you from going through that experience from what you have told me so far. So let me just read the question so that you can pick and choose which one you feel you have not addressed that you need to address. So, the 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?

**Participant 24:** That's a good one, and it's quite loaded.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant 24:** So let me see how best I can address this. Let's talk about recognition of foreign qualifications. Let's start from there. So, it's not uncommon for hiring managers or recruiters not to recognize our foreign qualification, sometimes when they ask you, so where did you do your undergrad and things like that, and then you mention the name of the (inaudible) they're like, excuse me, where, you know, you get that stuff. From the get-go, I can't even remember, I think...I'm a researcher like when I'm looking to do something, I would take my time to go online research, find out, you know, how do I navigate this, how do I solve this, what's applicable, what's available? So, earlier on, I'd realized that it was important for me to get my degree or my qualification that I'm bringing, you know, from Nigeria to the United States, I needed to get it evaluated, right? So that I can somehow translate it to what's applicable here. And this is where the WES, World

**Interviewer:** Evaluation Service.

**Participant 24:** Evaluation Service, thank you very much, comes into play. So that was actually the first thing that I did when I came into the country. I had, you know, ensured that all of my documentations were, you know, available, although obviously I had to go through the requirement for WES and they sent, you know, I filled out the paperwork. They sent my stuff to the school to verify, they did their own verification, and then once they verified that it was like a legit, you know, certification, I mean a bachelor's degree, and all of that. The transcript, everything, I sent everything to them, and they then evaluated it, and then converted it, word for word, you know to how many credit units I was bringing to the table, what my degree translates to here, and so each time I would apply to a position I would not only put in my, you know, degree, documentation, or evidence of me acquiring a degree from Nigeria, I would equally also attach the evaluation from WES. So that kind of prepared me so no one would say, they don't have, you know they can't translate what this is because WES had done that for me.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** So that was one thing I did, and I definitely would recommend anyone you know, who is in that transition phase, coming from a different country here to actually do that. You know, it goes a long way. So that takes care of recognition of foreign qualifications. And then I must say, though, credit to some of the, you know, application or job website, right? When you're going through the application process, some of them actually have, you know when it comes to like the country, you know they don't just by default think that everyone comes with a degree from the US, so you will see other countries, you can select your country, and sometimes. I'm surprised when I see that even drilled it down to the states in Nigeria. So…

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm

**Participant 24:** …that is something that is credit to those companies that actually do that and make that. That means that they are aware, that they have that awareness that it's a global world, and you know, people have very different skill set and we're all integrated. So that's the part about foreign qualification. Workplace discrimination, hmmm, I have quite a bit to say in that example. But I would share two scenarios that stuck with me for a very long time. I remember being, you know, while I was that the you know, working as a business and customer representative in the telecoms company, I took a call, actually, were two calls. One of those days, this individual again because of privacy, you know, we're not meant to disclose people's information on the phone. If someone calls and they need something, if they're not the account owner, they don't get any information about that account.

The only thing that they're able to do is, you know, make a payment if it’s payment we can take a payment but you can’t just call up and I pick up the phone and then you're asking me for details on the account, I can't give that to you if I do not have the authorization from the account owner. So, this gentleman, older man, had called in and said, give me the details of the account, the account number, and things like that. I pulled that up. I realized that his name is not what was on the account, and his name is not even listed as an authorizing person, you know, on that account, and so he said it was his wife's account and all those good stuff, he needs this information, he needs that. I said, you know, sir I'm not able to give you this information right now, because your name is not listed on the account. So, in other words, you are not the account owner. I recognize that you said it's your wife's account number, what I can do for you right now is, to place you on hold, and I'll give your wife a call, you know. Give that account owner a call and see, do I have your permission to speak with this individual? I could put a three way call if the person gives me authorization, then I will go ahead and assist you with the information you need. That's very simple. It's just going to take less than 2 mins, and we’ll get the authorization, and we'll keep it moving. But this older man was not having it, he was, I don't know whatever it is about me that triggered him but he was upset that I was following due process on the account (laughs) and then I told him, you know, if you don't want me to call this your wife, to verify and get permission, if you want to make a payment on the account I can take the payment from you. And then he said, Okay, yeah, let's do that. So he gave me you know the details of the, I processed it, and then I asked him to give me the card number and things like that, I processed it and then I asked him so, do you have a pen and paper there for me to give you the confirmation number, so that you have it for your record that you know you this transaction was processed, and his response was, “yes, I need that confirmation number, because I don't trust people like you.”

**Interviewer:** Oh, wow!

**Participant 24:** That was my first experience with discrimination.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 24:** I couldn't get over that, and you know, obviously I had to keep it professional. And I said, I'm not sure what you mean by that statement, but I just want to give you your Confirmation number. And then he went on and on, by, you know, then, being verbally abusive, you know, over the phone. And then he said, so I told him, you know at that point I realized that he was an escalated, he was getting irate…an irate customer so, and for the first time, in all my, you know. years of working with them the words he said to me, really got to me, and so I knew that I needed to step away from that call at that moment. And so I told him that, Sir, you know I kept it professional, and I was still very courteous, I said, can I place you on a brief hold while I get my supervisor on the line for you and he would not give me the permission to place him on hold, and I can't just put him on hold. And so, he went on and on, you know, cursing me out, and then says something to the effect that he was going to even end the call, and then he will call back and tell the next representative how bad I had been to him, how disrespectful! And all of that. And I'm like, what so but I had to, just, you know, get off the call and I reported the situation to my supervisor. But that was one experience. Another one was the fact that this lady needed help, and I don't know, especially I guess maybe it has to do with some bills and things like that, and I was trying to help the person, and she said to me that I don't, “Can you get me somebody that speaks English.”

**Interviewer:** Hmmm!

**Participant 24:** I was shocked (laughs) and I said, “ma'am, you can hear me like we're having a conversation, so I just want to help you.” And she said, no, I don't want your own type of English. I want someone that speaks the Western, I mean whatever English.

**Interviewer:** So, the problem was with the accent, right?

**Participant 24:** Accent. Exactly. So those were two experiences of discrimination now, coming from the customer that I was trying to serve, so I needed to share that experience with you for the purpose of your research. And then the other one was, with all the certifications that I brought to the table, and I mentioned earlier that I felt like I was, at some point, capped at the position I was, and I needed to move forward. Just because I'm a go getter, I just believe that, okay, if this position is no longer challenging me, that means, I have learned everything I need to learn here, it's time to move on to the next, and not because I'm not a loyal employee.

**Interviewer:** Employee.

**Participant 24**: Obviously, while I'm giving back to the company, I'm also expecting that I'm getting something back in return and that's part of career growth for me. And so, I started trying to apply to positions within the company. Obviously being a loyal, you know employee, I was getting a lot of…I really…that place was home. The benefits were great, you know. I just felt that it was serving my family needs at that time, my personal needs so I wanted to keep staying there, but I decided to look for positions within the company instead of going outside. One of the positions that I applied to, it was a project management consultant position and at the time I had, I think, I had the three professional certification, I had my ITIL foundation, I had my project, management, professional certification. I had the,

I think I had the business analysis certification, and on the side, I still had other master’s certificates from, you know, other universities that had to do with project management, contract management. So, it's like I was just acquiring all sorts, anyway. But you know, I just felt on my application, I put only those, you know, qualifications or education that I had got that was applicable to the role. Right?

**Interviewer:** For the position,

**Participant 24:** The position itself. Thank you. So just like I shared two experiences about how the customer treated me where I got discriminated against, I had two other experiences that stuck with me also with the workplace. First one was that I had applied to this position, I was overqualified it was later that I realized that you would have thought that my qualification, bringing all of those to the table was going to help me get what I needed, in some cases they did not because some people felt threatened with that.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 24:** So, one of the positions. It was after the fact…I was left with the I think maybe last two. I was one of the top two, but they chose the other person over me and then the other person did not have any of the certifications I had brought to the table. I'm not sure what they used as a criterion but they just did not choose me. And after, you know, investigating and doing some stuff, you know, just trying to find out, okay, because I always wanted feedback, like, you know, what could I have done better, was there something else that I needed to work on, so that next time I'll be a qualified candidate, like I just needed to know. I eventually found out that even the manager that I would be reporting to did not even have any of the professional certifications I had. Neither did the person have a BSc.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 24:** So that was a threat to that individual, and so she did not choose me.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn! Interesting.

**Participant 24:** Maybe it could be that you know me coming with all this, I may eventually take her job, I don't know but I didn't get the job. The other one was I went for another interview with somebody else. I mean, obviously there are interviews, you do interviews, you learn from each interview experience and things like that. So even when I'm not chosen, I'm like, okay, what can I learn from here? What can I do better, so that next time, you know, I'll have a better opportunity, it will move me closer to my goal.

So this one I did. They told me you got to network. I did all the networking, network in the sense that, okay, you know, you should go shadow in someone in that role, see how their day to day is, see, you know, if it's something that you're a good fit for, and things like that, and maybe your skill set. I did all of that. I did all the shadowing. I did all the, you know, go network with them, you know. I became friendly with them, I kind of understood what the job entails and I felt like, oh, I've done something similar, you know, this is in line with my career trajectory, where I want to go to. I still want to keep with the company. I want to, you know, go into that full Blown Project management, and I really wanted to have that project management title, and that recognition, since I already have the certification. But anyways long and short, I was not selected. And so, I sent an email to the, you know, interviewer, who was the supervisor for that team. And I said, I wanted to, you know, just feedback about the interview, just so that you know, I could have some closure. And what stuck with me was her comment, she said during the interview, I was talking too fast and that's a sign of nervousness.

**Interviewer:** Oh, really.

**Participant 24:** I'm like what? That's the strangest feedback I've ever received. And I asked her, you know, because I think I'm talking right now to you at the pace that, maybe like a little bit slower pace. But, as you can tell, I'm from the Yoruba tribe in Western Nigeria, right? The south western part of Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** Somehow, maybe it so happens that we talk fast with our mother tongue. But we had a conversation, she could hear me, I was communicating with her but for her to say that was a sign of nervousness, it beat my imagination, and one of the things I asked her was that, have you interacted with people from other countries before? Do you encounter people from not just where you are from, you know, being in the United States but have you interacted with other people from different parts of the world? If you have, you would not give me that feedback, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Participant 24:** That was shocking to me. But those were experiences that you know, some struggles that I had to go through, even while you know navigating you know the professional landscape and after a while I felt okay, if they say I'm talking too fast, what can I do to slow down so that the other person can hear me. And one of the techniques I did was when I speak, I would pause in between, I would take a breath in between, I would, you know, like swallow air, just to give me time to catch my…so I don't say, how are you? How are you? How are you? How are you? I would pause, and then I'll ask the next question like I had to start, you know, learning how to practice, talking so that you know that I would never get that feedback anymore from anybody. So, but those were two examples of discrimination and challenges that I've experienced even in this, you know, migrating from

Nigeria to the United States, and how you know people have treated me along the line, but at the same time I’ve also had, you know, good favor, you know, and again, it's about being prepared. It's about what you bring to the table. You know your, it's not just about, one thing you could have all the experiences but what about your soft skills like I could have all the qualification like you know, PMP and the MBA, and this. But what about the soft skills? What about my people relation skills, how am I doing with that? How am I doing with people management, team building, you know teamwork, collaboration, all the top skills, they matter a lot. Because even if you are the best, you know, engineer or the best software developer and you have anger issues or you're not a team player, you don't know how to, you know, work with others, and you just want to work in silo, and you don't know how to be committed to a deadline and deliver that, it's always going to affect you.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** So, I take my time to not only build my technical skill set, but also work on, you know my soft skills and emotional intelligence, because everything collectively together makes you a success in the business, in the marketplace.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn thank you for sharing that. That's quite interesting too. We'll go to Section 4, and I can tell you that the questions under section four are some of the things we have talked about. But I'm going to wrap maybe about 2 or 3 questions into one.

**Participant 24:** Okay, go ahead.

**Interviewer:** This section is about cultural assimilation and social integration. You talked a lot about the concept under this section. But let me rephrase the question in a way that you can capture the core things inside in just one question. How would 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 in both your personal and professional life?

**Participant 24:** Excuse me. That's a deep one. Cultural assimilation is key. I look at it this way, like the fact that two people live on the same street, in the same neighborhood doesn't mean that the same culture applies in their house.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** Right. And so, everyone, every family, every unique person, have their own core principles, have their own, you know, values that they uphold and their guiding principle, what you know makes them tick, what's unique about them. And so having that awareness helps you to be able to you know, integrate properly.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm.

**Participant 24:** Or being open minded enough to be able to accept the way of life of other people. Again, we’re, I mean it's a world, you know, different tribes, different nations, different people, different languages but together, we're a strong force. Cultural differences should not be something seen as something negative, as something that divides. So, to answer your question like, there are some things that are different from you know how I was raised, and you know coming to the US, that was like I had to adjust. Growing up back home, you know, and I'm not sure if the other tribes in Nigeria experience that, but being from the Yoruba tribe, when adults are speaking, a child doesn't speak when you're being corrected, you know, by someone older than your parents or grandparents, aunties, uncles, whoever it is. But the fact that they're older than you, you can’t look them in the eye, and, you know, stand 10 feet on the ground, and be so confident, and speak back, or talk back to them, that's considered being rude. Whereas in the US here if I'm going to have an interaction with someone, they need to look me in the eye, eye to eye contact. Look into my soul like that's the way, you know, and some people I don't know, I think people that study body language and things like that, you know, they look in you. When you're having an interaction with someone, you got to look them eye to eye. That's where you know the truth. They consider that when I'm looking at you directly and we're talking, I'm being sincere, or I'm communicating properly or I'm not…when I look away it feels like I'm being shady, or I'm hiding something or lying.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** You know, so that's something I had to get used to. You know, back home, even if it's someone that is a year older than you, you use the respect, you know, you can't call them by name, there's a way that you would address them. Here, you call people on the first name basis.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** It took me a long time to adjust to that and because I wasn't comfortable with calling folks directly, you know. I would then use either the Mr. or the miss, or the you know, and some people say, no, no, call me by my first name, I'm okay with that, you know. Or here in the US, some people are, they sometimes, especially in the workplace, you realize that they call folks by their last name versus their first name, you know

**Interviewer:** Hmmmmm.

**Participant 24:** So, these are just subtle things that I had to adjust to and be comfortable with.

You know, I had to learn that, you know, it's okay to stand for yourself, it’s okay to voice your opinion. One of the things that used to crack me up back home, and even in the workplace, like you cannot be in the same elevator with your boss (Both laugh). Like both of you, you know, maybe you are waiting for the elevator to get to your flight, and so you can get in, and then they come meet you there, and you say, it's my boss, you take a step back and you let them.

**Interviewer:** Let them go (Both laughing)

**Participant 24:** And that's not the case here, like I used to say that you know this place is a leveler, everybody's on the same level, you know, that was interesting. And I will never forget this experience - I remember, while I was in the telecommunication company. We have a cafeteria, and you know, that's where staff members will come into and go to, to get, you know, food, snack, whatever you need to get while you’re on…

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** ..break, and one of those days I can't remember. Was it the morning? Was it breakfast time? Or maybe it was lunch? But I was in the cafeteria, and I was, you know, standing there, and the Director of the Center came and she was right behind me, and she wanted to order. You know that I actually took a step back, and I told her to go ahead and order before me, and she said,” no, no, no, no, you got here first, I'll wait my turn.”

That was a cultural awakening for me, like my boss can wait her turn. So, I mean, I said that to say that there were things that I had to then learn, you know this is what's acceptable here, and it's not, you know, and just even having a voice you know. I felt like growing up, I really felt, you know, quite intimidated as a child, you know, and timid as a child and bullied even, you know. And those things have a way of affecting how you relate with others but here there's a lot of awareness, you know, being raised for those kind of issues and you find out that things trigger, you know, bring up those bad experiences but you have to learn to deal with it. So even going to therapy or speaking with a counselor, you know it's not like I'm mad or something, because if you say you have issues like you just need to walk through, you know culturally, they look at it like, oh, there's something wrong with you mentally. No, that's not the case but here it's about really dealing with the issues and the baggage that you've brought with you growing up just so that you be a better person and have better interactions with people. So, I mean, I had to learn. It wasn't easy, you know. And there's this adage that they say, when you're in Rome you behave like a Roman citizen.

**Interviewer:** Roman hmmn.

**Participant 24:** I feel like it's important to understand. This is where I am right now. I need to be able to assimilate.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** And adapt. You know that adaptability is important. Some Nigerian families, they will tell their kids that, “oh outside there is America but when you step into this house, you’re in Nigeria”. But guess what? You're just confusing that child. Because the best thing you can help that child is to adapt, this is home for them.

**Interviewer:** This is home for them absolutely.

**Participant 24:** All our experiences, you know, back in Nigeria is your experience, but their experience is different and so navigating how to raise a child with how you were raised versus how they have been raised here, there's got to be a happy medium. And it has to be your willingness to humble yourself, and you know, be teachable because we don't know it all, and many of the I mean not many, or some of the ways that we were raised were wrong. They were actually, you know, abusive, but that was, you know, a way of them showing love and affection and trying to instill discipline. But for us there's a way you can also instill discipline without having to be abusive, you know, so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Participant 24:** You take the best of both worlds. That's the way I look at it, whether in the family section or you know, in career, in the, you know, in profession you take the best of both worlds and make something beautiful with it. Culture should not divide us, there's strength in that. I know I said a lot about that, but I just felt that it was important to share that experience. And I think you, let's see what those words.

**Interviewer:** I appreciate it. Yeah, we can. Yes, I appreciate that insight, very, very, very relevant. I appreciate that. Let's round up section four. For some people when they come over to the US, they look for support from not just family members or friends, they look for support and resources from organizations. So, in your case, are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration? And how well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 24:** Hmm! Let me think about that for a second.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24**: Hmmn community networks organizations that supported my integration. So, I believe that there are support systems, that are available for those that are trying to integrate like when they come into the country, you know whether English is not their mother tongue, and they have to learn English language and things like that. I believe that's very useful, because obviously there are people, you know, that need those services. But I did not take advantage of any of those kind of services, because one I mean English is my first language right? So, I'm bilingual like, I speak Yoruba you know Western Nigerian dialect, and I also speak English, so at least you know, I’m English, speaking so I didn't have to do that. I really did not take advantage of any of those services that are out there. For me, but there were other structures that helped me out. For example, and you talked about community networks and organizations, for me, my local church was a strong support system for me. And I mean that was my first place of actually networking and finding and trying to find a community, a home, you know, a home away from them, so to say. I remember one of the conversations I had with one of the pastors, I think, after I had my daughter at the time, you know. I remember he was then asking me so, you know, what do you plan to do next? And I said, no, I didn't even realize, like it's a good question. I've been thinking about it. When I came to the US, I was thinking that I would start my master's program immediately, and things like that. But I'm really lost. And obviously I was trying to raise a family. Now I have a daughter. She's still very young, a baby, like I'm not even sure what next to do, and I remember the pastor mentioned to me that you know certifications actually help put your foot in the door.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** And that word stuck with me. And that was actually the push I needed to keep going, certifications get your foot in the door.

**Interviewer:** Hmm! That's interesting.

**Participant 24:** So before going to do your MBA, why don't you do some smaller certifications? Get something, you know, in corporate America and then from there, you can then plan over time to then get that you know, go for that big bang degree that you want to go get.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** And that's how I started. So that community helped me with integrating into the, you know, into the new stable where I find myself, new city, town, where I found myself. You know from going to events, like social events with them, I, you know, began to like adjust and feel like, okay, I'm at home, away from home, you know, a bit of this culture, a bit of that culture but that helped me. For professional network. It's also important. I'm not just one that would just have the certificate, and that's it. For example, the project management profession, PMP, and the certification, there is the body, the professional institute that supports professionals in that industry. So that's it, I'm giving that as an example, Project Management Institute. Right?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** So, I connect with them. I pay for membership.

**Interviewer:** That's a profession body

**Participant 24:** Professional body, and I get trainings from them. When they have meetings, you know I'm able to attend, when they have knowledge share, I listen in. I get credits, you know, to help, obviously, with my PD use. But those structures I took advantage of them. And so, I'm giving an example of the PMI. For governance risk and compliance and the cyber security, the ISC2 is also another professional organization that focuses on cyber security. And you know I'm a member, I'm a professional member, and they also have student membership as well, so you can't just give an excuse because I'm a student, you can still sign up and have that support system. So, I took advantage of those. I hope I was able to answer, you know your question in terms of like a network.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thank you. Absolutely. Thank you for sharing that. Let's move to section five. Section five, I have 2 questions here. This is about cultural and economic challenges. dual cultural and economic challenges. The first question is, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States. How do you navigate this?

**Participant 24:** Hmm. Cultural expectations, how do I navigate?

**Interviewer:** I think you've talked about things that.

**Participant 24:** The awareness. Let's start with that awareness, don't just ignore it because the Nigerian culture has the expectation, people back home have expectations of you, parents have expectations of you, of me, you know, and here in the US, I have obligations too, there are expectations. So, I take the best of both worlds, and I try to make something good out of it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** So that's the way I navigate through that, you know, through this space of cultural expectations., you know. Do I feel torn with certain things? Absolutely. But the truth is, if I cannot change something, why don't I be the change maker? Right?

**Interviewer:** Yes

**Participant 24:** So, if there are places where I feel like a little bit of advocacy is needed, why don't I start from somewhere, creating awareness in our community? I'll share an example.

I don't think I was raised with the mindset of like you have to network. And you know, when I got here, my high school, you know, organization, right? The old students’ organization, and then the college one as well. I remember one of my friends used to say, “oh, you know, you have to network.” And I'm like, what does she mean by networking? I stayed in my house, like, you know. But when I went into my MBA program, I understood what he was trying to share with me at the time. Your network is your net worth.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 24:** As a matter of fact, we did an exercise where, I think it was an entrepreneurship class and we had to like start a business, and the first starting point was, “who do I market to?” We had to write a list of people that are in our network that we could connect with and that was the first time that I realized that “oh, my God, I don't have anyone.” (laughs)

**Interviewer:** That's interesting.

**Participant 24:** Okay. Because then we had to like form, I think it was a project, was it 4 or 5 of us, we had to come together and form a business. And so, we had to start with our network.

So, with that like, okay, so we were like, who do we network with? Who do we talk to, you know, and things like that? They asked us to write the list, and I'm like, oh, my God, I don't have people to write oh. Okay, this one, this one. Okay, who else again? And then I realized, Oh, my God! Because when you're in this community, what you are looking for, somebody else might have the solution.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** The information that Person B is looking for Person A may have it, or even if Person A does not have it, they know who to go to Person, DEF to connect them. And to give an example, job searching.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** I have this skill set in cyber security. I don't know who to go to but there are people in my network that even though they are not cyber security professionals, they have their first connection, their second connection, the third one knows who is in that field and they can provide a recommendation or referral for me. But how will I get that third connection, if I don't know this connection A.

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm.

**Participant 24:** And so, it was emphasized that we really need to build our network. We need to socialize. We need to join organizations when people have…it's not, I mean, obviously, the reunion and things like that, is great, you know, not just for the partying part of it, or the social part of it but the economic benefit that it provides is a lot.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, from the professional networking.

**Participant 24:** Exactly. I could have some skill set that you know I'm a business person, I do this, I create this, you know, content creator, or creating these designs, or whatever, marketing this and somebody else would need it. And I'm just able to say, hey, guys, I do XYZ on the side as my, you know, pet project, or something like that, I'm like, oh, my God! I've been looking for someone that is doing that, you know, let's hook up, let's connect, let's discuss, you just open another world of opportunity. So, it also helps with wealth building.

So, I had to learn that it's not just an inconvenience, you have to come out of your comfort zone and go to something that you're uncomfortable with just to help you move up as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. One more question under this section, then we'll go to the last section. So, the last question under this section is, have you faced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria? What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 24:** Well, that's…I think there's nobody that is an immigrant that hasn't gone through this situation because there are expectations. You have family back home, and everyone feels that you're an Americana, (laugh) you have a tree that grows money at the back of your house, they must ask and you deliver, you know. So, a lot of times we put a lot of pressure on ourselves because we're trying not to let other people down. And I mean back home, it's kind of like a communal kind of lifestyle, right? I don't know about you, but I grew up knowing and being taught that I am responsible for everyone in my household being the first child. Okay, first girl, first daughter, first child, first born, I have siblings. There's this adage that says that in a horse pack, it is the horse that is leading the pack…

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** That everybody else behind follows, the other horses follow, so that has been ingrained in me. And so, being the first, I felt like, I'm that connecting, you know that centerpiece that connects everybody, my parents, my siblings, at least my immediate family, and so I grew up doing like that burden. I carried that weight and you know, I helped out with school fees, helped out with, you know, daily needs and stuff like that. And you know, coming here, and not, you know, even having a job to even get income to support, it was challenging, not because, I mean they were pressurizing me, but even personally, I put a lot of burden on myself, so I felt like I was responsible. But no, I'm not responsible for everyone. I've finally got to the place where I'm comfortable with doing the little I'm able to do and be okay with it versus putting that burden on myself, that weight, carrying that weight is a lot. I have to learn to balance, I have a life here, I have obligations here, and I also have obligations there. But I'm not going to let my well-being get impacted because I'm trying to satisfy other people right? I weigh it out, like everybody comes with a need, right? Everyone has something but how do I balance it out in such a way that my own personal well-being here, my family personal well-being here, is not affected while I'm trying to give back, you know. But I have to prioritize, for me. I've learned to prioritize me right now, my immediate needs here and at the same time do the best I can. And I'm okay with the little I can. Okay, fine, it's a free will giving right? So, I mean again, this is just personal, like versus putting that weight on me, like sometimes, $100 is a lot here, right? Would you agree with me?

**Interviewer:** Yes, it is.

**Participant 24:** Okay, good. Now, you could give somebody $100 back home, and rather than get like a gratitude response like, “oh, you've done well, thank you for helping out”, they're like, “Is it only $100?” Like, the way that they put value on it, or devalue what you've done, that's a lot of sweat, labor for me to be able to get that. So I realized that I can't control what this other person feels, I can only control my…and you know it has a way of running you down like mentally, like you're trying your best, and it takes me hours to even be able to make up this money that I'm even able to give and then the other person receiving it is not, you know, just devalues what I'm doing. So, I've learned not to put…I can't change their behavior, but I should be comfortable with, if this is what I can give, that's it.

**Interviewer:** That should be enough.

**Participant 24:** And that's fair enough, and I just keep it at that, you know. So, but it's a lot. It's deeper than that. And here we, this culture here and we’re going back to the culture point is, we don't carry loose cash, I’m trying to go for the right word, like we don't…back home, everything you do is cash down right?

**Interviewer:** Yes, you pay everything upfront.

**Participant 24:** Exactly, upfront. Here is a cashless economy, I don't know if, whether...

**Interviewer:** A Credit, more like a credit system.

**Participant 24:** Credit system. That's right. That's what I was looking for, credit system and then back home, they do all these things. So, you would then incur debt because you're trying to (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Meet responsibilities, or so.

**Participant 24:** Exactly. Meanwhile, we over here, that's another cultural shock that I had to like learn, okay, how do I prioritize here? I mean, until you get into that level where you're building wealth, right? And your money is working for you. And you know you're not just working 9 to 5, but something else is generating income for you, and you are able to save. We pretty much live paycheck to paycheck.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** Everything we do here is dependent on, you know, I get paid for my job and then able to meet my responsibility. If I get laid off, it takes two months before everything crashes for that one person, because you only have one source of income.

**Interviewer:** That's true.

**Participant 24:** But back home they save.

**Interviewer:** And they also have a support system, family members to run to, if things go a little (inaudible)

**Participant 24:** Exactly. Here, you don't have that. You tell your landlord, they say, lay you off, first month, okay, second month. Even the bank will like, we need our mortgage, otherwise we're going to foreclose your place. So it's true. I say that to say you have to learn to balance things, you know, so that you don't end up while you're trying to stretch yourself, you don't get to spend yourself too much and not have anything to fall back on here.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** I remember one time when my sister needed to go to school, I used to support back home, but then I was low on funds here. I remember those initial years when I just came, I literally found myself, I had to go to…I had to think outside the box that, okay, how am I going to help this person, I don't want her to get kicked out of school because of funds.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn

**Participant 24:** I had to go to the mall to sell my earrings, things like that. I did that.

It was after a couple of years later, you know that I was like, you know, that these are some of the things that I had to do…

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm

**Participant 24**: …to help you out. She was like, oh, my God! I didn't know, you know. I don't need to tell you how I'm getting it, but it's not easy, because I had to part with something, you know, so it's tough. You have to find that balancing act, anyway.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I appreciate that insight. A lot of immigrants go through these challenges. Let's quickly wrap up and go to the last section, section 6, it’s about recommendations. We are running out of time. But let me rephrase the question in a way that you can wrap up within few minutes. As someone who has lived here for many years and you've had working experience background in Nigeria, and you’ve thrived well in the US, too, and you've interacted with a lot of people over the years, professionally, socially, culturally. And you’ll agree with me that the curve is not flat for everybody. What I'm trying to say is that everybody doesn't experience this immigration and career growth the same way. For some other people it's a different reality coming with loads of experience, academic qualifications, professional skills in different backgrounds, and having to transition to something completely new. So, I know you are exposed to some of these challenges, that highly educated immigrants from Nigeria and from Africa face, even though you may have experienced some part of it, not the whole experience that other people have faced. But the question I'm going to ask is, do you think there are policies or practice or programs that are on ground that in one way or the other help immigrants to thrive, or in the other way, maybe hinder them from thriving? Then the second question which I want you to answer the two questions at the same time is, what kind of changes or support system do you think if these things are put in place can really help highly educated African immigrants, Nigerian immigrants especially to thrive well when they move over to the US here, and Maryland locally?

**Participant 24:** Okay. I'm trying to look for the best way. I'll just share my thoughts, and maybe you can extract some things from there.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you.

**Participant 24:** I feel like…first of all, let's start with the individual. The awareness that I need help and you start from a place of acknowledgment, right.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** Because a lot of times we come, especially very highly educated Nigerians. We come, you know, with that sense of “I've…you know I'm on this platter, I've accomplished this, you know, and I don't need anybody, I'll navigate this myself.” That's not true. No one is an island, and what you know when you're bringing from there may not always equally translate one for one here. So, having that awareness that I'm coming into a new community, a new place, you know, I'm going to need help and being open to even seeking for that help. Many at times, we're not really comfortable with asking for help even I myself, I'm not. But I had to learn to know that I'm not sufficient by myself, I need help. So that's where, starting from there. Then our own community, or like programs, knowing what I know now, we need to do better at helping, you know, providing resources that would help, you know, immigrants coming in from, you know, Africa, other parts of the world to United States. And I'm saying, within our own community, like advocating for ourselves, right? Because this information might be out there, you know but if no one is able to bring that to the community here, like some Nigerian, American communities, right, to then be able to share with others, they may not know that these resources are available.

So, seeking help one, and then one, creating resources, providing resources to be available for assimilating, integrating, job transitioning, skill sets transitioning, you know those little things, how little they might sound, they are big. It's a big deal, and for some it's not easy. It's not just as easy as oh, I do A, I get B, you know. Some people, it’s going to take them a while to be able to integrate. So, knowing that okay, there are resources in place that I can tap into, that I can connect with, that would help me, and even that being open to even asking for that help and you know, it goes a long way. So maybe say, I'll give an example, like the church community, they have outreaches, you know, they have their educational, you know professionals within the church are able to help mentor other people that are just coming in. You know, finding a buddy system also helps but being open-minded, I think, is also key. Kunle, because you can…some people get stuck with, “I've done this, I know this, I can’t. this is way beneath me, or I just can't transition.”

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** You can. You just need to understand that, okay, the way we say 2 here and add 2 here, this is what it means here, it translates to one here. So just infusing it, taking that thing and just translating it to the same way that they understand it here, then, you can communicate. Say, for example, I'm looking for a business analyst position, that’s job title, right?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** I'm coming from an Admin job, you know, in the Telecommunications Company. My title is admin executive. The job title does not translate one for one right?

**Interviewer:** Yes, it doesn’t

**Participant 24:** It doesn't.

**Interviewer:** Most times. Yes.

**Participant 24:** However, if you go deep down and then look into the job description, the requirement for that business analyst role - business analyst, you know, facilitate meetings with business people, you know their clients and try to uncover, you know the root cause of a problem and come up with the solution. Say, you call it jazz session, elicitation, requirements, you know, analysis or requirements, you know, review. Meanwhile, in this admin job, you just, I don't know, I'm looking for the right word, but we just call it something else. But you're doing exactly the same thing.

**Interviewer**: Right.

**Participant 24:** It's now just, okay, how do I just take that skill set that I'm doing, I could call it something else here but this is exactly what it means and translate it. That way, you would realize that, oh, out of the ten things that they said, they're looking for this business analyst, we're actually doing six of them but I call it something else, we call it something else there.

**Interviewer:** Alright!

**Participant 24:** So, but finding if there was a policy, you know, or a program, you know, as part of the integration, you know, trying to help people navigate here, you know that they can help with that kind of thing to say, okay, how do I bridge the gap, how do I bring the experience from here and translate it into this, like WES does…

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** …for the certification, it will go a long way to help people, and they don't want to feel stuck. But it's one having that, you know, I need help and we also creating that community and providing those resources for the people, the resources and researching. These things are out there, but not everyone knows where to go, look for and what to look for. That's why I feel like people that are already established can take an opportunity in that field or in that area or their own experience. They can come up with, you know, maybe, like a nonprofit, or whatever it is, to share that insight to help others that are coming in.

**Interviewer:** To bridge that gap.

**Participant 24:** To bridge that gap. It's important, because, like you said, it's not everybody that's going to have it, as you know, smooth and it's not like a lateral…

**Interviewer:** Hmmmm!

**Participant 24:** …you know, a path that you just keep going and they keep…no, sometimes you're going to rise, sometimes you're going to fall, sometimes it’s going to be a flat line for a while but just realizing that you can't get stuck, you cannot stay where you are. I've heard someone say, oh, I'm still called this, and I cannot change, and that's who I am, I cannot assimilate anything. How do you integrate?

**Interviewer:** (Laughs) You have to be able to assimilate.

**Participant 24:** You’re going to get stuck where you are, you have to be able to assimilate. You know, it’s taking advantage of our network. You see somebody else that has done it before, not necessarily because you are trying to mimic what they did but you know what, their own experience can, the mistakes and pitfalls that they had, you can learn from it and not fall into that same pit hole.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** I feel like it's the willingness you know, to also be able to share information and the humility to be able to accept that.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** One of the challenges I had when I came in, I was trying, okay, I was like, what can I do? Pharmacy, you know, maybe I could get some job here. I reached out to folks that I felt where in that field, and they could guide me but I realized that people were more concerned with hoarding the information that they had.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** And not wanting to share. How would you help the other person? There's an adage that says that when one rises we all rise.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Participant 24:** When one succeeds, we all succeed. We're building a community together.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 24:** And the sooner that we realize that, you know, you're not going to…it's not like you're taking from my wealth, we're putting it in the same basket and helping grow this community.

**Interviewer:** We are growing together collectively.

**Participant 24:** Collectively, that's it. So, they didn't want to share the information with me.

They actually wanted me to take the longer path that they took when there were other, not loopholes in the system, but the other shorter path that they could have shared with me to kind of help me. The answer I got was, “No, you have to go to Pharmacy School.”

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 24:** And I said, but that's going to take…I'm looking for an immediate something to help me. But then that pushed me to go do my research.

**Interviewer:** Hmmm! By yourself?

**Participant 24:** By myself because I didn't have that support system. The people that I felt were in that field that could help me, they were not being helpful, so I found out that there is a certification. There was one prominent professional institution that was offering the certification. But that one the requirement is, I think you have to go through school for minimum, was it six months? I mean, that was way back. Then six months, and this and that, you know. And I was like, man, okay, this is tough. But they said there's another body, this one just started, they are getting credentials for a few states, Maryland was one of them. I said, okay, good, what is their requirement, I found out that they had an easier path which was different from what the other ones had like. They said you could get the materials from them, and study like if you at least had, like science background and things like that. I did chemistry and physics, you know, way back, so okay, at least I’m sure I can pick this up again and learn, you know. So, they had the self-paced material that you could do, or you could go to their program, or if you decide to go self-paced, you need to have a pharmacist that would review your work, and, you know, kind of mentor you along the way, like there was an easier path.

And I went with that one, and it was also they were just, you know, they were already giving accreditation, and they were issuing certificates to people in Maryland. And you know, and that's how I was able to launch into the field. So that's how I was able to get that pharmacy technician certificate. But if I had, you know, waited with these other people, I would have been discouraged and not get it because they were not just willing to share information to help. So, there's a willingness to ask for help, awareness that I need help. Now, I'm launching out. But our community helping to also mentor other people. Mentorship is important, you know. It's a lot to share there. But I hope I was able to help a little bit just, what I think, you know. And then, lastly, I know there was a part about policies or programs that can help. In Maryland, and I think, on a county basis, I know one of the county that I'm in, they actually have an office that supports, you know. I think Africans in diaspora.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Participant 24:** And I didn't know that existed, not until you know, just a few years back.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Participant 24:** But they have initiatives, you know that they do, they have workshops that they do. They even help people like, you know, who want to go into business. They give them the inside information, and they also have social, you know, like, I think, an annual gathering where they raise awareness, so that you know, Africans in diaspora would know they know that this is a community that can support them within Maryland, and within the county. I was like very impressed. If I knew that from, you know, long time ago, I probably would have reached out and see what opportunities or what programs that they have available to help. So now, if I find somebody that just came in, relocated here, and they're needing help. I have that resource, I know that I can refer them, you know, go to this place, they have some information that are available, resources available to help people that you know, who just came into the country or Africans in diaspora. You know, there might just be some help there, some training, some things like that, workforce training, you know, how to set up business, how to do this, how to navigate, it goes a long way, every little bit goes a long way. So, I found that useful as well and I'm impressed that they have such…

**Interviewer:** Such programs

**Participant 24:** such programs, yeah available,

**Interviewer:** Okay, it's been a long night. I want to thank you so much for first creating time out to be with me in this interview, and also sharing this very knowledgeable, inspiring, an incredible journey that you've gone through as an immigrant from Nigeria and someone who has thrived well in the US. I do really appreciate your insights. I will say that I can't thank you enough for making this possible, and if you would like to have a copy of these research findings when I finish, please let me know, I'm going to provide you a copy via email.

**Participant 24:** Oh, I would love that, I could share my email with you if you don't already have it. But I'll love that. I thank you for, you know, the opportunity to even have this conversation. I do believe that you know everyone's journey is different. However, there are unique lessons that you know, experiences that we can learn from and I just feel that it’s an opportunity for me to be able to give back, want to support your research but even put that information out there that could also be beneficial and help somebody else, you know, see that it's possible to still make a success out of whatever career, whatever background that you're bringing to the country because it's a global world and skills are transferable.

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

**Participant 24:** Alright. Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much.