**Interviewer:** Good evening, sir, and thank you for joining me in this interview.

**Participant 26:** Good evening. How are you?

**Interviewer:** I'm doing. Okay. Thank you for asking, sir. Before we start, I just want you to know that this interview is divided into 6 sections. And of course, let me also say that since you have given me your consent to record this interview earlier so, I will proceed with the questions. Now we will start with section one. Section one is about demographic information. So, the first question under section one is, can you please share your age, your gender, and your country of origin?

**Participant 26:** I am 57-year-old, male, country of origin, Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Question 2 is, what is your highest level of education, and what country did you obtain your degree from.

**Participant 26:** I am a graduate of College of Medicines, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife with a degree of Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery from Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that thank you for sharing that, sir. The next question is, how long have you lived in the United States? Specifically in Maryland?

**Participant 26:** In United States, total is 25 years, in Maryland in particular, 5 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay? Thank you for sharing that. What is your current profession or job title?

**Participant 26:** I'm presently a quality clinical quality specialist in a major hospital in Washington, DC.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. What was your profession in Nigeria before you migrated to the US?

**Participant 26:** I was a medical officer in the major state government, owned hospital in Lagos, Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much. We quickly move to Section 2 under section 2, we talk about push and pull factors, factors that influence people's decision to move from their country of origin to other countries or from one country to the other generally. So, I'm going to start with the first 2 questions, I'm going to combine the 2 questions into one. So, the first question is, what motivated your decision to migrate to the United States? Were there specific factors in Nigeria that made you to leave e.g. economic, social, or political challenges?

**Participant 26:** Mostly economic challenges, is what motivated me to leave Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay. The next question is what attracted you to the United States and of course Maryland in particular?

**Participant 26:** I've always wanted to travel abroad for better opportunities. And I know that United State holds a better opportunity for me to succeed than going to other places like Europe. And you know other parts of the world that people go. Maryland in particular, because when I originally came from Nigeria, I was in New York City, and I left to Maryland because I've always said when I'm leaving New York I want to work and find a job and work in Washington, DC. So, when that opportunity came, that's when I left New York, and I chose Maryland because it's more family friendly than to be in Washington, DC itself, and main reason why I am in Maryland but where I live in Maryland is just 12 miles to my job.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that, sir. The last question under this section is about challenges that people encountered when they migrate. You said you have been in the country for like 25 years now?

**Participant 26:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** If you can remember, when you moved to the United States, different people have different experiences, different challenges when they move, when they come over like that, some people maybe they had family members that were already in the country. They could get a soft landing. Some people don't have soft landing, some people, even with the fact that they have a family member that was already in the country, still face a lot of challenges in terms of accommodation, orientation and looking for job. In your own case you moved 25 years ago, and you also moved to Maryland recently, 5 years ago. In both cases, what challenges did you encounter during this migration process?

**Participant 26:** The most challenging thing about relocating to a country like here is that you have to change your orientation completely from everything you used to know in Nigeria. because it's a different country, so I had that challenge. To start learning everything from scratch I won't say my landing was soft or hard. But even when you have accommodation like you said, and the people that you are staying with do not have a clue on how to help you to progress, or they are just not interested in sharing with you. I had to learn every single thing by myself, and that's what I would describe as my hard landing. Yes, I have people who housed me, but they had no clue, so the help to establish was very few and far in between. So, it was a big challenge, and gradually over time and started learning, and by the grace of God, is where I am today.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that experience. We move to section 3, section 3, we talk about professional experiences. Under this section, we talk about issues, such as your career growth in Nigeria while you were there. Then your career growth in the US since you came. And we also talk about skills, qualifications and issues like professional issues like licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications and workplace discrimination, and how you have been able to navigate this professional landscape in the US for the years you have been here since you moved from Nigeria. So, I will start with the first question. Please tell us about your career trajectory in Nigeria before relocating to the United States.

**Participant 26:** Wow! Using the word trajectory, I don't believe that exists in a place called Nigeria, because you cannot do anything or become anything in Nigeria, if you don't know somebody. So, I worked as a medical officer. Will I one day become the medical director of that hospital, if I had stayed? That is a discussion for another day, because if I don't know the governor or senator, you will just remain where you are. There'll be no improvement in your lot. This is one of the reasons why I left Nigeria. So, I don't even know where I'll be. My colleagues that I left behind, have they become better in their jobs designation? I don't believe so. So, I left Nigeria very early when I got the job, and I saw how things were going. Even in my own state of origin I couldn't get employment because I did not know anybody. All the people that were hired were from other States. So, trajectory. I'm sorry that doesn't exist in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that before I move to the next question, I wanted to know how many years did you work in Nigerian environment before you relocated to the US?

**Participant 26:** You know, in Nigeria, as you graduate as a medical professional, you are going to go for a 1-year internship that everybody knows as house job. After that you now proceed on NYSC (Mandatory one year national service for fresh college graduates) posting, and when I came back, I worked for 3 years before I relocated to the United States.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that. Let's move to the next question. How would you describe your current career trajectory in the United States?

**Participant 26:** United States is a land of opportunity. My career trajectory is only the only way, is up. The opportunities are there. Once you avail yourself of those opportunities you just keep going up. So, in America, if you put in hard work, you will see the fruit of your labor. That does not exist in Nigeria. That's just to compare both places. So, in United States the opportunities are there. As long as I make myself available to these opportunities. I'm only on the way up.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Thank you for sharing that. I have one follow up question based on that. Some people when they leave Nigeria and they come over here, they can't find employment, or yes, they can't find employment, or they are not able to find employment in the same field that they had professional skills, experience, and academic qualifications in. So, they more, like starting all over again. But in your own case you were in medical line in Nigeria, you're still medical line now. Have you always been in the medical line? Are there any challenges that you went through in those early years before you were able to transition to medical professional medical practice eventually.

**Participant 26:** Since I've been in this country I've always been working based on my medical background. My first job was working in a private clinic. It involves dealing with patients. After that I worked as a health inspector in New York City, and, since I stopped working as a health inspector. I've always worked inside major hospitals not to practice medicine, but to work with the doctors and assess the quality of care that they give to their patients. And this is mostly done via accurate documentation of patients’ visits. So, I have been doing that since 2,009 to date. And I've been moving from one hospital to another hospital. And when I left New York City, it’s the same job function that I transferred to my present employer and that's what I've been doing and continue to do now. In the future, would that be an opportunity to start practicing again? It's just like I said earlier, in the United States of America there is always opportunities. If I make myself, and put myself there for these opportunities, yes, I can still continue from where I stopped in treating patients in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** (Sneezes) Excuse me! Thank you for providing that extensive explanation. I appreciate that. The next question I wanted to ask is about your skills and qualifications. I've talked to many people, and I come across people that have skills and background in finance and accounting. They come over here, then they go into healthcare, and they feel like how they wish they had the opportunity to continue to practice in that field, that they build their career while in Nigeria. But in your own case, you're still in the same line.

**Participant 26:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 26:** My skills that I have acquired since I've been here has even put me in a position where should I start practicing and treat patients again, I will be doing my best work. Most of the people I've been working with, these same doctors and that interactions that I've had with the doctors here that are practicing have given me enough information and knowledge. Should I now decide that I want to go back? I will just hit the ground running. There will be no delay. That's where I am right now. So, I've acquired many other skills and qualifications which those who are still in Nigeria will not be able to get at all, because they are just not available, and these are cut edge leading skills that I don't think Nigeria's level of healthcare facilities will attain in a long time.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. I know when you talk about skills, the knowledge that you are exposed to here, I know you're also talking about technology, too.

**Participant 26:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Oh, yes. Okay.

**Participant 26:** One day after this interview, and we had any ‘Great Ife’ gathering when I get to speak to you, I will expand and expanciate more on that, for you.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Let me go to one thing that a lot of people talk about: the barriers they face in the professional setting, such as licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications and also workplace discrimination. These 3 things, have you faced any challenges in these 3 major areas? Let me repeat them again. Licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications and workplace discrimination. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

**Participant 26:** The licensing requirements. Once you study and you take the exam, and you pass, that's not a problem. My foreign qualifications after you do the translation services that exist here in this country. My certificate from Nigeria was duly recognized to be an equivalent of what it's available right here in the United States. So that was not a problem. Workplace discrimination based on the history of this country, being black, and being black, coming from Africa with an accent, yes, once in a while that rears its ugly head. But I know how to deal with that. We are all human beings, and we are equal under God. So, anybody that comes with me at that, with that I know how to deal with them so, it hasn't been a major problem with me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much for sharing that. We will go to Section 4, cultural assimilation and social integration. I'm going to combine the first 3 questions into one, because they are similar. And at times when people talk about other questions or other topical areas, they touch on this cultural assimilation and social integration. That's why I want to combine the 3 questions into one, so I want you to describe your experience of cultural assimilation in Maryland here, and if you have experienced any cultural or social challenges both in your personal and professional life, since you migrated to the US?

**Participant 26:** You know anywhere you go in this country you always see a group of fellow Nigerians from whichever part be it Igbo, Yoruba, Bendel, Benin, all of that. So, you get to mix with them, but other people from other countries, I've lived in a cosmopolitan city like New York, and on a daily basis, you will meet people from everywhere in New York. (Inaudible)…be an issue. I ride the bus with them. I ride the train, the subway with them, you know who is crazy, what part of the world people, crazy people who do crazy stuff come from. So, when you see them, you just know how to, you know how you know, act. and mind your business and keep going. So, I did very well, hasn't been a problem. And in Maryland, when we moved here, we also met fellow Nigerians. We associate together, my neighbors, where I live from different parts of the world, and we get along. It's not a problem for me. My New York background has helped me a lot to really be able to work and associate with people from all over the world.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, thank you. I'm going to ask you one follow-up question there.

**Participant 26:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Because I think at times, I think there is a contrast in the in the culture of where you're coming from and the culture of where you moved to. You mentioned something earlier in this interview, you're talking about while you were in Nigeria as a medical officer, you looked at the setting, even though you worked there 3 years after you did the house job. You looked at the setting, and you felt like a lot of things were not done right, and that's why you didn't really believe in the system, you felt like you mentioned that you didn't know people that could help you get a job. And you talked about how people got jobs because they knew people that are high up there in the society. Those 3 years that you worked in Nigeria, are there things that when you moved over to the US and since you lived in the US that you saw a kind of a sharp contrast or difference in the way things are done in organizations between what is done, based on your experience in Nigeria and in your own professional cycle here now, since you ‘ve been the US?

**Participant 26:** Oh, yes, there's a big difference. Just like you explained in Nigeria, nothing works unless you know somebody, or you give somebody kickback. Here, you don't have to know anybody. You don't have to give anybody any kickbacks for things to get done. I was recently speaking with one of my colleagues in Nigeria that came to visit, and I explained to them that if you need something, just put in your application and when it gets to your turn, they will process your application and give you what you want. In Nigeria you will have to visit that office that will process your application severally and go and start looking for somebody to do something to push your file. I experienced it when I wanted to take my licensing exam for the United States medical organization, USMLE. They require a letter of recommendation from my dean’s office in the University of Ife. The letter was sent directly by the examination agency. It arrived in Nigeria, nothing happened. I had to mobilize somebody to go to Dean’s office to inquire about this letter. He was just pointed to a box that was full of all these letters, all these similar letters, and requests that he should go and look in there to bring out the one that has my name on it. After we did that, they now said, what do we want to write in the letter? So, I had to supply the wordings. After that we had to pay the person that would type the letter who, after typing it, will now take it into the Dean, have it signed, and when it comes back out we will now have to pay, we had we had to pay somebody else to put it in an envelope to give to us, so that my representative in Nigeria, then would be able to mail it to the licensing examination agency here in the US. So, that doesn't happen here. You just put in your application. The people who are in the department will do their job, not looking for favor, and you will get the response in due time. So, there's a sharp, big difference between how things work in Nigeria and how things work here, way better here than in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for providing that example. That's quite interesting. The last 2 questions I'm going to combine them into one is about the kind of support that people get when they migrate to the US. People have talked about when they came, they didn't have anybody, any family, any friends in the country. They had to go through that challenge of finding their way on their own, just like you mentioned too earlier. But some other people have also said, you know, when I came, I had to go look for a Nigerian church that was more like a place for me to get direction, to have access to information, resources and also connect to people. In your own case, when you came. Were there specific community networks or organizations that were there to support you during the integration process? And how well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 26:** Probably these organizations or Nigerian churches that you are talking about started after I came to this country because I am not aware of any community network organization that supports people who are newly relocating from Nigeria. If they go to Nigerian churches, because when I came here there were no Nigerian churches. A few white garment churches but when you go to mix with those people, you see that they themselves don't have a clue about what they are doing. That's my own personal experience because I saw a few of them in New York and if you are not careful, some of them will even swindle you. Now, that takes me to now, is there any? I am not aware of it. People who just come from Nigeria, is there any organization that helps them out, do we? Most people will probably end up in a situation where it will be a family member or a friend, the principle of being my brother's keeper. We just want to help him out because I knew him. We were this tight, or we were like this in Nigeria before we came here. Nigerians do not work together. We don't do things together. We do things individually. It’s the mindset that people in Nigeria have till today, which is one of the reasons why Nigeria has remained underdeveloped. There's a Yoruba saying, saying that “Agbajo owo la fi n soya” (Meaning there is strength in unity, one finger cannot beat the chest the way five fingers will do it)…People do not beat their chests in Nigeria with all their 5 fingers.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn ...

**Participant 26:** And it's a big problem. We do not help each other. We don't. Nigerians want to do their own thing so that they can use that to brag or show off in the future that they are better than you.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn.

**Participant 26:** Even if they know a way where you can move forward and progress, they will not share it with you. A case in point, in New York, almost every erm country has their own area. There's Chinatown, there's little Italy, even people from India and Pakistan, they all live in the same area. Is there any way we can point to that where all Nigerians are living that it's called Nigerian town or Nigerian city? I'm not even sure if we have a Nigerian street just to let you know that we don't work together. If we get to Chinatown today, all the businesses there are owned by Chinese people, and they are thriving because they help each other out, even if it's starting with a small loan to start the business, and they repay over time. Nigeria does not have any of that here, because we are individual people.

**Interviewer:** Hmmn yeah, thank you for sharing that perspective. I appreciate that. That's very central to the core of my research. Erm, let's go to Section 5, dual, cultural and economic challenges. I have 3 questions here. I will combine them into 2. The first question is, do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 26:** I don't feel torn. I am from Nigeria. That, nothing will change that. And I've had opportunity, at events, to appear and dress as a Nigerian to these occasions representing and my fellow Americans from other places, they appreciate that, and I am not hiding my identity, that I'm not a Nigerian. I am very happy to share my culture with people from other places, so it’s not a challenge. I'm not torn. I navigate it very well, very interesting to me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. I’ll move to the last question under this section. And the question is, have you experienced economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria? What strategies do you use to balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 26:** Oh, yes, there is challenges, because everybody from Nigeria will call you and tell you they are in the worst-case scenario. If you don't send money to them now, now. I have learnt to tell them no. That’s not how the system works here. If I have money, and I feel the person is really in need, I send money to them only what I can afford. If they like, they can complain it's too little. But guess what that's what I can afford, and the list is long. But everybody like I said in Nigeria only thinks about themselves. They want to be the one that will have you solve all their economic, social, and otherwise problems, despite the fact that they are not Nigerian government. So, I have learned to only do what I can afford when I can do so. Nobody will pressure me or tell me that if I don't send money today, they will cut their leg or cut their arms. That does not faze me anymore. Agreed, it used to faze me when I first came, but I've learned to cut my coats according to my size. That's the way I deal with them.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing that. We are getting close to the end of the interview. We are in the last section. This section, we want to talk about recommendations, and for you in particular, someone who has lived in this country for 25 years, the last 5 years in Maryland that we are talking about. Someone who has a kind of a privilege of having the medical degree medical professional experience both in Nigeria and the US and also someone who has interacted with a lot of highly educated Nigerian and African immigrants in the US for over the past 2 decades, I wanted to know from you, based on your own experience and understanding of this society, this environment, do you think there are policies or programs or practices that first, hinder immigrants from advancing their career in the US here? Then, on the other hand, maybe programs, policies and practices that help immigrants to succeed in their career when they move over to the US. I want to hear your opinion on this.

**Participant 26:** I, personally, am not aware of policies that are designed to hold anybody back. There are many programs that people can use to advance themselves. They are not, There are no programs that will end up to be a barrier, because maybe in this present regime that we are under those kind of things can happen, but in experience all policies and programs are designed to help the populace, which is the sharp contrast from Nigeria, where we do policies and programs that makes life difficult for the common man. Here they do things in a way that will be easy for everybody. So, my suggestion is this. In America, information is important. In fact, it is critical for you to have the correct information in America. Case in point, ordinarily, to apply for a driver's license, if you don't have the correct information, it will become a problem for anybody that is just coming in, just a driver's license.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 26:** Not to now talk of how you are going to navigate sitting for your exams. What book are you going to study to pass this exam. How much is it gonna cost you? And things like that, information! Information!! I did not have it when I came, and it held me back from what I would have achieved in the first few years, so if we can help each other when they newly arrive, and point them in the right directions, then they will be able to swiftly move along and achieve their American dream. It's time we stopped saying to new people that, are coming, that, after all, when I came, it took me this time to get this. It took me, I suffered. You too have to go through this same process as mine. No, there is a principle of paying it forward. You have to be your brother’s keeper in a way that will help them, because guess what? At the end of the day, it will circle back to you, and you benefit from it. So, my advice is help new people that are coming in so they can get their feet on the ground in the shortest possible time, and they can move on. It helps and builds a better Nigerian community in the diaspora, and it reflects back on Nigeria as a whole, and the people that were left there. We'll be able to help them better. So, togetherness, if there's a way, we can make people come together and help other people, then it will be better for us.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for that elaborate response. I think you've actually answered my last question, which I wanted to ask specifically that what kind of changes or support systems do you think if they are put in place, it's going to help highly educated Nigerian immigrants succeed in their careers in the US. And I think you've answered that question, except, you, have any other thing to add to that? Other than that, I would just say, okay, do you have any just additional comment or insight you would just like to share, maybe something you just remembered or something you…

**Participant 26:** Everything we talked about.

**Interviewer:** Forgot to share.

**Participant 26:** Everything we talked about for us to achieve this we have to start little. Little drops of water make an ocean. We have to take Great Ife for example. It’s hard for us to come together in this our Great Ife association. I know everybody's busy, but if somebody just arrived from Nigeria, even if he’s not a Great Ife, and he reaches out to either a Great Ife or any other Nigerian, are they willing to help? Well, the other side of that is, it's difficult to help people sometimes, especially fellow Nigerians, because they can…most of the time we've had different, you know, scenarios where people turned around and did bad by the people that helped them. There are always going to be bad eggs in any society, but that doesn't and that shouldn't stop us from always looking for an opportunity to help one another. If we can do that one day, little by little, maybe we will now get to be the same level as Chinese people, Italians, people from India, Pakistanis, how they always come together and they are achieving a lot more than we Nigerians, that's all I want to say.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much, sir. I want to really really appreciate you for your time, erm taking time out this Sunday evening to be with me in this interview. I do appreciate your time for all the very insightful perspectives that you shared with me in the course of this interview. If you want to have a summary of my research findings when this research is completed, please just let me know. I will provide a copy via email.

**Participant 26:** That would be nice. I would like to read through.

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

**Participant 26:** You’re welcome anything you know, to help a fellow, Nigerian, if it's within my means and power, I'm ready to do it.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. I appreciate you greatly. I'm going to stop the recording now.

**Participant 26:** All right.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.