**Interviewer:** Good morning and thank you for joining me in this interview this morning.

**Participant 29:** Good morning!

**Interviewer:** Having given me your consent to record the interview, I want to tell you that the interview is in session, and it’s being recorded at this moment. So, before we start, I also want to share with you that there are 6 sections in this interview.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** There are a certain number of questions under each section. So, we go to section one, section one is just demographic information. So, we can just start right away. I will start with the first question.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Can you please share your age, your gender, and your country of origin?

**Participant 29:** Yes, 44, male, country of origin, Nigeria.

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

**Participant 29:** My highest level of education is a PhD, doctor as in PhD in Instructional Technology. I started my education in Nigeria, but I completed my highest degree, in the United States.

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

**Participant 29:** Well, all together, I’ve lived in the US for 12 years and then, out of those 12 years, I think I’ve spent about 10 out of those 12 years in Maryland.

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

**Participant 29:** Well, currently, I have a dual role. I’m a professor. And then at the same time, I’m like an e-learning developer with a federal government agency.

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

**Participant 29:** In Nigeria I was into more like media / journalism aspects, so, was into like technical writing, media journalism, that kind of a thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Let’s move to Section 2, Push and Pull Factors.

Under this section. We’ll talk about factors that motivate or influence the decision to move from someone’s country of origin to another country, or from one country to the other generally. So, in your own case, 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 29:** Hmm, I think my own story is a little bit different. It was a deliberate attempt, because (inaudible) I had a particular project in mind at that time that I just needed the foreign knowledge, degrees, and everything to help me. So, it was more about things that or about the knowledge about the skills that will position me for what I have in mind in the nearest future. And that was the reason why I decided to have this, to come to the US, specifically, to learn.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. The next question I was going to ask you, what attracted you to the United States, but you’ve already mentioned that, but the second part of that question is... why Maryland in particular, why not another state?

**Participant 29:** Well, I can still shed more light on the attraction to the US. What attracted me to the US was because I tried a couple of other places but what I attracted me to the United States was the innovative aspect of the country like most global or system or tool or software at that time, shaping the world even up to now emanate from the United States and it aligns more with what I had in my mind, what I wanted to do with my life. So that was the main attraction. Then Maryland, what attracted me to Maryland is proximity to Washington, DC because I live very close to DC, I work in the DC area. So, I just wanted to be in the epicenter of global phenomenon like DC, you know where the headquarters of the world in quote. So that’s what attracted me to Maryland, not just Maryland, as in the Maryland side of DC. We are in the DC area of the Maryland side. So that’s why I still prefer staying in this area. I don’t think I’m going to leave this area.

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

**Participant 29:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** There’s one more question under this section and that question is about the challenges people face when they migrate to a new country, a new environment. These challenges come in different dimensions. Some people face challenges even before they leave their country of origin, as soon as they start that migration process the migration itself, in the middle of it there could be challenges, and for some other people the challenges start when they really land in the new country, looking for direction, looking for some kind of support system, or how to navigate the new environment. In your own case, what challenges have you encountered during your own migration process?

**Participant 29:** I’ll say the biggest challenge was transitioning from the informal sector, or informal economy, or what we normally call it, I’m trying to use the right word so that I don’t sound derogatory. You know, transitioning from just normal odd jobs to actually becoming a professional. So, that was the biggest hurdle for me. At a time, for example, I remember so many years ago, a little bit close to 10, about 10 years ago I attended about 600 interviews.

**Interviewer:** Hmmm

**Participant 29:** So, you know, for me to, I used to work as a security guard and so, you know, and during my bachelor’s degree, and then my master’s program, I was working as a security guard, so I would do my assignment in the office as in overnight, or you know would bring my laptop and the rest. So, my biggest hurdle was the quest to transition to corporate America, and to actually have the kind of job I would love to have, that I desire to have. That was the biggest challenge. Of course it comes in diverse ways, you know, cultural shock, assimilation, pronunciation, the accent and so many things but the overarching umbrella that can be used to characterize my challenge is the transition process, how do I become who I am today?

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for sharing that very interesting experience. We will go into a little more details about that experience later, in subsequent sections. And of course, the next section is about professional experiences. You have talked about a little bit about your experience back in Nigeria. You were doing technical writing journalism, as you have said earlier but I wanted you to say it in a way that you can just summarize your career trajectory in Nigeria right from your first job to the last job you did before you relocated to the US. If you can just share this, your career trajectory in summary.

**Participant 29:** My career trajectory was very interesting. I started as a graphic, as a computer training, like teaching people computers. So then, transitioned to graphic design. And I was actually doing graphic design, you know, normal “Jamma jamma” (meaning doing all kind of hustle jobs to make ends meet) in Nigeria. I don’t want to use Nigerian lingua, but you know, just trying to hustle with graphic design printing. Then I got a job with Nigerian Tribune newspaper, January 2009. So, I got to Nigeria Tribune in January 2009 as a graphic designer. Then from there I became, I started reporting, started, having my own, as in writing for Sunday Tribune. Then from there I joined an international training organization as a graphic designer, as a technical writer to write proposal to various organizations, we do training for various organizations, like World Bank assisted projects in Nigeria, all those projects. So, and that is where I was until I came here. So, I started from graphic design, I worked in the publishing company, worked with Nigerian Tribune, then worked with international organization as a technical writer and a graphic designer. Then I worked in the media also, like on TV programs, script writing and all those stuffs, before coming to the US.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you so much for sharing that interesting professional career experience in Nigeria. Before I move to your career trajectory in the US, how many years did you work in Nigeria before you came over to the US?

**Participant 29:** Well, it depends on which way we want to calculate. Is it professional or...?

**Interviewer:** Both. Yeah, yes, we can do both the informal and the professional one.

**Participant 29:** Okay, I would say I had about erm. I started working since 2002, so 2002 till I left the job December 2012. Like as in left the career 2012. So that’s about 10 years right. Yes, I worked. Yeah, I worked 10 years in Nigeria. I had about 10 years experience in Nigeria before coming to the US.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you for clarifying that. Let’s come over to your career trajectory in the United States. Since you have lived in the United States. You mentioned something that was very interesting that while you were getting your degrees you were working as a security person. This story is common among immigrants having had very good years of experience back in their home country with loads of professional experience and technical skills. When they come over, it’s more like, starting all over again for a lot of people. You seem to have a similar experience based on what you mentioned earlier. I wanted you to walk me through how you are able to move from those initial challenges and getting to the level you are now where you are now have a doctorate degree, and you’re working in the academics and in the industry at the same time.

**Participant 29:** Well, this is side notes. I have another friend, that if you need any participants I can introduce you to. So, we used to work together as a security guard. He was an HR Director. I’m using this to answer my question. He was a senior HR Director in Nigeria before coming to the US. And like a very high-level position in Nigeria with official car, like you know, you know that kind of level. So, we met at security job and he’s just trying to see how to get a better opportunity. That’s the desire to actually get something better spun out of when he landed his first role after how many years? So he landed his first job with Maryland Department of Education that year, and started paying him, I think it’s $18, 50 cents per hour, he’s my close friend, he’s still my best friend till today. So, then, within the space of 2 years, he was able to get a job as a HR Business partner with the State of Maryland in Baltimore, and they started with him with $80,000. That was the real motivation for me that it is possible. You know when your best friend, that you are doing security together, is able to leave and within the space of 3 years or 4 thereabouts he’s able to change the trajectory of his career. But that is, after he has attended hundreds of interviews. There was a situation where he was given a job when he got there and discovered he was an African black, they rescinded the offer. It was that bad now. However, so that gave me a motivation like, say, okay, if somebody can do it, yes, I could do it. So, I didn’t have you know, bachelor’s degree in Nigeria, but I have a professional diploma from UI (University of Ibadan) that I used to work. So, what I did is transfer my credits, then I started online classes. And with my online classes, I was able to do my assignment. But specifically, what I did is to harness what are the skill sets I had from Nigeria. Judging from my friend, my friend has extensive HR skills in Nigeria he built on that he got certifications here, he was able to get a job. So, I look at my skill sets in Nigeria. What is the skill sets I had then how can I harness them to make them something that will become marketable and sellable? So, I remember I come from very strong technical writing, graphic design, multimedia design, journalism and everything. So, I have a very good handles on media technology, multimedia technology. So that I started doing a lot of research as to which area would those ones fit? So, I identified 3 areas it could fit into marketing, marketing, and advertising. They could fit into multimedia design, animation, and everything. Then the third one you could fit into education, instructional design, e-learning. So, after a lot of research, I discovered that the entry level the entry barrier for marketing, and this thing is high, because, there’s so many other aspects we don’t need to derail. Then the animation aspect is also very good, but for you to even become anything, you will have to have 2- or 3-years internship experience for you to become anything but education is way, more better education and training. And so, it’s way more better. So that’s why I repackaged my experience, my, you know, what I’ve been able to do technical writing, then did a lot of courses, you know e-learning instructional design, then repackaged myself as an e-learning or instructional designer, and that is how I was able to navigate You know the intricacies because I already have the skill in Nigeria. Then, now I have the education and the you know I’ve brushed up my skills, communication skills, pronunciation, you know, speaking and everything. Then after so many interviews, so yes, I was able to land my first job

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you for sharing that very, very interesting transitioning from the Nigerian environment to the US environment. That’s quite an interesting story. And it’s also inspiring, too. Thank you for sharing that. The next question I’m going to ask is about skills and qualifications

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** This question is also central to the core of my research, because many highly educated African immigrants like that struggle to transition the way you have transitioned. Some people come from different backgrounds, and they end up doing something totally different, totally not relevant to the skills, knowledge, and experience they had acquired before they moved over to the US. So, people also get stuck in those kind of jobs. So, when you talk to them, they tell you that I don’t feel fulfilled on the job. I’m just doing the job because it pays my bills. I have a background in something different, and I’m doing something totally different now. So, someone will say, maybe on a scale of 1 to 10 in this case, the skill that I’m using in my current position is just about 3 out of 10, based on what I have acquired over the years. I’m just, you’ve said a lot that I could confidently say it as I’ve gotten the answer, but I don’t want to put the word before you. I still want to ask you that. How well do you feel your skills and qualifications are being fully utilized in your current role?

**Participant 29:** I think my experience or my answer will, might be a little bit different from others. And this is partly related to the motivation that we mentioned in the first instance, because one of the interesting motivation for me for example, it aligns with the Why did I come to United States right in the first instance

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes.

**Participant 29:** So, I have a definite goal why I came to the US which, as in after the after this interview, we can also go into, but I don’t want to derail the interview so I needed to consider that goal first. Then, I needed to now harness my skill sets in Nigeria that I already had in Nigeria. Remember, I had a very strong computer training. I used to be a computer instructor. I later had my own computer training Institute. Then I became a good graphic designer printer in Nigeria. I had my own little printing press. Then from there transitioned into journalism that I worked with the oldest newspaper company in Nigeria, Nigerian Tribune from there worked, with publishing house, and had my own little publishing companies into multimedia, you know, film making video production and everything. So, I would say, coming from Nigeria, I was already well grounded in the media, multimedia writing and everything. So, the only thing I needed to do here is to see, where would those skills fit? I am not looking for something new. I’m looking for where those things would fit. That was my own approach. Then I was looking for where those things would fit vis-a-vis, even my long-time goal. So, because of that, there were a lot of other offers, opportunities. I decided not to take them or not to go towards that direction, because I was specifically interested in my interest. I’m a very like, I have very strong personality like how I want things, the way I want things. So, because of that, I was not interested in chasing money.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 29:** So, I was not even up till today. We still have this conversation with my wife about 2hrs ago. The last thing I’m going to do is to chase money, it’s too small a purpose for me. So, because of that, it was easier to capitalize on my strength instead of just looking for survival. So, in the meantime I focus on our security guard. Then, later on, I was working in the prison for 14 months, but it was just for me to get by to finish the degrees, the program I was doing. That was the reason I was doing those things, immediately I finished my Educational Technology master’s program without getting a job, I resigned from corrections, and the reason why I resigned was because if I did not resign, I would get trapped and remember, I’ll be chasing, you know, dollars as in bills and everything. So that was what made it worthwhile. I remember I’ve seen a friend who was a senior HR that is also able to transition. So, I believe it’s possible, and I believe is a risk that I needed to take. And I already have my skill set. So now I would say that I still use about 80% of the skills that I use today, I still think I learned in Nigeria. The only difference is that I need to learn how to do things American way. However, the skill set is still, I think, about 8 of them. There are still things I learned in Nigeria

**Interviewer:** Very interesting. Thank you for sharing that perspective. Let’s go to the next question, which is on navigating the professional landscape in the US and in Maryland here. People talk about the challenges they face in terms of licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications, and even workplace discrimination, too. So, in your own case, I want to know if you have faced any barriers in terms of licensing requirements, recognition of foreign qualifications and workplace discrimination. What strategies have you used to manage or overcome these challenges?

**Participant 29:** Well, it is a two-edged sword. So, I’m not trying to discount other people’s experience, but I’ll still say my experience is a little bit different for so many reasons. Yeah, we need to understand that America is different from Nigeria. So, America is a skill-based country. Nigeria is a certificate driven country. So, when people think that they are not being recognized because they are coming with this mindset, that I have a master’s degree, I have a PhD in Nigeria. And that’s those things are only relevant in Nigeria, here in America they are not. So that’s why I think a lot of people, I’ll give you two instances, you know. I told you I only did a 3-year professional diploma program in Nigeria. And while in Nigeria, I used the same degree as in same qualification to work with Nigerian Tribune, to work with the international organization because I’m a very highly skilled individual by skill like I know my stuff right.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 29:** So, when I got to the United States, I only had a diploma, the same diploma that I had, so I don’t come with the idea that I have a bachelor’s, I have a master’s so which a lot of people in Nigeria did. But, my best friend, I told you he only also has a bachelor’s degree in Nigeria, but he’s highly skilled as well, very skilled. So, it’s easier for his skills to shine, and it’s easier for my skills to shine. So, are there going to be challenges? Of course, the issue is that we, I think, a lot of Nigerians, African immigrants, we expect the people here, I mean by individual here, like in the workplace here, to consider your years of experience, Nigeria, your degree you have in Nigeria that this person only has associates. For example, my friend’s supervisor only had associates degree and he has a master’s. He has a lot of international experience but one thing we need to know that here nobody cares about your degree, they care about what you can do. So, that’s why it’s I’m trying not to be very critical of what happened in Nigeria, because what we get in Nigeria is more like the theoretical approach and the head knowledge certificates, but some of them they are not transferable skill set that will actually have the value to the organization. So, you can’t let them…you can’t expect them to rate you based on a degree you have. They have to rate you based on the skills that you bring to the table. Are they going to be this… are there going to be discrimination? It depends on the lens to look at if they’re actually discrimination. But people that don’t know how things are done, where you’re coming from. They don’t know everything. You don’t think they will just clap for you that they want things to be done where they are. So, I ‘ll answer this question and let you judge like I work with the US federal government right? My current position with the federal government’s current status is equivalent all of almost all my colleagues. They are having their 25 years’ experience in the federal government, and they are retiring right now, but I’ve only been with the federal government for about 5 years.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 29:** So, and the reason for that is because I’m highly skilled. So, what they have learned over the years I come in I do way better than what they know. So, it’s easier for me to rise to apply for higher roles, and like right now, my role is more like an associate director with a US Agency, and I’ve only been with them for a short period. So, are there challenges? They are just normal challenges of life. But some people’s challenges, maybe more than others, because of the perception, because of where they’re coming from. They focus more on the degree. But some of us who don’t really have the degree, or we don’t focus on the degree we focus on the skill sets we tend to (inaudible). And the same thing with my friend. He only has a master. Okay, I think he just completed his master recently, but he got a job with State of Maryland, with just his bachelor’s degree from Nigeria. The only thing he did was to do some certifications, and so, and then to do what they call now evaluation of the degree. He didn’t have any other degree in the United States until later on that he completed his master’s, and he could land a job like HR Business Partner of the entire State of Maryland as in entire City of Baltimore rather.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 29:** And now he’s a senior like HR person with the Census Bureau. So, is there discrimination, of course, but with another man’s country it’s bound to happen. So, it depends on how people see it. So yes, let me pause.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that very interesting perspective. I appreciate that distinction between certificate and skills. And I can’t agree less. I can’t agree less with you on that distinction, that clarification. Thank you for sharing that.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Let’s go to Section 4. We will talk about cultural assimilation and social integration. You have talked about some of the things that have to do with integration in terms of how you came with not so much advanced degrees. But you had the skills, and I’m already able to infer from our conversation so far that integration was kind of erm let me say, challenging. But, you overcame those challenges based on the things you have gone through. You will also agree with me that the experience is not the same for everybody. But I want to hear from your own perspective.

**Participant 29:** What?

**Interviewer:** I want to hear from your own perspective. If you have had any challenge with cultural assimilation in Maryland, and if you have experienced cultural and social challenges since you migrated. And now you have navigated these cultural differences in both your personal and professional life.

**Participant 29:** Well, it’s a very complex (inaudible). I don’t want this to turn to, but I think the world cultural assimilation, social integration it’s very loaded and people will see it from diverse perspective. So that’s something. I don’t really believe in cultural assimilation and social integration. I believe in, you know, coexistence, for example, what I do is to, I need to understand that I’m here as a guest in America. I’m here as a guest, and I have to respect my host. So, how do I respect my host, or how does that actually mean? It means that I need to understand what the nuances are, what does this mean to them. Remember, they have their way of life, their existence, and everything. Before I came here so, I don’t want them to just accept me the way I am. Rather I want to learn their way of doing things because I am the guest, they are the host of course, in the process they also will get to learn more or little about me right.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 29:** But the first thing is the overture that’s me, willing to learn about their the way of doing things. And remember, I said this, I need to learn how to do things American way. So that was the thing. So up till today, I can tell you that I am not cultural… I’m not socially integrated. I’m not culture. I can’t say I’m culturally isolated or anything. But I understand the culture very well. I understand the perspective very well, I understand everything, so I deal with them that way. When I get back to my home I deal with my family, my friends, the way I want to do things. so, I’m not unnecessarily mixing, and I’m not begging for acceptance. I operate professionally and sometimes they, you know, you can say we want to go and do this at work, I will tell them, no, I don’t want to do that. So, I just think that the idea of cultural aspiration and social transformation. It’s very loaded, and it’s very difficult to define. And I’m not sure if anybody has actually been perfectly and socially integrated. Yes, we are Africans so. But I just believe that we can coexist as a micro, you know, as a very small pocket of individual ethnic city, or whatever we are coming from, we can still have that and learn other ways of others, their way of doing things respects them and just do those things at a professional level. So, I just try to be professional. So, and do my job professionally, and I’ll give you an example, I worked with US Department of Veterans Affair in DC. Around 2018 and I brought my lunch to work one day and guess what I brought to lunch as my lunch, fried rice and goat meat (Interviewer laughs). And in the afternoon, I now microwaved the goat’s meat in the microwave. So, and you can imagine, was the smell coming from goat meat in the office (Both laughing) So, everybody was like what. So, I turned into a joke like, remember, I have a media background. Sorry, I just want to teach you guys to see what we eat, so that in case I have to take you to Africa. I wanted to start experiencing the flavor and the aroma of what our food feels like. That’s why I wanted to give you a taste. So, it turns that situation that could be very problematic into something that becomes, you know, a joke like, please, what? What can I taste this. How does it taste like that? You know that kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Participant 29:** And so, it still boils down to individuals how we manage things. But that was, in my entire life, I will never take food to work (laughs) because our foods are very smelly. You know we use our own, you know what I’m talking about, so. So, but again, it’s a learning opportunity for me, and I dare not try it again. So, I learned to respect, to understand and to respect what they mean when they say this and everything. So, I know that you do a lot of you know dive tipping into their cultural nuances to know how to relate. And remember, I’m a trainer and I’m a professor. So, I have to deal with so many people from different backgrounds. So that really helps me.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, thank you for sharing that story. Yeah, I appreciate that perspective. Hmm, erm let me ask one more question under this section. And that question is: are there specific community networks or organizations that have supported your integration. How well have these organizations supported your career advancement?

**Participant 29:** Hmm, to me ah (laughs) me, ‘am a one-man mopol’ oh so (A Nigerian expression meaning ‘a one-man army’ personality type that does everything by self) yeah, I didn’t join any organization. I didn’t do anything, no social cycles. I don’t know if I (inaudible). I didn’t even go to church. So, I go to church once in a while. So, (laughs) like I just focus on my skill, I focus on understanding the culture. And I focus on doing things American way. But for me to do things, America, we need to learn American ways of doing things. So, I do a lot of that. Then one additional thing I would say that I would do is that I learned a lot from their TV shows. So, that’s actually where I learned a lot about American culture, my God, doing things I learned from the TV shows. So that’s more like what I do. That talking to anybody, I didn’t join, you know they do, what’s it called? Toast…(Toastmasters) What is the name of that organization? You know what I’m talking about, ‘kinikan toast’ (meaning ‘something toast’

**Interviewer:** Erm, the public speaking, organization?

**Participant 29:** Yeah, I didn’t join any organization. Nothing. I don’t. Up till today.

**Interviewer:** That’s very interesting. Thank you for sharing that. Let’s go to the next section, section 5. Section 5 is about dual cultural and economic challenges. You may have answered this first question, under this section, but let me still put it to you in case you have something to add to it.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** And I don’t want to say I already know the answers. But let me just… (both laughing) Let me, let me put the question to you. Do you feel torn between the cultural expectations of Nigeria and the United States? How do you navigate this?

**Participant 29:** Hmm! I don’t think so, because again, my motivation and my, you know my motivation and my drives, they’re a little bit different. So, because of that, I guess what… let me answer it this way again, the overarching goal for me coming to the US was established even before I came to the United States. So, my overarching goal was to come and learn. So, because of that, I didn’t come here with entitlements that America needs to, you know, and is for me to learn. So, I’m learning about that. And because of that, I know when I’m learning is like, I mean, let’s say, I studied accounting, and I needed to learn Biology. It’s not going to kill my accounting skills, but it’s just going to give me another perspective about biology, the ecosystem, and the rest. Right? So, and I’m a scholar as in I have a quest for knowledge. So, it just gives me another interesting background. Do they come with challenges? Absolutely yes, because you have to do more. So, you know, you have to do more, work more and the rest and stuff like that, but it’s not really a big deal like we have to survive.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, thank you. One more question in this section, then we go to the last section

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** And that one question I want to ask is about economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members back in Nigeria. Have you faced any economic challenges related to remittances or supporting family members in Nigeria? How do you balance these dual responsibilities?

**Participant 29:** Well, it still depends on how we see them. If we see them as you know, there is a very thin line between burden and responsibility. And if I have to take care of my family right if I see it as well, this is my responsibility to do, I won’t see it as a challenge. I see it as a privilege that I’m able to do that right? if I see it as if it’s just like paying my bills here if I whatever I want to do to my parent. For example, since 2019 up till today, my parents have, everything that has to do with my parents, my both my parents are still alive, it’s 100% my, my whatever responsibility. So, it’s like adding them to my monthly bills that I have to pay here. It’s like that’s the mentality that I have. It’s just like paying my bills. So, if I don’t see paying electricity, seeing paying mortgage, seeing paying, car notes, insurance as burden. So, I see supporting family in Nigeria like my responsibility, so I don’t see it as a challenge, I see it as a privilege. But does that mean that I don’t feel it sometimes? But it’s just the way I feel that I have to pay my mortgage, I have to pay my rent, or the gas price just suddenly increases, and I have to take care of that. Yes, I still have that as a human being, but I see it as a responsibility, as a privilege that my $50 can make a difference in Nigeria.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Now, we are in the last section, section 6,

**Participant 29:** Yep.

**Interviewer:** We just want to talk about recommendations. I have 2 major questions here which I’m going to frame in a way that is going to give you the clarity of what I need to hear from you.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** First of all, talking about you as a person, you you’re someone who had a very unique experience. I think, among all the people I have talked to, you are the only person who never had a bachelor’s degree from Nigeria.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** You had a diploma in Nigeria. Then you came here, you had a bachelor’s degree, then you have a master’s degree, then you have a double PhD. Am I correct?

**Participant 29:** I have double bachelor’s, triple masters and double PhDs.

**Interviewer:** Oh, my apologies. I didn’t know about those (both laugh)I didn’t know about those I didn’t know there’s a count to those lesser degrees

**Participant 29:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Very, very interesting, very inspiring. But then you have seen it all, and you have also interacted with people. I believe you are exposed to immigrants from Nigeria, immigrants from other parts of the world. You have a kind of an understanding of what immigrants face when they come to a new country like this. You’ve seen people who are stuck in the job, you have seen people who are struggling to even get their feet in the door, and you’ve seen people who have done very, very, very well, too erm. So, the question I want to ask you is based on this experiences that you’ve accumulated over the years that you’ve lived in the US. And knowing that 2 people don’t experience these challenges the same way.

**Participant 29:** True.

**Interviewer:** The question I want to ask you is, do you think there are policies, there are programs or practices that are already in existence in the US and Maryland specifically that can help, that help highly educated African immigrants, Nigerian immigrants, to do well in their career when they come over. On the other hand, do you also think there are policies, practices, programs that are already in existence that also slow down African immigrants, highly educated ones to do well in their career transition when they come over to the US Maryland specifically?

**Participant 29:** Hmm, oh, okay, program systems, a network that is available. I’ll say there are organizations that actually a few that I’ve seen. I did not use them. Well, I got to know about them through a friend who also works in DC. She’ now also a professor in DC, American University in DC. So, she uses Toastmasters a lot. That's what I wanted to remember that time, she used Toastmasters a lot when she came in you know I would she, you know, graduate student teaching assistant blah blah. She used Toastmasters, she networked. She does all of those things. That has really contributed a lot to her growth as in, although it's in DC, not in Maryland, but DC and Maryland are kind of like, and there's toastmaster in Maryland in DC. So, they used to have their, interestingly, they used to have their Toastmasters meeting in the facility where I was working as a security guard, as an American Red Cross, Holland Lab, it’s in Rockville, Maryland. So, I was working there. So, they will come for their Toastmasters meeting, public speaking, and everything networking. I'll be the one to open the door of the place for them. I would do the badges for them to come in and then take that badge to come out so, and that's actually how I met the lady, and we became friends so, but that really helped. But I didn't join.

**Interviewer:** Hmm.

**Participant 29:** And I didn't join because I was still in school trying to survive, just trying to and she already had a master’s degree. I didn’t have my own bachelor's. So, I was just like, you know what? Let me focus on my bachelor's first. So, I think that's something. About that is one thing, but one thing I have been able to do, I'm not, It's not a formal program is to have a mentoring program for people. So, like the mentoring program I have is informal. It's not like a formal something, but it's an informal mentoring program that I had developed what they call a skills assessment matrix that you will assess your skill sets that you are bringing from your host country is just for anybody from West Africa. Anyway, skill sets that you're bringing from your country, and by skill sets I mean the skill, the relevant skill, the hard skill, then the educational background. So, we marry the two together, and then we now look at different institutions, organizations, or professions and careers where your skill sets will be the most useful or appreciated. Then you can now see the certifications and career paths trajectory you can build along that thing that way. It is easier for you to leverage on what you have in Nigeria, because that is what I did that works for me, and that's what my friend that I will introduce you to if you’ll still need participants. That's what he did, and that's exact, and I experimented with my wife when she came here in 2018. So, I experimented with the same approach like skill, and then I because by that time I was already I've completed erm I think I've completed, yeah, I've completed all my master's degrees. I started my PhD then. So, I've had access to advanced training in human capital development. I have my first PhD in human capital development. So, I have advanced training in human capital development in how to help people navigate skill deficiency. So, because of that, so, I experimented with my wife to harness her, and today she didn't have to go through the hustles that we went through. Of course, she still worked corrections job, for I'm sorry security Job, for I think, little lower than 2 years, but since then she has transitioned into a professional career since 2020. So that's something that I think that I know. But any structured program that I've been there. I don't think so. They are there anyone that are slowing people down? That's. I think, it’s a two-edged sword, the way the country is set up, especially in Maryland, Maryland is set up. I'll use this example. It's harder to get a driver license in Maryland. Why? Because Maryland is an immigration state, especially the Prince Georges County and the Baltimore County, Prince Georges County, the Howard and Anne Arundel so, and other parts of them. So, it's highly immigration driven community and people are coming from diverse ways, diverse knowledge. So, they're a little bit strict when it comes to their to obtaining driver license stricter than other States. So, I got to know that because my wife…I told you that I've only I've spent 10 years of my life of my American life in the Maryland, the 2 years plus in other States, Missouri, specifically so. I was working with a company in Missouri, Edward Jones. That's when my wife joined. It's also way easier for my wife to get a driver license in Missouri. Because it's not an immigration state. So, they have a rating point. Once you have a 75% or 80%, they'll give you the license. Even if you’re not perfect. It will be easy to understand that you'll be learning along the way, but Maryland, because when she was given the license, I just like, thank your star that you came to Missouri. If it were to be Maryland, I don't think you will get a driver license in 2 years. So, but it is not that it's designed to slow people down. Rather this philosophy, principles, and policies are designed to bring people up to the level of what Maryland expect, and sometimes that can slow a lot of people down. I hope I answered the question.

**Interviewer:** Hmm... Very interesting perspective. Thank you. I have 2 more questions now.

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Let me go to the next one really quick. You have talked about the blueprint that works for you. That blueprint you transitioned into, mentoring people so that they can go through that blueprint and just get the same outcome that you got. Apart from that, do you think there are changes or support systems that can be put in place to help highly educated Nigerian and African immigrants to succeed in their careers in the US. It could be from government, it could be from even the immigrants themselves. Do you have any other ideas? What kind of changes or support systems that if they are put in place, it can help them better to succeed in their career when they come over to the US and to live in Maryland, particularly?

**Participant 29:** I think the answer is yes, because there are always rooms for improvement. There's a room for improvement. So, I think there could be social communities they can join, networks they can join especially the network of highly, achieved individuals that they have done it before. But the problem with Africans generally is that people don't really want to show you the way I'm trying. I'm not trying to be very negative, but everybody just tried to find a way. For example, I've trained a lot of people in IT or not necessarily training them per se or training. Of course, I've trained a lot of people to help them navigate 100% free without taking any money. And the same IT skills, some people will say they want to charge $7,000. I'm like, okay. Why? So, even like that, everybody wants to make money from everybody. Right? Imagine somebody who newly, for example, when my wife came, a friend introduced her to somebody that wanted to teach at EPIC. That was when epic health care software was raining. And the guy collected money. And they say, okay, do it. When they were gonna teach, they said, okay, they will help you do the resume help you apply for jobs until after the training. That was just the end of it. So now I think my recommendation, my as in this thing is everybody should actually look this elsewhere when they are looking for help. What do I mean by look elsewhere? It's because, everybody around you, they are also struggling. They are also finding a way to go on. Can I re-answer one question, or introduce something to answer this question?

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes, absolutely.

**Participant 29:** You know, I told you that I came from Nigeria, I was into media film making and everything. I wanted to go through that direction initially. So, I joined an organization in Arlington. They are into film making and everything, and I was working as a security guard, but I already took car notes. I had my car. So, then I joined the organization, they are into film production. I said okay maybe I'll join them. We had a meeting in Arlington, and on 2 different occasions, there's are these gentlemen, white guys that they would ask me to give them a ride after they finished. That was an occasion that's one of them said, do I have anything? I gave the guy $50 or something like that. So, I now looked at them like, okay, if these people who were born here, though they are white, and the career I want to go to in Maryland, this is what they are doing with it. This is how their life is. I don't need any prophet to tell me that is how my future is going to look like. Right? So, the next time we had a meeting, I now talked to one of them like Frank, Can I ask a question? He said yes, yes. What do you want? I said here's the thing how come you guys have not made money and everything? He said, no, it's hard to make anything film production whatever in Maryland. Nobody is shooting movie, nobody's doing anything. So, they're just doing it as a hobby. That is hard. And all the radio stations, the TV stations, they have their own staff, their own crew that they hardly leave. So, where am I going to get job? That if I'm not doing it as hobby, I should not waste my time. So that's what made me close that chapter, except I wanted to move to California which I was not interested in. So now, that’s what I mean by looking outside. I joined those organizations, but they are not from the people I know people who are, as in, you know, because the way those guys were sincere with me, if it were to be my African people, they will tell me, don't worry. They won't be sincere with me that way. They'll tell me. Bring money for me to train you to join this program, which they also are not making money. They're just getting money from training people and that's actually where they're making their money from. But they won't tell you, because you know, that's what they do. So that's why I believe that it's better to look elsewhere. What do I look elsewhere? Look at professional association elsewhere? That's not how the people of your country you will learn more from. I learn more from outside than from my people. That's why I don't. I don't join anybody. I don't know any Africans and anything. I don't. I hope that is settled.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you very much for sharing that experience, and that story in particular, It kind of let me think about so many things I've heard from people. Thank you. I appreciate your perspective.

**Participant 29:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** I usually ask people as a closing question. Do you have any additional comment on insight you would like to share?

**Participant 29:** Well, oh, do I?

**Interviewer:** You don't have to, but if you have, please share it.

**Participant 29:** Yeah, I think people's story and journey would not be the same. So, and regardless, whatever our stories look like is a combination of the first person we meet whenever we go to the US, or the first association will keep, or the first home will live in, will determine a lot. So, it's gonna determine a lot. But it doesn't determine the outcome. We can get out of the place. The reason why I say that is because, everybody that I met , everybody that I stayed with when I first got here. They already have the same thing, what they were doing. And that is the direction that everybody around that environment ecosystem, the same direction they will follow. And that influences a lot, determines a lot. What happens to a lot of people. And the reason why I said that is because what makes my wife's journey different is because I'm here because of the direction I tell her to go. If I happen to be doing something that's when she came from, she also be. Basically, she will still be a security guard by now. So, people's story journey will be different. However, it's going to be largely influenced with the first person they meet here, the first home they stay and the first people, the set of people the first interacted with were influenced, however looking elsewhere will always make a difference.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for your time for the very interesting and inspiring story you shared with me today in the course of this interview. I really appreciate your time, your perspective, your insight, and your contribution to this research. I'm very, very grateful, and thank you for your time.

**Participant 29:** Thank you. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I’m going to stop recording, now

**Participant 29:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much.