

Transcript for Oral History Interview
Conducted for University of Maryland Course HIST 428M – Spring 2015
Instructor: Dr. Anne S. Rush

Interviewer's (Student's) name: Ganiyat K. Ayodeji

Interviewee's name: Omowumi L. Akinwale

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Nigeria

Interviewee's Current Residence: Glenn Dale, Prince George's County, Maryland, U.S.A

Date of Interview: March 22, 2015

Place of Interview: Lanham, Prince George's County, Maryland, U.S.A.

Disclaimer: Please be advised that the Standard English grammar is not common all over the world, in this specific case, Nigeria. There are plenty times throughout the interview where the interviewee is not speaking in Standard English grammar.
Thank You.

Kike Ayodeji: Hi I'm Kike Ayodeji and I'm interviewing, Omowumi Akinwale. Today is March 22nd, 2015 and we are right now in Lanham. Um ... Yes, ok... So I know I introduced you already, mom, but would you like to introduce yourself to the audience?

Omowumi Akinwale: Yes, good evening! My name is Omowumi Lolade Akinwale.

Kike Ayodeji: Okay and the first question we're going to ask you is: Why did you come to America?

O.A.: I came to America to meet my fiancé.

K.A.: Okay and would you...do you mind uhmmm introducing your fiancé...or?

O.A. Uhhhhm then uhhhhm then my fiancé's name is Abimbolu Akerele.

K.A.: Okay. And you said then, so has-did his name change?

O.A.: His name did not change but because we are not together and we never get married. That's why I said "then", he used to be my fiancé.

K.A.: Ohhhh ok ... so um, you said you guys didn't get married. How come you guys didn't get married?

O.A.: Uhh When I came to U.S. to meet him I don't have paper and he doesn't have a paper. So some of his friends told him it's better for him to go marry an American, so he can have a paper. So he decided to leave, he left.

K.A.: Ok, so whe ... so when you came here you actually met him...like you guys were actually like together?

O.A.: We were dating in Nigeria, we were dating for like 10-15 years. So he came here a year before me. So I decide to come to America to join ... him. So we can be ... get married and started our life.

K.A.: Ok, so did you act ... like ... when you came to America did ... was he ... did you actually meet him in person here?

O.A.: Yes, when I came to America, I went to meet him, he live in Ohio ... in Cincinnati. Then I came to Maryland, then he moved to Maryland. Then we rent an apartment, we lived together (K.A: background adlib: "oh") in one bedroom apartment on 14th street, Northwest Washington D.C.

K.A.: Wow, so when his friends decided, um, to encourage him to leave, how did you feel?

O.A.: Well um, what it is initially, when they are talking on the phone I picked up the extension I heard about all the story they are saying (K.A.: background: wow) and one of his cousins. Then he went to meet some of my family, to ask if that advice was ok. So he was talking to Dipo Aishida, talking to Ojo Akinwale, my brother. So they all told him, "Yea, go ahead and get your paper, leave." So he decided to leave, I was sad but I have to move on with my life. To summon courage, I keep on getting to do my job. Get another job, move on with my life, praying to God to show me the direction.

K.A.: Oh ok, and you said um, you...he spoke to your brother um, Ojo Akinwale, and you mentioned Dipo, who's that?

O.A.: Dipo Aishida, he's my cousin

K.A.: Ok

O.A.: That's ehh Janet's husband. Abee's friend, William's mom, William's father.

K.A.: Oh

O.A.: We used to live together, then he lived with Ojo then. Dipo Aishida.

K.A.: Ok, so for, so for the audience to know that um that's just ... that was your cousin. Dipo's your cousin. Ok and um he, your fiancé at the time spoke to them and asked them for advice like um "should I go ahead and get my papers and leave". And your family members told him to go ahead.

O.A.: Yea to go, I mean. So but I encouraged him not to go because amnesty is coming up shortly, but he doesn't believe in that. So he left then he keep on coming back

every month. So it get to a certain time the American wife say "you cannot be leaving, where do you normally go to?" "It's either you stay or you leave." So he decided to stay back and I decided to move on with my life and started doing all my job. Trying to get myself together to get my own papers and all those stuff. So I met, along the line ... I met Hakeem Ayodeji.

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: We started talking but I still told him that I have somebody in my life. That I came to America because of him that he have to hold on, we can be friend. So we're talking, we're friends for like three years before I decided that okay, I'm not going to be waiting for this guy forever. Let me move on with my life. After three years I decided to start going out with Hakeem.

K.A.: Okay, so um, you said Hakeem Ayodeji, he's the man you started dating after Bolu?

O.A.: Yes,

K.A.: Correct?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: Okay and um, so what happened with that relationship?

O.A.: Uhh, that relationship, eh I end up moving in with him. (K.A.: Background: ok) I never planned to do that but, my brother wife cause a trouble where I'm living. Where they locked my stuff in, that he's the one who picked me up from job to drop me off at home that day. So I end up going back with him, because there's no way I can get to the house, and I went to buy some clothes, so that's how I started living with him. Before I get my own place, then he decided to tell me to stay with him. And then, Bolu started calling back, "please move out from Hakeem's place, I'm ready for you" but I told him it's too late so I decided to leave...I stayed with Hakeem.

K.A.: Okay, and you stayed with Hakeem, so did you guys um get married, did you guys have children?

O.A.: Yes, uh, when I started living with him, initially, I told him I want to wait and all those stuff, then he's in school, I'm working, supporting him so we actually have, Kike Ayodeji as a first child. Ahmed Ayodeji, as a second child then I told him it's about the time we have to get married. So I will know that I am legally married to him, so we went to a registry, we did a church ... I mean we did a registry marriage and we did a church wedding, and we did a party. So that's after then I have Abee Ayodeji then I have Shaki Ayodeji.

K.A.: Okay so, from what I'm understanding, um, you guys got married after your first two children -

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: - With him?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: Okay, I'm gonna, move on. So I understand that Bolu was in this area when you came to come meet him. Correct?

O.A.: He was in Ohio

K.A.: He was in Ohio

O.A.: He moved to Maryland because of me

K.A.: Oookay

O.A.: Because when I came, he came to live with his own brother, in Ohio. So when I was coming I told them I want to come to my own family, because my brother Ojo live in D.C. That's why I came to D.C.

K.A.: Okay so, that was your reasoning for settling in the D.C. area because your family was here.

O.A.: Yea, yes

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: So I don't want to go to where his own family is, then he move from there to join me in D.C.

K.A.: Oh, okay

O.A.: That's how we lived together in Washington D.C., Northwest.

K.A.: Interesting. Uhm okay so before you came to America, what was your perception of America?

O.A.: I don't even know anything, about America, at all. I have not hear that "oh I want to go to America to do this or that" but I'm just thinking my fiancé went to America, because he want to come here. Because I have my own business that I'm doing back in Nigeria, so I'm not really worried to, maybe like "oh I have to go to America" it's not so pressing, but because I'm thinking

“okay, I want to get married, I want to settled down, the time is going,” that’s why I came to meet him, so when I came here, I have to just start planning my life, how to do everything. I’m not really eager to say, “okay I have to come to America to make it or to do anything” because I’m comfortable in Nigeria. But I came because of my fiancé, so that’s why I came to America, so when I came here, I want to start my business because in Nigeria, I did hotel and catering management. That’s what I get my diploma in. But when I came here I met certain of people... so I was telling them that I want to open my restaurant, and I want to go to P.G.¹ to get a clue to start doing my meat pie, fish roll and everything. Oh they told me “oh if you do that, if people die they’re going to sue you. If somebody have a stomachache,” so they discouraged me they said “oh, its jail time.” I never knew it simple as just get your insurance, open your place, and if anything happen, your insurance will settle. So that’s how my mind was changed.

K.A.: Hmm

O.A.: So I decided to go to school, I started going to school for nursing assistant. That time is not like now, if you want to become nursing assistant you have to go to school for three months. They gonna train you at the nursing home three months, then you’re gonna be on the floor, after you finish you take your board, then I start working as a nurse. So I worked for years, I did private duty. Worked with different agencies, then later I went to PG to start my nursing program. But when I get pregnant with Abeebe I drop out, then later on I went to University of District of Columbia to do my licensed practical nurse. Then from there I started working, so in between I did so many businesses, different various of business. Tele-communication business, mortgage, nursing agency, I run so many businesses, so I’m still doing business as of today. So... after I have all my children so...my mind changed that I have to sit down and raise my children...because wherever I cannot get to I want my children to get there. So I don’t want to bother again, I could have gone back to school, I said no. Because I have to like, when I get separated with Hakeem, I have to make a... make a way to get a way we’re gonna be living. So I decided to be working hard to raise my children and when they all grow up, if I want to go back to school, I can do that. If not then I can sit down and enjoy my life. So I have been working so hard, since that time.

K.A.: So, you actually separated from Hakeem?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: And um, around what year was that?

¹ Please see P.G. explanation on Keywords and Phrases page.

(Pause)

O.A.: I want to really remember...1998.

K.A.: 1998? And so you mentioned in um the beginning that you had four children. So when you guys separated, what happened with the children?

O.A.: The children are all living with me.

K.A.: Wow...okay. SO the children are all living with you. How was that, raising four children by yourself in America?

O.A.: Is...is...a lot...it took a lot of hard working, it's not easy. I can nev...but we thank... I thank God for journey mercies. Because if not because of God, there is nothing I can do by myself. But with God everything is possible. So I lay my... my faiths in God's hand to keep me going. So and I'm always happy.

K.A.: And you're happy?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: What makes you happy?

O.A.: God, because I have God. God is everything. Because whenever I look back, whenever I think I will say God, I thank You. Because some people they don't even - they have all the money they are in the hospital, some people they have everything they want, they can't even get up, but I thank God that we are all living, we're not in the hospital. We can get up, God is providing, how I pay my bill, how we all eat, so the rest I left it to God. God will take control... so I'm always happy.

K.A.: So um, I'm interested in knowing, what um, made you want to stay in America after Bolu went to marry someone else?

O.A.: Yes uhm, I decided to stay because uh, I'm already here, so I already left Nigeria pack up the business I have, so I'm not just going to go back just like that. So I decided to be strong that I said I will really make it before I go back home. So that's why I keep myself, I'm positive that I have to be become a ... become a good person in life. I don't just want to turn back and leave. That I will stay here and make sure that God do well for me.

K.A.: Okay and can you um tell the audience a little about your business in Nigeria? Was it successful? (O.A.: Yes) Was it just getting started? How was it?

O.A.: Yeah my business was successful. Even though when I started my business immediately it started getting booming, everything is selling. Uh I was running a restaurant doing like meat pie, fish roll, food, because that's my profession. So when I open up, I have some people that work for me. So everything was going on smoothly.

K.A.: So, can you describe to the audience what meat pie and fish roll is?

O.A.: Fish roll is a mixture of when you mix your flour together to make the pastry, it's a pastry. So when you put fish and roll, roll it around and egg wash and bake. That was a fish roll. The meat pie is when you, when you, mix your flour with butter and you mix potatoes with uh beef, grounded beef and some vegetables and boil it together and put it inside the pastry and bake the meat pie.

K.A.: Oh okay, and so you like to cook?

O.A.: I love, love to cook. All the time.

K.A.: What are your favorite foods to cook?

O.A.: I can cook everything.

K.A.: So you don't, you don't have a like, specific favorite food to cook?

O.A.: It depend on what people like.

K.A.: Okay, so it depends on what someone likes to eat?

O.A.: Umh

K.A.: Um do you like American food? Like when you came here, did you adapt to the American foods that were here?

O.A.: Yeah, when I came here, yea I was adapted to American food but I eat everything because we still cook Nigerian food.

K.A.: Mmhm

O.A.: Where I was and I can buy it, and cook, then, and I still try all American food. I ate pizza, burger, everything they sell.

K.A.: Did you like the burgers and the pizza...did, did you like the American food when you first came?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Okay, you did?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Okay. So what are some traditions you brought with you here, when you came?

(PAUSE)

O.A.: In Nigeria, from Nigeria?

K.A.: Mhmm, from Nigeria.

O.A.: You mean dressing...?

K.A.: Anything... dressing...

O.A.: Yes, I brought a lot of dress.

K.A.: You brought a lot of dresses with you?

O.A.: Yes, traditional wear and all those stuff

K.A.: Were you comfortable wearing those dresses here?

O.A.: Yes! Of course.

K.A.: Uh...and what made you comfortable? (lower voice: Do you know?)

O.A.: Because that's what I'm used to!

K.A.: Mhmm

O.A.: So, if I wear it anywhere, I'm comfortable, so it doesn't bother me

K.A.: It doesn't bother you?

O.A.: No

K.A.: What was some other traditions you brought here...like um...cooking?

O.A.: Yes like cooking African food

K.A.: Mhmm

O.A.: Yes, cooking African food, the way we eat.

K.A.: Okay. So, has any of your traditions changed since arriving in America?

K.A.: Anything?

O.A.: So many things as it's been a long time (chuckles while saying this).
Mhmm.

K.A.: Can you uhh give me an example of one thing?

O.A.: I don't eat everything we eat there anymore.

K.A.: Mhmm

O.A.: I can still make few of it, I mean, there's so many things that we eat that we don't get it here. So I have to change and adapt to the system and I have to change the clothes I wear wintertime, summer time, so many things...yes.

K.A.: Okay. So, you said wintertime. How, like, do you – can you remember your first year here? How was the winter for you?

O.A.: Hmmm. The first year...(pause). The first year was, when I saw it snow and it was so cold. It was terrible. Because when I moved out of my brother's house, when Bolu left from the one bedroom we are living in, then I have to get a roommate in Beltsville. So the Giants store is far to the apartment, so whenever I go buy stuff I have to carry it in my hand. Before I get to my apartment all my hand would be frozen. I have to go under the hot water and be running tap because there is no way, there is no cab that you're gonna call. So there's no cab, nothing, so no help than me for me to carry my food and walk all the way to where I live.

K.A.: So you um walked there?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: And you walked back?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: And how did you have money to buy um these foods? Where did you work?

O.A.: I'm working

K.A.: Where ... do you remember... like?

O.A.: Well, when I first started working, my first job was at a Standard Drug store. Is no more now, they changed them. Then it used to be Standard Drug Store, and um ... CVS. (falls asleep and I quietly tap her) (* Please also be advised that the interviewee does not get enough rest thus she sleeps everywhere, even during this interview) Standard Drug Store and CVS.

K.A.: Okay and how was it working there? Did you like it?

O.A.: Yes, I was a cashier, ringing up the stuff. They trained me, I was cashier, I left ... after that place I was working at Posin bakery on Georgia Avenue, [falls asleep and I quietly tap her] but yeah Posin Bakery on Georgia Avenue.

K.A.: Okay, so when you started working here, um, how was the experience compared to having your own business in Nigeria?

O.A.: It's totally different because uh they pay per hour and you have to do all the job they ask you to do. So, you I mean you have to clock in, clock out, you have to attend to the customer, you have to pick everything and organize it. In Nigeria, I have to sit down and command like people like four people that work "go and do this, go and do that". I don't have to do anything myself, but this place is totally diff ehh different.

K.A.: Okay, and do you think that is why you still um, cause earlier in the interview, you said that your still...you still consider yourself to be a businesswoman, correct?

O.A.: You said I said what?

K.A.: You still consider yourself to be a businesswoman?

O.A.: Yeah because, I'm always a businesswoman. Even though when I'm in high school, in Nigeria, I started doing business going around buying stuff, to sell, go to Lagos, bring it to Ondo State. So I'm still a, uh, uh – all the time I want to be a businesswoman. I don't like to work for somebody because that's me.

K.A.: Okay, alright! So, what is your current business right now?

O.A.: Right now I'm doing a car dealership. And I have a little restaurant I'm running on the side, by the car dealership.

K.A.: So you're doing both at the same time? (O.A.: Yes!) Is that hard?

O.A.: The food aspect is hard because I have to do all the cooking by myself. I'm still looking about thinking, later on if God make a way, I'll hire some

people. We started doing, I'll look for a restaurant but right now I'm doing everything by myself.

K.A.: Okay so um, you, so you're hoping that you get to hire people to help you run this.

O.A.: On the food aspect, yeah.

K.A. Okay, and what kind of foods do you cook in this certain business?

O.A.: I do pepper soup.

K.A.: Okay,

O.A.: And I do Isiewu Orieran, like goat head. I do stew, I do mixed vegetables. I do fried rice, jollof rice. I do various dishes. Pounded yam, amala, eba, everything.

K.A.: Can you describe what um...can you describe what one of the things you mentioned are... like what is um jollof rice?

O.A.: Is a rice that when you, when you grind your pepper, and onions and tomato, fresh tomato, you put it in a pot, you put a little bit butter or oil, then you put tomato paste and if you want it to be spicy you put a little bit pepper you put your rice in when it boils. When it's ready we call it jollof rice. (nodded off, so I quietly tapped her) Yeah we call it jollof rice.

K.A.: Okay so, before you came to America what did you know about it?

O.A. The jollof rice?

K.A.: No! Just....well the jollof rice...

O.A.: Oh! What did I know about America?!

K.A.: Mhm

O.A. Oh my god, I don't even know anything about it. I only know my brother is here and my fiancé went to America. To know everything what is going on here, what it's all about, I never even knew.

K.A.: So you just came.

O.A.: I just came.

K.A.: Cause your fiancé.

O.A.: Yes, yes. I did not even know anything about America.

K.A.: Did you see anything on the TV, anything?

O.A.: No

K.A.: No?

O.A.: No. Back then we don't have access to TV like that. Is only our mom that can watch T.V.

K.A.: Mhm

O.A.: And the light always go off most of the time. So I didn't even know anything, I didn't read about America, I didn't know anything about America. Not at all.

K.A.: So, people around you and your community they didn't ... there was no one saying, "oh America is this and that" like "we want to go to America"?

O.A.: No, no, no. Because, gone are the days when-people come from Nigeria to study here, immediately they finish, they come back home because there's a good job. Everything is good back home. Even though America beg them "come we'll hire you, we'll give you green card". They always say they don't want it. Many people that were here long time ago, it's their children that start filing green card for them now. Because they wanna go back home and it's a dollar to dollar, the changing rate, but now everything is messed up. So I never get eager to come here for any reason. No, I didn't know anything about America, because I'm okay in Nigeria, I'm not thinking "so let me go to America". Even though London, before we don't need visa, we just go there you tender your passport, you just go in.² So I don't even plan to go there either. So people go and come.

K.A.: Okay, so what were the economic conditions of Nigeria when you were growing up?

O.A.: We are okay.

K.A.: Mhm okay, and what do you mean by okay?

O.A.: We are all doing well. You do your business, they make money, so we don't need to run anywhere to look for money. Oh, we are very comfortable. It's only the presidents of that country that are not running it well.

² Please see explanation of reference to London on Keywords and Phrases page.

K.A.: What do you mean by not running it well?

O.A.: Because it's like we believe they always embezzle all the money and take it to another country. Because if they spend the money they make, that Nigerian government make – we can establish more factories, more businesses, so everybody would be comfortable at home.

K.A.: And so do you think that um that that is why a lot of Nigerians still come to America because –

O.A.: Yea because everything is getting frustrated there, so everybody wanna run away.

K.A.: So do you believe if the government gets better and like you know someone comes that's more honest do you think –

O.A.: Everybody will, most of the people will like to go back home.

K.A.: Would you go back?

O.A.: I have to – I will go back one day, I'm just here because of my children. (K.A.: okay) because back home I'm a businessperson. If you do business there, you make money, I don't need to be stressed out. I stress here. But I just want to wait for my children to all grow up, get married, get a good job, then I'll be going and come.

K.A.: Going and coming?

O.A.: Going in and coming in.

K.A.: So you wouldn't wanna just stay there?

O.A.: No.

K.A.: You wanna come back.

O.A.: Because my children are here, I wanna see my children. I wanna see my grandchildren, I wanna see everybody. I'll just go, maybe spend three months come here spend six months. Just –

K.A.: What if, what if all your children wanted to move to Nigeria? Would you be happy with that?

O.A.: Then I'll move with them. I don't really care for them to move back there. They're not used to Nigeria. They didn't grow up there. So they can visit and come back, but if they choose to live there, why not?

K.A.: When you were having children, uhmm, when you had your first child, did you ... like did something in you say oh maybe I should go back to Nigeria because there's more of a community there or –

O.A.: No, I never think about that.

K.A.: You never thought about it

O.A.: No I'm thinking about raising my child here, she was born here so I wanna raise her here.

K.A.: Why did you wanna raise her here? Like what are some things that make you wanna raise her here?

O.A.: Many aspects about Nigeria, if you don't really have money, their hospitals, it's the rich people that goes to better hospitals. All the other hospitals, most of the time there is no light.³ So you don't want to risk your life.

K.A.: Okay, so you... so you knew America was the better place to raise your children.

O.A.: To raise children yes.

K.A.: Okay. So, before you left, like right before you left Nigeria, what... cause I know you said that the economic conditions were okay. How about before ... right before you left?

O.A.: Right – yeah- everything is fine.

K.A.: Its still, it was still fine?

O.A.: Mhm

K.A.: Okay. So, what is your perception of America right now? Um after you know, living here for, a long time, since, you been here since the 80's, correct?

O.A.: Yeah, I'll say America is a good place to live, it's a good country, God bless America. Because America help people, they help people a lot. If you don't have a job, they help you, with your bills a little bit, they can do, they

³ Please see explanation to “no light” on Keywords and Phrases page.

give you your insurance... they help you about your hospital bill. They pay all the tuition for children that was born here, if you can at least there's a Pell grant and all those stuffs. There's not that kind of opportunity in Nigeria. So I'll say God bless America.

K.A.: God bless America.

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: Okay, so, um some people, like, my age, they believe that America isn't a good place to be because it's so stressful and –

O.A.: Yeah the only thing is the stress, because of the monthly payment. Back in Nigeria it's easy for them. If you build your house, it's your house. Then people that are renting too, you only pay once in a year. When you pay your rent, you don't have to pay until another year. So you don't need to get stressed month to month about bill. So based on that it's easier over there than here. And if you have your small business, it'd be okay to keep your daily living. America is so stressful because before you know it thirty days is here to pay the bill. And you have to work hard and if they pay you hourly, if you don't work, you don't get paid. Back home when they hired them they paid them monthly. Sometimes if they don't go to work, they still get paid at the end of the month.

K.A.: Mmm

O.A.: But here if you don't work, you don't punch in, you're not getting paid. So back there it's easy. Life is more easy, it's only that if the government makes it more comfortable if there's light, if there's water permanently. People there they are handy. They do everything by themselves.

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: And if you are back home, you eat all the fresh food. You don't need to buy all can or anything processed. Directly from the farm. Your pepper, your vegetables, your anything.

K.A.: Okay so, you seem to like fresh food, um so what do you think about the food here in America?

O.A.: They're introducing organic foods nowadays, but I still hear that people are saying, there's a guy that's works in the farm that says it's not pure pure organic. That they always inject a little bit when it starts growing then they will leave it. It's still organic but it's not really 100% organic. But back home, everything every morning, you see people that come from farm, (?) your tomato, your pepper, your vegetables, everything is fresh. Your fruit is right

directly from the farm. You wanna eat banana, apple, pears, anything, your stew, your stuff that you used to put to your cooked stew.

K.A.: So everything, was right there from the farm?

O.A.: Yea...umhmm.

K.A.: Okay, so you said, what is, you said some things in Nigeria, um, you can eat them here. Can you give me an example? Like what is something you used to enjoy in your life in Nigeria that you can't have here?

O.A.: You don't have it here, like Agbalumo. It's kind of a fruit... (K.A.: mhmmm) it's not here.

O.A.: Oriri, so many fruits, raw fruits that is not here.

K.A.: So a lot of fruits.

O.A.: A lot of fruits that are in Nigeria is not here. The common one is like orange is here, mango is here, those ones are the common ones.

K.A.: Can you describe um-

O.A.: Or banana

K.A.: Umm what you just said. Agmbalamo?

O.A.: Agbalamo is like a...small fruit that have like a seed. Like four seeds inside. Orriri is like blueberry, but it's bigger than blueberry. We have different, a lot of fruits.

K.A.: And you miss those, because they're not here?

O.A.: Yeah. Yeah, we get it there every day fresh. Even though when we wanna eat mango, we just go there and pluck it. It's all the way? The trees is all over, every area. We don't need to buy.

K.A.: Mmmkay. So if there was one thing you can change -

O.A.: There's always a pear. All these avacodo pears, we eat it we have a lot in our backyard, people plant it. We just go there and pull... pull it.

K.A.: And just pull it. And if there is one thing you can change about being here, besides the food aspect what would that be? Cause you seem to really enjoy like the, like being able to just go outside and pick out your fruit, like that was enjoyable.

O.A.: Yes, so many thing is there that.... [pause] The only – (I tapped her) I'm not sleeping. The only opportunity here is that, like, if you're getting sick, they will take good care of you. Over there if you don't have money, nobody will take care of you. They will say money first. Some people are dying because they don't have money. The hospital will just lay them on the floor where they are sitting or on the table to die. They don't want to take care of them, if their family can't donate money and bring it, so health wise, it's better here.

K.A.: So that's something you would change in America um sorry Nigeria –

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: If you had a chance to.

O.A.: Yes If I have opportunity I want to tell them there “take care of life, life is very important.” There's no second life. Many people want to have children. They don't have money, they labor, they die on the seat. So I want to change it, I want to... I want to tell them my word, I'm still planning one day, I want to see who's going to be the next president. If they all travel abroad they see the way they live. People are dying every day!, even though if they can do like, health, free health, that would help. London they have free health, America they are helping, they are giving Medicaid or whatever. But Nigeria they have to change that. If they can make electric stable and water stable, it's fine to live back home than here. America is stressful.

K.A.: Okay, so is that one thing you would change about living here... the stressful environment?

O.A.: Here is about bills, bills, bills before you know it 30 days, 30 days. Over there we don't run 30 days, even though you don't build a house you rent, you pay two years in advance you don't have another two years to pay. So every day you go, you do your business and come home and relax. You don't need to says “hey Pepco, hey water, hey this no”.

K.A.: Okay so, um how was it growing up for you in Nigeria, like what was some interesting things you did?

O.A.: Growing up is fun! You do so many things, you go to school, went to elementary school, middle uh high school. I... I trade when I was young ... I do so many things, sell oranges, sell this, sell that, then we go out, you know like Easter time, I'm in choir in my church, most of the time. We go... we go around and sing around. When Jesus died, we have to line up and do it early in the morning when they wake up, we gonna be running around beating the drum that Jesus already arose, “everybody wake up!” We do so many fun

things. And during December to New Years, every morning, early morning, me and my mom we have to go to church, they have service in this church. Today maybe Baptist church, next day it's Methodist church, so we go around we do so many things that we don't do here.

K.A.: So do you think um your children ... say if they were raised in Nigeria, they would have more fun there then they had in America?

O.A.: You know America we always keep you all inside, in Nigeria you just go around. You can walk around from one street to other; you can play around and come back home. Here we are scared for people that are abducted kids and steal kids. Nigeria you can play outside you can go around.

K.A.: So, over here, you um, feel as though, parents keep their children inside, because, one of the main things is cause of safety. And what do you think about that, like what do you think about the crime in America vs. Nigeria?

O.A.: Uhhh ... Nigeria ... is ... people that know people, maybe you borrowed them your money, they don't wanna pay, they can come and kill people. They don't just start shooting or start drive by shooting or no ... it's only like when people send people to people, that one is it. But it's not gonna be our portion, it never on my chi- or family's portion. It will never be our portion in Jesus name.

K.A.: Amen. So um you seem to have a lot of faith in God and in Jesus um when did this start?

O.A.: Like almost three years ago.

K.A.: Three years ago?

K.A.: Um so, you, so, I'm guessing you were not that serious with umm you know your faith in Nigeria?

O.A.: In Nigeria? When I was in Nigeria, I'm not born again because born again is not common then. (K.A.: Okay). I go to White Garment Church or go to Methodist Church, my mother's church. So you know we don't do all this, we don't – the way everything changed now – gospel changed lives. Before I used to go White Garment we just danced, you know they, they see visions for you, do this do that, we go home. They don't preach faith. So, Methodist church, you know they just do a normal sermon, everybody go home. When I came here, I started with Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial, but when I start going to Grace of God too, there's nothing big serious serious serious

preaching.⁴ When I get to pastor Mike Olawale church he keep on preaching faith. So when you go everyday he tells you not to be scared of anything because there is God, if there is God nothing can happen to you. He still preaches it today, so I have faith. I'm not scared of, about anything anymore. I always pray. If I see something bad I say "God I cancel it".

K.A.: Okay so, you said you mentioned that when you were in Nigeria, you went to a White Garment Church. Can you explain to the audience what that is?

O.A.: White Garment Church can be Celestial Church of Christ or Cherubim and Seraphim where you make a garment white, you have a hat white and go to church. They used a... they use candles and they used a turari.

K.A.: Turari?

O.A.: Yeah

K.A.: What is that?

O.A.: um Incense, what do they call it?

K.A.: Oh like an incense?

O.A.: Ehn hnn incense

K.A.:Okay

O.A.: So they pray with it, they use so many things. It's a White Garment Church. So they are believing is different from gospel.⁵

K.A.: And why do you think they um, what they believe in is different from gospel?

O.A.: [Looks me straight in the eyes] Their doctrine is totally different. The preaching ... what they do ... they use candles, they use different things, they use incense, they used different materials of stuff to pray to God. And gospel you just use olive oil, anointing oil (K.A.: umhm) and water.

K.A.: Okay. And, can you, in your description like what would you define Gospel church as?

⁴ Please see Keywords and Phrases page for explanation on Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial and Grace of God.

⁵ "gospel" is a different type of church, also explained on the Keywords and Phrases page.

O.A.: mmmm Gospel church are preaching the Word of God.

K.A.: Okay. So, like what is the word of God to you?

O.A.: Word of God is for us to have a faith that Jesus died for us. So He already went to the Cross with all of our sins. So we should not be, we should not be scared of anybody, in life. And if anybody wanna do us, if we pray, everything is going to go back to the person.

K.A.: Okay. So, do you believe that in life we have like a lot of forces, or –

O.A.: There's really a lot of forces because where I came from, in Nigeria there is. You can see them with your eyes, you can see many things happening. But if you have God, they can't touch you. There's a lot of bad forces, bad ones –

K.A.: And -

O.A.: With God everything is possible in our lives.

K.A.: And what are these forces? Um like can you explain? Can you give an explanation or description of one?

O.A.: They come like people go around trying to kill some people, where they go to voodoo man, take some people's name, some people they have a witchcraft, where they say they go to meeting in the midnight. So there are so many forces, it's real. Because growing up you can see where they some people catch some witches. They cover them, they will be, begging "leave us let us go home, they are birds" but they are humans that turn into birds overnight. So there – I grew up where I know there's a forces. And that's why I have God and I believe in God. I'm not scared about any forces any longer. Because I believe, when I'm a ... when I'm a child of God, that nothing can touch me.

K.A.: Okay so, do you enjoy going to church?

O.A.: Of course.

K.A.: Are you a worker in the church, do you anything?

O.A.: Yes, yes, I'm with the evangelism team, and hospital... hospitability group.

K.A.: And can you describe what do you do in each team?

O.A.: Uhh, hospitality team we organize baby shower for member, we organize birthday, any event that wants to happen in church we put the..., we'll be the event planning, we plan the event and put it together. Evangelism team, we go around to preach gospel to people, to come to church to change their life.

K.A.: Okay -

O.A.: And we pass out church flyer.

K.A.: And do you like doing this?

O.A.: Yes please

K.A.: What else, do you like to do?

O.A.: You mean in the church?

K.A.: In the church, on your free time...

O.A.: Umm lately, on my free time I like to be home, relax, watching African movie and listen to news or stay on my computer to check my mail and see what is going on, all over the world.

K.A.: Okay so, um can you describe which, like what do you do, I know um.... African movies are like, their movies but to... like to someone who's not, you know, familiar with the African culture, can you describe what an African movie is like to them?

O.A.: African movie is like all the English movie you watch here. Where people are, I mean they are... they are in group, where they act. So they just act some movie to show us, certain things that happen to some people. Maybe it's a story, maybe they write the story and act the movie, so I just watch it to relax.

K.A.: Okay, um, what are some artistic things that you like to do? Like would you like to act, or what are some things you like to do besides watching a movie and besides cooking?

O.A.: Yeah maybe one of these days I would like to act later in the future.

K.A.: Later in the future? In the... in an African movie?

O.A.: America

K.A.: Oh, in an American movie? What kind of movie?

O.A.: I'm still talking to some people.

K.A.: Oh you're actually talking to people right now?

O.A.: Mhm

K.A.: Oh what is the movie about?

O.A.: They don't know, they're gonna do it soon. There's one of my customer that normally comes to my lot. They want to use his house in D.C. He has about three houses he used for tourists, where they rent the place every day. So they look at it and say they love it. Some movie people came there and they look at it and said if he knew some people that are interested, he should bring them. I said he should take you, Kike, and me. So he will let me know. He just came to look at the place.

K.A.: Okay so, um, earlier in the interview you said you dropped out of school when you were pregnant with your third child Abee. Um did you ever wanna go back?

O.A.: Maybe in the future, I don't have time for that now.

K.A.: Mokay

O.A.: I don't want to put too much stress on me.

K.A.: Okay, and do you want all your children to go to school?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: Why is that?

O.A.: Because education is important in life, without education you cannot get anywhere. But some people get anywhere if they are... if they are blessed, if they think about something they can put together and put it to work, and if it work out they become a millionaire. But you still have to have education.

K.A.: So you want your children to pursue education? You um, sound like you have a business mind about you, what if one of your children have um a business mind and they didn't want to finish school, what would you tell them?

O.A.: I would put them into a right path. I'm planning in myself... within myself, I'm gonna open a business for each one of them. If they like they can run it, they can hire people there, but that's what I'm planning to do, to go

ahead and register some business, register non-profit organization, and register profit organization. Put it into doing, that's gon be like family business. I know what is good. I know where the money is, but I'm happy they're gonna be graduating soon. So whichever anybody want they can start doing it. I know where the money is, I know what they can do. Many people come to me to take advice and they're making a lot of money. So I'm thinking I should set up my children. So they can get ready for life, for future, so they don't need to stress. They can relax and the money will be coming and God will make a way, I'm planning it, so I just have to do one thing or the other. To see which step I'm gonna take.

K.A.: So you believe that um, a business is a good way to secure um something for your children?

O.A.: Yes, you cannot work for people and become rich in life, you need to have your own business. You can behave, you can work for people and make money to pay your bill and be comfortable, but in history then you cannot become a millionaire. Just taking check to check.

K.A.: Ok, so when you, when Bolu left you and you decided to stay because you wanted to be a successful person, right? Did you ever have thoughts like maybe I should just go back to Nigeria?

O.A.: I went home, I actually went home a year after, just to visit for two weeks, just to refresh my brain, because he left, I've been with him for a long time, so just to clear my mind, when he left, I... I... I mean, I feel terrible [sucks teeth and smacks lips] so I just went home spent two weeks, then come back.

K.A.: You felt terrible? um, so what was...When you went home, did that help you feel better a little bit?

O.A.: Yeah because I was talking with Akin's mom, my uncle's wife, we knew about all this so we're talking about it, so I just said let me talk to somebody live, so I can forget about it, and I just said God give me the grace, let me move on with my life and forget about all this issue.

K.A.: So who is Akin?

O.A.: Akin is my cousin.

K.A.: Oh Akin is your cousin? So you went back home to talk to his mom?

O.A.: I just went back home, not to talk to his mom. Just

K.A.: Just to go.

O.A.: To go, yeah.

K.A.: Clear your mind?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: And, but you spoke to her to get advice?

O.A.: Yeea ... yes yes. Not advice, just to talk about it, to get over with it.

K.A.: So, so would you like, if you had the chance to go back in time, and you know, would you come to America? After looking at your life and everything you've been through? Would you still make the decision to come to America?

O.A.: It's for my children that I have today, it's only for my kids that I have here, I'll come back, but if not I would rather stay home.

K.A.: Okay so, only for your children?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Okay. And if you didn't have children here you would've just stayed in Nigeria?

O.A.: Yea, because over here the business that I open, they close it down, if I open a business in Nigeria, you establish, nobody would come over there and say oh... you can't ... you can't operate this business anymore. Nigeria when you have your thing, you have your thing, but over here there so many law, there so many thing that you have to go through.

K.A.: So, do you still communicate with Bolu?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Okay, is he still married to the American woman?

O.A.: He left, he left the American, they only marry for eight years, so he left the lady, everybody move on. They didn't ... they never had children together.

K.A.: Ok, but, so you guys are just friends?

O.A.: Yeah, he call me most of the time, every time, and I talk to him, we're friends... yeah

K.A.: Are you guys best friends?

O.A.: I'm not gonna, I'm gonna say no, I don't wanna be his very, he call me all the time, which is okay, he left the lady like, 10 years ago, they uh, divorced, separated, but one of his, one of his girlfriend have a baby for him. He only have one child.

K.A.: Are you still angry with him?

O.A.: No

K.A.: Were you ever angry with him?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: If I think about all what I been through for years, yea. But I forgive him, later on they told me "let go". So I let go.

K.A.: So what advice would you give to your daughters, about dating, and men, and marriage?

O.A.: The advice I would give to them, is for them to pray for God to give them their bone of bone and flesh of flesh, and they should marry believer, because if both of you marry and go to church, you all listen to the same sermon, so even though there's always a bump in marriage, it won't be like people that are not belief. Believer you pray together, you go to church, you go to all the program, so that will keep marriage going and will keep the children in God way.

K.A.: Ok and the same for the um, your boy children? The boys?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Okay.

K.A.: So, what is something that you would like to tell the generations after you? Like your grandchildren and their children, and children, like do you have a message you wanna tell them or?

O.A.: The message is for them, when they're grow up, they should face their book, do everything on time, and know God. Early stage start serving God because serving God is good because it will give you peace.

K.A.: Serving God will give you peace?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: So do you have peace now that you serve God?

O.A.: Yes, I do.

K.A.: Can you explain what this peace is?

O.A.: Nothing bother me, nothing that anybody do that bother me, so I just keep on focusing on what I'm doing, I won't let anybody put me astray, so I don't get angry with anybody, because if you have God you have everything in life.

K.A.: Ok and is that something you would tell to anybody or..?

O.A.: Everybody in life.

K.A.: Everybody in life.

O.A.: Everybody in life.

K.A.: That if you have God, (O.A.: you have peace) you have everything, you have peace.

O.A.: Yes, yes

K.A.: Okay! So what other things beside hospitality and um, and evangelism do you like to do at church?

O.A.: I'm still thinking about joining some other group, I will think about it, I like to dance, I like to praise God and thank God for my life, my children life, I thank God that keep us going. So I always like to praise and worship with God. Whenever I'm in church. (I'm not ...) (I tapped her because she nodded off)

K.A.: So you like to dance and praise? (O.A.: mhmmm) What kind of music is at church? Is it normal (O.A.: the choir) American music or?

O.A.:Yes.

K.A.: Its American music, it's not Nigerian music?

O.A.:Yes, we do English because we are gospel church, we don't dooo, yes it's a praise and worship.

K.A.: Is there like, when you um, started going to church here, were there some songs that you heard in Nigeria that were sung here too?

O.A.: You mean by Cherubim and Seraphim?

K.A.: Anything, any church?

O.A.: Yeah, Cherubim and Seraphim, what we're singing there, they're singing here.

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: Gospel church, too we do what they're doing there because it's like.....

K.A.: You sing.

O.A.: Uhn, hun.

K.A.: So are there mostly Nigerians at your church?

O.A.: No, there's American, it's English!

K.A.: No, like Nigerian people ... like Nigeria--

O.A.: We have Sierra Leone, we have Cameroon, we have American, we have Nigerian.

K.A.: Okay

O.A.: So the song that we sing is what churches ... it's for everybody, it's not that they pick, that this is only Nigerian song.

K.A.: Ok, so anybody can sing it?

O.A.: Yes, yes.

K.A.: Okay, so it's mostly an African church? Like African people attend there.

O.A.: American is there too.

K.A.: Oh, there are also Americans?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Ok, that's good. So you really really like this church?

O.A.: I do.

K.A.: Ok, so besides watching African movies, and watching the news, and cooking, and going to church, is there anything else you like to do? Or is there anything you wish you had more time for?

O.A.: No, maybe shopping, just window shopping, go around the mall, relax, that's all.

K.A.: Just shopping and going around the mall?

O.A.: Yeah, window shopping.

K.A.: Do you still wear um those African traditions, we talked about earlier, um a lot now?

O.A.: I wear them to a party, or church. (K.A.: Okay) Once in a while, not all the time.

K.A.: So you don't wear them as often as you used to?

O.A.: No, no no no

K.A.: So, when you came here, was it easy for you to um adapt to the American culture?

O.A.: Yes

K.A.: And why was that?

O.A.: Because it's cold, you have to go buy jeans, top, buy something, suit, immediately you need to change all your dress.

K.A.: Was it uncomfortable for you?

O.A.: No

K.A.: So you liked the jeans and the top?

O.A.: It's fine.

K.A.: Ok. Was it expensive to buy?

O.A.: No

K.A.: No?

O.A.: When I came there used to be a shop... a store that they called Sims in Rockville.

K.A.: Sims?

O.A.: Sims, they took me there...that's where we shop from that time.

K.A.: And that store is no longer there? I've never heard of that store before.

O.A.: It's gone.

K.A.: What other stores were around when you came that are gone now?

O.A.: [sucks teeth] A lot of them are gone, I don't remember.

K.A.: Were they cheaper, than now?

O.A.: Everything is getting expensive; yeah they used to be a little bit cheaper.

K.A.: So now everything is more expensive?

O.A.: Mhmm

K.A.: Ok, so, what, do you have like a favorite memory from Nigeria? When you were younger, or when you were a teenager? That you would like to share?

O.A.: Memory... maybe memory when my mom died, it's a bad memory.

K.A.: And what happened?

O.A.: She was [breathes a little heavy here], a little bit tired, she went to the doctor, they said maybe her blood count is low, they wanna give her blood. I was in the room with her when they are putting the blood, she told them it's going fast, it's itching, and they said "no, that's the way it's supposed to go." So when the blood finished she have a kidney failure, and she died the third day.

K.A.: Wow. And you were just devastated, right?

O.A.: Very, very

K.A.: You felt alone?

O.A.: I feel alone, because I'm always with my mom, sleeping in her back. We're the only one... my mom ... Ojo is in America.

K.A.: Your brother?

O.A.: My brother, my other brother was in Lagos, so I'm the only one with that burden. I have to [pause] just move on with my life.

K.A.: Do you think that's why, maybe that's why you're so interested in telling Nigeria that "your health policy needs to be changed"? Because th--

O.A.: Because of that, and because of many people are dying every day. [K.A.: mhmm] When they wanna give blood some of the hospital, they don't check for o positive, negative. [K.A.: wow] Some good hospitals are doing that, but it's the rich people [K.A.: only the rich people] that can go there. So people are dying daily for so many complication.

K.A.: So there's a lot of death, that can be prevented?

O.A.: Yes, yes.

K.A.: And you said, only the rich people can afford it, is there a big gap in Nigeria between, you know, rich and poor?

O.A.: Of course, of course. Some people, if they are politician, they just, they're eating Nigeria's money, they don't work for the money, and some people work for it, and many people that work in the company too, when you're on top you just, make money, you don't need to work so hard for that money. So they're able to spend money.

K.A.: So when you say that they just make money, like they do it in corrupt ways?

O.A.: Yeah, there's so many things they're all doing.

K.A.: So if one of your children wanted to, you know, go back and help Nigeria develop, would you encourage them to do that?

O.A.: Not now. They're not civilized yet, they kill people every day, they put bombs, there was one guy that left from New Jersey, I knew him very well, they put bomb in his car, [K.A.: Wow] because he started saying, oh everything has to be truth. They pieces him into pieces, [K.A.: Wow] and her *{Although she is still speaking about the man, she used a female pronoun, this is common in the Nigerian culture] mom is still living. *Her mom is old already, can't get out of the door. They kill him, they will kill people that want to say the truth. The time is coming but not yet.

K.A.: Not yet? So when you say the time is coming do you think maybe in a couple...

O.A.: When God wipe away all those old people there, corrupt, killing people, yeah when the younger generation grow up.

K.A.: Cause, I know a lot of people in my generation, like uhh some of us are majoring in things like international development, and ,you know, African politics and we wanna go back and change you know...

O.A.: God will give all of you the Grace when the time come.

K.A.: So you don't think the time is now?

O.A.: It will come ... soon.

K.A.: It will come soon.

K.A.: Ok!, so what is something you're proud of, from just being here? Like what is something you can look back and say, you know I'm proud of accomplishing this.

O.A.: I'm proud to have all my children, and I'm proud because they know God. I'm proud because they read their book, and they listen, they're good children. So I'm very proud of that.

K.A.: So you're very, very proud of all four of your children?

O.A.: Yes, I'm very, very proud of them, and I'm proud of myself for all what I've done as a woman, all my accomplishments, I thank God for my life.

K.A.: That's good, I'm proud of you too!

O.A.: Thank you.

K.A.: And this is Kike her daughter speaking, I'm the first child she spoke of earlier, I've been interviewing my mom this whole time. Um, is there anything else you wanna tell to the audience before we finish?

O.A.: No, that would be it.

K.A.: That's it!?

O.A.: Yes.

K.A.: Ok, and I'd like to say thank you for your time. Alright, thank you!

O.A.: You're quite welcome.