

**Emmanuel Onyeukwu**

HST 428N

**Professor Thomas Castillo.**

**Interview with Megan Chukwueke.**

**March 30, 2014.**

**Emmanuel (0.00)**

Good morning everyone, my name is Emmanuel Onyeukwu, I'm here to interview Megan Chukwueke, uhm we are in Silver Spring Maryland and today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of March and today is approx.--well right now is approximately 9:38 am and uh the purpose of this interview is to uncover memories, u know, remember memories in relation to an immigrant history experience of Megan. Megan is my girlfriend and we've been dating for four years and I am really interested in ge--getting to this interview and understanding a few things that I may not have prior recollection of. So I would first off like to ask for your consent to have this interview. It's going to be archived in the center of new history in America uhm and I would want you to verbally consent to having this interview, so is it okay to get your story down Megan?

**Megan (1.08):**

(Chuckles)-- Yes it is

**Emmanuel (1.09)**

Wonderful Wonderful. So first off, you have a very interesting background from (background noise) Nigeria, to the UK and now in the United States so, but I would first off like to start with Nigeria, U know that'd be the first thing that I would like to talk about. I want to find out certain things about your experience in Nigeria and I would say, maybe an appropriate question to start off with is tell me, what is your fondest memory of Nigeria?

**Megan (1:45)**

Uhm you mean like while growing up or--

**Emmanuel (1:50)**

Yes. While growing up

**Megan (1:52)**

Okay. Uhm I would say my fondest memory is just being able to be free--uh just running around the compound with my neph--my cousins, and my--just my relatives, my siblings, u know--riding our bicycles, climbing on trees

**Emmanuel (2.12)**

(Chuckles)

**Megan (2.13)**

Just being free, having a good time u know with my siblings which is something that is very rare to find in Nigeria these days because of the--security issues. Uhm you don't see a lot of kids running around like how we did when we were growing up because you know the kidnapping; there's all this turmoil in the North and in the East and everywhere. Parents don't want their kids outside anymore. Parents want their kids indoors, and they give them all these gadgets to keep them company. So they are very tech savvy, but they are not free. You know they don't really know what it's like to be a kid you know. So those are definitely my fondest memories.

**Emmanuel (3.08)**

Well climbing trees-- That's (laughs) quite interesting. I can't envision you climbing a tree right now. That's a very good visual to think about. Uh but you mentioned something really--I guess important [and] it's quite troubling as well. There's this notion that yes there is development in the society in terms of kids being able to be more conversant with technology and they are very good with things like iPads and iPods but they are not necessarily free in a sense to enjoy the real quintessential childhood experience of running around and playing and I find that to be quite fascinating and that's definitely a dynamic that I guess is a result of the technology and the effects that it has on children, so I thought that was quite fascinating. Uhm so--(Intelligible) that's a good way to start off. So for those siblings you played with and cousins, do you still keep in touch with them?

**Megan (4:17)**

Oh yes definitely. Uhm even though they may be far away in Nigeria, we uh have conversations--daily conversations. I am really close to my siblings. I reach out to them almost every day so--u know it's; its yea we have very close ties that I can never--we can never get rid of, no matter where we are so--

**Emmanuel (4:39)**

(Laughs) okay okay.

**Megan: (4:40)**

Yea

**Emmanuel (4:41)**

So for the purpose of the audience, how many siblings do you have?

**Megan (4:44)**

That's a very difficult question (laughter). Uhm so I have; I have eight siblings, seven siblings, so it's eight plus uhm in addition to myself, eight children from my mom. My mom was, from my mom's first marriage; (she) had five kids. She had uh four boys and a girl, then uh when she got married to my dad (they) had three kids so that's my immediate older sister--then I'm the middle child and then I have a younger brother who's 14 years old.

**Emmanuel (5:21)**

14? Okay.

**Megan (5:22)**

Yes. So seven siblings.

**Emmanuel (5:25)**

So its five siblings from the first marriage and then three including--

**Megan (5:29)**

Yes.

**Emmanuel (5:30)**

Well two including you--making it three from (intelligible)

**Megan (5:33)**

Yes.

**Emmanuel (5:34)**

Okay okay, and you also keep a close relationship with the five from the previous relationship?

**Megan (5:40)**

Uhm as much as I can. I mean I would admit that I am much closer to my actual like you know siblings from the same mom and the same dad just because uhm I didn't really get a chance to grow up with them. I actually didn't know that I had siblings until I was around like ten years old. (EM: oh wow) And I didn't know that I had other siblings, I had no idea my mom was in another; in a marriage before my dad so it was kind of like--it was a shock to me and my older sister that we had other siblings. It was exciting but you know at the same time, it was--it was shocking because we always just thought it was me and her. So I definitely have a much closer relationship with my, you know, my actual like full siblings.

**Emmanuel (6:36)**

O wonderful, wonderful, wonderful oh and well previously in your answer to your fondest memory, you mentioned that in the eastern parts, in addition to the Northern and the Southern parts of Nigeria that there has been some sort of turmoil per say uhm in terms of like kidnappings and--can you give me an example of how that has influenced you? Specifically, have you; basically have you had any direct experience with that turmoil? Has anyone in your family been kidnapped or do you know people who have been kidnapped or any of that?

**Megan (7:17)**

I know people who have been kidnapped - uhm just friends, friends of friends but none of that has actually happened to any members of my family or any you know actual close friends of mine. So in terms of how that has impacted my life—uhm--definitely [in] a very serious way because anytime I go back home to Nigeria, if I'm not in Lagos, or you know if I'm going back to my actual hometown which is in Imo State, our movement is very restricted - uhm the way you know when I was much younger as I mentioned, us being able to walk around the village and like see our relatives, we can't really do that anymore. I mean we do see them but whenever we do, we have to you know; it's this whole process and we have to have security with us and you know can't really go out--go out there and experience the town because of the likelihood that you might actually never come back to your home or you know there's a ransom out there for you for like twenty million naira or something. What's the conversion in dollars? I'm not really sure--

**Emmanuel (8:38)**

Uhm a million is about seven thousand dollars. A million naira is about seven thousand dollars. I guess--

**Megan (8:44)**

Right, so it's obviously not worth the risk. (Laughter) uhm so I guess--I guess that's you know--uhm yeah so my movement is very limited.

**Emmanuel (8:54)**

Well there's a lot of talk; uhm and established reports about the security situation in Africa - uhm but would you say that is how it is on a wide scale. Is that--is it-- basically; when you are in Nigeria do you feel unsafe everywhere you go and at every particular time?

**Megan (9:20)**

Uhm I don't feel unsafe everywhere I go. It's just like some certain areas and you know [this is]one of the issues when I hear people who are not Nigerians, you know Americans or British people talk about Nigeria as if it is the entire nation that is in turmoil or it's the entire nation that is experiencing real security issues. I mean that is not the case, we just have specific areas. Just like how we have specific areas here in America or in London where you wouldn't ever been seen walking down the street alone as a woman by yourself, uhm or anyone really. Uhm so there are - there are some parts of Lagos that are really safe. I mean [of] Nigeria that are really safe. I mean Lagos, Abuja; there are a couple of other cities that you find people walking around freely, there's not a lot of armed robbery, there's a lot of security. Like where I live in Lagos, Lekki Lagos, you'd find there are a lot of police checkpoints and you know there are a lot of shops around and people are walking very freely and but cautiously at the same time but you know there's not that much of a security issue in that area and I'll say the same for many other areas in Nigeria. So--

**Emmanuel (10:48)**

Hmm I see. You mentioned that you lived in Lagos, Lekki Lagos and I believe that's in the southern part of Nigeria and from research I found an interesting statistic that Nigeria had almost if not more than two hundred different ethnic groups, and I also did a little bit of research on Lagos as well and Lagos happens to be the hub of entertainment and business and so there's like a melting pot of different people that live in Lagos if I am correctly assuming this. So tell me, let's talk about Lagos a little bit. I believe you went to school in Lagos as well?

**Megan: (11:35)**

Uhm yes I did go to school in Lagos. Uhm in Nigeria at least, Lagos has one of the best educational systems so it's a great place to send your kids to school so I was privileged to go to school in Lagos. Uhm talking about the melting pot, what I really like about Lagos is that it's really a hub for different cultures. Uhm you can find different people from different parts of Nigeria in Lagos so it would be very easy for me to say that I have experienced Nigeria as a whole because I lived in Lagos. I got to interact with different ethnic groups, I even got to learn some languages. My best friend; my best friend of like fifteen - sixteen years, she's Hausa which is; so yeah she is Muslim, Hausa. She's from the northern part of Nigeria and ah (EM: I see) yeah you meet different cultural--people from different cultural backgrounds. It's a very cosmopolitan state. (background noise)

**Emmanuel (12:44)**

Wonderful. So she's Hausa and what is your religious affiliation?

**Megan (12:52)**

Well she's Hausa and she's Muslim, but I am Igbo and Christian, Catholic Christian actually. My parents are staunch Catholics (background noise) and so I was born and raised Catholic. I, you know, went to church like two or three times a week, I was in the choir, I was an altar girl, I was--I went to a Catholic convent A-level school so my parents are very serious Catholics. (EM - laughs)

**Emmanuel (13:27)**

Oh wow. And how did you feel that that upbringing as--well in the Catholic church has affected you as a person?

**Megan (13:38)**

Uhm, it definitely made me a more disciplined person. Uhm because you know, in my younger years - as you know to be a Catholic, there's several steps you have to take. You have to be baptized and then you have to receive Holy Communion, then you have to have your

confirmation, so the good thing about being Catholic is that it trains you to prepare yourself for certain milestones in your life. Uhm, so while all my friends on Saturday were going to parties and all of that, I was in Catechism (laughs) learning, reading my prayer book, literally memorizing every single thing in the book so I can pass my test and get to the next stage. So it made me very disciplined, it made me realize the importance of learning and you know conditioning my mind to study regardless of the distractions that may be around me or regardless of what my friends were doing. So, I guess [that's] what I learned from being Catholic.

**Emmanuel (14:59)**

I see. So I mean, I'm just thinking retroactively here, so most of your friends on Saturdays would be out partying and you know having fun while you on the other hand would be in church learning things and studying and trying to develop yourself. But, how did that affect your relationship with those friends? Did they feel a certain type of way about the fact that you didn't always join them for leisure activities? Or were you able to strike a balance? How exactly did that work?

**Megan (15:37)**

Uhm I definitely was able to strike a balance. Uhm the good thing about having you know, Nigerian friends is that they understand the culture, they understand the necessary steps you have to take for your religious background and I understood theirs as well. Uhm and so, no I was able to strike a balance. So I might not have been there on Saturdays, but on Sundays, you know after church I would always go and visit my friends or like you know catch up with them at school. So it wasn't something that was extremely difficult for me to handle.

**Emmanuel (16:18)**

Hmm. Okay, that's quite interesting. Now prior to ehm I guess when we were talking about your best friend Ameera who is Hausa and is from the northern part ehm of Nigeria, you are from the eastern part of Nigeria I believe? [MG: yeah] And so, and that's I believe--you are Igbo? [MG: yes]. That's Igbo, okay wonderful. So now with; Igbo's a very fascinating tribe. I'm Igbo as well [MG: (laughs)] so I am very proud to be Igbo you know, I love the fact that I am Igbo. But for you, I would want to get your; get a feel for what you; like how do you define yourself as an Igbo woman. Is there any particular, I don't know, culture or tradition that you identify with strongly? Like what is it exactly that you define being Igbo as?

**Megan (17:21)**

Uhm as an Igbo woman, I define myself as a woman who is strong, but also a woman who is submissive to her husband in a certain way or to her partner or whoever she is with. Submissive in the sense that you realize that it's important to be able to take care of the home and to be able to raise your kids and really have an impact in their lives. Uhm, as an Igbo woman I--it's a lot it's a lot of strength, it's a lot of independence, it's a lot of offering your support. Uhm, there's a lot of pride in the tradition itself. Uhm, so for example the - I'll say one tradition that I really like is the traditional wedding we call "Ngwaa Ukwu". Uhm, which is always basically like a day of glory for the bride, she gets the wine from her dad and her dad would bless the wine and she would go around and search the compound for her husband and then she presents the wine to her husband and then they come together and he drinks from her cup of wine and they go over to her family and then the parents bless them again and then the man puts some notes--some currency--some money in the cup. So, that concept of the traditional wedding fascinates me because that's how I really think that an Igbo woman should be. She should be submissive enough to go and find her husband and present him the wine, but also be supportive enough to say this is my husband, this is the decision I have made. Be supportive and strong enough to say this is my husband, this is the decision I have made, this is the person I have chosen to marry and now parents I want you to bless my husband. So it's--that's, that's I think, that's the pride as an Igbo woman.

**Emmanuel (20:02)**

Hmm. So basically it's from my understanding, it's the--traditional wedding is; involves a lot of symbolic gestures which you mentioned about carrying the wine and looking for the husband and then leaning and presenting the wine. Uhm and you are also translating that into strength of a woman and how she's supposed to carry the home and sort of like be the backbone, so she's submissive in some sense and also strong enough to carry the family as well and I think that's quite fascinating that you interpret it in that way (EM: exactly). That's quite interesting. Okay but now you used a very strong word uhm submissive. Submissive, is subjective per se in the sense that in your context, you are explaining it as you know being you take a--slightly smaller role to give the husband the heads up, uhm but then at the same time you are also--I guess metaphorically speaking you are like the neck so the husband can't move the head without the neck and I understand that. But, is there an aspect of this submissive culture per se that could be uh I guess, detrimental to the way family life is conducted? Is there any aspect of this subservient role that negatively impacts women in Nigeria--well specifically Igbo women?

**Megan (21:45)**

Definitely. I hate to use the word submissive because it's a very strong word and you know people interpret it differently. But I do agree that the word submissive can have some negative connotations for African women and so my definition of submissive completely different and so African women, you know some African women tend to think that



submissive means you are totally at your husband's beck and call, you know, you have no voice, you have nothing on your own because you believe that as the man he should be the breadwinner and as the woman you should be the sole caretaker of the home. And so a lot of women take being submissive to another negative level, condoning domestic violence and a lot of that because they feel like the husband has a final say. That's not my definition of submissive. My definition of submissive is doing what you can to be a great home you know, carer of the home--home taker uhm (EM: caregiver) yes care giver of the home, but you know at the same time being able to have a voice and being strong and you know being more of a supportive system to your husband than you know a--I don't know, like a mat (Laughter) or a rug. Being more of a supportive system and saying okay this is what I think you should do, you know just being able to air your views and be supportive in that way. I think its two completely different things.

**Emmanuel (23:36)**

Yeah I can definitely see the distinction that you are making. One is definitely I guess the negative outlook on that word and the other is more structural and supportive and that provides a very interesting Segway into understanding your theology per se about womanhood and what it means for you to be an Igbo woman and so that's quite fascinating. So like--just go back, what would you say that you love the most about Nigeria and I guess essentially at this point now, what is it that you miss?

**Megan (24:28)**

Uhm what I really love the most about Nigeria is that regardless of whatever issues we may have, it's still my home. There's nothing that can ever compare to that so sometimes I'm here and you know I am enjoying my independence - my independence and my income and like how well I'm doing for myself and these are things I have been able to achieve by myself without the assistance of anybody. Uhm, but at the same time when I come back home--when I come back to my apartment, I don't feel like its home. When I'm back in Nigeria, I feel like it is home. It's just a very relaxing feeling, there's more to life than working yourself to death. (EM: laughs) There's a lot of support from family members, there's a lot of freedom; you don't have work on your mind 24/7. You know, you are more relaxed because you don't owe anyone anything, it's just--it's a lot of support so that's definitely what I miss, just being, being in a position where I can call a place home you know.

**Emmanuel (25:53)**

Home. That's interesting. So I mean why then; I guess moving on to your education in the UK. Why did you; why move to the UK. What was the reason for you know your migration to the--to the United Kingdom?

**Megan (26:14)**

Definitely for educational reasons. Not saying there are not great universities in Nigeria because there are, but I wanted a much better life for myself. I wanted to be educated abroad; I wanted a law degree from England and luckily enough for me, my parents were able to afford to send me there and so that's what happened. I wanted to be educated abroad and at the time I was about fifteen years old and my parents didn't think I was old enough to be in America on my own so they wanted to send me to England because its--it's much closer to Nigeria, it's only like a six hour flight and we have a house in London and we had a lot of relatives there, and my sister was there at the time as well and so it kinda just made sense to them to make sure that I was in a space where I was monitored and given a chance to grow and be independent before I decided to go elsewhere. So--

**Emmanuel (27:30)**

I see. So was that your first time being in the UK when you left at fifteen or had you been visiting the UK prior to that?

**Megan (27:38)**

No. I had uhm the privilege of visiting, I would visit every summer and so it definitely wasn't my first time. Uhm, No.

**Emmanuel (27:48)**

So it was more like that's a zone where they felt more comfortable sending you to because you had prior experiences there and it made sense to--

**Megan (27:59)**

Yes I knew how to get around. I knew the entire transportation system. We had a home there, so there was really a lot of support in England and because of my young age, my parents felt that that was the best place for me to be in.

**Emmanuel (28:11)**

Hmm, that's interesting. So what year--what year was it exactly when you moved to the UK?

**Megan (28:16)**

2006

**Emmanuel (28:19)**

2006. I see. And then you went there and you; that was for your A-levels?

**Megan (28:25)**

Yes for my A-Levels.

**Emmanuel (28:27)**

A-Levels. And where did you attend--

**Megan (28:28)**

I went to St Leonard's Mayfield. It's in East Sussex in uhm--yeah East Sussex England and yeah it was a Catholic; it was convent school actually. So I think my parents had the intention that I would be a Reverend Sister but that didn't really work out. (Laughter)

**Emmanuel (28:43)**

A reverend sister? (Laughter) Oh that's interesting. So that's why they sent you to a Catholic Convent school. Had you wanted to be a Reverend Sister before?

**Megan (28:59)**

Never at any point did I want to be a reverend sister. (Laughter)

**Emmanuel (29:05)**

So they were basically trying to indoctrinate you into that particular--

**Megan (29:07)**

Trying to see if that would be something I would consider--

**Emmanuel (29:11)**

I see. I see. So St Leonard's you say (MG: Yes. St Leonard's) St Leonard's Mayfield. So how was your--I guess your initial experience going to that school; like your first thoughts once you got there.

**Megan (29:28)**

First thought when I got there was: where the hell am I? (Laughter) uhm it's in a very isolated place. I would definitely say that my parents knew exactly what they were doing. It was a very isolated place. Our school was probably like the biggest you know compound in the entire village. It's so small, and you know it's not a very urban lifestyle. It's a very kind of like low-key secluded area and so my first experience of it was why am I here? This place is very different from what I remember England to be. I mean it was a nice place don't get me wrong, it was very nice and peaceful but that you know - the excitement of going to school abroad was very much limited by the scope of me not being to get around as much as I would have liked to, me not being able to see my friends who were - a lot of my friends actually left Nigeria at the same time as well to go to school in England but they were all in like really you know schools - like good schools - I was in a good school as well but they were in good schools in London so really living the city life and I wasn't so uhm, yes...

**Emmanuel (30:51)**

That was a bit of a contrast coming from even with Lagos which is like a bubbling city and then living in London and then now going to East Sussex. (laughs) That must have been ah a very huge change per se for you. I mean so for such a big change, how did that affect your personality? Apart from I guess your initial reactions where you didn't like being there, what else - what other impact did it have on you that you , you know were sent to this place that was really small and remote and away from everything else that you knew. How did that affect your like - your outlook on things?

**Megan (31:31)**

Uhm again I would say that my parents knew what they were doing because I definitely became very studious (EM: "okay"). Uhm I didn't really get the chance to you know visit my friends and be around my friends, so I had no other you know - I had nothing else to do but study (EM: "hmm"). While I did have friends you know in my school as well, mostly Asians because my school was - I was probably the only - actually I was the only black person in my school at the time (EM: "hmm"). Because I mentioned that it, as I mentioned it was such a remote area that you wouldn't see that many people of color in that kind of area. But, I was the only black person there.

**Emmanuel (32:23)**

In your class? Or in your entire school?

**Megan (32: 25)**

In my entire school.

**Emmanuel (32:27)**

Wow

**Megan (32:28)**

Okay I exaggerated, there was one more black person but she I think was in the seventh grade or eighth grade or something. Uhm but it was just two of us. I was definitely the only black person in the A-Level College.

**Emmanuel (32: 44)**

Oh wow. And just trying to get an insight, how did that make you feel, coming from a place that is you know, Nigeria is predominantly black all the way, uh going to the UK and you are the only black person. How did that make you feel?

**Megan (32:57)**

It was hard. It was very hard. Uhm for me at the start, you know coming from Nigeria because I felt like you know, I really did not have any support at all especially as it was in such a remote area where I couldn't just take my things and say oh I am going back home, I'm going to London, you know to see some family members. Uhm but at the same time it really made me uhm adapt to all the different cultural groups that were there, all the different races, it really made me appreciate you know welcoming, you know having friends that were not black opened me to other you know, cultures.

**Emmanuel (33:32)**

Cultures. Interesting. So what nationalities, like most of your friends that you made there, can you recall like what nationalities they were from?

**Megan (33.55)**

Uhm, mostly Asians. uh

**Emmanuel (33:59)**

Ok.

**Megan (34:00)**

Uhm, the entire boarding school was populated with Asians. Uhm, all the other uh, everyone else they were all British and they were all day students

**Emmanuel (34:13)**

Ok

**Megan (34:15)**

So I didn't really see that much of them. I mean we would be in uh classes together but in terms of living together, I lived with like ninety-ninety five percent Asian girls.

**Emmanuel (34:29)**

Asian girls. Oh interesting. And did you learn any fascinating things about the Asian culture? Do you remember anything?

**Megan (34:35)**

Uhm I had a lot of Asian friends uhm and we developed really close ties, and so uhm they would always like tell me about their culture especially their New Year's Day celebration. It's a completely; their New Year's Day is different from ours, I'm not really sure which one it is but...

**Emmanuel (34:57)**

Oh really.

**Megan (34:58)**

Uhm they would tell me about that, like always invite me to come back home to China with them but that never happened because it's way too far away and my parents would have killed me if I decided to go.

**Emmanuel (35:13)**

Laughter.

**Megan (35:13)**

They would always, I mean whenever we went on our excursions, they would make sure they introduced me to like Chinese food, the real Chinese food, I mean like the actual real Chinese food.

**Emmanuel (35:26)**

Laughter

**Megan (35:28)**

Cause there's a difference. Uhm, so yes I definitely learnt a lot about their culture. Uhm, when uhm if we go to dinner or lunch and I'm sitting with them, mostly they would speak their language but I had a really good friend who would always translate to me what they were talking about so I never really felt left out.

**Emmanuel (35:53)**

Oh. This friend of yours, what was her name?

**Megan (35:55)**

Juliana.

**Emmanuel (35:56)**

Juliana. Do you still keep in touch with Juliana?

**Megan (35:58)**

Uhm yes, I do over Facebook. Yes.

**Emmanuel (36:00)**

Oh wonderful, wonderful. So she's in, she's still in the UK or is she back in China.

**Megan (36:03)**

She's moved back to China.

**Emmanuel (36:05)**

She's moved back to China. Oh so who knows, that could possibly open a way for you to make a trip over there one of these days.

**Megan (36:12)**

Possibly, yes.

**Emmanuel (36:14)**

Possibly? Interesting. So uhm, you went to St Leonard's for you're A-Levels and uh you proceeded on to College in the UK?

**Megan (36:25)**

Yes, I did.

**Emmanuel (36:27)**

I see, and where did you go?

**Megan (36:28)**

I went to the University of Warwick in uh, Coventry which is like an hour and thirty minutes away from London.

**Emmanuel (36:39)**

Ah. I see. And in Coventry, what was your major?

**Megan (36:44)**

Uhm, my major was Law.

**Emmanuel (36:47)**

Law?

**Megan (36:48)**

So my degree was a Bachelor of Laws degree.

**Emmanuel (36:53)**

I see. So different was Coventry from Essex or Sussex?

**Megan (36:57)**

Sussex?

**Emmanuel (36:58)**

Sussex

**Megan (36:59)**

Uhm, it was very different, uhm definitely more of a more, more ethnic groups, I would say more, different races. There were a lot more black people, good mix of Asian. It was generally like a very good mix, you have like Russians, you have; it was dominated by a specific uh, you know race.

**Emmanuel (37:32)**

Race. I see

**Megan (37: 33)**

It was a good mix of different races from all around the world. So I would say that was one way it was different and then secondly it was kind of like, even though our college was in more like rural area, it was still very easy to get around unlike how it was in Sussex. Uhm, you could get on the bus and go to town and be in town in like 10 minutes.

**Emmanuel (38:04)**

Wow.

**Megan (38:05)**

Uhm it was easy to go to and from London, Uhm I wasn't in boarding school anymore so I wasn't being controlled by any of the matrons. So it was easy for me to kind of like just be independent and do my own things and make my own decisions. So I guess that's how I can say it was different.

**Emmanuel (38:28)**

I see. So what was the, I guess, you said, you mentioned that there were a lot of people from different ethnicities and nationalities in Coventry. Uhm did you also meet Nigerian friends in Coventry or it was still Asians and British and..

**Megan (38:49)**

Yes uhm, definitely a lot of Nigerian friends and its very interesting because the Nigerian friends I had there were really close to me. I had one Nigerian friend from my primary school in Nigeria who went to Warwick.

**Emmanuel (39:05)**



Oh wow.

**Megan (39:06)**

And then I had one Nigerian friend from my first high school in Nigeria who went to Warwick and then another Nigerian friend from the second high school I went to in Nigeria who went to Warwick, so it was almost kind of like you know like bits and pieces of my old life (EM: wow) in my present school so it was a lot of fun. I got to reunite with you know those friends of mine who I kind of lost contact with when went to, when I moved to Sussex. Uhm, there were also a group of; it was a large group of Nigerians, very different from my prior experience uhm so yes....

**Emmanuel (39:52)**

Hmm. Interesting. So did you; you mentioned that you were no longer a boarding student and you were a day student so I am guessing that you lived off campus?

**Megan (40:02)**

Uhm so my first year of school I lived on Campus. In your first year, it's mandatory that you live on Campus. In my second year, I got a house with two of my other friends and in my third year I lived on Campus again because I really just wanted to be close to the library, I wanted to take my studies very seriously (EM: uh hmm). But I lived with all my close friends. I made sure that we all got into the same flat so we all had rooms opposite each other which was fun.

**Emmanuel (40:37)**

Oh, do you; are there any uhm interesting experiences that you call from living there with your room mates and friends?

**Megan (40:47)**

Uhm, Yes. I recall, I recall driving everyone, every other person who lived in the flat that was not Nigerian crazy because we would always cook Nigerian food that would, the scent would kind of like go around the entire hostel and everybody is like what is that very strange smell (EM: Laughter, ok) But we definitely had some fun memories, you know just catching up on old times, you know really trying our best to stay close to our culture, watching Nigerian movies. Just generally being like a noisy bunch of people so....

**Emmanuel (41:30)**

(Laughter) I see. I personally, like I for some reason haven't been able to adjust to American food yet for some reason and I love Nigerian food. What kinds of food you guys cook in that dorm. Do you remember specific ones that had this really overwhelming scent?

**Megan (41:52)**

Uhm, so we have this really strong soup called *Ogbono Soup*. Uhm it's kind of like a very brown thick soup with some vegetables. And we usually eat it with what we call pounded yam which is like, I don't know if they have, well they have yams here but you basically just--

**Emmanuel (42:14)**

It's like a yam flour?

**Megan (42:15)**

Yeah like yam flour. You cook with hot water and you serve it, it's kind of like fufu, you dip it in your soup.

**Emmanuel (42:22)**

I see.

**Megan (42:24)**

It's very tasty, but it has a very strong scent, enough to drive anyone who is not Nigerian crazy.

**Emmanuel (42:30)**

Laughter. So I mean, how did that affect the relationship between the Nigerian students in the dorm and students from other nationalities? Was there like some kind of beef between both parties or you guys eventually made up on other grounds.

**Megan (42:45)**

I wouldn't say there was beef, you know I would just say that there was a lot of curiosity about what we were cooking that was so strong. You know, that's the good thing about living abroad and mixing with different cultures is that eventually they accept your culture and they accept theirs. So I wouldn't say there was beef. It was just a very distinct scent.

**Emmanuel (43:16)**

So speaking of uh, I guess culture and facets of culture, what exactly; living in England all his while I'm guessing, what exactly about the British culture did you feel that basically became a part of you. What exactly is it that you feel affected you as being part of this new society that's different from your Nigerian upbringing?

**Megan (43:47)**

Uhm, I would say that one thing that uhm impacted me about the British culture, believe it or not is being able to just walk very fast [EM: Laughter], there is no, you know back home in Nigeria there is no sense of urgency to do anything like everybody is so relaxed and when you see people taking strolls, they are really taking their time. When you see people heading to work, they are really you know taking their time to like get to where they are going, but in England it's like very fast movement like think of New York lifestyle times two: people are walking really fast to get to where they are going. Uhm, so that really helped me realize that you know there should be a sense of urgency in a lot of

things, it just; it make you think on your feet more, you are walking faster, you are thinking faster, so that's definitely uhm something I took away from being in that British culture, like just having the mindset of being independent and thinking on your feet.

**Emmanuel (45:08)\***

I see, and did you ever feel British in a sense? Or you always felt that you were a Nigerian living in the UK? Did you ever feel that you basically were conjoined to that particular culture and society? Did you identify with it or it was always distant from you in a sense?

**Megan (45:34)**

Uhm, that's a good question. I, I can never say that I felt British. I mean I took a lot of British uhm thinking and a lot of British [EM: Ideologies] ideologies, but I would always say I was a Nigerian just living in England

**Emmanuel (45:59)**

Hmm.

**Megan (46:00)**

Because I'm very; I'm not one of those people who would completely forget where they are from just because they are elsewhere that they think is better than where they are coming from. No, I am a proud Nigerian and yes that's how I will continue to see myself.

**Emmanuel (46:19)**

I see. That's a good thing. Uhm now you were a student in Warwick and you were studying law (MG: Yes) correct and that's British common law which you were studying and uhm why law exactly? What inspired you to study law in the UK.

**Megan (46:43)**

Uhm, what inspired me to study law in the UK. Uhm I just; so growing up I just wanted to be a lawyer. I, my mom is a lawyer and I wanted to take after her and also I was very; you know growing up in Nigeria, I was very interested in being able to change the system one day, being able to change the legal system one day, uhm being able to have a working functioning judicial system that we don't actually have and since Nigeria and England have the same kind of like legal structure, for me going to school in England kind of like made the most sense because I would be very easy for me to translate the Common Law in England to the Common Law in Nigeria.

**Emmanuel (47:48)**

Hmm. So it was an easy transition per se

**Megan (47: 51)**

Yes, it was an easy transition

**Emmanuel (47:53)**

And it made sense to study over there.

**Megan (47:54)**

Yes

**Emmanuel (47:55)**

So speaking of being a student in the UK, I did some research and I found out that in 2011, there was this massive you know protests by over fifty thousand students in London. I believe they were protesting the hike in tuition rates that was instituted by the new conservative government. Did that uprising affect you in any way? Did you; how did you feel as an immigrant student in the UK? How did you feel about that?

**Megan (48:26)**

Uhm, honestly that didn't really affect me in any way and if; ill just be straight up and say ha I was kind of like welcome to the club [laughs].

**Emmanuel (48:42)**

Welcome to the club.

**Megan (48:44)**

Welcome to the club, I mean my parents were paying you know over four times the tuition that they were even protesting against [EM: oh wow]. And so it was kind of like well, you know; I mean that shouldn't really be a big deal because that's what we had been going through. I went to school in England in total for five years and my parents were paying these ridiculous fees, just to make sure that I completed my education. And so for me I thought it was like well you know, you shouldn't even be complaining about this in the first place. Like I'm sure the hike in the fees must have been very shocking to them because they are home students and they feel like it's their country and you know they should be looked after and unemployment at the time was very high and you know them thinking of how they could possibly start to repay their homes once the fees had been hiked was very difficult for them. But at the same time, I can't really say that I completely sympathize with them because our situation as international students was much much worse. [EM: Hmm] I mean I remember even during A-levels, my parents were paying eight thousand pounds a term. [EM: Wow] I'm saying a term, I mean eight thousand pounds every four months

**Emmanuel (50:14)**

And how many terms were there

**Megan (50:15)**

Three terms a year.

**Emmanuel (50:17)**

Oh wow, that's eight thousand thats; wow. That's a lot of money

**Megan (50:22)**

Yes that's a whole lot of money

**Emmanuel (50:24)**

It's about twenty thousand pounds a year.

**Megan (50:26)**

Twenty four thousand pounds a year.

**Emmanuel (50:28)**

And this was in contrast to how much that the home students were paying, the British students; how much was their tuition?

**Megan (50:36)**

So I think that their tuition was probably about two thousand a term...

**Emmanuel (50:42)**

Oh wow. So basically in three terms that's six thousand and that's in comparison with the twenty four thousand.

**Megan (50:50)**

Yes

**Emmanuel (50:52)**

Wow. So that's definitely a lot of; that's like four times...

**Megan (50:56)**

That's like four times the amount so you know it was hard for me to sympathize, welcome to the club, you know deal with it, this is life [laughter]

**Emmanuel (51:05)**

This is life. Okay so now let's move on to America which where we are here, you know where we are right now. Uhm when did you move to the United States?

**Megan (51:20)**

I moved to the United States right after I graduated from the University of Warwick so that was in 2011

**Emmanuel (51:29)**

2011. So that was right around the time that these protests were going on.

**Megan (51:36)**

yea

**Emmanuel (51:37)**

And so why America, why did you want to move to America?

**Megan (51:41)**

Uhm, as I mentioned at the time I was very focused on being an attorney. [EM: Hmm] and I always wanted to go to school abroad. I had visited America a couple of times and I always thought that I would go back; I would go to America and pursue a post-graduate degree. That was my intention at the time, to go to America since I have a law degree from England, why not just do what I would call a post-graduate degree, even though it's really not, but it's an extension of the degree that I already have; do it in America and just have you know, get to know the American Law and have British Law as well for a well-rounded view of being an attorney. So that was my plan initially. That was why I moved here to the states.

**Emmanuel (52: 34)**

I see. You mentioned, you said initially your plan was to become an attorney in the United States as well or get a law degree and then move on to Nigeria whichever the case may be. But the word initially signals that you don't feel the same right now. Is that correct?

**Megan (52:55)**

Uhm, that is definitely correct. So, I enjoyed law, it taught me a lot of analytical skills, the ability to think on my feet, great writing skills as well. But, I realized along the line that it wasn't really something that I wanted to do. It was more something that 1. I was forced to do by my parent and 2. I kind of forced myself to go into. When I was; before I went to school in England, before I did my A-Levels, I really wanted to pursue a Business Administration degree but my dad kind of told me that it was more important to have a degree that he said "was more solid", something that was more distinct as opposed to broad, just say that I specified in a particular area which kind of made sense to me and well he was kind of paying the tuition so I kind of had to go with what he thought. So I did enjoy it and I was passionate about it while I was studying it, but I got the chance to work for a really good law firm as a legal assistant and the more I; I worked there for almost two years.

**Emmanuel (54: 26)**

What law firm was that?

**Megan (54:27)**

Sidley Austin, LLP. While I was there, I realized that it wasn't really something that I wanted to do. I wanted to be in a position where I was being more creative. I felt like I was being; in the legal field I was confined to a desk; I felt like I didn't get a chance to interact very much with people. I felt like being a lawyer kind of trains you to not be confident in taking risks [EM: Hmm]. It trains you to follow existing precedent which my personality right now does not completely

gel with. I want to be able to think outside of the box. I want to be able to advise people and their business, you know on their business ideas, and what I think from a strategic point is the next profitable thing to do and so it wasn't really in line with what I wanted to do anymore.

**Emmanuel (55:39)**

I see. I see. Okay interesting. So take me back now. I just want you to take me back in time a little bit. I understand with the UK it's a very simplified and efficient transportation system. It's much smaller, it's easier to get around and then you know you move to the United States in 2011, and it's this huge place, its expanded and the transportation system is not as efficient as it is in the UK, there's this completely new uhm; these completely new adjustments that you have to make. So tell me, what were your first impressions of America once you got here? Tell me, what was that feeling like?

**Megan (56:27)**

Uhm, my first impression of America was that it is too big. It is just too big. I was coming from England, London where it was so easy to get on the train and in like five minutes, you are at your destination. When I first moved here, it was very hard for me because; say I was going out with my friend [or] I was going to dinner or something, I would have had a nap before we get to the destination [EM: Laughter]. It takes like thirty minutes to get everywhere in the states. It's crazy. The transportation system as well; I didn't know how to drive because I never needed to drive in England. I did not own a license; none of that. I had zero interest in learning how to drive because at the time it was like what's the point; it's even more expensive to own a car in England so why would I stress myself to do that and it's so easy to get on the train and the bus and they are so reliable, they come every minute [EM: Oh wow]. But moving here I really had to become independent. I had to go to driving school, make sure I passed my tests and get my provisional, then eventually get my driver's license; it's like a whole process about just learning a lot about yourself being; I thought I was independent in England but I really wasn't until I moved here. So, I had to learn how to get around basically, even before I had my car, just getting on the bus which isn't as frequent as it is in England. It was very hard for me to adapt [EM: Hmm]. and considering the fact that I didn't have any family members around, didn't have much of a support system. I had to do every single thing, well mostly on my own.

**Emmanuel (58:33)**

Oh wow, so you moved to the United States but then did you keep in touch with your family back in Nigeria?

**Megan (58:39)**

Yes I did. I still do. Family in Nigeria, family in London - it's just a phone call away and luckily for me, my mom visits America very often. She comes like every three months [EM: Oh wonderful]. My sister comes every year and so does my brother so I get to see them and I also go back to Nigeria at least once a year. So, it's been easy to keep in touch.

**Emmanuel (59:10)**

So it's been easy to keep in touch... interesting. And you mentioned when you came here that you worked for Sidley Austin for quite a while. Was that your first employment opportunity here in the United States or?

**Megan (59: 22)**

That wasn't my first employment opportunity. My first employment opportunity was at Chicago Title Insurance Company where I was a legal assistant as well [EM: Okay]. But it was a temporary position. That was my very first job yes.

**Emmanuel (59:38)**

Oh your very first job? Well very first job in the United States or very first very first job ever?

**Megan (59:44)**

Very first Job in the United States.

**Emmanuel (59:46)**

Oh okay, okay. Well first job in the United States, I'm guessing you met people also from different nationalities or was it mostly just Americans who worked there.

**Megan (59:57)**

It was mostly just Americans in that particular office. It was a really small office so. It wasn't like a mix of cultures; there were probably only like ten to twelve people, other people in the office were all American [EM: Hmm].

**Emmanuel (1:00:12)**

Hmm well, being a first job that may have had; that may have also been a very good way to experience Americans and the American culture. Did you notice any fundamental differences between Americans and British people?

**Megan (1:00:31)**

Yes, I would definitely say that Americans are a lot [friendlier] than British people.

**Emmanuel (1:00:39)**

Laughter. Okay

**Megan (1:00:41)**

Definitely a lot more friendly, a lot more welcoming, it's much easier for them to try and you know, kind of like welcome you into their... their... I guess their culture? [EM: mm Hmm] So I would definitely say that was the difference. People were warmer, they see you in the



morning and they give you a big smile saying "Good morning!" whereas, in England as everyone knows, people tend to be a bit more snobbish so...

**Emmanuel (1:01:12)**

I see, I see. So I mean; now you were a student in the UK and you are here in America now and one of the first things you do while being here is you get a job. What is that transition like? From being a student where you have little worries but studying and trying to pass exams and all of that; well did you have a job in the UK first off?

**Megan (1:01:38)**

No. I didn't, no I never did.

**Emmanuel (1:01:42)**

So how did you; how did you get by basically?

**Megan (1:01:46)**

Uhm I'm very blessed to have parents who are privileged to have assisted me throughout my studies [EM: I see] and so I was given; every month I was sent money from Nigeria to fend for myself. [EM: Okay] So that's how I survived which was a very strong contrast to my life in America because once I graduated from school, my dad basically just told me well you're the one who decided to go to America to live on your own so you are on your own. [EM: Laughter] and never gave me any assistance whatsoever which I think was a great thing though because I learnt to be independent and it taught me to work extremely hard to get what I want. To achieve, I had to keep working.

**Emmanuel (1:02:36)**

What was that adjustment like? In terms of now you had to fend for yourself as opposed to getting monthly stipends.

**Megan (1:02:41)**

It was hard because there in England and in Nigeria as well, accommodation is always provided to you. You know in my A-Levels, I was in a boarding school and then same thing, my rent was paid when I was in college and then we had a house in London as well so it was very hard to adjust to actually seeing bills every month and having to pay your rent, but as I said, no regrets and definitely learnt a lot.

**Emmanuel (1:03:18)**

I see. So now at Chicago Title and Sidley Austin, these are places that you mentioned that you have worked at upon your transition to the United States. Did you make any friends? Did you make any colleagues or people you associated with after work? Did you have any notable relationships?

**Megan (1:03:41)**

While I was Chicago Title, I mentioned I was only there for four months so I would say I wasn't able to build strong relationships because I

was there for such a short period of time. Uhm at Sidley Austin I would say that I did build relationships but unfortunately for me, the people that I worked with were not in the same age group as I was in so they had completely different interests, they were much older and married with kids and so it wasn't like I could just say oh let's all go for a happy hour, that wasn't how it worked. [EM: Laughter] People had bigger problems so I wasn't really able to socialize with them outside of work, but at work I definitely gained a lot from having good relationships with them because they really; because I was the youngest, they kind of saw me as their daughter and really made the effort to make sure that I was okay and trained me. They taught me a whole lot so...

**Emmanuel (1:04:48)**

Hmm. Can you remember one specific instance of that training, that mentorship that you received from these older people?

**Megan (1:05:01)**

I remember one very funny instance. One of the attorneys was trying..

**Emmanuel (1:05:10)**

At Sidley?

**Megan (1:05:11)**

Yes, at Sidley was trying to get to New York very last minute and I was supposed to be responsible for booking his flight and bear in mind that this was like the first time that I had been working at such a big; cause it's a very big law firm, they are like big time attorneys, very reputable and he was trying to get to New York and it was hard for me to get any flight out. So I said to them, I said, I don't really know what else to do bear in mind that this was like two or three weeks into when I first started, I was like I don't really know what else to do, the flights are completely booked, can't I just put him on a bus? And everyone just burst out laughing! [EM: Laughter] cause they were like Megan you cannot really put a senior partner on a bus. You don't do that. It's one of those moments where I feel other people might look at you like - you are so stupid, how could you have ever come up with something like that, but I feel like someone; people who really, they really cared about me, they really looked at me as I mentioned, as their daughter so they said okay no this is not what we do. They always spoke to me in a very encouraging manner which I really liked. It wasn't a competition to see who was smarter than who. It was really like a family where they really encouraged you when you were wrong as opposed to knocking you down when you were already on the ground. They encourage you which was nice.

**Emmanuel (1:06:56)**

I see. You talk about them in a past tense per se. So you don't work at Sidley right now?

**Megan (1:07:03)**

I don't work at Sidley anymore and that's; as I mentioned is because I lost interest in legal. I started to feel like that really wasn't the best place for me to be in. Although it was a great firm, I realized that I didn't want to study law anymore so I now work at Hill & Knowlton Strategies. It's a PR consulting firm and digital marketing firm and I have been really enjoying that.

**Emmanuel (1:07:35)**

I see. So what is your role at Hill & Knowlton?

**Megan (1:07:37)**

My role at Hill & Knowlton currently is; I'm working as an Executive Assistant to the head of Internal Communications and the head Digital Marketing.

**Emmanuel (1:07:49)**

Oh wow. Digital marketing, that's interesting and that's relative to what you said you've always wanted to do in a business sense per se

**Megan (1:07:56)**

Very much so, so that's really the path that I'm heading towards and I hope I continue to learn and I continue to progress.

**Emmanuel (1:08:05)**

I see. So what is the culture at Hill & Knowlton and how is that different from these law firms you have worked at?

**Megan (1:08:12)**

Completely different. I mean it's a very young very bubbly kind of environment. It's like very creative people always willing to take risks. It's like getting to learn how to develop your thinking in that kind of way, getting to interact with clients and just; it's been interesting finally working with people who are around my age.

**Emmanuel (1:08:44)**

I see. So have you made friends there too? American friends orr...

**Megan (1:08:48)**

I've made good friends, American friends actually which is good. We hang out after work, do happy hour we have actual good relationships with each other so...

**Emmanuel (1:09:00)**

Ah interesting. So slowly you are getting involved in the American culture. You mentioned happy hours, that's a quintessential staple in the working field in America, so what else is it about America that you have basically caught on to.

**Megan (1:09:21)**

What else about America that I have caught on to... I would say; I keep saying this, it's just the independence, you know being; knowing that it's necessary to build relationships and being able to connect with people, being able to interact with people realizing that that is key to where you need to go. I would say that in England I was very much shielded; I think because at the time my general thought was well I am just here to go to school and I'm eventually going to move back to Nigeria so there's not really much of a need to apply myself like the way I am applying myself now but now I have realized its actually very important to network and build relationships with people. So I feel like that's definitely the American culture, just being independent and continuing to fight for your own cause.

**Emmanuel (1:10:25)**

So independence and liberty, these are things that I guess you have been indoctrinated into and things that you identify with at this point. Is that different from life in Nigeria? This notion of independence and liberty because you put such an emphasis on being independent and being free to make decisions. Was this the same kind of experience in Nigeria or was that any different?

**Megan (1:11:00)**

Definitely a completely different experience. In Nigeria as a woman, you are not trained to be independent. I mean you find a lot of Nigerian women who are out there maybe starting businesses in Nigeria, maybe, and it's usually businesses like selling clothes or selling cosmetics. It's very hard to find a very strong career woman who is at the top of her game either in business or as an attorney or; so it's definitely very different in, here you work hard and you get what you want. In Nigeria, you work hard but you might not necessarily get what you want. In Nigeria you work hard and you know you deserve to be at a certain level but you might not actually get to that level unless you know someone who can take you to that level. So that's really the difference but here if you are persistent, you could easily go from the bottom to the top. In Nigeria, you remain at the bottom until someone that wants to take you to the top takes you to the top. [EM: Laughter, I see] So it's different. You work hard and you see results, that's what I really like about it here.

**Emmanuel (1:12:30)**

That you for sharing that with us because that's a very important contrast to note with growing up in Africa as a woman and how that translates over here and how that's fundamentally different from what you've experienced. So are they; in America right now, do you have any Nigerian friends who are in similar situations such as you, basically who moved here for school and are working now. Do you identify with the Nigerian community here or any Nigerian community here?

**Megan (1:13:08)**

I do. I have a lot of friends who are here as well, I wouldn't say as many friends as I did back in England, it's a much smaller group. [EM: Okay] But definitely there's a big Nigerian community here in DC.

**Emmanuel (1:13:27)**

There's a big Nigerian community and why is that; why do you think that is the case? Why Washington. DC?

**Megan (1:13:32)**

Honestly, I think that a place like Washington DC is a really good place for immigrants, people who either come, come from Nigeria for example. Because I feel like out of all the states, it's one of the easiest places to kind of settle into as an immigrant because it's easier for you to move around. The transportation system here is good you know it's a really good place to be in.

**Emmanuel (1:14:06)**

Hmm and also I guess from my personal experience the fact it is like a cultural hub as well, you have people from different nationalities..

**Megan (1:14:15)**

Yes, it is definitely. That is a very good point. It's a good cultural hub.

**Emmanuel (1:14:20)**

Oh okay. Now, okay so you said that you have a small community of friends who are also Nigerian. Now importing some of your values back home, you earlier mentioned that you were a Catholic. Do you go to Church here and if so, what church do you go to?

**Megan (1:14:44)**

So right now it's kind of difficult for me because I'm kind of struggling with my Catholic faith a little. When I moved here and you know I'm away from my parents, I started to go to my boyfriend's church which I find that I connect more to. I feel like I connect more to the sermons; my boyfriend is Pentecostal by the way.

**Emmanuel (1:15:16)**

[Laughter] yeah, that's me. Pentecostal yeah.

**Megan (1:15:20)**

Uhm so, I feel like I connect more to the pastor, I really take a message home every time I go. I don't necessarily feel that way in the Catholic Church so I'm kind of torn. I mean I go to the Catholic Church on some Sundays and then I go to my boyfriend's church on other Sundays. So whether I want to remain Catholic is something that we really need to keep thinking about especially as we are considering getting married in the next year. But yeah I still do go to Catholic Church sometimes.

**Emmanuel (1:16:02)**

I see. You mentioned that your parents are very staunch Catholics and I understand that they take up leadership roles in the Catholic Church over there. How do you feel that that will translate back to them?

**Megan (1:16:16)**

Uhm, that's the problem. That's why I'm really finding it difficult right now because I know that my parents are not going to take it lightly at all. I know that they are going to be upset about it. I know that they are going to be upset that I could possibly, might not be raising my children as Catholic, I know that would completely break their heart so, you grow up in life and you make certain decisions that are best for you and guess we will have to see what happens.

**Emmanuel (1:16:57)**

So that's a touchy subject.

**Megan (1:16:59)**

Yes.

**Emmanuel (1:17:05)**

Okay, well I guess let's move on then. You live in Silver Spring, Maryland...

**Megan (1:17:08)**

Yes I do.

**Emmanuel (1:17:09)**

So tell me, do you have any good memories so far about living in the United States? Has there been any notable thing that happened that you remember and you recall favorably?

**Megan (1:17:22)**

I wouldn't really say this was a very favorable experience but what I would say was definitely a new experience to me was the earthquake. [EM: Laughter] when was that, like two years ago?

**Emmanuel (1:17:40)**

Yes that was...

**Megan (1:17:42)**

Yes that was very shocking to me because I moved to Washington, DC or you know, the Maryland area thinking it was safe [EM: Okay] and wasn't prone to earthquakes and any natural disasters. So that was definitely an eye opener, it signaled to me that nowhere is actually really safe and so that was definitely a very shocking experience.

**Emmanuel (1:18:16)**

Where were you during the earthquake? Do you remember?

**Megan (1:18:18)**

At the time I was still looking for a job so I was home when that happened actually, I was sleeping and the earthquake woke me up.

**Emmanuel (1:18:27)**

Wow. So what was that feeling like, you know you were sleeping and you hear the ground rattle, what did you do in that particular instance cause I imagine that that must have been quite scary because that's not something you had experienced.

**Megan (1:18:38)**

I honestly thought it was rapture. I thought Jesus Christ had come.

**Emmanuel (1:18:41)**

[Laughter] oh okay.

**Megan (1:18:42)**

So I started calling all my loved ones [laughs] to make sure they were in Heaven. No It was definitely very scary, I mean, okay so I happened, like the first few seconds, it happened once and I was like; I woke up and I was like hmm, I think I felt the ground shake, I'm not sure; Anyways, I'm going to go back to sleep and then it happened again and I was like okay the ground definitely shook. [laughs] But it was shocking, it was shocking.

**Emmanuel (1:19:18)**

This was shortly after you moved to the United States [EM: Yes] so it was like welcome to America.

**Megan (1:19:24)**

Welcome to America and then of course I had my mom and my dad call me and say "you see I told you! Maybe this America plan wasn't a good idea. Look at you now [laughter] going through an earth quake.

**Emmanuel (1:19:42)**

Okay, so tell me, what else is it America that you have adjusted to? For example, with the food is there any particular type of American food that you really like to eat now or?

**Megan (1:19:58)**

So, American Food, I mean there's nothing that I had tried here that I had never tried before if that makes any sense because in Nigeria or in England, you are served American food, there are a lot of American restaurants there like we have Johnny Rockets, we have, there are so many Nigerian restaurants\* [EM: McDonalds] McDonalds in England. It's like burgers and fries and steak and sometimes fish. These are not

things that I haven't experienced but I do know that in terms of the culture, I feel like I have really adapted to the fitness culture; trying to eat more healthy kind of meals so; I wasn't even aware of all these other healthy options when I lived in Nigeria so now I try to substitute my meals to eating wheat bread, eating brown rice, all of these things help my diet trying to eat more vegetables so I would say that's definitely a kind of culture I have assimilated myself with.

**Emmanuel (1:21:10)**

So you feel like your views on certain things have slightly changed [MG: Yes] from your experience here in America.

**Megan (1:21:17)**

Yes mostly because I would say of the portions that are served in American restaurants. They are very intimidating and so when I first moved here, it was very hard for me to maintain my weight because the portions were over whelming so I started to do my research and I found people who were starting to take their fitness more seriously and that's definitely a culture that I've picked up on.

**Emmanuel (1:21:42)**

I see. I see. So with; wow that provides a perfect Segway into my next line of questioning which is; well you've come to America, you've been in the UK after leaving Nigeria, now you are in America and there's this little tweaks and bits and differences relating to food or your views on liberty and independence and how now that you work you provide for yourself and this is something that was different from your life in the UK and in Nigeria. So now like when; you also mentioned that you visit Nigeria at least once a year, how is it that your visits back to Nigeria are different? Like do you still feel the exact same way when you get back to Nigeria after experiencing life in the UK and in America? When you go back home, is it still the home that you remember or do you feel that you have changed when you get back there or has Nigeria changed?

**Megan (1:22:44)**

Good question. In terms of whether I still see it as my home, I definitely do. Nothing can ever change my views about that. But has Nigeria changed? Yes Nigeria has changed. Nigeria has developed so much more in comparison to when I first left. The educational system is better now, we have a lot of China-African investment going on\* so there are a lot of buildings, tall buildings coming up, a lot of businesses, a lot of international businesses moving to Nigeria; we have Deloitte in Nigeria, we have Accenture, we have Deutsche Bank, we have everything, a lot of big international companies moving there. Nigeria is definitely progressing, we have a lot of American restaurants that are now in Nigeria and at the same time we have like a big influx of people who have decided that they are going to leave America or London and just move back to Nigeria because of how much the country has progressed in the past few years. So I definitely still call it home and at the same time, I am very proud of the fact that its vastly developing.

**Emmanuel (1:24:08)**



Hmm. So when you visit and you meet with your family and friends and those that you left back; I'm trying to get into that scene; how is that usually like when you return back home?

**Megan (1:24:22)**

Uhm, it's a lot of excitement, everybody is looking at me to see if I have gained or lost weight [EM: Laughs] if I still look the same, everybody is really interested in helping you open your suitcase to see what you could have possibly brought back for them. It's definitely very welcoming feeling because they only get to see me in Nigeria like once a year. Everybody is always so excited, it's a big re-union, I get to see my nephews and my siblings so it's always a great time and it's always sad to leave.

**Emmanuel (1:25:01)**

It's always sad to leave; and what time of the year do you usually go back?

**Megan (1:25:05)**

Usually during Christmas holidays, that's the most time that I get off work because of all the holidays in between so I like to take advantage of that and use that time to be at home.

**Emmanuel (1:25:18)**

I see; and how is the, how is Christmas celebrated in Nigeria? Is it different from how it's celebrated here - is it much bigger, is it much smaller?

**Megan (1:25:01)**

I think it's about the same scale or maybe even bigger. It's a whole lot of celebration. People in Nigeria really believe in going to church on Christmas day, doing a night vigil the day before Christmas and the day before New Year to really welcome the New [EM: New year coming in]. Yes so and then uhm, it's usually a very big celebration. People have parties, people kill cows and kill chickens [EM: Oh wow\*]. It's a really big celebration, a reunion of all the family members which is kind of how it is here but maybe on a much bigger scale, yea maybe on a bigger scale.

**Emmanuel (1:26:17)**

Much bigger scale, I see. Oh okay. Well I'm certainly looking forward to going back to Nigeria for Christmas. I went this past year and I had a lot of fun, I hadn't been back in quite a while so I definitely understand what you mean; and uhm you said something earlier which caught my attention. You said that you would always see yourself as a Nigerian. But, while you are here in the United States, do you ever feel like you are an American African or you still maintain that nationalism like you are Nigerian, doesn't matter where you are, you

know you are just a Nigerian in another culture; same way you felt in the UK, do you feel like that in America or do you feel that has changed?

**Megan (1:27:14)**

Good question. I don't feel like that has changed at all. I still feel like I'm very Nigerian. For me, when someone says that they are African American, I usually associate that with Africans who don't visit home a lot; Africans who maybe were born there, are now in America and haven't been back since they were born, people who don't really have ties to Nigeria or Africa. So when someone says I'm African American, that's what I think like oh this is probably someone who is Nigerian but does not really know what Nigeria is about.

**Emmanuel (1:28:01)**

By that you mean an African who refers to themselves as African American?

**Megan (1:28:04)**

Yes.

**Emmanuel (1:28:05)**

Okay.

**Megan (1:28:06)**

But that's not my case; I have very strong ties to Nigeria. I visit there very often; I still have very strong ties to the culture so I can never refer to myself as African American. I mean, no that's not me.

**Emmanuel (1:28:30)**

So do you see yourself moving back to Nigeria?

**Megan (1:28:35)**

I definitely do, but I wouldn't say anytime soon. I see myself moving back to Nigeria when I feel like I have gotten enough capital to go over there and start my own business. You know, really be independent and run my own ship because I just feel like in terms of the monetary income, there's not really that much to be gained by moving back to Nigeria just to work a nine to five job that I can be doing here earning three or four times what I would earn if I was living in Nigeria. So my goal, I'm working towards financially setting money aside, saving up just so I can move back to Nigeria and just do something of my own.

**Emmanuel (1:29:01)**

So your goal is to take your experiences here and take your resources that you would have generated from working here and moving back to Nigeria and starting something; starting a business for yourself?

**Megan (1:29:42)**

Definitely.

**Emmanuel (1:29:44)**

Okay. I guess that's a good cause per se. Now this is I guess a question that has to be asked in light of your transition to all these different places; If you had to do it again, would you go the same route that you did?

**Megan (1:30:09)**

I definitely would. I feel like having all these different experiences at the time I had them was very crucial to developing my character. Coming you know, going from Nigeria to England was great for me to do at the time because I was much younger and I really gave me a chance to be at least a little more independent before I got a chance to move out into the American world, gave me the chance to experience many cultures; so that was great for me at the time and then finally moving to America after having the experience that I had in England with the little bit of independence that I got and being able to interact with different cultural groups, I think was a great thing for me. It really worked in my favor having that prior experience and if I was to ever go it again, I would do it the exact same way just because at each stage of my life, no matter where I was, I was learning and developing myself in one way or the other, and they were both at; it was all great timing for me. Everywhere that I went, I thought was a perfect time for me to be here.

**Emmanuel (1:31:43)**

I see. Well I would like to thank you so much for your time. We've had a very productive discussion and I've gotten to learn a couple things about you that I didn't know previously and I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to detail all these experiences. It's important to categorize these memories and histories. I'm grateful for sharing all of this with us and I would like to thank you for doing that.

**Megan (1:32:08)**

Thank you.

**Emmanuel (1:32:09)**

Alright.