

Akin Adegboye

Establishing ProAct Community Centre (2 mins 28)

I came into Essex from Edinburgh in 2002. I was employed as the area housing manager for the then Springboard Housing Association, which eventually merged to be part of the Genesis Housing Group. And from that point, I've been involved in the day-to-day activities of ensuring that those who are in need of housing in Essex are met, 'cos I have responsibilities for different areas, including Hertfordshire and part of Suffolk. So from there I could then say that I got connected with the community. And my wife haven't got a job then, and she set up the first Afro-Caribbean shop in Chelmsford. We found out much of the town in this shop, people do have all sort of questions in terms of betterment of their life, people looking for assist to education, to housing, to all sort of things. And I got an indication that there's a service there's a need for something that can assist the ethnic minority. And I contacted a friend of mine named Ade Fashidi, he was working for Shelter then and we decided to set up ProAct Community Centre. And ProAct was basically, you know, set up to assist ethnic minority in accessing information, like a signposting, if they need anything we would then signpost them to where they can get assisted. We work alongside with Chelmsford City Council and the Chelmer Housing Partnership.

Migration Theme:

Coming to England (1 min 28)

I think I left Nigeria in 1989, that was quite long time ago, not voluntarily, but I was – I had to leave, I've been an activist in Nigeria. But coming back here – coming to Western World is quite different – different in so many ways. In the way the perception about life is completely different to what works, if things works well, you know, which it give – it was a platform for you to – to achieve certain objectives, certain aims, if you're really meant to achieve it. Compared to Africa sometimes, you may well have some aims, you may have some objectives, but the environment may have certain impact on it, you know, they're not much realised. We have found those who are able will leave the country, would leave the country, and the moment they're here, you can see them prosper as they get some sort of – level of – I use the word, ability to do, which they never can – they may not have the opportunity in Africa.

Community:

Supporting the Black Community (45 secs)

I'm going to use my own community as an illustration. We set up ProAct Community Resource Centre in order to take care of that. So we were able to provide support for the black community even though Asian, or some other people say no, it's just for black community. Because we are diverse, we are – when I first arrived in Chelmsford, there are pockets of black here and there, there was not many. But as time goes by, we realise there's so many black, in fact at ProAct we find that there is a lot of black community.

Childhood:

My Early Life (53 secs)

I was born into a family of twenty-one children, my father was a polygamous, he had five wives, he was a high chief at the time, and he was a Prince as well. I think I'm number seven in the family. My mum was the second wife, she was a trader, my dad was a civil servant, my mum ran a very small family business in trading, you know, buying and selling and stuff, and distributed to Cadbury. I went to primary and secondary school in my hometown and after – well from my mum, I'm the fourth child, so I'm a middle child.

Fearing for my Life:

Campaigning (32 secs)

So I was campaigning against the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa, and I was campaigning against Shell 'cos Shell was actually accused of destroying the land of the Ogoni people 'cos of the oil spillage, they should go and clean their mess, they are operating a double standard. I got picked up, that's how my problem started.