

Henry Ezicke – Audio Clip Transcripts

HE Reclaiming Our Story (1 min 25)

We, as a community, we as an ethnic minority, we as black people, keep on encouraging and whenever there's opportunity to tell our story, you know, nobody, some people don't know how educated most, especially Nigerians, we Nigerians, we like education. We also, I can say we like certificates!

I hold a master's degree in internet engineering and an MBA in strategic management. My wife is completing her PhD, you know, so we like studies. We like, you know, so if any way we can tell our story, you know, I want our story to be heard.

I want our children to be proud to be Essex children, English and united, Great Britain, you know. I want us to be able to live with confidence that we are part of this big Great Britain. So, I just want to encourage anyone that is, that has a story to share their story, because that's the only way we can make ourselves a member of this community, this great Essex community.

HE Nigeria independence civil war (1 min 40)

Nigeria got their independence in 1960, and like every other country, we had our first indigenous prime minister and president. So the prime minister was Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and he's from the northern Nigeria. And we also have a president, ceremonial president, called Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe.

He was from the eastern part of the country where I came from. So yeah, as the story was told, Nigeria, yeah, we got our independence, celebrated it very well, looking forward to bigger things, with one of the largest population in the African continent as of that time, and as of now also. Nigeria had a lot of prospects, there was, and with the discovery of oil in 1956, the world was looking to Nigeria for the big things.

Well, as it might be, Nigeria was made up of three very, very distinct regions, which is the north, the Fulani north, and the west, the Yorubas in the west, and the Igbos in the south. Now, I believe, well, there's always unity in diversity, but sometimes if it's not managed very well, it becomes a conflict. So I don't think these three tribes have been able to manage their diversity very well.

So based on that, I think that was one of the reasons for the Nigerian civil war.

HE Living in Essex (1 min 26)

Technically, where we live is a very small village, so almost everybody knows everybody, and one of our houses, one of the big ones, so it's easy to, at the end, we are not quite a number of coloured people living around, so it's easy to pick up. Then luckily for me, luckily for us, the next compound is the village hall, where people normally come in, and also we are Catholics, and we like attending masses. So by attending masses every Sunday, we started getting into the

community, visiting the village hall, village community hall, started, you know, meeting communities, and of course, you know, going to the local schools, and all those kind of stuff. But it's... we live a stone throw from the Hatfield forest, yeah, so we go for a long walk there. So a lot of things to do. So you can easily, when you come out in the morning, you're having a walk, either you see people running, walking their dogs, so you keep on meeting people, bumping into people, and so it's a community that you can't hide, because there are so many, there are not so many places to hide. There's a lot of open spaces, people are living, you know, so you meet people a lot.

HE Embrace your community (1 min 20)

Wherever you find yourself, that's where you're from. You contribute, this is I live here, I pay my taxes, I pay my council tax in Essex. This is my community, this is where I live.

If anything happens to Essex now, my home is worth a lot. The only way you can, and I tell people, you don't stop living. You can't say, oh, don't worry, later when I go back to Nigeria, oh, later, no, no, no.

Every day that passes by, you can't get it back. Right, any day that passes, so why not start living? And the only way you can live is within your community. You start from your community.

So what we are doing here today is to show our presence that in 100 years' time, nobody is going to ask my great-grandchildren or grandchildren, where are you from? I'm from Essex. You can go to the archive, you can see my grandfather speaking. This is what we want to, because the world is a global village.

You can't, you know, we can't in one hand and say, oh, it's a global. Oh, no, no, no, it's not. Where are you from? No, no, no.

You defend yourself. This is where I live. This is where I pay my tax.

And I'm so proud to be from Essex.

HE Early childhood (2 mins 11)

My growing up was a little bit, I would say I had two parents growing up. I lived with my biological parents. My biological parents, we had ten of us, my dad and my mum, they had ten of us and I was the first.

Now, after the Nigerian Civil War, we moved as a family, then it was only me and my immediate younger sister. We moved to a town east of Nigeria called Onitsha, O-N-I-T-S-H-A, Onitsha. So, it's in the current Anambra State of Nigeria.

And my dad started off again with his businesses. So, we lived as a family. We had some other more siblings.

So, very interesting life. When you don't know about things, you don't miss it. Life was so enjoyable then because, you know, it was more like a community where everybody, whether it's

your direct sibling or not, everybody's your brother, whether it's your nephew, everybody's called brother, sister or something like that.

So, the sense of community in those days was extremely very strong. People looked after each other. You don't have much, but you don't notice it because everybody's more like a community. You don't eat separately. Food is brought in a big bowl and everybody's dipping their hand there and eat from there.

So, when I look back at my growing up in that, it's one of the happiest times of my life because you know you have people that have your back.

The community, there's no kind of individualism. There's no kind of, this is mine. It's always ours, ours, ours.

So, I spent the first 10 years of my life with my parents, living with them in Onitsha and four of my siblings.

HE Career in UK (1 min 24)

So, getting to the United Kingdom, like every other young guy that doesn't know exactly, you meet some friends and like every other thing, you start your career. As a student you don't care, you're just like, where is the job, you know? So, started off like every other person in the care industry, doing some mental health care, while going to school, studying. Luckily for us, luckily for me, that was the era of information technology, that was the first time information technology was creeping in. We started hearing about technology and all this kind of stuff. So, my intention when I was coming here was to further things on banking and financing, banking and finance or something, investment banking, all those kinds of stuff. But with technology and all this lot, we started drifting towards technology.

So, I eventually did my master's degree in internet engineering, which is computer sciences. So, I did my, in computer sciences, got my first job as usually what we call network support engineer, where you're, you know, you're looking at the computer system, the systems that people use to do their work or something like that.

So, that's actually where my proper career kicked off.

HE Career Choice Part One (1 min 14)

Yeah, because I grew up, both my primary school and secondary school was within this university community where everything is all about education, education, education, education, everybody there. And usually in those days in Nigeria, if you're clever enough, if you're good with maths and sciences, automatically you're pivoting towards studying medicine or pharmacy or something like that. These are the two you understand.

And lucky enough, as I said, I was clever enough, but maybe not very, very clever. So I wanted to study pharmacy. You know, that was my choice. I wanted to, but eventually I did not get into

pharmacy. Eventually I studied economics. So I studied economics in University of Nigeria Nsukka. So I got my first degree there. That was in 1994, '95. By 1996, I came into United Kingdom.

As I mentioned before, in Nigeria or in Africa, in those days, maybe things are changing a little bit now, nobody knows exactly unless you're studying pharmacy, unless you're studying medicine or law, every other course you study, you don't know where you're going to end up.

HE Career Choice Part Two (2 mins 14)

Nobody knows exactly unless you're studying pharmacy, unless you're studying medicine or law or one of, you know, every other course you study, you don't know where you're going to end up. We don't really understand what career means, so to say, other than you going to school, you need to get a good job and you need to make money.

So, if things weren't looked at from the career perspective, I'm going to work in this organisation, doing this type of stuff and grow and get to be a CEO or something like that. It was more like, where am I going to get the highest reward? No, not even tomorrow, no. So, people, we are doing after graduation from school.

So, in graduating from school, you don't, because there's limited mentorship, there's limited coaching, there's limited direction, so, people were figuring things out for themselves as they go.

So, in the early '90s, Nigeria was really bad. We were still in the era of the military regime. General Hassan Abacha was the president of the country then. Things were really rough. Companies were leaving, foreign companies were leaving Nigeria and everything.

So, then, one of the most attractive things then was going abroad. You know, if you can find yourself abroad, then whatever you're going to do abroad, nobody knows.

So, I fell into that bracket because my parents were, would I say, financially sustainable enough to sponsor me abroad. So, I'm one of the lucky ones. Based on the choices we have after graduation, you can start sitting in Nigeria and start looking for a job you don't know when you're going to get.

You can go back and do a master's. And what advantage is it for you? If you finish a master's in Nigeria, is there any job for you? No. Or you can go into business, start your own little business.

And because I grew up in an environment where business is not... although my parents were business people, I never had that kind of intention of, I don't know how to do business. I don't know. So, the only thing I know is either I get a job or I go abroad.