

Kay Lawson

Career choice (58 secs)

Born in the UK, precisely Paddington. I spent my first, I think, seven years or eight years in the UK. Then from then onwards, I was back in Nigeria to do my primary school and secondary school and the first early years of my OND before I moved back to the UK.

I went to do business administration, business management, and that's what I graduated in school. Well, on coming back to the UK as well, that's what I actually did as well. But I don't work with my qualifications right now.

I work as an IT consultant right now, twenty-five, twenty-six years now, and initially when I only went into IT because of the money, that's when I started realising the value of money, that money was quite important, and I do enjoy doing it now, which is a good thing.

Day by Day (37 secs)

So, where you are living there now and this stage in your life, how do you see sort of the next five, ten years stretching ahead? Have you got any ideas how you want to live your life?

That's a very good question. I just take it every day, one day at a time, you know, honestly speaking. I don't have a plan. I just think, okay, this is where we are. I deal with it on a yearly basis, not on a five-yearly basis.

Do you go back and visit family in Nigeria?

I do. I've got family back home, even though my mum is in the UK, my sisters and brothers are in the UK, and my dad is late. So, I just go back to Nigeria to visit extended family and to try to connect with the community back home.

Enjoy O5BM (1 min 17)

Is there any aspects that you would like to share in this story as part of your interview and, you know, life story that you feel is important for this project?

No, I mean, nothing special. I mean, I just tend to... One thing about O5BM that I like is that when Eni started this O5BM journey, I was like, "Oh, Eni, what are you trying to do? Why are you stressing yourself about this?" Well, honestly speaking, it's been a great impact on my life and the life of my other friends as well, because a lot of us do attend all these webinar sessions. They have a webinar called the Ask the Doctors Seminar, which talks about health as well.

And it's been a great change and a great game-changer in my life. So I'll still keep on inviting people to come and join O5BM 'till today. So it's a good thing.

Yeah, it seems like there's a good mix of online stuff that they do, activities like this, webinars and health, and then a good mix of meeting up in person. And have you actually made new friendships there with brand new people you've met?

Yes, I've made lots of new friends there. Oh, yes. Especially at table tennis, which is everybody meet there on Wednesdays. So you meet a lot of people.

Leaving Nigeria (51 secs)

Going back to the UK was 1989. I think I grew up in Nigeria. I think I was just 20 then.

I just wanted to leave Nigeria because I just wanted to leave. I didn't want to leave Nigeria. I just wanted to leave. I was living under my parents. I just didn't feel comfortable being with my parents anymore. And I think the best solution was for me to leave.

And I took the bold step to come to the UK. And I stayed with my cousin for the first three months I was in the UK. Now, from then onwards, my brother came to join me. We stayed together in Stepford. From then onwards, we went to Surrey Quays, which is still the same South East London. And one morning, nineteen, twenty years ago, I just thought I've had enough of London because it was too congested.

And I just said, I need to move out of London. That's how I ended up in Essex. And I have no regrets 'till today.

Life in Tilbury (1 min 34)

Where did you first move to in Essex?

Tilbury, and I'm still there till today. Tilbury is quite quiet. I like it. It's a very small community. Everybody knows everybody. I mean, you've got Tilbury, you've got West Tilbury, and you've got East Tilbury as well.

But I live in Tilbury town, so it's quite a small community. There's only one or two way in, and that's the only two way out as well.

So I used to be in a Tilbury community centre, but the only reason why I backed down a bit, and this was when I first moved down, it was, no disrespect to you, it was mostly white people.
[laughs]

And they used to look at me funny, because when I moved to Tilbury, I could tell how many black people lived in Tilbury. They just used to look at everybody like, what are you doing here? It was about four black people. But right now in Tilbury, you have like maybe thirty, forty percent of black people in Tilbury right now, which makes it a lot easier to communicate with everybody.

But on saying that, I have a group of friends that I meet, most of them in Essex, we meet every six weeks. As a community, we just brainstorm together, do mental health courses, do the same thing like O5BM is doing as well, just about twenty four of us. We meet every six weeks at the Hilton Hotel, Deptford.

And we just talk about life experiences, how we can balance life, work, and we just brainstorm about business and life itself, really. And we've been doing this for like eight, nine years now.

Systemic Racism (2 mins)

And have you had any particular challenges in your career, and either in the early days, starting out, or nowadays?

In the early days, yes, but nowadays it is a lot easier. I think, no disrespect to anything, I think in the early days there was this systemic racism, then, and as a black guy, and you're doing an article sort of, and I used to struggle, but right now, obviously speaking, a lot of people are exposed to that, look, a lot of black people are doing not too bad these days, it's a lot easier now.

Do you mind if I ask if you've got any stories you'd like to share about the systemic racism, or just sort of context?

Yeah, so I've been to jobs where you just think that some of the staffs at the place where you work, your colleagues just didn't like the fact that you're a black man and you were just there, and they just think you are working ahead of them, because we Nigerians have this thing about education, education is very important for us to go to, especially in an African country, and you come into a place where you're doing well than other races, other colleagues of yours that are either white or Indian, and they just didn't like it, and it was a struggle then, but obviously speaking, the way things have been going right now, things have changed a lot compared to when it was.

Because I remember coming to the UK years back, this was when I was twenty, as a black man, to drive a car was a problem then, you know. It was just the fact that as a black man, you drive a car, you get pulled over by the police. But that has changed now, you know, things are a lot easier now, but every time, I can't remember how many times I've been pulled over, just for driving as a black man, this was in the early '90s, but obviously now it's a lot easier now, so.