

ORAL HISTORY - E

Transcriber's initial: T

P1: In Lagos state we were living in the army barracks, in a place called Ojo Cantonment. That was where I spent most of my childhood, although I travelled around. So, in the barracks you get your apartment... It would be a block of flats, but then you have your own apartment which would be two or three rooms depending on the size of your family. And then when your parents get a promotion in rank, you move to a bigger flat. So, we first live in a two-room, then we moved to a three-room, then we moved to four rooms. Yeah, so I am from a family of seven. I'm the middle child. I have one brother, five sisters.

It was quite exciting. One of the memorable things there was that my brother and I... We used to play like train ourselves, that we want to be in the army just like our dad. So yeah, we would have toys and gifts that our daddy bought us, and we would play "in the army" like we would do what we call parades. Funnily enough, he ended up... right now he's in the Nigerian Navy. And I went on to join the Merchant Navy because I work as a marine engineer. And I attended a military primary school, so when I'd get home from school I'd always engage in boys' talk with my brother. So that's fondly what memories I have.

In Nigeria, I'm from the south-western part. We are good at growing cocoa, yam, cassava, maize and a lot of other crops. So, one of the things we do during festive periods while we celebrate, or when my parents cook a special meal, is pounded yam. So, you have yam. You boil it and pound it. It becomes like mashed potatoes, but it's thicker. And then you prepare soup. One of the favourite soup we use is egusi soup. And then you use beef or goat meat, or sometimes they go hunting and then they have meat from the wild animals captured, and then they use it to prepare soup. And then they add some vegetables to it. One of the favourite

vegetables is from the eastern part of Nigeria, which we call ugu. It's called pounded yam... pounded yam and egusi soup. Right now, it's trending on TikTok and Instagram... because a lot of Nigerians who have travelled out, they've told their friends about it and people are doing videos of it, and then they are eating it and putting it online, saying it's a delicacy from Nigeria. It's very popular now.

Yeah, we had gardens and parks but then our gardens... we used them to grow plants, most of which... the goal is to grow what you can eat. That environment is not... because of the soil, is not suitable for growing flowers. And because of the buildings there, in order to avoid pests, they try to not grow flowers but crops that will enable you to get rid of the wees regularly. So they had places where they... at the back of the house where you can grow maize, orange... we had orange and mango trees. And then at the garden we also had wells, in case there's scarcity of water. So, you fetch from the well to water your plants. We don't have gardens for grasses or flowers at that time.

Then the other bit is the park. One of the major characteristics of the parks we have in Nigeria is that they've made sure that a park is a place where people gather to buy and sell. That's what most of the parks are in Nigeria. But now, for the past ten years, the government is building parks where you can go to take pictures, or where you can have monuments or landmarks... beautiful things for people to see, you know, like it is in Europe. Back then, most of the parks are where people gather to start markets. They have trade fairs, like international trade fairs. They usually have it in the parks. And I go there every year to spend money, to buy toys... to see a lot of foreigners, because that's one of the places where you'll see a lot of people from America, from Europe, from Asia.