



4-14-2007

Oluwasegun, Michael

Bronx African American History Project
Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.library.fordham.edu/baahp_oralhist



Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Oluwasegun, Michael. April 14, 2007. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham.

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Bronx African American History Project at Fordham Research Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of Fordham Research Commons. For more information, please contact considine@fordham.edu, bkilee@fordham.edu.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

Dr. Jane Edwards [JE]: Ok. My name is Dr. Jane Kani Edwards. I am the Senior Interviewer for the Center for African Immigrants, the Bronx African American History Project. Today is Saturday, April 14, 2007. I'm conducting an interview -- an oral history interview with Mr. Michael.

Michael Oluwasegun [MO]: Yes. Michael.

JE: Yes. The interview will last for two hours and it's taking place in the seminar room in the Department of African, African American Studies at Fordham University. Ok Michael, before you go through the [inaudible] questions, I would like you to tell me about, about yourself like your name, your, your occupation, your country of origin and where you live.

MO: Alright. I'm Oluwasegun. Michael is my middle name. My first name is Oluwasegun. I'm from Nigeria and I'm a student at the Fordham University. And it's eight months since I've been here now studying at the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University. I live in the Bronx at [inaudible] Avenue. And so it's my pleasure to be here.

JE: Thank you. So, the other thing I want to know is about your immigration. Like where you born in: in the United States or where you born in Africa?

MO: I was born in Africa over 30 years ago but last year, August, I came into the United States with a F-1 Visa, study visa to study in the United States. So it's the first time I'm in the United States. And for the first eight months I would say.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

Dr. Mark Naison [MN]: Do you have any relatives or friends in the United States who guided you to come here?

MO: Well, I would say friends. While I was in Nigeria shortly before I came here I had been working in a Jesuit high school. [Inaudible] Jesuit College in Abuja, Nigeria and at this school the person who is now the Vice President of Mission and Ministry, [inaudible] Patrick Ryan, was the President of the school where I used to teach in Nigeria. Now, I wanted to go for my graduate education and I wanted to be in connection with Jesuit education. Now, we don't have that in Nigeria therefore I applied to Fordham University, and I got admission into Fordham University. And one of the advantages of being here is that I have half tuition taken care of by Fordham University because I have worked in a Jesuit high school back in Nigeria. There is a program so it's easier for me and it makes it more, you know, how to ...it's just much easier that way.

JE: So how long is your program?

MO: The program is a year and a half. So I have a two year visa in the United States. F-1 visa.

JE: So during these eight months that you have been in Fordham, what is your experience with the Fordham community?

MO: The Fordham community. Yes. It's a great community as far as I know. Great in the sense that there's a sense of togetherness and – ok, right – in my own classes because not all my classes take place here at Fordham Road. My other classes I go to Lincoln Center downtown to do the class and I see the cooperation among the staff with my course. [inaudible] being

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

cooperation too. Things I do not understand out of the difference in culture. In the way – the degree of responsiveness that I get is high so I think there is a great community sense.

JE: So you mean that response from the community? Is it from the staff, from the professors, from the students?

MO: Both ways. I have this professor, Patrick – Patricia Bischoff who's been extremely helpful with problems I have in my academics. Say for instance I don't understand something. I go back to her – she's my advisor and she's always ready. Say I'm looking for information- she has actually given me two books free. That she gave to me – this I think will be helpful to you. And use them for research and you can keep it. So I'm so, so grateful to her for the assistance which she has given to me and even my – one of my other professors feels special, Susan Apple. She's also been very, very, very very helpful with problems I have academically and she's even friendly. I would say more, much more than professor- student relationship. It goes beyond that. It goes into personal relationships. Something which also I'm happy to realize is happening because it is one of the core principles of Jesuit education – the very core.

MN: Yes. It's something [inaudible] personality

MO: Personality – exactly. I see they care there much more for the individual. Not just the academic relationship that's between, between them but how is individual doing? Does he need help? Does she- whatever it is.

MN: What is your experience like since you've been living in the Bronx?

MO: Yes. Experience living in the Bronx.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: Do you have an apartment on Arthur Avenue?

MO: Yes, I have an apartment on Arthur Avenue. The graduate housing, it's it a nice five-room apartment and so we're five in that place. And we all interact well. I haven't really mixed well with other people outside of the school community, but I have never been harassed. I walk on the streets. I see people. They go about their business. I go about my business.

MN: Have you met any other people from Africa? In like local restaurants or like stores? Or -- and, and what has that experience been like?

MO: Oh yes. I have, I have met some Africans in the Bronx, Webster Avenue at a place called Sankofa. I've been there twice, three times. Yes, I think three times. You know a lot of Africans come in there. To eat hot African meals which I miss so [Inaudible]. [Laughter]/

MN: Now the people Sankofa are from Ghana. Is there still a connection you from Nigeria and them from Ghana?

MN: Oh. Yes, there is still some connection because again I'm familiar with food I find there. So I [crosstalk].

MN: Give some examples of the food because most of the people listening are not as familiar with the food as [Inaudible].

MO: Ok. One of the food is called eba. E-B-A. It's made from cassava and it's mainly energy giving food. It has carbohydrates and the -- it's much more like the mashed potatoes you have here only it's not as smooth. Ok. It's grainy somehow and you have different kinds of soup you

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

use for – vegetable soup, okra soup, and stew. So yes. I've been there and I've eaten this food.

Other food you have is amala. This is made from yam, yam powder

JE: [Inaudible]

MO: Not [inaudible] yam powder. Yam is dried and then ground. You just mix it in boiling water and it becomes a thick paste. You also use that for – with some soup or so. So, so that's what [inaudible].

MN: It makes you feel at home to go there?

MO: Unfortunately [laugh]. I – it didn't taste like what I used to taste at home. I don't know because it's gone through some [inaudible]. I don't know if it's a processing thing and for me, my personal opinion, it's not as delicious, which explains why I haven't been going there more frequently. The types of [inaudible] actually went together but we had a couple of Africans – Nigerians came around and then wanted to have African dish. We went there actually in the, that's in the company of Father Patrick Ryan who is, to some of us here, a benefactor. And we just go out together and we get there. The last time I go by and I didn't eat any of the African dishes per se. I just had rice. [Crosstalk] We eat rice in Africa but like from my background, it's not considered something really, really African. Like my grandfather would say this is earth's food [Inaudible].

[Laughter]

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

JE: I think that's beginning to [crosstalk]. I used to have this Nigerian friend who cooked this chicken with a lot of spice. What do you call that in Nigeria?

MO: It's just chicken.

[Laughter]

MO: But, well if it's in my tribe we say it's adia. Adia is chicken. [Crosstalk]

MN: What's your tribe or nationality?

MO: Yoruba.

MN: Yoruba.

MO: Yoruba from Nigeria [inaudible] which is northwestern [inaudible] country. Generally people from the west are mostly Yorubas so, so that's where I'm from.

MN: Now, is your family Catholic?

MO: Oh no. My family is not Catholic. They're cherubim and seraphim. I don't know if you've ever heard of them.

MN: No.

MO: It's an, it's an African church. It has its origin in Africa and in Nigeria. Odo State. It's in the western part of Nigeria.

MN: Cherubim. Could you spell that?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

[Crosstalk]

MO: Cherubim like the Ark of the Covenant.

MN: Oh. Ok.

MO: Angel seraphim. And, as a result, a lot of people have the misconception that it's angel worshipping – that they worship angels. But it's something far from me because, they say it's because they do not have a firsthand experience of worshipping in that church. It's commonly categorized as one of the churches called White [inaudible] churches because when you go to worship you put on your white [inaudible].

MN: Now, are there any example of these churches in New York City?

MO: Oh no. I haven't seen any and even if I find any here it's not the church I go to at the moment because, because I worship at the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

MN: And where is that located? Is there one in the Bronx?

MO: There is one in the Bronx.

MN: Oh.

[Crosstalk]

MO: There is one in the Bronx where I worship.

MN: What, what street is it on?

MO: This is – I just [inaudible] straight onto Arthur Avenue where I [Inaudible].

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: Oh. It's very close to you.

MO: It's very close to me.

MN: It's very close to you.

MO: Yes. When I came here I was looking for – do we have Redeemed Christian Church?

That's one of the advantages, I mean one of the great, the great advantages that Internet connectivity has. I just [Inaudible].

MN: You went on the Internet and [Crosstalk].

MO: Redeemed Christian Church of God and [Inaudible].

MN: And you could walk to it?

MO: I could walk to it. It's just up behind my house. So I just [Inaudible].

MN: And, and about how many people worship there?

MO: Certainly more than one hundred.

MN: And are these all Nigerians or do they represent?

MO: No. They are not all Nigerians but the majority, I would say like 80% of the congregation, are Nigerian. Yes. So, the pastor himself is Nigerian. We have deacons who are Nigerian. We have some African Americans. I don't know where they're from. I never asked. Not from Nigeria who are also members of the community, church community. Occasionally we have

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

some whites come in there but rare, you know, to find them there most times. Come there and worship [inaudible].

JE: So do you have any idea when this church was established in the Bronx?

MO: No idea. I never asked "oh, when was this established?" No.

MN: Is it in a church building or is it like in a storefront or is it a house? I mean, is, is. . . .

MO: I understand what you are saying. I would say it probably be because it doesn't look like – ok. It's –the first floor of this story building and just at the corner of that building is a store and then there is a – I don't know how to say this- is really a storehouse

MN: In the United States, there is a whole history of what people call storefront churches which start off in like a one-story, you know, enclosure and then as the congregation gets bigger, they either buy, you know, another church building or even an old synagogue or else build their own building. So a lot of big churches start off this way with 100 members and then they get up to 200, 300. They don't have enough room so they have to buy or build their own building.

MO: I think we are going through that phase now. We're seriously considering moving from the place because the congregation's growing and sometimes we have special events and have people who are coming. Probably people who are members of the church but who don't – who are not quite regular because of work or something. When we have special occasions you see them coming then.

JE: So you mean what kind of special occasion [crosstalk].

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Well – not well. Weddings [crosstalk].

JE: Easter?

MO: Yes. Easter

JE: Christmas. That sort?

MO: Yes, and then every first Sunday of the month is Thanksgiving Sunday. We give, you know, thanks for what God [inaudible]. We thank you for – we dance, we sing, we're joyful. So people come in more on those days than [Crosstalk].

MN: Now, now is the music in your church African in origin or more like U.S. African American gospel music?

MO: It's a mixture. It's a mixture. Certainly some people come out who are core Africans to give thanks to – Ok – to give testimony. I mean, as it pleases you whatever song that is in your heart. Sometimes you can raise songs from the different tribal –I mean, parts of Nigeria, you hear Yoruba songs, Igbo songs, Benin songs. I mean, so if you are not Nigerian, at those moments when you hear them sing the song, you don't know it [laugh] but for the praise worship, most of the songs are gospel, African American type of music.

MN: Is there a piano in the church?

MO: No. [Crosstalk].

MN: A keyboard? And are there percussion instruments?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Yes. In fact, I hit percussion instrument. I hit drums. [Crosstalk].

MN: So you're a drummer?

MO: I'm a drummer.

MN: In the church?

MO: In the church and I also – I just belong to the choir. [Crosstalk]

JE: Oh. Ok.

MO: I like some these gospel songs from people like Ray Bowes. A couple of them I get to meet on the Internet and I heard the songs and I. I mean they were very, very touching and full of praises.

MN: There is a beautiful tradition of gospel music in the United States, you know, going back 70, 80 years and some of the greatest popular singers in the United States came out of the gospel tradition. Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, even James Brown many of them began singing – Curtis Mayfield – they began singing gospel and then [crosstalk].

MO: So I heard even, what's her name, Whitney Houston was [Crosstalk]

MN: Whitney Houston.

JE: Whitney Houston. [Crosstalk].

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: So I see some of these and listen to them practice sometimes and Sunday I sing in the church.

MN: Do you ever cook, you know, in, in your apartment?

MO: We have a kitchen.

MN: And, can you get the right Af – kind of ingredients to cook a Nigerian meal?

MO: Yes. You can get the right ingredients but I'm not this great cook fan. So . . .

MN: [Laugh]

MO: So most times I haven't really cook. When I cook, you know what I do, I just get some spaghetti and I just get some Ragu sauce. [Laughter]

MO: Prego and it's so fast. It's convenient.

MN: So you're not making – what's, what's the name of the yam, the yam?

MO: Eba.

MN: You're not making . . .

MO: If someone who can make it – I miss it. But even when I was at home, you know, I never used to cook.

JE: Why? Because it's the African tradition or you just don't like to cook?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: No. I just don't like to cook. Well, well, well in the African tradition you would see, women would cooking.

MN: [Laugh]

MO: I'm not used to cooking. Not that I can't cook.

MN: [Laugh]

MO: It's not something that I – we have men who, who good excellent cooks but I just don't feel I fall into that category. Like I remember the last semester when we went on break I went to North Carolina where I met somebody who also used to teach in Nigeria, the school, the Jesuit school. She's in North Carolina. She invited me over. She's the mother to a friend of mine. I went there. I enjoyed the African dish for the one week time I spent there.

MN: So it sounds like the Bronx needs a good Nigerian restaurant.

MO: Yes.

MN: [Laugh]

MO: I think so. Somebody once told me there is one at University –

MN: Avenue.

MO: Avenue.

JE: Nigerian?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Nigerian but I haven't been there. I don't go out much so most times what I do-I student teach right now. My days always, always, [Crosstalk].

MN: Where do you student teach?

MO: At the Beacon school just, 61st Street between West End and Amsterdam Avenues. Far from [Crosstalk].

MN: Right near the – and this is in what grade?

MO: 10th grade.

MN: 10th grade.

MO: I teach biology to 10th graders. So from there I have classes everyday except Friday in the evenings. So from there I leave home like 7 [inaudible] 7 o'clock. I don't come sometimes until 8:30, sometimes like 10pm so.

MN: What is it like teaching 10th graders in Manhattan compared to 10th graders in Nigeria?

MO: Well, well, well, it's a very good – teaching 10th graders in Nigeria I have no problems with them. With these children, I know 10th graders here are, are more, you say, expresses their opinion because the, the model here is student centered in the school where I teach. Though in Nigeria, it is also student centered because of the Jesuit tradition but that is a separation from what obtains generally in other schools. Ok. So with my experience in a Jesuit school and teaching 10th graders here and 10th graders there, more similar than they are different. Some of the difference I have noticed are not really, really in the academic area but again, my school back

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

home where I used to teach, they had a uniform. The first thing I noticed when I got here everybody, no uniform. I mean so, I'm like this is school ok [Laugh] because all my life before the eight months since I've been here, schools have always been – I mean, associated with uniforms.

JE: Yes. In the whole of Africa because when I first came here and my son was going to school for the first time, they don't have uniforms. I said uniform is better because they look like students who go to school.

MO: [Laugh]

MN: Now, where the students in, the students in 61st Street are they disrespectful or are they respectful to you as a teacher?

MO: Well, see Beacon I have been told, is one of those ideal schools. Not the type that operates everywhere and common in New York. So we have students who are ready to learn and they do not cause disciplinary problems so they're very respectful and a teacher cannot ask for more from their students. So the same way back at home, children were not disrespectful to me. Here, none of them have been disrespectful. I think when you talk about respect something that is also mutual so, so, I think a lot of student respect you are dependent on you as a teacher. So, I, I have not experienced such disrespect from any of my students.

JE: So the students that you are teaching here what are they? What are their backgrounds? Are they Africans? African Americans?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: It's largely white. Yes. We have Hispanics and students of other languages. We have some African Americans. I think about more than 60% white. The others comprise of African Americans, Hispanic students. So, that's, that's what it is.

MN: Have you ever been in any of the schools in the Bronx?

MO: Yes. My Field Specialist, like I told you, beyond academic work, she has been helpful personally and she thinks, "Michael I'd really like you to have a feel of what it is like in other schools. So I want to take you to this other school so you can see and compare to the Beacon school." And she took me to a school in the Bronx. What's the name of the school now? Jackson [inaudible] I can't –

MN: Was this a high school? One of the small high schools or one of the large high schools.

MO: It's a very large high school. More than 3,000 [crosstalk]

MN: 3,000 like it's Kennedy.

MO: They broke it down.

MN: Oh.

MO: I think it's Kennedy.

MN: Kennedy High School in the North Bronx. Yes. Very big school.

MO: Very big school. So, it's been broken down into sub-schools. So, we went there and on this particular day there wasn't any problem that I really saw. People seemed to be going about their business but the thing that struck me there was the science lab had no equipment.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: No equipment?

MO: The Beacon School, we have computers in the classroom. We have projectors. We have the island tables where you have sink where when you are doing the experiment you have the top and a lot of resources. Textbooks, science equipment, microscopes. We have many of them and in this particular school, they have just one cupboard, say about four feet high and the width too, let's say about three feet, four feet in height, I mean, broad like that. So it's not something big and they had a few bottles of chemicals. And this is all they have in a science lab and I, I thought to myself no. Students here are seriously disadvantaged when you compare them to students at the Beacon School. And if there is –if they experience problems I think yes. They can also experience problems for that reason. I mean, people are not really well engaged. I see there is a lot to engage the students. Students want to learn. They – you see, when you have this many resources there, I think, much more, more motivated. They learn and another is there is parent involvement in education and so the teachers can call the parents for conference. So students are aware of this too. I think that is one reason they work and do their work. I mean, they cooperate with the teachers and knowing the parents are also supportive of what they do.

JE: So you say you're going to study here for a period of time. So what are your plans after you finish here?

MO: After I finish? I have spoken with the school lawyer.

MN: Lawyer?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Yes.

MN: LaSalle Academy?

MO: LaSalle Academy. Where they are in charge of international students. So-

JE: You mean here at Fordham?

MO: Yes. I guess so. In charge of international students advise you on, you know, your status, your immigration status. If you want to stay, what are your options for this? So, I am planning to do the one year of training program which by law it is allowed for international students. Once you graduate you can stay and work for one year. It has to be in the field in which [crosstalk] you study. So I'm planning to do that. I mean after this course, one year, I am working in the United States and if it works out fine. Then I get my papers, right, to get work permit. I intend to stay in the United States and work because it really is more profitable, I mean-

JE: In what ways for example?

MO: In what ways – talk about the currency rate of exchange, exchange rate and if I work here and send money back home I know the rate at which it multiplies. It's about \$830 to – I mean naira. Ok. And if I earn let's say, let's say, minimally \$3,000 a month as a teacher minimally. If you convert that to Nigerian money, that would be like about -- \$1,000 is about 130,000 naira so times four. It would be like 400,000 naira and compare that to what I was earning when I was home about 40,000 naira. [Laughter]

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: Oh. I see. For a year.

MO: No, no, no, no. For a month. \$3,000 is the average – [Crosstalk]

MO: Being a teacher back home earning 40,000 naira and converting the – however it's not to say – it's also expensive to live in the United States. So \$3,000 it would-

MN: [laugh]

MO: I'm having the same status that I had back at home in the United States. But with the kind of saving I can do if I send money home, yes, because of the rate at which it multiplies it pays me better to work in a society like this full of other opportunities. Things you can also do outside of school hours.

MN: You can tutor.

MO: Yes.

MN: Especially in science.

MO: Exactly. I see that in my kind of profession- it makes for me a lot of sense to be here with the opportunities open to me. But, however, I mean, I would like to do that legally. I'm not interested in being an illegal guy in the United States and trying to hide my, myself here and no. If I don't get that, as a matter of fact, I'm going back home. I miss home, really, but it's just for economic reasons that I'd consider staying [Crosstalk].

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: There's a tremendous need for science teachers and so that's a very good field to be in. There are many, you know, I know in the New York City public schools especially in middle school and high school science –there's a tremendous demand for science [Crosstalk].

MO: I've been told that my chances of getting to stay here with legal status is high. So I look forward to that. Yes.

MN: Now if you stay here will other family members come to the United States to stay with you?

MO: If I can do that I would certainly like to help some of my family members to enjoy what I enjoy in the United States. I have a better life because I graduated 1995 and it took me like six years to get a good job.

JE: In Nigeri?.

MO: In Nigeria. The rate of unemployment is so high. People go to school and-

MN: So you have educated people who have difficulty finding jobs?

MO: Yes. A lot of them walking the streets of the country. No job and I think that's one reason the crime rate is high.

JE: In Nigeria?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Yes. People don't have jobs and they got to survive. But that is not to – I see as an excuse.

Ok. I don't see that as an excuse. I think that has to do with personal, personal – at least for six years I didn't have a job. I never stole. I never involved myself in any crime. It has to do with my background. We cherish the name and we don't do anything that will bring shame. I think people are just different and they react to the same situation in different ways. But, you see, it's tough serving back home. I was fortunate. I was employed, after the six years, in a very good school. So my standard of living was very high compared to others my –

MN: Now. Does your family live in a large city?

MO: Yes. They live in a large city. [Unknown] that's where – [unknown] that's the capitol city of [unknown] State. Ok. And my father was a government worker. He worked in the Ministry of [inaudible] and so he gets transfer – he got transfer a couple of times so I have been to different cities in Nigeria. From [unknown] State to Niger State but it has always been in the city. So –

MN: Is there much tension between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria?

MO: In the north. In the northern part of the country, there is a lot of tension. The ten years I spent in the heart of [unknown] land Muslims, Islam is the predominate religion. That's the seat of the caliphate, the Sultan of [unknown]. And it's a very peaceful, peaceful – of the ten years, I think, there was one major incident. Yes, there was a problem between the Christians and the Muslims but that's all I can recall. It's a peaceful place to be but in some other places like Kano, there is frequent clashes. They clash much more –

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MN: What part of the country is Kano in?

MO: The northern part of the country.

JE: So, do you think the conflict is because of the implementation of the Sharia law?

MO: Well, the conflict has been there before the Sharia law came in. So, I wouldn't say it's because of Sharia law. But Sharia law, I would say, also contributed to the already existing problem. Yes. Because they want to judge everybody by Sharia Law. And when the Christians living in the community, they are like no, no. We're not Muslims so we're not bound under the Sharia Law in this land. So if you can apply it to your own people, so all Muslims, if you have a problem go to the Sharia court and get yourself sorted out. I don't know how that is working because I seriously don't follow up on historical things that much. So I don't know how that is working out. And you see sometimes the Sharia Law is very, very very, I would say cruel and crude in the sense that I heard of somebody whose hand was severed because he stole a cow. Supposedly, and they severed the hand off and later discovered the cow. [Laughter].

MO: And the guy wasn't the one who stole the cow but they couldn't put the hand back.

MN: They can't put it in the refrigerator

MO: [Laugh]. Can't put the hand back. So that's why I –

MN: [Laugh]

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Express it that way. It went well for them. It's their religion. I'm not against it. So probably I shouldn't have said it's cruel but in my own kind of – I wouldn't want to be subjected to [Inaudible].

JE: We have experienced that in our country the same way. [Crosstalk].

MO: I wouldn't want to be under the Sharia Law.

MN: Is, is, is all of Sudan under Sharia Law or only certain parts?

JE: Actually they, they implemented the Sharia Law in 1983 during [inaudible] and then at that time the fighting started in the south against this Sharia Law. And then when this government in 1989 came to power they continued to, to implement the Sharia Law. So now after the peace agreement they say Sharia Law will only be applied to the northern part of Sudan. Only the southern part will be exempted from this Sharia Law. Yes. Ok.

MO: I mean those who believe in the Sharia Law seriously believe in it. I've also heard Muslims who doesn't like for this reason because you could be killed. You could get your hand cut off for all of these kind of things.

JE: Let's come back to the Bronx. What do you think is the role of the church that you go to in the life of the African immigrants in the, the area? Do they provide services?

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Well the role of the church I would say is the sense of community – it's like a home away from home because you mix with your own people and you know, you make friends with people there. So, I would say-

[END SIDE ONE, TAPE 1]

JE: I think the church is like where people come together because you could live in different areas. Also, the church gives the chance for people to meet and also when they have like weddings they do it in the church. And if they have death they all come together. So that's why I asked about-

MO: That's exactly what it is like. People meet and they are helpful to each other. If a brother is experiencing some problems you have different professions, doctors, lawyers in the church so – if you have problems you ask, is it about law? Are you sick? I mean, you can just talk to people who might be able to help you out. Some students meet senior students and ask them, “Can doing this really work? Can you help me out?” And you help out. It gives a great sense of belonging, a sense of community to be with your own people so it get very, very good.

JE: So what kind of language do they use in the church? Do they preach in English or . . . ?

MO: English. They preach in English. Just English. So I think everybody in the church understands English so-

JE: So, I just want to know if you're familiar with – can you tell me more about your experience, especially in the Bronx.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: Like I said before, not much because [crosstalk]

JE: Not much because you only have eight months [crosstalk]

MO: Not much experience. I go to my house. I come to school. I go downtown. What I do most times maybe go to the restaurant. Also where I live, the [inaudible] market is where I buy most of my things.

JE: Which market?

MO: [inaudible] market it's called. I think it's owned by Spanish. I remember the first time I came to the Bronx and I wanted to eat – I needed some sausages. So I went this store. Nobody, nobody spoke English in this particular store. I asked for sausage nobody understand and people were there -

JE: And what language did they speak?

MO: I think they were Hispanic speaking people. And I went into dramatizing and mimicking the cow moo do you have that sausage? And I no idea. Eventually they got it after a time. The goat or the ram or whatever. Meat, meat, they finally got meat there. I finally got [inaudible]. I didn't think that you come to the United States and you have people that don't speak English. That wasn't my intention before I came so-

JE: What about other African communities, do you have any idea besides the Nigerians? There are other Africans from other countries.

Interviewee: Michael Oluwasegun

Interviewer: Dr. Jane Kani Edward and Dr. Mark Naison

Date: April 14, 2007

MO: That's something I experienced and I think much of Hispanics in the Bronx if I see them more than I see African Americans. There are African Americans but I see more Hispanic people. Maybe it's because of the places where I go to. These are the ones that I see the most.