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## Ogbuisi, Chief Paul Okali

Ogbuisi, Chief Paul Okali. Interview: Bronx African American History Project  
*Fordham University*

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Interviewee: Chief Paul Okali Ogbuisi

Interviewer: Mark Naison, Jane Edward, Kojo Ampa, Mike Mohi, and Delarean Davis Mosu

Date: April 15, 2010

Mark Naison (MN): Okay, so we always start this with – could you please tell us about your family background in Nigeria and also how you became a chief, that process.

Chief Paul Okali Ogbuisi (CP): Thank you very much. My family background, my mother who had children in my family, I'm the top age but I'm the person that is of the businessman, I try build the houses and try to help people in school and train people in [I think he says vices] and colleges. And how I become a chief is because my duty in my country, Nigeria. You know, I'm from Ugweke [not clear] community, [not clear] community, it's where I'm representing.

MN: Could you spell the name of the community you're representing

CP: Ugweke. U-G-W-E-K-E. [not clear]

MN: Now is Ugweke a city or a section of a city?

CP: Yes, a section of a city.

MN: And the section of, what's the name of the larger city?

CP: Umuahia, Umuahia is out capital.

MN: Oh, so you're representing a section of the capital?

CP: Exactly.

MN: Now, were you chosen as chief because your father was a chief?

CP: No, actually it was because in my community whoever had a problem I'd come out and solve the problem. This includes the children who are very intelligent in schools, I have to put them school and pay for their school fees.

MN: So how did you become a chief? In other words is this a, something that's passed on within your family, or people see your talent and then select you?

CP: The people see me in the town and select me because of my good doing.

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MN: So you were chosen as chief?

CP: I was chosen as the chief, yes.

MN: How old were you when you were chosen to be chief?

CP: About fifty years.

MN: Fifty years old?

CP: Yes.

MN: Oh, so you had a long life before you were a chief?

CP: Exactly.

MN: You weren't the chief at like, seven years old.

CP: No they hadn't been calling me to be a chief when I'm in business because I don't have much time to sit down or in one place I used to travel all over the world. So when I settled down in my country then they had been calling me – they were calling me to make me a king because I don't have much time. So, but when I get time, when I settled, build my house and do a lot of things that I'm supposed to do, so when I start to this they come back to me and say this is [not clear] they have to give me the certificate, how to do it because I'm qualified to be a chief in my community.

MN: Let's go back to when you were a child, did you grow up in the same city that you were a chief in?

CP: I do, I do grow up in the same city.

MN: And how do you spell the name of the city?

CP: Ugweke U-G-W –

MN: Oh, that's the section, and the city it's in is?

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CP: Umuahia. U-M-U-A-H-I

MN: How much education did you have? Did you go through high school and college?

CP: I went to high school, after my primary school I went to [I think he says: after primary school I went to secondary school] after my secondary school level I came out, joined business because, I mean, I'm business inclined.

MN: In your area is school – did you grow up before Nigeria became independent?

CP: Yes, no, no, no. Nigeria became independent in 1960.

MN: And you were born what year?

CP: I was born in 1954.

MN: In 1954.

CP: Yes.

MN: So the independence came when you were in primary school.

CP: Exactly.

MN: Was school free in your area or did parents have to pay tuition.

CP: No, in school they paid tuition. But before, in the public school it's free. But the church school, back then the Church have a village school, you pay tuition in this school.

MN: Did you go to a church school?

CP: I go to a church school, yes

MN: Was that a church primary school or church high school?

CP: No, primary school then. My secondary school is in a public school.

MN: When you say you were business minded, were you surrounded by business when you were growing up? Did you have members of your family who were involved in trade?

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CP: I have a member of my family that's involved in trading. When I was in business I have many men that do business with me because I cannot do business alone because my business is very large. [not clear] have some men, that people stay in my warehouse, people stays in my offices, people that help me, people that goes other places I want to send them to.

MN: So when you were starting out, I guess you left high school were you seventeen, eighteen years old?

CP: Yes, I was eighteen years old.

MN: Eighteen years old. Did you go into the textile business right away or did you start in other businesses?

CP: No, I go to textile business right away because I study with somebody who know better than me to learn.

MN: Okay so you met somebody who was in the textile business and you joined the person?

CP: The joined the person for fifteen goods years.

MN: Wow.

Jane Edward (JE): That was in Nigeria?

CP: This is Nigeria, in Aba, got a place in Aba, Aba [not clear] in Aba, but it's still in Abia State.

MN: So it's in the east?

CP: In the east.

JE: So the person that helped you in the business, you first started working for him?

CP: I started off working for him. His name is Dr. M.M. Ihekumere.

MN: Could you spell it for us? [Laughs]

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CP: I'll spell it, I'll spell it. Doctor M.M. Ihekumere. Ihekmuwere the spelling is I-H-E-K-W-U-M-E-R-E.

MN: You were growing up in the middle of the war?

CP: Yes.

MN: Do you see the violence around you?

CP: No, only to see the violence I joined the army in 1970, I mean 1967.

Kojo Ampa or Mike Mohi (KA/MM): During the Biafran War?

CP: Yes, during the Biafran war, yes. During the Biafran War we don't have much people that to fight, my mother had to go to the warfront.

MN: So you were thirteen years old?

CP: About that.

MN: Wow.

CP: What we used to do, we had to we call it [Tiraki?] you have to go to the warfront and speak to the enemy and talk to the enemy that maybe my mother is dead, my father is dead, you know that kind of thing in order to know the position they are.

MN: So you were like a spy?

CP: Exactly, then.

MN: So you were like a spy to find out what was going on?

CP: We have to find out what is going on during that war.

JE: Then you come back and report to your people?

CP: I report, I report to my people say look, this is the area they are. This is where the enemies is. So, maybe in the nights they have to bomb that place.

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JE: So when the war stopped what did you do?

CP: When the war stopped in 1970 that's when I joined back my business.

MN: Wow. So, were you in school at the same time you were in the war?

CP: I was doing, yes, no, no, no. In the – during the war, see what happened during the war I was in the school, the war started I was so young so at least nobody's at the school because the enemies come to the school and bomb the school.

MN: They bombed the school.

CP: So we close the all the schools closed. But immediately after the war we all went back to school. In 1975 as I remember, 1975 I came out from school and joined the business.

MN: Right.

KA/MM: Can you tell us about what started the war?

CP: What started the war is in that year they started killing some of our people in North, they killing some people and besides that they killed [not clear, sounds like a name] they also killed some of the head peoples that matters a lot in Nigeria. Not that they are not from east actually, so whether they want to kill Kaduna Nzeogwu. So, they didn't succeed to kill Nzeogwu, he escaped.

KA/MM: Who are you talking about?

MN: Nzeogwu, he's a famous leader.

CP: What I'm talking about is the notables, the notables. There are people had been killed, they want to try to kill lots of people from east. They want to kill Kaduna Nzeogwu, they want to kill Dr. [can't find this person's name]. That's some of the big people that matters in east. But those people –

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MN: Now Nzeogwu is from your region?

CP: Is from my region, yes. So the people that are scared, so they started killing some of our people in the schools, in north. So that then we have to give order for them to come back to east, everybody. So some of them joined the train, the northerners stopped the train and killed all the people on the train.

MN: Oh, so they were trying to come back to the east –

CP: To the east

MN: -- and they stopped the train and killed everybody?

CP: Yes, because we knew that there must be a war, so we give the announcement if you are from people from east, if you an Igbo man in north, come back. So people are trying to come back, they started killed them. By then Igbo group came out and declared a war.

MN: And this was a war of succession, to try and form a Biafran state?

CP: We formed the Biafran, yes, we formed the Biafran because the Igbo family, they are very rich. He uses [various?] money to start the war when we fight that war. So, that's what started the war, we started the war that time and started fighting but, even then so many countries didn't recognize us. Only Tanzania and some other countries recognize Biafra, mainly countries didn't recognize us because they told us to stop the war and we said no. None of us had seen the war, we don't know how the war looks like, but well knowing that when brother says, you know, sees what is exactly enough. When you live life they kill you mother and kill your son, and kill – you know, it's okay, let's go and perish. So that's how the war started.

KA/MM: Can you tell us the effect of the war on you?



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CP: Um, the effect of the war – it's an experience actually because what I know now, if there's no war maybe I would not know it because the war brings civilization at times. After the war it brings civilization then, before the war, what I know now, I don't know it. Now, if I see any country that wants to fight the war I would tell them don't stop, have the experience.

KA/MM: If Ghana want to fight now I would tell them no don't.

CP: This is experience I have. You know what I am saying? Believe that without civil war I would not have the experience to tell them about fighting the war.

Delarean Davis Mosu (DM): What did your family think, like your mother and stuff, with you being a soldier in the war?

CP: No, my father was an old man, he didn't join the – even when my father – they send my father – the eighth grade my father they send them to go out – when the northerners came into my area, they came in and they conquer us so we raise up our hands and say we are Nigerian.

[Laughter] So they send my father to go and represent my area, so my father, when they captured my father that my father is a soldier my father said no, they tried, they almost killed my father. But one of his eyes, because they beat him thoroughly, so my father lose one of his eyes. When my father came, when I saw him like that, I was so brutal annoyed, but my people told me no, don't revenge. I said okay, you know. So that's only thing my father did during the war.

MN: Did they burn a lot of buildings?

CP: They burned a lot of buildings, a lot of buildings, they burned a lot of buildings.

MN: Did they burn churches?

CP: They burned churches.

MN: They burned schools?

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CP: They burned schools, a lot of sickness.

MN: They burned hospitals?

CP: Hospitals, definitely. There is no food at that time, no salt, no food, no nothing. So there's a sickness then there's one sickness we call, I don't know, they call it [name?] sickness [crosstalk]. Exactly, exactly it was everywhere because there's no salt, who don't eat food with salt? A lot of things happened, a lot of things.

KA/MM: If you have your way would you today have a separate state for Biafra, or are you happy that the country came together?

CP: I'm happy the country come together because the people that still fighting for Biafra, even now, pretty much they fighting for Biafra. But I used to advise them the way they are going is not the normal way. I'm a chief, I don't have to advise them to not fight anymore, I used to tell them no, stop. And many of them are dying carelessly in my country they would send some soldiers who don't know anything, just only know how to shoot a gun, go there whoever I say is a Biafra man, kill him. They killing for nothing, one mustn't die for nothing. Our problem is Ojukwu, he came to be a ruler of the Nigeria, I mean why are you fighting for Biafra anymore? So, if there be a Biafra it will be from help of God, I don't know. Because we still want to be a Biafra actually, but [laughter] we don't want a violent.

MN: You don't want to have to fight.

CP: No, no. Right, we just want the world to –

MN: If you could win it in a casino. [laughter]

CP: I mean if we want to cut the [not clear] say that okay. And I'm sure one day Nigeria must be divided because the number of million, we have about 240 million.

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MN: Wow.

JE: A lot of people – that’s what Gaddafi said like some weeks ago, that Nigeria should be divided into two countries, Muslims and Christians. [crosstalk]

CP: Do you know how many [not clear].

JE: And I think you have two capital cities, right?

CP: Abuja, Lagos. No, Lagos is too congested.

JE: So they created Abuja?

CP: Yes, and Abuja [not clear] because it’s area, it just extend the capital to one city.

MN: Abujan is in what portion –

[Interruption]

MN: Is Abujan in which section of the country?

CP: It’s North.

MN: It’s in the North, and Lagos is in?

CP: The South and West.

MN: West, right. By the ocean.

[Pause/Interruption]

CP: So many things has happened in my country, so many things.

MN: Okay so, when did you start travelling as part of your business to other countries?

CP: Oh I started travelling in 1979.

MN: Okay so you spent four years doing the business locally?

CP: No, locally, like I told you before I started with someone who knows about textiles. I stayed with him for 15 good years, but when I was working with the housing experience he used to send

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me to London, Germany, to America here, to buy things because I know about the business of the world.

MN: So he would send you to buy things and then bring them back and then he would sell them in Nigeria or other African countries?

CP: In Nigeria, in Nigeria.

MN: All over or mainly your region?

CP: Pardon?

MN: No, when you sold the textiles did you sell them only in the east or all over Nigeria?

CP: We sell them in the east but people from other parts of Nigeria come to my area to buy.

MN: Now, was it safe for you to go to the North, or you were very careful not to go there?

CP: I have never been to north.

[crosstalk]

CP: I scared. I scared to go. There's nothing that make me to go to north.

MN: Do you ever go to Lagos?

CP: Yes.

MN: Okay, but lately – but you wouldn't go to Abujan?

CP: No, I wouldn't go to Abuja, no.

MN: Wow.

CP: Lagos is no man's land, let me put it that way.

MN: Everybody can go there.

CP: Everybody owns Lagos, just like Manhattan okay. If you go to Manhattan it's mixed up people, so Lagos is just, that's why people are now in Lagos. If you want to kill somebody in

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Lagos, you might even kill your mother, cause your mother is there, or your brother is there. So, Lagos is mixed up people, so I like to go there, but if you go to Lagos it doesn't – nobody will know where you come from. Literally, action because somebody will know me that I'm from Abia because of my behavior in Lagos, he will know where I come from.

MN: Can most Nigerians tell very quickly by looking at you and hearing you speak which region you're from?

CP: Yes. [not clear] to me, if you are a Nigerian if you speak I will know where you come from.

MN: From the speech or from –

CP: From the accent.

MN: Oh, mainly from the accent, not from the physical features?

CP: No, no physical.

MN: Everybody looks the same?

CP: Everybody all look the same.

MN: And dresses the same?

CP: No. We don't dress the – but now our dresses we stop. I can dress like somebody from north. Somebody from north can dress like somebody from east. But anyone from north dressed as somebody from east, because of – if he's going, walking I will know you from north because he walk is scared. I remember when we have a problem some people from north they tried to put on clothes, you know. If you stand out somebody will know you are from north. You know, definitely.

MN: So the people from the north are scared to come to the east?

CP: They're scared, yes.

MN: And the people from the east are scared to come to the north?

CP: No, people from the east because we are business inclined, we don't scared to go anywhere.

Only me myself –

MN: Oh, okay. [laughter]

CP: I said it even if you are giving me millions of dollars I am not going to north because it can go – it can start going to the north now, there's a problem they don't mind to determine about that problem, they start killing you, killing people. Last time, they kill a lot of people, a lot of people that travelling to north with the [not clear] bus. They kill them.

JE: And what's the reason? Why did they kill them?

CP: They kill them that you are a Christian and you are from east.

JE: So basically it's the religious aspect?

CP: Yes, that's exactly.

MN: Now, this doesn't happen in Ghana the same way, Muslim – no what is it about Nigerian Muslims?

CP: It's tussle of, tussle of power. That's the major the tussle of power, northern and eastern and western.

KA/MM: So it's more political?

CP: Yes. Somehow. No, no not political. It's individual in actuality, but what I'm just saying is some [not clear] who don't know anything just [not clear] maybe got [not clear] toward them.

They just understand it in that way, they don't give a reason, they don't think. And the same day this big man will be in their house eating, drinking their coffee, and suddenly these peoples they come and die.

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JE: So let's go back to your business –

CP: Okay.

JE: -- when did you come here to the Bronx, specifically?

CP: Now I'm here in the Bronx so –

MN: The first time.

JE: The first time you come to the U.S.

CP: The first time I come to the U.S. in 1979. I came here.

MN: And this was on business?

CP: On business trip.

MN: And you came to buy textiles?

CP: Textiles, I buy textiles, I buy mosquito –

MN: Net?

CP: -- from, what do you call it, what do you call this company? That sat Jack, Jack

DM: Mosquito sprays.

MN: Oh, mosquito sprays.

CP: Yes, mosquito sprays.

MN: Now did you have particular people you dealt with?

CP: Even now –

DM: Safeguard.

CP: -- safeguard –

MN: Safeguard.

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CP: -- I want to open the company in Nigeria, Safeguard. Even now I have the [not clear] I went to their factories, oh my, I [not clear]. They took me to their factory to show me how to operate their, you know machinery for they want to do that industry to my country.

MN: Oh so they want to put the pesticide industry –

CP: Exactly, the safeguard, yes.

MN: Wow. So when you came to New York for the first time, who did you know here? To introduce you to people?

CP: It's my former boss who knows those people.

MN: So he knew people in New York?

CP: In New York.

MN: And where did you live when you were in New York for the first time?

CP: I live in – I have a friend in Ghana whose name is [name], he live in Fish Avenue.

MN: Oh so you're first trip to the Bronx you stayed on Fish Avenue with a Ghana man?

CP: With a Ghana man, right.

[Laughter]

CP: The Ghana man is a family friend.

MN: I see, so he put you up and –

CP: Yes, I stayed in his house.

MN: Fish Avenue, what is the close – near Boston Road?

CP: Near Boston Road.

MN: Was it a private house, or an apartment?

CP: No, apartments.



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MN: So the first time you were in New York in the Bronx what did you think?

CP: What did I think? As what?

MN: Like, you know, you're going from the east of Nigeria, but you'd already been to Europe –

CP: That time I don't want to spend much time here, I just like to spend only two weeks.

MN: Two weeks and do your business and get out.

CP: In my country my business is moving on. I don't have anything to come to the –

MN: So you didn't come to see the statue of liberty, or go to a museum?

CP: No, no, no. I went to watch the warship, when it came in here. I went so many places that time, but I finish my business I have to go back to my country. After selling I have to come back again. I used to –

JE: Travel between –

MN: Did you have a lot of people that you were supporting with your business?

CP: Exactly. I have – when I started my own business I have more than forty people that are working under me.

MN: Wow, and what's the name of your business?

CP: Macpauleo International Nigerian [last part not clear]

MN: How do you spell it?

CP: M-A-C-P-A-U-L-E-O.

MN: And that's your – I'm not going to try to pronounce that name.

CP: Macpauleo, Macpauleo.

MN: Macpauleo?

CP: Yes.

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MN: Do you have your own website?

CP: Yes.

RA/MM: How did you get your capital, set up capital for business?

CP: After I – when I was with the man I was helping, whenever I come back from my trip, his trip, after the sales, he used to give me some amount of money so I put it in my account. You understand? That’s what I used to do and when my money started growing up I started buying some lands and houses.

MN: And this is in your local community?

CP: Yes, in my local community. And the land appreciate after some years. Something I buy maybe \$10,000 you going to sell it for \$50,000.

MN: Were you also expected to support relatives with this money as well as save money to open a business?

CP: Yes. When I save the money and open my own business I started helping people because I’m getting my own profits, so I have to open my hand and help people so that – the way I spend the money is the way the money comes back to me because they are giving me blessings.

MN: So you said something in 1982 you helped somebody go to school in New York City?

CP: Yes.

MN: This was?

CP: It’s my brother-in-law. [name not clear] He school here, he’s still here now.

MN: What school did he go to, do you remember?

CP: Fordham.

MN: Fordham University, wow.

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CP: Yes. I used to come here and when [not clear] as big as it is now. I used to come in here

because he live at the school at the time. I used to come here and visit him.

MN: Now they build all these new buildings.

CP: Yes, and it's very fantastic now.

JE: So do you have children, because you said he is your inlaw?

CP: My second son is inspector for police.

JE: In Nigeria?

CP: In Nigeria.

KA/MM: Like the chief of police?

CP: Yes. My first son was in the bank.

JE: In Nigeria?

CP: In Nigeria, yes. I have five children, four boys and one girl.

JE: And they're all in Nigeria?

CP: They're all in Nigeria.

DM: And one [not clear].

CP: And on [not clear], yes.

MN: And they don't want to come to the Bronx?

CP: They will come, they will come and visit me.

MN: But not to live?

CP: Not to live, no.

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MN: What do people think, you know, we often talk, we have a lot of people associated from Ghana associated with the project, and everybody knows the Bronx in Ghana, do people know the Bronx in Nigeria or more they know New York City?

CP: Mean people from Nigeria?

MN: People from your region, when they move to New York, so they know we're going to move to the Bronx?

CP: Yes, I mean we know that people in Bronx, I have a lot of people in Bronx here. But in Bronx, and in Yonkers, and in Queens, all over. I have many people out there. If I call, if I have something now, if I call them all of them just report immediately.

MN: What year did you become chief?

CP: I become, like I said, I told you that I become chief when I was about, it's about ten years now.

MN: So you've been a chief for ten years?

CP: Yes, but when I'm not a chief, when I'm on business like I told you, I used to open my hands and helping people.

MN: So you were helping people way before you became chief?

CP: Yes.

MN: And so that's how people decided – you helped this many people.

CP: Yes. When we have our community, the community to who we want to gave, I'm the person who they sent to the government. So I went, I met my governor and talked to the governor with some of the people; I'm the speaker, I have to speak and talk to them and tell them what we want then for the good of our community.

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MN: See, being a chief is almost like being a mayor, or a rep?

CP: No, a mayor, what we call a mayor in my country is the chairman of the government. Like, after governor you get a mayor.

MN: And the mayor is in charge of the city?

CP: In charge of the city.

MN: Now, do they have –

CP: The chief, the king, after a king you get a chief.

MN: Okay now tell us about the difference between being a governor and a king.

CP: To be a governor?

MN: Yes.

CP: A governor can be removed from his seat. As the governor he is, they can remove the governor, but if you are a chief or a king you represent their community, unless if you commit anything, something –

MN: So you're chosen for life? As a king or a chief?

CP: Exactly, as a chief. A chief for life.

MN: Who chooses you?

CP: It's the community.

MN: A committee?

JE: Community.

CP: Yes.

JE: A community.

MN: Community. So you have ten thousand people, how do they get together to pick as chief?

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CP: We have a meeting, we have to get together, at a big hall.

MN: A big hall.

CP: A big hall. So people stay inside, some stay outside and people will go on the interview and ask what kind of person you are and what family you come from. They have to know the family you come from before you become a chief.

MN: Does everybody vote by raising their hands?

CP: By raising their hands, yes, they do.

JE: So why is it important to know the family history?

CP: Let me tell you one thing, in some families, some families that do some things that maybe they steal. Some people become thieves, their children steal somebody's things, they have to know what kind of father you have and mother you have, the family you come out from. If they don't know that you can't be a chief because if you become a chief that means things will go the wrong way.

MN: So the people knew your father and mother?

CP: Yes. They knew my father, my mother, and my grandmother.

KA/MM: So what was the name of the, the title, of your chieftaincy.

CP: My title was Chief Omera I. Chief Omera I.

MN: How do you spell that? [laughs]

CP: I don't know all the spellings. O-M-E-R-O, A, sorry, A.

KA/MM: What does it mean Omera?

CP: Omera means someone who spreads his hand to help people.

KA/MM: So it reinforces the fact that you are mainly chief because of your generosity?

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CP: Yes.

JE: Your generosity and your family background.

CP: My family background first. My family background, if I don't come from a good family people will say no.

MN: Let's say Kojo moved to your area and he set up a business and was very generous but nobody knew his family, he could not, they would not select him as a chief, even if he did many good deeds?

CP: They can give him a chief title, ordinary chief title. Not because they know their family. His own chieftancy would be different from my own.

KA/MM: Ordinary chief.

CP: Ordinary chief.

MN: An ordinary chief?

CP: Like, if you come to my, like you – because I know you are my friend I'll say, I'm the person you already know I'm from good family, whatever I tells them is the truth. If I tell them what kind of person you are, that goes for Kojo. I tell them Kojo's my friend, he's from good family, they'll believe what I say.

MN: They'll believe what you say.

CP: They know where I come from.

MN: So your job as a chief would be to represent the peoples' interests to the government?

CP: Exactly.

MN: And then also to solve problems?

CP: Problems.

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MN: What sort of problems do people come to you with?

CP: We have, at times, we have land dispute.

MN: Land disputes?

CP: Yes. So when such thing comes up they will have to send me, I have to go there and interrogate his family because I have to know the history of the land. I have to go and study by the land. So whatever I said, with me and my king, the king will be there so –

MN: So they bring the king in as well?

CP: Yes.

MN: The king – so there's two of you, the chief and the king?

CP: And the king, yes. Because if there is a problem, like killing, a land dispute, because it's a lot of things. You can know what is happening in Israel now, it's a land dispute, it's land. So, the king will be there and I will be there too so whatever we discuss have to go with the king, we go outside, or the people will have to give the office here and give us chance so we can decide what to do.

MN: Now, is there a court system where people use the chief and the king instead of the courts?

Like in the United States, a land dispute people would sue each other and they go into a court.

Do you have courts?

CP: Let me tell you one thing, we have courts. Court is different, court the judge don't know anything about the land dispute, he don't know, what he knows is what the guy told him, "my father owns the land." He knows what you telling him, your father owns the land, that's all the judge knows. Maybe he have some people who follow him and say yes, I know about it, but for



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chief or for the king, and I was born and brought I'm the son of the soil of that place, I know everything about it, I have to go by myself. I make move, I know the land.

MN: So people trust the chief and the king more than they do the courts?

CP: No, they trust courts too, but they told the chiefs because they know the chiefs – whatever a chief tell is said in court, the court will accept it.

MN: So the courts use the chief as –

CP: So if they went to court, if the chief, if I'm asked, I'm chief, if I go to the courts the judge will listen to me.

JE: And I think in the context of law they use both, the court and the customary system.

CP: Yes.

MN: Yes, they have some systems that are parallel. Now, so that's a land dispute and we all know land disputes can get very violent.

CP: Apart from land disputes, there's other problems we solve. Even the husband and wife have problems, you understand what I'm saying? If a husband and wife – we don't practice what you do here in America. Like, divorce, even though it's in the courts, but we don't do it as much. What I said is exactly what would happen.

MN: Are there any women chiefs?

CP: No. We don't have women, we have what you call lolo. Like [she is?] is my lolo now.

JE: And how she became a lolo?

MN: How do you spell it? [Laughs]

CP: How do you call, if I'm – as I'm a chief, [not clear] whoever I live with, you wife will be a lolo.

KA/MM: How do you spell that?

CP: Lolo. L-O-L-O.

MN: A lo?

[Crosstalk]

MN: A lolo, L-O-L-O.

KA/MM: Is it like a queen?

CP: Not a queen, just a, it's just because you are a chief your wife must be something.

[Crosstalk] Also, the way they respect me they have also to respect my wife.

DM: Like a first lady.

CP: Yes.

MN: But this is a system where marriage disputes go to men to solve?

CP: Pardon?

MN: In other words, if there's a marriage problem they go to talk to a man because the chiefs are all men, –

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

MN: – so is this something that –

CP: I don't [laughter] see marriage as a [laughter] we don't much go to that area, we go to something that's more important. But even though that, even the marriage system if it goes somehow astray, I can also help because that's a marriage that can take life, but when isn't going that well, I can step in.

MN: [Directed at Chief Ogbuisi's wife] Now do you get involved in marriage disputes as a lolo?

Wife: He would take care of the men part and I would take care of the –

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MN: Oh, so women –

Wife: – women goes to women and men stays with the men.

MN: Right, and then you two would discuss it?

Wife: Right.

CP: Exactly.

MN: You'll come together, so it's not like the woman has to go to a man.

Wife: No.

KA/MM: Chief Paul, how popular is the Bronx in Nigeria? In Nigeria before you came here, did you know about the Bronx?

CP: Yes. Before I come to Bronx?

KA/MM: Before you came to America.

CP: No, before I come to America, I came to America not by the Bronx. I don't know Bronx when I was in Nigeria, but I know, I know America, I did the history in my school so I know about – I know about JFK, then I don't know they call it JFK I thought it mean John Francis Kennedy, how we were taught in [not clear] I thought it's John Francis Kennedy. What does it mean?

KA/MM: Fitzgerald.

MN: John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

CP: Okay.

MN: When you – you've been living in the Bronx for seven years now?

CP: Yes.

MN: And how many people, in the Bronx, recognize you as chief, as part of your group?

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CP: A lot of people. Anybody who knows me, who knows where I come from don't call me by my name –

MN: They call you Chief Paul.

CP: Chief Paul.

MN: Now is that true of people who are also from another region, let's say, will they call you Chief Paul?

CP: If they know me, but if they don't know me there's no, I mean, like, let me just I'm just using Kojo because he's sitting beside me. If Kojo don't know who I am he can call me whatever he likes, I don't care, you understand? [Laughter] Because he don't know who I am, but those who know who I am will never call my name.

MN: They call you Chief Paul.

CP: Yes. If they call me by my name the way I will look at them they will know that they made a mistake [Laughter]. They will come back and bend down, of course they have to bend down to me.

KA/MM: Do you sometimes organize Igbo traditional functions here?

CP: I do, I do.

KA/MM: What are some of them?

CP: That's a [interruption] oh, Jesus Christ. Like I told you both in Bronx here and in New Jersey if I want them to come together they will come together here because I'm not going to them they will come to me.

MN: So you have a function at a hall?

CP: Yes.

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MN: What will the name of this gathering be, or is there not one name for it?

CP: Well we don't, actually that's, like, before we have done gatherings if something happens, not we have the name for it. If anything, like last time we have problem in the schools, public schools and I called them, they come, we have to put money together and send to them.

MN: Ah, so there was a crisis in the –

CP: No crisis, no crisis, just some students that they don't have books, I just, [not clear] they don't have pencils, they don't have pen maybe. We have to buy some books and pencils and pens and some other things and send to them.

MN: Do people come to you for disputes living here, in New York? To settle disputes.

CP: Yes, if there's a problem yes, they come.

MN: What sort of problems do you have here mostly?

CP: Well, I have [not clear] don't worry. There's a problem I can explain here and there's one I cannot explain here, which you know, [not clear]. But, somebody can, if you owe somebody some money, because money is the root of all evil let me tell you, I just using money to say something, maybe somebody give somebody \$10,000 for some business here. [not clear] they have to call me, I have to tell that person "please, this man give you this money in faith, you understand what I'm saying? So try to pay back the money." I will give him time, often he will tell me he have problem, he cannot get the money in time, you know what I'm saying? I go back to you I say please, this man has a problem, I know why he hasn't given back the money, don't fight with him, give him time.

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MN: How many – a number of people have mentioned that sometimes they come with problems with children who are misbehaving, do you get problems with “my son stopped going to school and started hanging out in the streets?”

CP: Yes, yes, yes, they come. What I used to tell them is that you don't have a bad child, there's no child that's a bad child, but we have bad parents.

MN: So what would you tell somebody whose son stopped going to school and hanging –

CP: We don't have bad child, we have bad parents. If the parents raise their children, like, if your child starts smoking whatever, it's the parent that started to him, not the child. The child don't know what is called “beer” but it's the grown up people that sell that beer to the child, if you don't sell it he will not drink it. So to tell them that they have bad child, we raise the child to be bad, we men, we grown-ups, we fathers, or we parents. But, if your child is misbehaving I will tell you what to do, how to talk to that child, so they can change.

MN: Do you ever tell people to send their children back to Nigeria to go to school?

CP: It depends. I don't tell someone to send their child to Nigeria to go to school, it depends, but that's the child not only child to go back to Nigeria, one of several from here, that don't like to go back to home to school, they like to be here. You can't force a child to go back home, if you force him he will misbehave in Nigeria. You have to discuss it with him if he choose to, but if you wants him to know the tradition of Nigeria you have been here for some years he wants to also go to Nigeria and know what is happening over there, okay. But that's one we cannot order, that the chief's cannot order to go through that, it depends on that father. You know how to talk to that child, if you want, I will not come to you as a chief and try to force that child to go back to Nigeria, I cannot do that. It's not my duty to do that.

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KA/MM: Are there any Igbo traditional values that you would like children here in the Bronx to learn?

CP: Igbo, Igbo?

KA/MM: Igbo – are there any way of Igbo way of teaching kids –

CP: Definitely.

KA/MM: – are there any of them in America, can you tell us some of them? How Igbo is different in raising kids?

CP: Yes, we do that. We used to teach them how we behave – you know the way we behave in our country is quite different than how we behave here. Because here, you know, I had that, which is true, it cannot beat that child I know, it cannot beat that child. It is impossible in my country, I will, if you're my child I have to beat you thoroughly so that you have to learn. You understand what I'm saying? Why can the child come beat me up, as a father, I leave him just like that. No, don't do that.

MN: What about in school?

CP: Even in school, the teachers have canes in the school. You have to lie down on the bench, they just – maybe they studied mathematics, you didn't get it right, the teacher will tell you “you not go back home, you have to stay until you know how to do that mathematics.” If you continue [not clear] then you know that you have a broke head, and then I whip you so tomorrow after you go home you have to learn. We do that in the school. But when the teachers [not clear] when I was young I don't know really, that's what the learn made me from [not clear] come to my school to see how the school is, they teach us how to [not clear]. You understand, the [not clear] from them, they may be fired.

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JE: What about issues related to husbands and wives and the problem with 9-1-1 calls?

CP: No, not too many 9-1-1. [Laughter] To call the police a right? No. [crosstalk] In Africa, if you, let me tell you the truth, if she's my wife maybe she call 9-1-1, the police will ask you "what, come on, why you calling the police on your husband, what did he do?" You have to, you know, we all are mature here, if you have a problem with your wife you have to settle it in the bed. [Laughter] That's, this is true. Don't allow that problem to go to lengths.

JE: But did you encounter problem with other people who come? –

CP: We encounter some men also that bad, as a women that's also bad, also.

JE: So what –

CP: We try as much as we can, you know, it can take a horse to the water it can't force him to drink the water. You can try as much as you can, but it cannot force them. Whatever the woman decide to do. I have one here, I've tried my best – that's not somebody I would talk to, you know that understand me, we say okay I will do this. But I talked to these two couples, as much as I told them, I talked to them but they don't understand until they have a problem now. They are not staying together, the husband also don't listen to me, I tell him "look, woman have power here" soon as I mention women have power, "don't go to that extreme." He don't want to listen to me until police tell him to "come on, get out of the house." [Laughter] He bought a house, he got out from his house because he don't want to listen to my advice. I told him "look, I'm doing an order advice, I'm the chief, I know about women, 100%, I know. See, do this, go back say 'I'm sorry.' Everybody say I'm sorry to their wife, it's not true, but even the woman come outside and say I'm sorry. If you want to make peace tell your wife 'I'm sorry' even the [not clear] they still come, you know, to say I'm sorry." If you look at it, if you want to make peace in



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your house “hey baby, I’m sorry, why we fighting?” You know, I have to make peace. If you have a peace in your house then you can go outside and play. If you got outside – if fighting’s born in your house it won’t like to come back home, so you have to make peace in your house.

MN: Do you still have your international business?

CP: Yes, I still have my international business. My nephew still managing my business in Nigeria.

MN: In Nigeria. Now do you buy textiles still?

CP: No, no, no. He himself goes to Far East now.

MN: Right. Oh he gets it in the Far East?

CP: Far East, yes.

MN: So what is your role in this?

CP: My role is that I still have my investment capital, it’s 2 years of money in the business. So whenever I go to Nigeria I have to do the accounts.

MN: So you’re an investor?

CP: Yes, exactly.

MN: A financial advisor.

JE: You go often to Nigeria?

CP: No, for about three years now I haven’t been.

KA/MM: So why are you here in the Bronx now, why have you chosen to be here?

CP: Yes, that’s something I’m still learning [laughter] I’m still in school here. So I have to learn some subtle things, some mistakes we make in Nigeria while I’m here correct the mistakes over there.

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JE: I just want to ask about the textile, what kind of textile do you buy?

CP: I buy like, [not clear] we call it [not clear], have like this one is used to cut textile, so, it's in the roll, we buy in the roll. So, I will buy linings, it's what we call linings –

JE: It's for the –

CP: – Yes. I buy linings, a lot of linings. I [not clear]

KA/MM: Do you miss home?

CP: Yes, definitely. No place like home. I'm not born here. So, I mean, I miss home, definitely.

MN: Do you have enough Nigerian Igbo people around you here so you feel like you're surrounded by your community?

CP: We meet together at times and eat our own food and drink our own drinks.

MN: Okay, I need to know what a good Igbo dinner is. Since I'm very interested in food, so tell me what a traditional dinner –

CP: We have fufu.

MN: Fufu, okay, that I know.

CP: We have fufu, and we make our own stew meat different way, so if you make it you have to use a [not clear] put it in nice stew and eat it. And you have to try not to chew it.

MN: You swallow it in one shot?

CP: Yes. [laughter]

MN: Oh you put it in your mouth and swallow it? Okay, I can do that. Now, is your food very spicy?

CP: It's very spicy.

MN: Very spicy. Okay.

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CP: We like spice because – if you like spice food, if it's not spicy you can throw it out.

MN: What about breakfast? Do you eat American breakfast?

CP: Oh, no no. Breakfast, yes, we have cheerios like Americans.

KA/MM: So do you cook your own food or do you buy?

CP: I cook my own food, I don't eat junk food.

MN: You don't eat McDonald's?

CP: I eat McDonald's occasionally [laughter].

JE: So do you cook or does your wife cook for you?

CP: My wife cook, I cook too, I have to have my wife to cook.

KA/MM: So she's not a Nigerian –

CP: She cook very well, for not a Nigerian. I'm telling you, she cook better than Nigerian.

MN: Now, are there good Nigerian restaurants in the Bronx?

CP: Yes, we have a lot of them.

MN: What are some restaurants in the Bronx that we should know about?

CP: We have one, on what is it called, Last Stop, they call it Last Stop. It's on Gun Hill Road

Wife: 218 I think.

CP: By, which, Chase Bank.

MN: Okay it's called Last Stop? And it's very good?

CP: Very, very good.

KA/MM: I know of Isiah's.

CP: Isaiah's closed.

Wife: It's not closed.

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CP: No more Isaiah's there.

Wife: They changed name to –

CP: But Isaiah's not owner of the place, no.

KA/MM: So what is a –

Wife: African-American shop or something like that.

MN: Anything else? So we know about Last Stop.

CP: That's one, there's other ones I know but I forgot the names where they prepare soup and you can go there and they have palm wine, that's one drink come from the country we call it palm wine.

MN: Palm wine.

CP: Palm wine, from the tree, from the palm tree. So they give it to you there.

MN: Ah, okay, palm wine.

KA/MM: Chief Paul, so what is the relationship like between Nigerians and people from other West African countries like Ghanaians and Sierra Leoneans and Senegal, what is the relationship like over in the Bronx?

CP: I'm not sure I follow.

KA/MM: Are they nice to each other? Are there problems?

CP: No, we all from West Africa, even if not West Africa, all Africans, to me, I love somebody from Africa whether you are –

MN: Do you find commonalities in the culture between the –

CP: The culture is quite different from my own but still I, like, I like whatever the other people are doing something that's similar the same because all Africans, even Sudan, there's something

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they do I remember yeah, this is what kind of something we do in my country. Always

something, we all the same. I don't discriminate.

MN: What church do you go to in the Bronx?

CP: My church is in [not clear]

MN: And what is it called?

CP: Victory Assemblies of God.

MN: Victory Assemblies of God. Is it near your house or is it down further?

CP: Just by –

Wife: 215.

MN: By 215. Victory Assemblies of God. Now, are most of the people there from Africa or they're from everywhere?

CP: Mostly it will be people from Africa, from Nigeria too.

MN: From Nigeria.

CP: From Igbo land.

MN: From Igbo lands.

CP: There are very few that doesn't understand the language because you know we have so many languages, I won't tell you, in Nigeria have more than two hundred something languages.

MN: What's the language in Igbo land?

CP: We speak Igbo.

MN: Igbo.

KA/MM: Are you a leader at your church too?

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CP: I'm not a leader, I'm supposed to be one of the deacons but because I don't frequently be in the church, to be honest with you. I go to church also Sundays but other things they have in the church because of my time, I have a lot other things at times, if it is Sunday's I can go to church maybe they will call me somewhere else for [not clear].

KA/MM: So what business do you do here in the Bronx right now?

CP: Like I told you that I still have business in Nigeria. They send money to me to buy things for them.

MN: So you're still buying?

CP: I still buy, yes. They send money to buy –

KA/MM: Textiles?

CP: – No textiles, cars mostly now.

MN: Cars?

CP: Cars yes, I used to buy some car parts.

MN: Car parts, okay.

KA/MM: And where do you buy them?

CP: I buy them, what do they call it.

Wife: Junkyard.

CP: Junkyard, yes. So I buy them.

KA/MM: Here in the Bronx?

CP: Here in the Bronx.

MN: So you buy them at a discount because you can get them as used?

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CP: Yes, I buy them and put them in containers and send them to Nigeria. They have to pay by themselves.

MN: What percent, what amount of your time is spent on being a chief and what percent on other business?

CP: It's 50/50.

MN: 50/50 so your chief work is as big as your business?

CP: Yes, exactly.

MN: People are always calling you?

CP: People are always calling me, they call me on my phone, they call me everytime my phone, I have two phones, they call on this, I call on the other one. So I have time to –

MN: Can you be a chief on email? Do they do that also?

CP: Yes, they call me and they send me emails. I have my email that they send me. A lot of people if they can't get me on my phone they send me email.

JE: And I just want to ask about the textiles, you don't buy textiles for women's clothes?

CP: I do, I buy for women clothes. Most of women, even men's clothes doesn't move fast because men doesn't change clothes like women. So women's clothes sell faster than men's clothes because I can wear these tomorrow but women cannot do that, they will always change.

MN: When we had the Ashantihene, who is the Ashanti king, he came dressed in all these traditional outfits, is that a different tradition? Like, is Igbo, do you have –

CP: I have, I have my own dress, in fact I'm supposed to dress that, but why I didn't want to, I just run in from the hospital I went to Jacobi Hospital coming here otherwise you see me in it.

MN: See you in your [crosstalk].

Wife: But he has one thing, his hat.

MN: The hat, that's the chief's hat?

CP: That's the hat, yes. And my cane.

MN: And your cane. Now, when you are doing chiefly duties do they expect you to be in your traditional dress?

CP: Yes.

MN: So you wouldn't do it in this outfit?

CP: No, no.

MN: Oh, do you have an outfit also?

Wife: Yes.

CP: She has, yes.

MN: Do you have a picture of the two of you?

CP: Yes.

MN: Because I'd love to –

[Crosstalk]

MN: Not with you, oh because we'd love it for our bulletin board. You know, because this is actually an honor for us to have you here and it's very, you know. Now, again do you have libation ceremonies to make a room culturally appropriate?

CP: Yes.

MN: Do you do that before you perform your duties?

CP: Yes, we do that before we perform our duties. It's like if I come to – we have cola, what's called cola, cola nuts. So if I bring that cola nut they have to bring that cola nut to me first so I'll



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touch it, I have to touch it as the chief I am so I can tell somebody to share it. And, according to my tradition I have to, the cola, I have to put down to the floor. We call it you give it to the old men that are already dead.

KA/MM: Ancestors.

MN: Ancestors. And you do a cola nut?

CP: Yes, a cola nut. And that cola nut must be Igbo cola nuts. We have Igbo cola nuts.

MN: You have Igbo cola nuts that come from your region?

CP: That come from my region, only we Igbos eat that cola nut. I have the one [not clear] [laughter]. The one that makes their mouth to be yellow.

KA/MM: But the Igbo nut, the cola nut they come in different color.

CP: No, that one I'm telling you is I will bring that Igbo cola. The different cola nuts you can open it only two a packs, but the Igbo cola nuts come in the four packs, in the three packs, in the seven packs. And if it's coming in the seven packs, if I bring cola nut, Igbo cola nut to break it, if I bring it you break it you come into seven packs.

MN: Now where do you buy Igbo cola nuts?

CP: In the Igbo shops.

MN: And they have them in the Bronx?

CP: Yes, they have them in the Bronx.

MN: And you can go there and buy Igbo cola nuts?

CP: Exactly, I can go and get it there.

MN: Wow.

KA/MM: So cola nuts, are they used for –

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CP: Listen, okay, we use cola nuts in so many things. If you go to marry a wife, they have cola nuts, if there's no cola nuts, no marriage. That cola nut must come, that's first thing that must come to the table. We have to break that cola nut, when we break it we chew the cola nut, all of us. Before, we say why we are here. Maybe you know that I'm coming to marry your daughter, but when I come with my people we at the table, sit down at the table, bring the cola nut and we chew it.

MN: And you each chew it, everybody chews cola nuts?

JE: The cola nut is given to you by the father of the bride?

MN: Father of the bride.

CP: Exactly.

MN: And he gives you a cola nut.

CP: He give the cola nut.

MN: But he has to chew it also?

CP: No, no, no.

JE: No, you have to.

CP: We have to break the cola nut, we have to test it because we don't know what happen to the cola nut. You have to chew it, you have to test it.

MN: Test it to make sure he's not poisoning you! Oh, he's a afraid that the poison – [crosstalk and laughter] So he has to test it before you chew it.

CP: Yes, so after breaking the cola nut.

MN: So there's seven pieces?

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CP: No, several pieces, it depends. The one that come in seven pieces is [not clear] many men. If you come with seven pieces I have to bring more things. Seven pieces is dangerous because, not dangerous, what I'm saying is.

KA/MM: Bad luck?

CP: No, it's a good luck, if you have seven pieces I have to call people and they will have to come next time. I have to cook and –

JE: You have to provide so many things.

CP: So many things.

JE: Because it's seven.

CP: Seven.

MN: Oh, right. [Laughs]

CP: But, after I chew the cola nuts, so, then you ask us why do we come to your house. So I say to you, I say okay, I will tell you that something is here that is very good to us, so much [not clear]. You say I have so many things in my house, I hope these are not – I will not mooch on your daughter. Another person will say okay, that's our tradition, there's one beautiful girl we see here, my son wants to marry. You know we from there, we be talking and talking and talking and talking. We will say this, we will say that until we say “you have so many daughters in your house, you don't know which is which.” Which one, then? You know just in same place, [not clear]. Until the end of it, he knows why we're here actually, not to play.

MN: In Sudan the father of the bride offers tobacco?

JE: Tobacco, yes.

CP: Do they pay money for the head of the girl?

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JE: It depends, sometimes you have to pay for school fees, like [crosstalk]. Me, you have to pay *a lot* of school fees [emphasis added]. [Laughter].

CP: That's what I'm telling you that, like Sudan, we do something. If you might want to marry my daughter you have to, I will tell me daughter you going to pay 10,000 or 20,000, but there are people who will pay ten cents. But, you must give something. If somebody say we pay ten cents, even though my daughter went to university and has so many degrees. You cannot pay me that, I have to take token monies, more money, to be heard. But if you don't want to marry my daughter again, if you say it's finished, I have to give you back that money.

MN: Right.

CP: I have to, I have to give you back the money so that, that's how it works.

MN: That's how it works.

CP: When I return the money my daughter have the power to marry another man.

MN: Got it.

CP: Otherwise, if I didn't return the money, if my daughter have a baby for another man, that baby still belongs to you –

JE: To you, yeah, because you paid.

CP: Exactly.

JE: The bridewealth.

CP: Oh you know this already?

JE: Yes. And it's not only money even sometimes people who keep cattle they pay in cattle.

CP: In cattle, I know.

JE: Some people combine money with goods.

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CP: That's true, that's true, that's true.

JE: And other instruments like iron bars.

MN: Are you, as somebody from Nigeria, happy with the education that young people are getting in the Bronx? Do you feel the education is as good as they get back home?

CP: It's very good, very, very good. How I wish it to be like that in my own country like we have here, if very good. Excellent.

JE: So are you planning on staying here forever or will you be going back to Nigeria?

CP: No, how could I stay here forever? I must be back to Nigeria. [Laughter]. Definitely, I am getting older so, even the Bible, who is that? When his time comes to, when he get into his grave, he go back home.

KA/MM: Do you know any other African nations apart from Nigeria? Have you been to any other countries in Africa?

CP: Oh, I have been to Ghana, I've been to, I know Ghana very well. I have been to Conakry Guinea, I've been to Guinea. I been to Togo, I been to some other places I forget the names, in West Africa. I visited another so I know a little bit of their culture too.

KA/MM: You say you know Ghana very well.

CP: I've been to Ashanti Bekwai of course. When I mention, you know I say well where I been to, I say Bekwai [not clear] in Ghana.

KA/MM: [Laughs] okay so you were interior.

CP: Interior.

KA/MM: You come there for business? For your textile business?

CP: No, like I told you I have a family friend in Ashanti Bekwai in Ghana.

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MN: Ashanti Bekwai is inland?

CP: In Ghana.

KA/MM: It's inland.

CP: So I went to his house, I used to visit his place –

KA/MM: Bekwai actually means forest, like a forest area.

MN: Right, now when you go to other African countries do you fly or go by bus or car?

CP: At times I fly, other times I go by road.

MN: Are the roads improving?

CP: Yes, our roads are a little bit improving, it's improving. Like when I travelled to Conakry I go by road, and I spend about three days to get down there because I stop in, I forget what it's called, I stopped to – like I went to Liberia, I stopped there.

KA/MM: Sierra Leone?

CP: Sierra Leone, no, no, no. No Sierra Leone.

KA/MM: Niger?

CP: No, where would you go into?

JE: Niger is far.

KA/MM: What about Ivory Coast?

CP: Ivory Coast, Ivory Coast, yes.

MN: When you're driving on the road do you stay in a hotel overnight?

CP: If I'm, when I'm travelling for that?

MN: Yes.

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CP: No, no. we [not clear] but we stop over in hotels, you can pay some little money and, you know, take shower and change your clothes and other things.

KA/MM: But you don't sleep over there?

CP: No, I don't sleep over there. Fourteen hour journey because the same will be working for everyone, take shower and then you know, and when he need us out we continue moving. I went to, I just went to have the experience, but when I was coming back I came back by air. By air.

MN: Is there an airport in your home city?

CP: We have the best airport in the whole Africa.

MN: Wow. [Laughter]. And what is the name of the airport?

CP: It's the Murtala Mohammed Airport. We named it after the man who is my former president. They assassinate him just like JFK, so we named his name right on the international airport.

MN: What is the first name?

CP: Murtala. Murtala Mohammed.

MN: Murtala.

CP: Mohammed, yes. He was a Muslim. They killed him when he was going to the mosque on Friday.

MN: And so the airport's named after him?

CP: Yes, it's a place to say goodbye, he was a very good person.

KA/MM: Ramat was a very good man.

CP: Yes, he's a very good president. No, what happened Ramat replacing Gowon during the war, the president of Nigeria during the war, during the civil war, his name is Yakubu Gowon. He is a Christian, even though he is the president of them, he is a good man.

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KA/MM: So it's only the Hausa Muslims who are not good people?

CP: No, no. Like I said Murtala Mohammed is a Hausa, is a Muslim, but he is a good man. You understand?

KA/MM: Can you tell us why Nigeria has been consistently ruled by almost only generals, about 95% of Nigerian past presidents are all in the army, they have been in the army, can you tell us why?

CP: Well you know, they are retired army, they are no more, we in a democracy now. They are retired, even though, if you retire from the army, you still a soldier, which we know. They rule by power. It's by power. You know what is happening in Africa. So all these peoples rule by, you know – they use so many things to rule. Not that many [not clear], not that many because some of the northerners they can bribe and give, I mean, so many things happens, my problem, that's why we losings presidents and they use their power in that way, that what I will tell you. Power puzzles, you know? They use their power to rule.

MN: Is your region the wealthiest region in Nigeria?

CP: My region?

MN: The east, is that the wealthiest part of Nigeria?

CP: Yes.

MN: And that's part of the reason for the resentment?

CP: Yes.

KA/MM: So what are some of the natural resources you have in your region?

CP: The only natural resources we have, we have cocoa also, a lot, have a cocoa. Have iron, a lot of minerals sources as well, a lot. But the major one is oil which, [not clear] because if you come



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in my own state we have all your modern drilling in my own state only. In other states, we have so many oil wells, so many, that if you go to Port Harcourt we will have problem of oil. It's Port Harcourt that's where we have the major oil, where the, you know, the once told them because their women are not taking good care of them, they don't have electricity, they don't have good road, that's why some of their bosses if they do not have electricity, if they do not have good road, nobody will come here. They started to, you know, hijack people.

MN: What about business and people and traders, is Igbo land famous for traders?

CP: Yes, that's what, we're born to trade in fact [laughter]. We, I mean it, we sustain by trading, by business because otherwise, even after the war, they didn't allow us to penetrate into the government because of where we come from. We say okay, bye for your government, so we didn't do business, so that's why every Dick and Tom in that land is a businessman.

JE: Are there women traders?

CP: We have a lot, yes, a lot of them.

KA/MM: Do you have any particular thing that are more popular for trading?

CP: In the what? Igbo land?

KA/MM: The Igbo's, do they have like, do they mostly sell textiles or?

CP: In fact, if you come to my area, Onitsha, we call Onitsha, Aba, Ugwueke, we right here.

Most of things we do on that land is for textiles. That's why they put it as a contraband now, they want to stop it because northerners lose out. Northerners lose out, we Igbo's depend on these textiles, they stop it. They didn't bother me. I'm telling you it's a contraband even tomorrow, if you bringing it, if it bringing it to my country now, it's contraband. They can seize it, if you unfortunate they seize your container. But if you fortunate, you can get your container. We call it

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CB, so if you want to play the custom you tells customs “I have a CB.” They know what CB means, give the money –

MN: So you have to bribe the customs official?

CP: Yes. So if you pay have to take it out from the wealth. But if the Federal custom comes and want for seizure, your only [not clear] because one container can get about 15 million, \$500,000 textile. That’s what we call textile for, we use it for sew pants. It’s very expensive. One container is about \$500,000. So if you unfortunate they seize it, you have to jump into ocean. [Laughter].

DM: In Ghana we call it trousers links.

CP: We call it trouser too. We don’t call it pants I don’t mention pants because I’m a man.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

MN: What about things like entertainment and music? Is that something that is well established in Igbo land?

CP: We have the world of playing our music in Igbo land. Which, if I had the sound now, I forget that I’m a chief maybe, [laughter].

MN: Is there a name for the music?

CP: That’s what we call [aiakata?]

MN: [Aiakata?]

CP: Aiakata.

DM: Where is King Sunny Ade –

CP: Huh?

DM: King Sunny Ade.

CP: Oh Sunny Ade from Igbo land.

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DM: Oh really?

CP: Yes.

DM: We're going to see him when we go down, I'm going to the Jazz Fest and he's there this year.

KA/MM: Is there another popular Igbo musician like Sunny Ade or [Fada?]?

CP: No, Fada is from Igbo land too. Fada.

KA/MM: Do you have any Igbo musicians?

MN: Igbo musicians. Or do they manage the musicians, money? [Laughter].

CP: Also they play music, but some of them are not as popular. Some of them have those who are popular actually.

KA/MM: Who is this guy who sings [begins singing].

CP: I know the music, but I don't know the guy.

MN: Thank you so much Chief Paul, this is a real honor for us and a great learning experience for all of us, but also for all the people who will listen to this, so you know we really appreciate your coming to Fordham University and good luck with all your endeavors and it's really a pleasure to have you.

CP: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]