



LAGOS BUDDING 50

by Helen Gebregiorgis

P R O F I L E S

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the participants and people I met in Lagos, Nigeria, who willingly and graciously shared their stories with me. I sincerely feel privileged to have met every single one of you. The Lagos Budding 50 project would not have been the same without each of you. Thank you to Ford Foundation and IIE (Institute of International Education) for the generous support that made this project possible. A special thanks to Mr. Innocent Chukwuma, Mr. Paul Nwulu, and Mr. Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima who were all tremendously supportive throughout the project.



In 2017, I met many people living in Lagos, Nigeria. I listened to stories and was given a glimpse into the life of everyday people of Lagos. All of them were different but connected to the special place I was visiting, Lagos, Nigeria. They had different faces, names, experiences, backgrounds, lives, but they all shared something in common, which was their resilience and love for their country.

Some may describe resilience as not giving up others may say it's finding a way in a space that doesn't offer many options. Some say it's not allowing defeat and some describe it as navigating through to reach your goal. Some saw it as opportunities to create and to do something new. Also, resilience to claim a space as home even when it didn't feel like one anymore. And finding a way to survive daily, to thrive, and to be.

I've learned that there is much more than what appears on the surface. As I've come to the end of this project, I realize that everything comes to an end for new chapters to begin, for new things to flourish.

My hope is for those who participated in this project to see that their stories are worth hearing and that they impact their countries in many different ways. I do my work not only to shed light on everyday remarkable people but also to show that a place would be nothing without the efforts and lives of the people. I specifically focused on people who migrated to Lagos to show how movements are a part of all our journeys and our growth. Some people have left Lagos since I began this project, and some people have stayed. We continuously are moving in our lives, whether it is physically, spiritually, mentally, intellectually, etc. And as we move, we subtly shape our environments.

Keep going, growing, sharing, learning, thriving, and living.



There is something about Lagos that isn't in any other city. You have to be here to understand. Lagos embodies the Nigerian spirit. A lot of people come to Lagos, and that very moment you are Nigerian, you are not your tribe. You are a Lagosian. I love the unity. It is the story of where we are going as a nation.

Lagos has been a blend of the good and the bad and the ugly. I have been robbed; I have also fallen off a moving keke. But all these experiences came together to make me a more careful person. I am now more than ever, observant to my environment, I have become this person who pays more attention to the most mundane of details. I am more Independent. I would not have become this rounded individual if I had not moved here.

Onwukwe Chimdinma Adriel

Birthplace: PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Profession: LAWYER

Cities you have lived in: PORT HARCOURT - RIVERS STATE

UMUAHIA - ABIA STATE IBADAN - OYO STATE

LAGOS



With my strong mind, prayer, and faith, I survived. As I was struggling, I used to pray. Not everybody that comes to this life will achieve immediately. Some face a lot of challenges before they achieve.

I faced a lot, and I know that I will face challenges before I achieve in my life. But I know it will pass.

The advice I would give to young people is to have faith in God, have a strong mind, and don't be lazy. Whenever bad things come up try and stay behind and pray to God on how to rebrand your self to achieve your aim.

Tijani Ajayi Rasaq



Life is made of challenges, and we can't run away from it. We all have challenges here and there and personal. One thing we should realize and I think would help is if we can ask ourselves, Why? Why am I here? Why am I doing this? Why? If we can answer why we are doing, the things we are doing, I think it would help us have a mindset of --okay if this is good I should go on this path. If this is bad, what can I do to make it better? I always come to Lagos because it challenges my mindset to grow. People come from different places; people move because of work, family, or wanting a new beginning.

It's why we are doing that, which should really drive us. A lot of people move to Lagos not because they needed to move to Lagos. They move to Lagos because someone said there is money on the streets of Lagos. People should ask themselves why do they need to move? Is it good, or is it bad? I have seen couples where the husband lives in Lagos and the wife lives somewhere else. So you need to sit down and understand the why first. And when you understand, then you can say this is what I want to do.

Oluwafunmilayo Ajala

Birthplace: Ilorin, Kwara State
Profession: Travel and Documentary
Photographer/Visual Storyteller
Cities you have lived in: Lagos,
Ilorin, Ado-Ekiti, Calabar, Offa



I am writing stories about women living in Lagos. I want to use the stories, the books, to enlighten the female generation. I want to educate them both in being independent and how to handle this pressure that it comes with. Being a lady in Nigeria isn't an easy thing. It all boils down to me writing those books.

Amaka Felly Obioji

Birthplace: Awka, Anambra, Nigeria.

Profession: writer

Cities I have lived in: Awka, Port Harcourt, Lagos



I want to be remembered as a person who wasn't afraid. And not a person who was so afraid of being labeled that he never actually lived. I believe that is the last part of my evolutionary process. I've lived in fear of labels all my life and I am at this point that I realize if you are going to be labeled, you are going to be labeled. What is thought of you and what you think of yourself doesn't necessarily have to be the same, but you do have to make peace with the voice inside your head.

So I am very dedicated to finding out as much about myself, and what my place is in the world that I am living in; in a perfect world, I'd like to be remembered as having found that place, and lived in it, and done my best with it.

Andre Blaze Henshaw

Birthplace: Calabar, Cross Rivers State Nigeria.

Profession: Broadcaster, Writer.

Cities you have lived in: Calabar, Lagos, Port Harcourt.



To find a path towards a dream. Lagos was such a big deal. It was like conquering the world. It was a place I had to be in.

I have learned to be resilient, to embrace the hustle. It is the spirit of Lagos that makes the difference, the ability to roll with the punches, I have learned to make my own dream.

The fact that everyone is all about their hustle, everyone is trying to survive, everyone is trying to make it. Everyone is trying to be original and create their world, and everyone takes pride in the work. Even if you think about street artists, they are so proud of their work. Everyone is like 'do you know who I am?' Everyone is trying to be relevant in their own space and Lagos allows you to do all of that. Lagos allows you to fail, and Lagos also allows you to succeed. It is up to you which side of the coin you want to flip. Lagos is such an enabling city. That's one of the things I really like about Lagos. The fact that it presents you with so many troubles but also presents you with an equal amount of opportunities and gives you strength. Lagos is fantastic.

Aurora Monyei

Birthplace: Delta State
Profession: Brand Management
Cities you have lived in: Abuja,
Jos, Shendam, Bauchi, & Lagos



I think one thing someone has to do is remain focused.

I mean for a long time I had no job and I was doing some other jobs I didn't want to do. I kept developing myself. I would go online and do courses. I would read and just keep developing myself and keep aligned with what I wanted to pursue. If I hadn't done that I probably wouldn't have been very productive. For someone to be resilient you have to be focused.

It might be hard but look forward to that goal that you want to pursue and believe that there is hope that you will get there one day. I mean for me is it's a dream come true for me to be here. After I got this job a friend called me up when he saw my update on LinkedIn and he said that he also applied to the job but didn't even get called for an interview. And he said did you know anybody? I said no. I came here and did the test like others. I had my interview and here I am. I believe that that in itself can inspire a lot of people. Because if the system was structured in a way where there's a level playing ground for everyone then you know someday you also have the opportunity to do what you want to do.

BANKOLE, Olaide Abdul-hameed

Birthplace: Igboho, Oyo State, Nigeria

Profession: Agricultural Economist

Cities you have lived in: Ibadan and Lagos



We got registered in 2015, and we started full operation on March 6, 2016. As with any new business, you feel like this is going to be rosy... But it didn't turn out so. We had so many setbacks and challenges. First was the meat, and how do we preserve the meat? We had a cold room but then two months later the cold room started to have issues, and the meat would go back. There were many times I would go home and cry, and think am I supposed to do this business? It's probably not cut out for me.

But then at the end of the day, with prayer, with the push from family members, with encouragement, even from strangers, from customers that became friends, it kept us pushing and feeling like we can do it and we can make it. Those are the things that day by day we kept doing, and then we found a safe ground. It's not like we don't face challenges anymore, but at least we have gone past a few levels that we know that if anything happens to us in the future, we'll know how to address it.


Mato, Oluwabukola

Birthplace: Ilupeju, Lagos

Profession: Entrepreneur

Cities you have lived in: Gbagada, Maryland, Iju (Lagos), Abuja and Ogun State





I wanted to come to a place that held such vast opportunities for me; in law, in poetry, in social entrepreneurship.

The first time I came to Lagos I think in 2012, I found this city bubbling with life, screaming of opportunities, giving me the finest story ideas.

As a writer, I knew my muse would find its finest expressions here. The hard work, the constant movement, the diverse nature of its inhabitants piqued my desire to move here, settle here, and stay here.

Caleb Adebayo

Birthplace: Port Harcourt

Profession: Lawyer

Cities you have lived in:

Port Harcourt, Ile-Ife, Lagos

Although I was born in Lagos, my father moved here with his clothes wrapped in a bigger piece of cloth and he hitched the next ride here. He moved down here with hopes to secure a better life for himself and his future family. He desired an education although he couldn't afford one. His parents didn't have enough to send him to school especially as Nigeria was just recovering from the Biafra war. He moved because he wanted a shot, a better opportunity in life.

There is a 'Never Die' attitude here in Lagos. It doesn't matter what the issues are, people keep pushing on. Being born in the ghettos, gave me an uncanny determination to be better. Although I wasn't sure of what I wanted to become, what I saw everyday around me made me certain of what I did not want to be. I wanted to be enlightened, to live a life of purpose, to be influential- to make my life count for something and for someone.

I currently use my skills to help NGO's and individuals to access funding and opportunities that will grant them international visibility. I desire to become a policy maker, to provide solutions that work- to help institutions develop sustainable solutions to some of our major problems. From health to women and girls; I see myself becoming influential, walking in purpose and helping others do the same. I want more people to become empowered to make a difference in their personal lives.



Chidi Koldsweat

Birthplace: Lagos, Nigeria

Profession: Consultant

Cities you have lived in: Lagos



I see myself as a youth activist. One who pushes for young people to see beyond the limitations, and aspire to get to the positions that they want. I see myself as a health policy analyst and specialist that through his knowledge, can make positive contributions that can advance the current state of our health system. I see myself as a strong believer in true Christian values and virtues. A lot of my values and principles emanate from my belief in God and Christ.

I believe that we all have a well of motivation inside of us, but we need to constantly fill it up with inspiration, and when there is a need you draw out from that well. So I want to be one of those external factors that would constantly keep your well of motivation filled. So that when you need to draw out of it, you still see a lot of resources to encourage yourself.



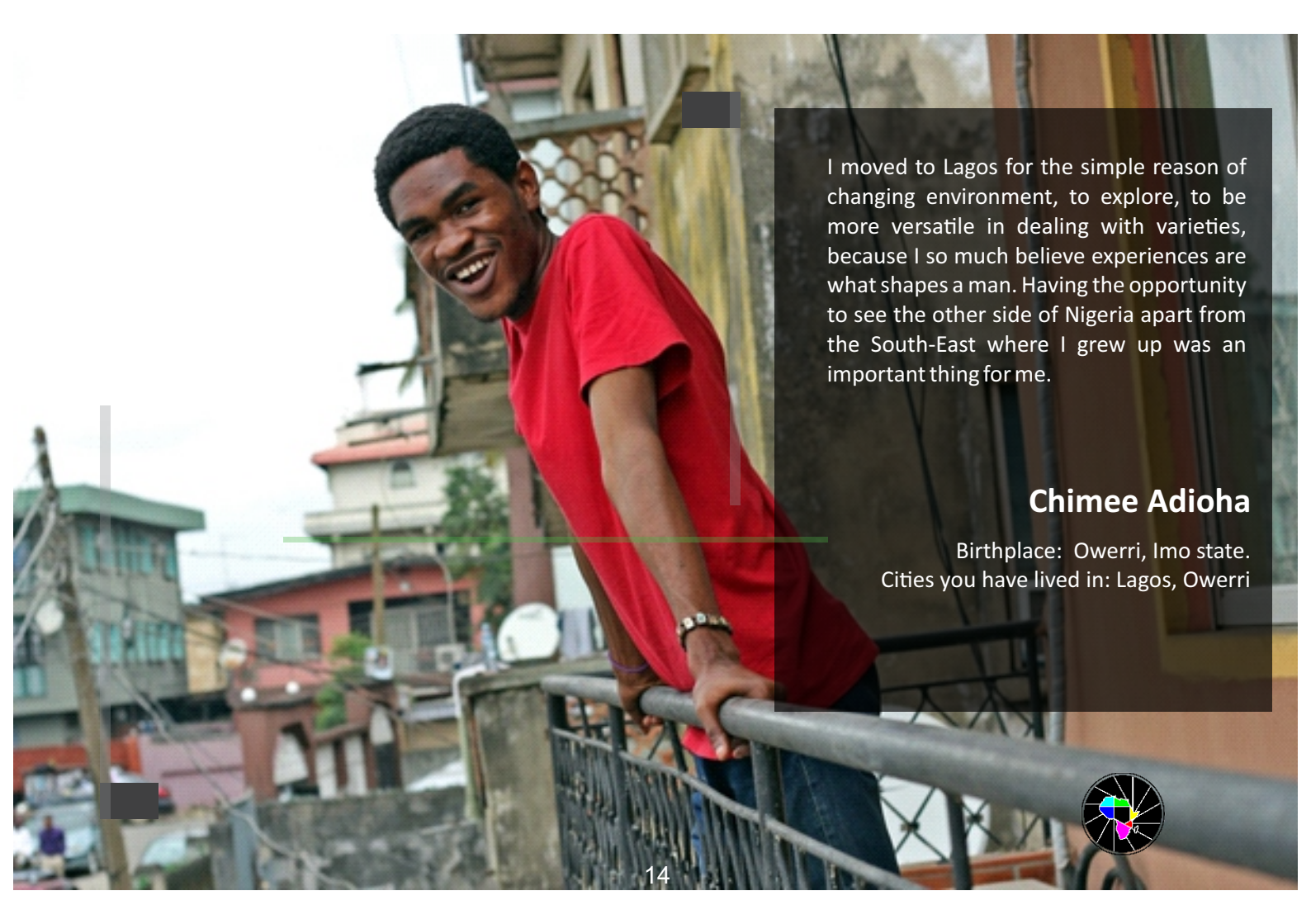
Chimankpam Williams Uzoma

Place of Birth: Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Profession: Researcher

Cities you have lived in:

Port Harcourt, Lagos, Benin, Ibadan



I moved to Lagos for the simple reason of changing environment, to explore, to be more versatile in dealing with varieties, because I so much believe experiences are what shapes a man. Having the opportunity to see the other side of Nigeria apart from the South-East where I grew up was an important thing for me.

Chimee Adioha

Birthplace: Owerri, Imo state.
Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Owerri



The lessons I have learned in Lagos are enormous and can make a full book. My experience in Lagos has thought me how to survive anywhere and irrespective of the situation. The gender limitation mindset I had was erased since I moved to Lagos, in pursuit of my life path as a shoemaker. I have learned to stay strong not just for myself but for the thousands drawing inspiration from my journey. I have learned to have faith in Nigeria because we are truly gifted people irrespective of the odds

Before I was shy, not courageous, not daring enough, although I had my dreams, and I didn't have the courage to pursue it. When I came to Lagos, a whole lot of things changed around me.

Lagos made me more confident in myself.

Chioma Madueke

Birthplace: Newwi, Anambra state, Nigeria

Profession: shoemaker

Cities I have lived in: Newwi, Anambra State

Sampou, Bayelsa state

Awo-omamma, Imo state



Lagos has helped shape me. In Lagos, you have to realize when to mind your business and when to connect with other people. Because this connection may help you. You pick up your phone, and you know someone who knows someone. You need to know the right people.

In Lagos people can make money from anything. And you as a freelancer, and artist, you have to be sure you move with the right crowd, if you know the right people, you get the right things.

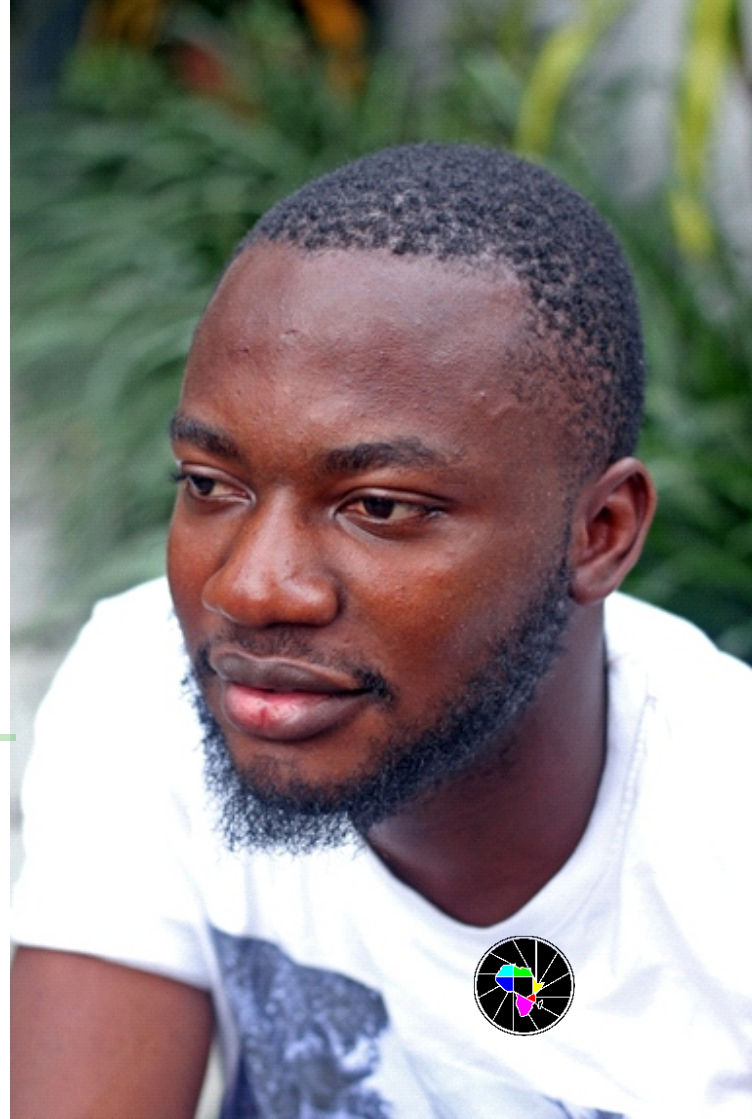
Back then, I used to go with the crowd. When my friend invited me to stuff, I used to be like *okay let's go*. But now I've learned to take my time and know the things that are time-wasting. Because time is money and money is time.

Eromo Egbejule

Birthplace: Sapele, Delta State

Profession: Journalist/Writer

Cities you have lived in: Lagos,
Port Harcourt, Abuja, Malmo, Nsukka



I grew up in Badia East and on 2015, September, 18th my community was displaced. We were evicted without notice.

After six months of the demolition, the old ones kept on dying. They had nowhere to go and nowhere to sleep. We lost elders and even babies. Lagos state needs to come to our aid.

We have been standing firm with the help of the organization, Spaces for Change. They have been coming and helping us. Sometimes they come to the communities and bring mosquito nets and bring other things that people can use. They have really been helping us.

Femi Harrison

Birthplace: Lagos

Cities you have lived in: Lagos



I look at the different forms of resilience and the absence of government involvement in people lives. If people didn't have to struggle for basic amenities, I think people would really live their lives. They wouldn't have to worry about where their next meal is coming from; they wouldn't have to worry about how their going to feed their children and how they are going to pay for their school fees. They wouldn't have to worry about the little things they worry about now. They wouldn't have to worry about light. You know those things that constitute into their daily affairs. It would make them trust the government more. Then resilience can go towards other energies and not everyday struggle.

Fisayo Ajala

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: Researcher



The person that I am now was influenced by Lagos.

I went back to University, and I took a career as an administrator in a school in Lekki. And that is when I saw a child who had come to school who was adopted by someone whose kids had relocated, and she wanted the child with her. This girl had come to the school, and she was completely different from every child in the school, which was a high brow school. I didn't know how we were going to work on the child to get her to where she needed to be with her peers. What happened to that child within two terms is what transformed my life and what led the way and created the path to where I am today. It was what opened up my eyes to see that every child can thrive if they are given the right opportunities and the right exposure.

After what happened to this little girl in two terms I couldn't stay to only see a few kids having opportunities to quality education. I wanted to see how I could give more I wanted to see how I could reach out to masses.

And that is where it started from and what spurred me to leave the job as an administrator, and become a social entrepreneur today. And so if not for Lagos I would not have had the experience led me where I am today.

Folawe Omikunle

Birthplace: Ogun state

Profession: Social Entrepreneur

Cities you have lived in: Sango Otta,
Ogun state, Cotonou, Benin Republic,
London, United Kingdom, Lagos, Nigeria



There are many good opportunities in Port Harcourt, but if you don't know anybody you can't make it there, but in Lagos, if you go and apply and be serious about it, they will hire you.

I know that my parents aren't patient and they keep saying look for another job, but it is not easy. But I know that where I am is not the last place. What is keeping me moving ahead is the focus, determination, and God because I know I can not do it alone, and I will do it.

Francisca Abel



I wake up in the morning, and I see a woman selling biscuits with sweets or corn by the side of the road, and she still wakes up early in the morning because she has a family to feed and she pushes and strives to get it done. So I ask myself what is wrong with me? In terms of education and network, I may know more people than she does, and it makes me rethink everything I do. I mean sometimes I may get depressed and down but once I step out my doorstep into the bustle and the noise, and the danfo drivers upsetting you or the okada drivers upsetting you, it is enough to get my juices going and get my energy back. For me, I drive on that energy. Some people say those things put them off, but for me, that's where I get energy. Sometimes I want to ride in a danfo bus and just experience different people conversations, and I am like okay *this is life*.

Idongesit Harrison Umoh

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: Entrepreneur

(Footwear and fashion accessories designer/maker)

Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Uyo, Atlanta, Washington.



Lagos has been a land of opportunities for me. It allowed me to have a very strong foundation (primary and secondary school) which set me on a pedestal for my later years. Lagos has taught me perseverance, persistence, and patience; I can achieve anything! I have developed interpersonal, self–confidence, and good communication skills that I couldn't have gotten anywhere else in Nigeria. All these values have helped shape the entrepreneur that I am today.

Every day, I wake up with a can-do attitude, and I remind myself of my goals. I try to be a doer/an achiever instead of a complainer. I understand that in every environment, not just in Lagos, (so location doesn't really matter), when challenges occur, you look for the opportunity from it and become the problem solver.


Ifedayo Durosinmi – Etti

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: Sales and Marketing Expert

Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Ogun State, London





I am a freelancer, and I am also a photographer. Even when I was not here, I was doing my photography, but I didn't have the right people around me that could support me. But here in Lagos, you get to meet and learn from more people. You get to attend more workshops and events that revolve around what you want to be. I tend to learn more from bigger people than me. That's why I moved here. I believe here is where you have everything, here in Nigeria, it has to be Lagos.

Ogbanta Ikenna Chukwudi

Profession: Freelancer,
Photographer



I am a feminist.

I find myself in an environment where women are underprivileged in a lot of areas. So I tell people I am a feminist. I don't want to say that defines me but my outlook and perspective on everything I do in my life is based on that.

Iseoluwa Ejide Obagade

Birthplace: Lagos Nigeria.

Profession: I am the

MD/CEO ISEMIIYI ENTERPRISES LIMITED.

It's an indigenous Agro Allied export company



There are a lot of people who are okay with their comfort zone, and there is this quote that says *“everything you've ever desired is on the other side of fear.”* So I think it is important at some point in every young person's life to decide it's time to make a move. That move doesn't necessarily have to be leaving the city you were born in; you could also be in the same city but make a significant move. It could be trying to be independent, caring for yourself, and taking care of your bills. Somebody said to really grow you have to have lived alone. And I don't think everyone has the opportunity to live alone. So I don't always say get an apartment and pay rent because even if you are living with your parents just make sure you are doing something significant.

People should learn to be brave and courageous towards pursuing their dreams. It's fear that holds us back a whole lot. And in the end, you die and so many things you think you would have done, you didn't try.

Be willing to try new things.

Jennifer Chinenye Emelifé

Birthplace: Sokoto State

Profession: Teacher /Literary Journalist

Cities you have lived in:

Lagos, Sokoto, Abuja





After graduation, there was no work in my state, so I came to Lagos, but there was still no work, so I joined a security company.

Because of my condition, I am not happy, but I had to find something to become somebody in the future. That is why I am engaged in security work.

In everything, you have to plan for yourself so that your suffering will not be in vain. So as I am suffering in security work today, I plan to go back to school, to start where I stopped, that is my hope, and that will make me happy.

Onyukinu Johnson Idah



What brought me to Lagos was a career connection. I wanted to come here and establish my whole being and my personality. I wanted to add more to what I wanted in my life the most, which was education.

I wanted to go to a place where I was more exposed, and I could see things, do things, and also the opportunity to have things.

Joseph Okoro



What really keeps me going. What keeps me alive with the job I have is my passion. My customers encourage me. If they don't see me, they won't cut their hair. Sometimes they will call. Some will wait for me, and some will go. You will find one way or the other I have customers, and I give them a sparkling touch in their hair, so they are looking good.

Adewumi Oladimeji Julius



I think that everyone in life fears oblivion. You don't want to die, and no one remembers anything about you.

Lately, I have decided to let my heart lead me away from paths that always lead to fear, doubt, and anxiety.

No matter where you are, I think the concept of home will always be very difficult for most people to come to terms with, but if you ask me home is wherever you find yourself, especially your inner peace. Where you feel safe, and your stories are heard. So home is not one particular place for me. The road will always be home

Obasi Susan Kamnelechukwu

Birthplace: Mushin, Lagos

Profession: Storyteller/Documentary Photographer

Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Port-harcourt,
Enugu, Ebonyi and Abuja



Lagos for me has proved to be a land of opportunities. Lagos for me has proved to be a land where we can achieve so much. Amidst all of that is the individual. Everyone has to know who they are for themselves. We talk about the corruption in Nigeria generally, but every single person has a role to play. So it's not all down to the government, it's down to you and me. If as a market person or market seller, I shouldn't expect that my customer leaves the change with me because that is still corruption. If they do it voluntarily, then that's fine. Don't force me to do it. Don't try to take advantage of the next person. It may seem like a little thing, but it's the little things that matter. Yes, the big things are grand, and everybody sees them, but it is the little thing that constitutes and aggregate to make up those big things.

Onyekachi Asugha

Birth place: Lagos, Nigeria

Profession: Automotive Engineer

Cities I've lived in: Lagos, Ibadan, Owerri,
Port-Harcourt, Abuja (all Nigeria).

Leeds (UK), Atlanta, GA (US).



Economic opportunity is the first thing that attracted me to Lagos. It held promise for me more than other places I had been or lived at.

My experience has taught me to explore, hustle hard, be a dream chaser, give back and continue my soul-searching journey.

I've been resilient and that has motivated me at every turn to look for solutions instead of wallowing in pity and the problems.

Kehinde Ayeni

Birthplace: Ibadan, Oyo State

Profession: Communication Specialist/Non-profit Executive

Cities you have lived in: Ibadan, Ilorin, Enugu, Lagos





The time I moved back to Lagos I was at the point in my life where I was to trying to reconnect and go back to my root and see. I spend all my years. and I felt that it was time to move out of that particular space and given my wild spirited self, I got bored and I just wanted to learn about other places.

Lagos was a starting point and when I got the opportunity I ran to Lagos.

It is the city where dreams come true. There are no rules to hustling.

The daily hustles and bustles of Lagos is enough to make one develop a thick skin to what would have normally make one cringe. I've been able to find ways to override the otherwise tough living conditions in Lagos state. I'm now pocket wiser to save for the high cost of living, an early riser to avoid the heavy traffics, grown security consciousness and a giver.

Kehinde Ekundayo

Birthplace: Lagos, Nigeria

Profession: Art Curator

Cities you have lived in:

Lagos, Jos, Ile-Ife, Ibadan, Owerri.



I was born in Lagos, in the capital Ikeja. My mother and father are from Ondo state. My dad grew up in Delta state, but my mom grew up in Lagos state.

Lagos is home. You go away for school, and you come back one day. It wasn't a rule imposed by anyone; it was just my true north. My identity is rooted in what I am called to do. What I am called to do is writing the African narrative right from the roots from where I started.

Like any major metropolis, I have lived in New York, London, Paris, Nairobi Abidjan, Johannesburg people come for opportunities. I think the African development narrative is centered around cities, and Lagos is the hub in West Africa where you can come for commercial activity and commercial opportunity. You come to make it big. Businesses don't die here because the market isn't big enough. They die because of execution or external factors never because the market isn't big enough.

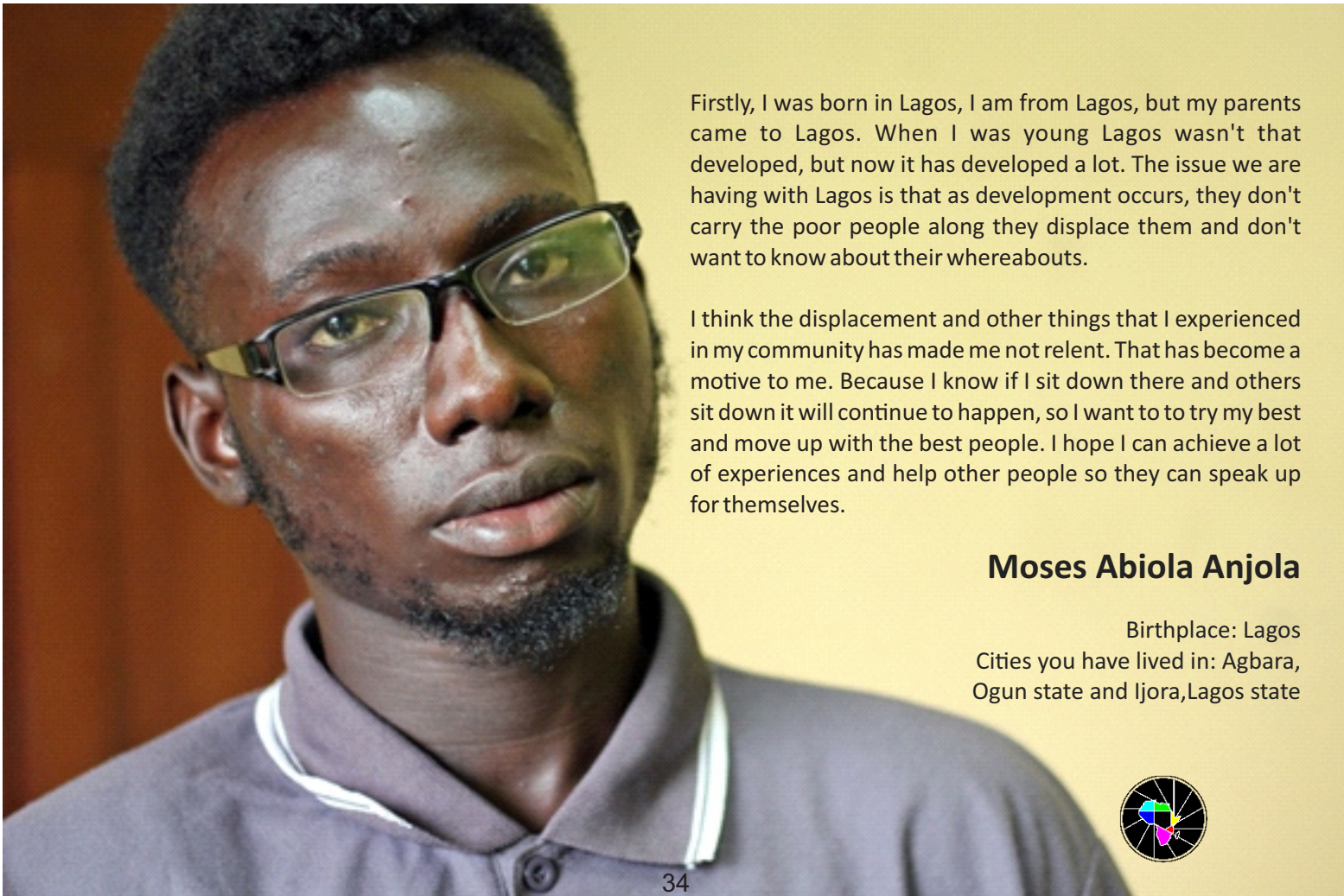
Misan Rewane

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: CEO, WAVE

Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Bristol,
Stanford, New York, London,
Abidjan, Boston





Firstly, I was born in Lagos, I am from Lagos, but my parents came to Lagos. When I was young Lagos wasn't that developed, but now it has developed a lot. The issue we are having with Lagos is that as development occurs, they don't carry the poor people along they displace them and don't want to know about their whereabouts.

I think the displacement and other things that I experienced in my community has made me not relent. That has become a motive to me. Because I know if I sit down there and others sit down it will continue to happen, so I want to try my best and move up with the best people. I hope I can achieve a lot of experiences and help other people so they can speak up for themselves.

Moses Abiola Anjola

Birthplace: Lagos

Cities you have lived in: Agbara,
Ogun state and Ijora, Lagos state



Coming to Lagos, affected my trajectory as a human being. I think that my life would have turned out very differently if I wasn't in this town.

I credit Lagos for the grit, focus, and relentlessness with which I pursue anything my hands find to do. As a melting pot of cultures, ideologies, and history, it has enhanced my understanding of diversity and helps me leverage the same to further my personal and professional goals.

My hope for Lagos is that it will continue to have the kind of visionary leadership that it has so far. Lagos has focused on infrastructure, on enabling policy, on enforcing discipline and order, and making sure that opportunities are available to people who should have them.

Naomi Lucas

Birthplace: Kaduna

Profession: Creative Entrepreneur

Cities you have lived in: Kaduna, Jos, Jimeta,
Lagos, Johannesburg, Lusaka, Katsina



I call myself a butterfly. Really, I call myself a butterfly. Basically because I live in this dreamy world. I pretend that the reality doesn't exist. I am a wanderer. I love to just walk and think about nothing around me...that's why I picked up street photography. I travel a lot too. I see myself as a butterfly because I travel, I wander and I just think about beautiful things.

I want to be remembered as that person that came to this world and took beautiful pictures of people trying to tell their stories, and doing it selflessly...I seriously love it. And if you love it, I feel like "oh you can have it! It's free. It's for you!". I feel fulfilled that way. My fulfilment comes from the fact that, I don't know how much I make people smile but every time I make people smile or maybe help with one or two things. I feel very cool. I feel like "okay, I have done something I am supposed to do."

Nec Nonso

Birthplace: aguleri, anambra state.

Profession: documentary photography

Cities I have lived in: enugu, abuja, calabar



There was this story of Africa rising, and I fully bought into it and still believe it. And I wanted to be part of whatever was the fastest, energetic sense of that. I had known about Lagos, and I heard about Nigeria and how crazy it was from friends, family, and colleagues. But the stuff that was exciting and attractive about it was the spirit of entrepreneurship and all the young Nigerians coming home.

The clusters of people my age who had not grown up in their own country but were coming back and trying to re-create it and make it into something that they believe it could be, I wanted to be a part of that. And I knew it wouldn't be easy, but it also seemed like a really exciting adventure.

Noella Moshi

Birthplace: Dar es Salaam Tanzania

Profession: Educator

Cities you have lived in: Dar es Salaam (Tanzania),
Gaborone (Botswana), Harare (Zimbabwe),

Lae (Papua New Guinea),

Cape Town (South Africa),

Johannesburg (South Africa),

Lagos (Nigeria)



I have not overcome all my challenges yet but God has been faithful all along. I have been able to make friends that are higher than me who motivates and encourages me, been able to meet great facilitators who really inspired me in getting to the next level. It has been amazing so far.

Education plays a vital role for any country or state to be developed. As a fellow for TeachforNigeria, I have been able to acquire some basic skills and knowledge that are useful in reducing the level of education inequity in the state. As a teacher working in an underserved school, I have to say that Children need quality education irrespective of tribe, religion, or family background. So it's my duty to work towards changing the face of education system in Lagos and am fully committed

Chuwa Nonso Kenneth

Birthplace: Cross River State

Profession: Teacher

Cities you have lived in: Calabar,
Portharcourt, Abuja, Kaduna,



My time here has sharpened my instincts for survival and for identifying opportunities. Living in this city has its many challenges and navigating these issues every day is a central part of the experience. Lagos has also presented me a higher platform from which to observe my country and tell its stories.

I feel I am mentally stronger, more creative and more aligned with the conversation around the future of my country because of my Lagos experience.

Lagos has a robust arts and creative industry which is at the soul of the city and which I believe, will shape her future. I am proud to be part of this community. I intend to document through my fiction and social commentary, the everyday realities of life in the city and use these as a tool for advocacy/activism towards shaping the Lagos of tomorrow.

Sylva Nze Ifedigbo

Birthplace: Abuja

Profession: Writer & Communications Specialist

Cities you have lived in: Abuja, Lagos.



We have this myth that when you are finished with school you are expected to work. So I started job hunting and I got a job in 2013. While I was applying, I spoke to a mentor of mine and the mentor said if you are trying to find a job start with things like giving back. Do things for free even if it is transport money. You never know what comes up. So I did an internship for awhile and while I was doing that I got a job. With the company I work with, the consulting firm.

I would like to be remembered as someone who made impact. It is important you go through life and your known for something.

I want to be remembered as someone that has impacted the economy and the lives of other people. I want to be remembered as someone that has never thought of and taken it to the next level.

Olamide Olatunbosun

Birthplace: Ibadan, Nigeria
Profession: Self Employed/Entrepreneur
Cities you have lived in: United Kingdom
(Coventry) and Nigeria, Lagos





Akinboye Akinpelumi

Birthplace: Osun State

Profession: Student

Cities you have lived in:

Lagos, Osun, Ogun, Oyo



I happened to grow up in an environment where motivation is not really around for you as a kid. When you look around you...the people you are surrounded with do not motivate you. They kill your motivation if you have one. You wake up and find people who had tried their hand in education, and they failed. They've given up, and they've ended up on the streets doing what everyone else is doing.

But one way I keep myself motivated is that I have a mother who didn't have the opportunity to attend any formal school. But she has five children, and I happen to be the last. She always said the reason she is the way she is today, is that she didn't have any education. And she always would say that if you get an education, you get yourself a good future. That is why I always tell myself... 'boy, you need to stay motivated. And if not for anybody at least for your mom.' So whenever I want to do anything, I always think about what she said, and I put my best into anything I want to do.

So for the younger ones out there, any circumstances they need to look for a way to motivate themselves. Nobody will motivate them. Not society. Not the government. Not the news. Not blogs online. But themselves. If they have a target. Gather motivation; the sky is the limit.

I came to Lagos and started to do okada riding. The government of Lagos banned the okada, and so now I began to do this business and grow this business little by little. And as this Boko Haram became an issue in our state, we did any job that we could do for Lagos. We try to manage with the business little by little. When our brothers came from the village, I helped them and gave them small work; I gave them some money to have something to do in this Lagos.

Peter Patrick



You can either choose to learn or stick with what you know; my experience has thought me to be tenacious and bold. Lagos feels like a jungle sometimes, with all of its hustle and vibrancy, you need to be able to balance all you do properly and still be sane. Its either you get it wrong or right.

I am passionate about childhood because I know it is a fundamental part of becoming an adult. And I know if you get it wrong, you can prepare broken adults. I teach children, and I volunteer at schools in my community. I teach about morals, etiquette, and how they should believe in themselves, self- resilience, self-motivation, and self-awareness.

Recently I had a program for boys because I noticed we focus on the girl child, we can never do enough of them, we still have to talk them, but then again we need to speak to the boys. A lot of training has to be done in that regard, because if we end up training the girls only, then the girls will only end up marrying the same boys. I want to see Nigerian children, not rude but assertive, bold, and confident. Having that wonderful child transform into beautiful human beings, not aggressive people.

I want a situation where we can go everywhere in Africa and even the world, talking to boys and children. The future of this country depends on this young generation. It's about impact and value. We need to invest in them.

Queenette itsemhe Enilama

Birthplace: Edo state

Cities lived: Benin city, Calabar and Lagos

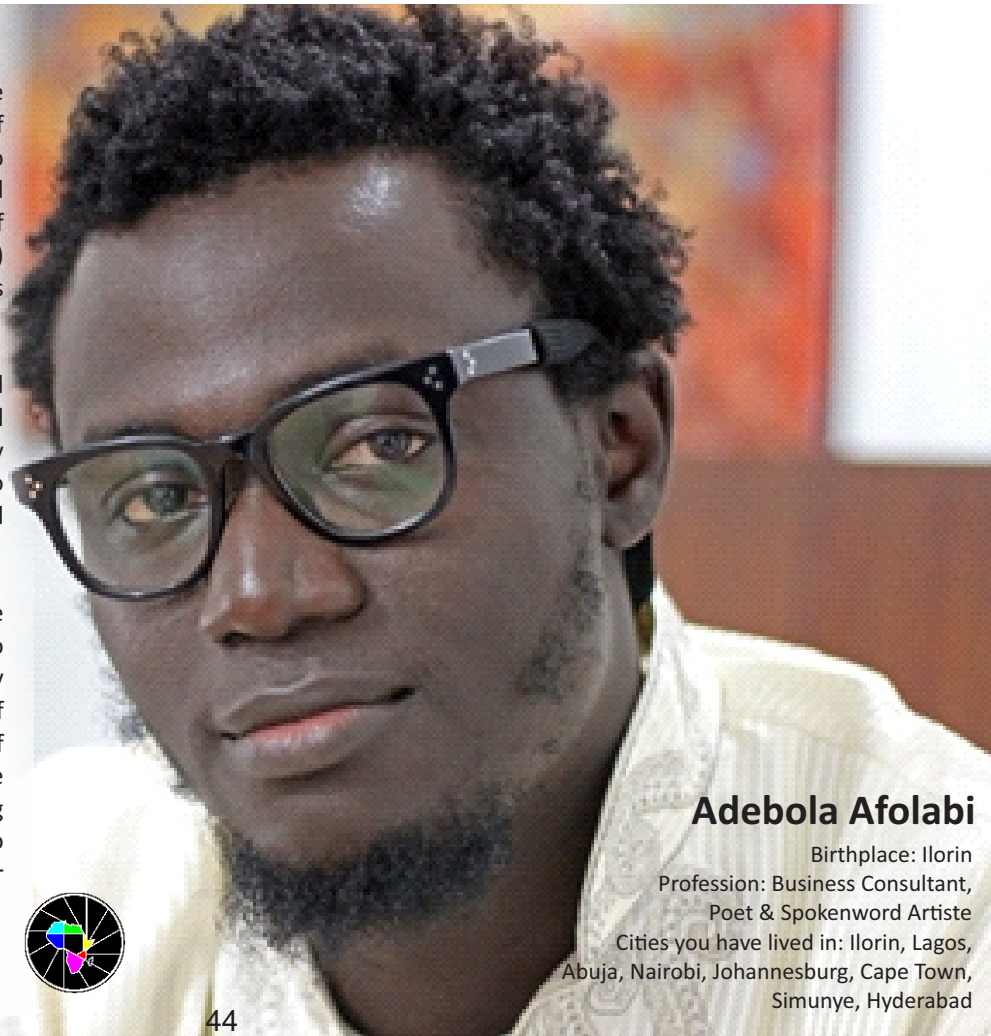
Profession: A learning facilitator for children.



I moved to Lagos for economic reasons. There are more jobs in Lagos; more so, the diversity of opportunities across industries in comparison to other cities made Lagos more attractive. I could work as a freelance consultant and also be self employed (with an entrepreneurial mentality) without waiting for a job in Lagos - it's less frustrating than in other major Nigerian Cities.

Lagos has made me resilient. The pace of life and the fact that everything boils down to survival has improved my work ethic. Lagos is a very competitive environment where you have to combine hard work, intellect and social intelligence in order to make it.

With more youths realizing who they are, I hope that at some point we will have more people who not only work hard but also have a very healthy self esteem as young Nigerians, with essence of character but also with a re-fired sense of patriotism that is based on their collective realization of their true identity channeling everything positive in our heritage and history to envision and realize a new and better future for us as a people and a nation.



Adebola Afolabi

Birthplace: Ilorin

Profession: Business Consultant,

Poet & Spokenword Artiste

Cities you have lived in: Ilorin, Lagos,
Abuja, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Cape Town,
Simunye, Hyderabad

There is this energy that Lagos has that no other city in Nigeria has. It is overflowing; there is creativity everywhere; there is survival. There is the fact that the average Lagos person does not stay down when beaten. Everybody is always rising. And on the streets, out of the streets, in the workplace you always see the survival. There are stories everywhere. There is beauty.

I call myself a butterfly, and most of my friends call me that. Because of the metamorphoses that a butterfly passes through to become that beautiful, colorful creature. You look at its wings fluttering in the winds, and you tell yourself wow this is magical, but there is a struggle behind it. There's ugliness; there are so many turns it takes before it becomes that beautiful creature.

So That's how I look at myself. I struggle, but there is beauty, so I say I am beautiful. I don't like the word handsome. I think beautiful covers a lot more things. Everywhere there is beauty.

Romeo Oriogun

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: Writer

Cities I've lived in: Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Ikare, Enugu, Abuja and Accra





Being in Lagos, I have experienced the good, I have experienced the bad, I have experienced the ugly. The good part of Lagos is there is room for all. Irrespective of your tribe, regardless of your religion, or your beliefs.


If you can survive in Lagos, you can survive anywhere in Nigeria. And if possible, anywhere in the world. Because Lagos is a training ground, you experience a lot, and wherever you go, you can't be intimidated at all.

Uma Samuel

Birthplace: Abia State

Profession: Trainee Marine Technician/ surveyor



A portrait of Samuel Mark, a young Black man with short hair, wearing an orange and dark blue polo shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with some metal structures.

I was living in my village but because of the Boko Haram ambush in my village. I came here 3 years ago and I haven't gone back to my village. I stay here with people from my village.

I drove an Okada (motorbike taxi) but Lagos state didn't allow the Okada.

When I started I didn't have capitol... but I knew there was demand for bike parts... So I would go to the dealers and give them the little money I had as a deposit. They would give me the parts that were worth more than the money I deposited. Then I would go and sell the parts and pay the money back into their back accounts and they would sell me more parts. That is how I have been growing the business little by little.

Samuel Mark



I was born here. I am a Lagos girl. My parents moved here when they got married. I did my primary school here, and then I did my secondary school and my university outside of Lagos. But when I was done, I told myself that I had to come back because, for me, Lagos is where it all happens.

My friend spoke to me about public relations because she saw that I had a passion for speaking, a passion for helping people communicate what they want favorably. So she talked me into public relations, so I signed up for a professional diploma, and that is when my dreams began to come true. I would go every day, and I would read so hard because I wanted to make something out of myself. A recruiter came to our class one day, and I was hired. So I got my first job in a PR firm in Lagos. It was a small one; the salary was really small. People were wondering why I took it. But I told myself I would take it and I would learn, and I would improve from there.

Tricia Ikponmwonba

Birthplace: Lagos

Profession: Social Entrepreneur

Cities you have lived in: Lagos, Benin city, Abuja



In the beginning, I felt a little lost, to be honest. Because of the stories I heard, I had to be careful. I felt insecure, but then I got to know my way around, and it wasn't so scary anymore

I have been through it all. I have been through everything you can imagine. I have been through very great times and not so great times. But I feel grounded. Every day I get clients, and they give me their addresses, and I don't know how or where it is, but I get there.

For every single reason that made me move, I've been achieving it, even if it is not so fast. For the clientele, for career opportunities, for every other thing, it has been great.

Uchenna Francisca Anochilionye

Birthplace: Onitsha, Nigeria.

Profession-Makeup Artist.

Cities I've lived in - Kano, Anambra, Enugu, Lagos.



I believe that in the course of helping people solve problems, you would eventually do well for yourself. I had to start something and see what can I do that can be sustainable. What problem in my community can I do something about in my little way? How would I impact the environment? So initially, when I started all this, it was about Lagos, but in the course of doing this, it is now about Africa. I have seen the problem we are having here in Lagos is not just specific to only Lagos; it is something that affects other cities in Africa. I decided I was going to do my own part little by little and eventually get there.

As I go through most of the comments on social media, they say I am focused and hardworking. They say I have a target, and I don't look at the shortcomings, I want to focus on the target and make sure it is achieved. They say I look for the good in people. They say I am helpful and give good advice. They say I am quite strong and when they bring their problems to me I listen, I give them good advice, I pray with them, I support them, even though I have my challenges I still try to be there for them.

It's quite touching to read all of that from them. I am just happy that I can help. You know growing up in my house my siblings would call me all these funny names because I look so fragile like I can easily break, but as much as I appear fragile, I am strong. And I remember that my mom used to tell them that I have this inner strength.

Ugochi Obidiegwu

Birthplace: Kano

Profession: Cabin crew and Safety Officer

Cities lived in: Kano, Lagos, Uyo, Ibadan, Gusau

50





In Lagos, you can find a wonderful, urban, beautiful city and also find underdeveloped places and underrepresented people. For example, if you think about Lekki Phase 1, that is where the rich people live, but inside that same Lekki Phase 1, you have small communities that have next to nothing. Although there is a lot of progress and a lot of money going everywhere, there are a lot of people cut off from that even though they are in the same environment. Because of the number of people coming into Lagos, there are challenges and infrastructure has to keep up.

Cities you have lived in: Kano, Lagos

Ukinebo Dare

Birthplace: Kano, Nigeria

Profession: Training Consultant



I was not born here; I came here because of this Boko Haram Issue. I came here in 2013. I live in Lagos since 2013.

What make me strong is my responsibility to my family. If I don't try by myself no body would and would assist my family. But I know if I pray, God will answer my prayers and he will give us what we are supposed to eat from morning until night. That is why I keep myself strong. And our church people if there is anything in my power that I can't do the church will take responsibility. And if they asked me I would tell them because I can't hide it and they would take responsibility.

Yusuf Clement



BIOGRAPHY

Helen Gebregiorgis is an Eritrean-American filmmaker and photographer with an interest in international development and storytelling. She has worked on a number of short films and photography projects such as the National Coalition Against Censorship Youth Contest award winning film titled "Mute". She has a keen interest in working in Africa and has travelled and documented people's everyday lives in Eritrea, Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria. She was funded by the Ford Foundation in 2017 to document the lives and contributions of young social justice leaders to the resilience of Lagos, a mega city in West Africa, and was invited to exhibit her photography on Eritrea during black history month at the University of East Anglia in 2017 and and her work on Lagos at the University of California San Diego in 2018. Helen's photography has been featured in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and the United States. She has a MA in Media and International Development from University of East Anglia, United Kingdom and BA degree in Film and Video from the Columbia College Chicago in the United States.

Helen Gebregiorgis
www.africaphotostories.com
Email: Helen@africaphotostories.com