



Dr S. I. Laguda Oral History Transcript for IROKO 'Home from Home' project 2022 – 2024



Sabrina

Do you want to tell me a little bit about yourself?

S. I. Laguda

I was born in Nigeria. I had my primary education and everything there. My secondary education and then later on, I went to the then Soviet Union to study medicine from a scholarship from the Nigerian government and after that I came to Britain.

When I finished there, I practiced my medicine here and then after that I did some post-graduate studies in medicine. I then passed the membership then of the college of obstetricians and gynaecologists of Britain. Then I worked here as a specialist for some time and then I went back again to Nigeria.

I worked there for so many years. You know, as a consultant, obstetrician and gynaecologist. And when I retired there, I came back here because my wife was working here. So, I came to join her.

Sabrina

For your primary and secondary education, what was that like, growing up in Nigeria, can you tell me a little bit more about that, like what kind of things did you do in school growing up?

S. I. Laguda

When I was in school growing up. You know, first of all, you go through the elementary school, which is lasting for about eight years in general. First of all, you start the first two years or so, mainly in your native language. At that time, you know, we did it in Yoruba because I'm in Lagos. So, after that then, from about the third year in the elementary school, you go to what you call the standard one. They started teaching you also in English, so you study both in your native language, mine was Yoruba and is still Yoruba, and in English, so you do both.

Until you would then reach what you call standard 6 in those days where you now have to take the first exams of leaving the primary school. After that then you can now take some entrance examination to go into your secondary school. In the secondary school, the main language for studying is mainly English. And I went to the Seven Grammar School in Lagos, which is the oldest secondary school in Nigeria. And you spend about six years, five to six years, in the in the secondary school. If you are able to complete that, you may be able to take the West African School leaving certificate examination.

When you pass that, then if you want to go further, you can go and do what you call GCE advanced level or HSC, a school certificate. That was for two years.

After you pass in the subjects or which you are interested in for whatever profession you want to follow after that. After that then if you pass those examination either GCE advanced level or high school certificate in the necessary subjects, then you are able to apply to go to the university. Either they are in Nigeria or you can go to Britain for your university education. Or in those days, you may win a scholarship to go abroad to other countries to go, study whatever you want to study.

Sabrina

And is that how you found yourself going to the then Soviet Union?

S. I. Laguda

That's right.

Sabrina

How did you find that? How was living there for that time?

S. I. Laguda

Oh at that time we all enjoyed it. We like it very much because don't forget around that time the Soviet Union was very, very prominent and leading in science.

They send the first man into orbit and they're very good in science, so everybody wants to go and study the science and know what is happening. So, I went there anyway and studied medicine and I completed my medical degree there.

Sabrina

No, of course, of course. And so was it after you completed your medical studies in the Soviet Union, was that when you then came to Britain or did you go back to Nigeria first?

S. I. Laguda

No, I came here straight to Britain. While I was a student in the medical school over there, I've been coming to Britain all the time because I have some friends here.

So I used to spend most of my holidays during the university days here. We saw our friends and there was what they called then international union of medical students. So, when I was in year three in the Medical College there in Kraków, they call it Kraków now, I apply for that students, international medical students' association and I was given a chance to come here and see how medicine is being practiced here.

I was lucky to be posted to Mansfield District and General Hospital in Mansfield where I met some other students from other countries. From Greece and some other places and we were there together for about a year. We know each other. We compare what you are studying, things like that you know, and that made me think that, *OK, when I finish over there, I will prefer to come here and continue with and do my postgraduate studies here.*

Sabrina

So, when you came to do your postgraduate, did you start working here immediately after and or?

S. I. Laguda

Well, as you know, when you come here as a new or just qualified doctor then uh, you have to register with the General Medical Council here. If you were able to register the General Medical Council, then you will be able to apply for some jobs to work in the hospitals here. I did that and I was registered, and I got some jobs in various hospitals to have more medical experience. And after that then I decided to specialize in obstetrics and gynaecology, and then take the exams for the Royal College of obstetricians and gynaecologists.

Sabrina

I guess when you first came to Britain, were you able to find like your own community or was it was it a struggle to find people to, I guess like socialise with or anything like that?

S. I. Laguda

There are so many Nigerians students here in those days, so many. So, I have quite a lot of friends from Nigeria who are based here, in Britain studying in different colleges, universities and also engage in some work here. So, there is no problem at all. You feel quite alright. You are among the people you know.

Sabrina

You mentioned that you went back to Nigeria after spending some time here during your postgraduate. Did you notice any changes between the time where you grew up and then the time you went back?

S. I. Laguda

Of course, lots have changed then. Because when I left Nigeria, I left Nigeria in 1963. That was about three years after Nigeria's independence. When I went back to Nigeria, I went back in 1979. That's a long time. So, there was a around between that time, a lot has happened in the country. We've had a civil war. You'll remember the Civil War then that happened in Nigeria and there was a lot of things happening over there. Anyway, after the Civil War, things came back gradually to normal. Stills were created and I came back, as I've said in 1979, and started working as a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology and the Lagos Island Maternity Hospital.

Sabrina

And you said you came back to England because your wife was working here, did you meet her in Nigeria or was she someone you met before you went back?

S. I. Laguda

Well, I met her here in England. I was the first time, as I've said when I started working, I went to work in a place called North Shields. That is in the north of England, very near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, around that area. And my wife at that time she was, a nursing student from Zimbabwe – at that time they called it Northern Rhodesia – from Zimbabwe. And she was based doing nursing in another hospital, also in North Shields. So, we met in North Shields, and anyway, eventually she became my wife.

Sabrina

Very, good. And so, when did you decide to come back? What year was that when you decided to come back to England?

S. I. Laguda

I came back to England finally when I left the medical service in Nigeria. I left there as a chief consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology. I was actually heading the obstetrics and gynaecology departments in the Lagos area. And I came back and that was in 2000 and 3 or so.

Sabrina

Very good. Previously you were up in the north in North Shields. When you came back, did you go back to North Shields, or did you come straight to London?

S. I. Laguda

Oh I came straight to London. My wife was based in London, so I came back straight to London.

Sabrina

When you had spent time here before, was it always in the north or was there ever times in London as well or was London brand new to you at that point?

S. I. Laguda

Well, in those days I was based mainly in the north, you know, in the northern part of the UK and the last place where I really worked, before I left for Nigeria was York. Where I was the registrar in obstetrics and gynaecology at the York District Hospital. So, it was similar because I'm used to going up and down the whole of the UK, so I'm used to almost everywhere. I worked, done some work in Scotland, I've done some in Wales, so I've gone round and round and see how things in the UK.

Sabrina

Do you notice any major differences between like I guess the culture that Nigerians have in England versus the Nigerians, back in Nigeria, do you know of any differences in culture there?

S. I. Laguda

Well, it depends. You can't compare both cultures straight. There are probably some slight modifications from what we practice here in the UK and in Nigeria. But similarly, you will be able to know that *oh yes, this is a culture from this area that from that area or from which area* so you can easily recognize. But definitely you can't practice everything the way you practice is in Nigeria, here in the UK there must be some small, small differences, yeah.

Sabrina

Is that a language thing or is that like a British culture thing? Do you think?

S. I. Laguda

Well, I would say that, of course your language is different. If you have to do things in the yeah, culturally in the way they do it over there and you have to do it in the language there, it will be different from the way it is if you have to do it mainly in English. That of course people mix both English and whatever other native language. Because you have other friends here who are not Nigerians or who must have come from other parts of Nigeria where they don't speak the exact language of the culture you are trying to portray. So, sometimes you have to speak in both languages so that everybody can understand and then make explanation like that you know.

End

All errors and omissions excepted.