



Richard Tosin Fe-Cados Oral History Transcript for IROKO 'Home from Home' project 2022 – 2024



Sabrina

If you want to start and just tell me, I guess a little bit about yourself and like what you do.

Richard

Well, my name is Richard, Richard Fe-Cados. I'm currently I'm a printer. Well, I've been a printer for two decades now. We cater for the local community in Newham and well, that was our intention when we started. But now we've actually got clients from all over UK now, so that's basically what I do.

Sabrina

Brilliant. Yeah, I saw that you started the print shop in like 1997, was it?

Richard

That's right, yes. We opened the first shop in 1997. In Balaam Street in Newham. This branch, I am in now we open this in 1999. September.

Sabrina

Do you have many different kinds of stores now around the UK or is it still mainly located in Newham?

Richard

Yeah, it's mainly located. We had a branch in the Canary Wharf side and we had that for a couple of years and well when the pandemic hit, we had to close that branch. As that went on, we discovered that it's better to market online than open outlets. You get quite a few clients online and instead of having shops open here and there, or outlets open everywhere, and considering the overheads you pay for these premises, light, whatever. So, the online has been going on well in the past couple of years so. Yeah. We thought that financially is much better to promote our works online and then our services as well.

Sabrina

And this shop that you're at now, is this the one where you print the T-shirts and the clothing? All those aspects of it.

Richard

Yes. Yeah, the work wears and then the orders. Yes, and now we do other kinds of printing as well, which are actually like business cards, flyers and all that. And then we do other form of printing which is mainly for outdoor promotions like posters and outdoor banners and all that kind of stuff, yes.

Sabrina

Has the online really helped you like I guess reach the rest of the country and like kind of branch outside of Newham and London?

Richard

Yes, even as far as Scotland 'cause, you never know where people just place orders. You know, they just ordered. And then yeah, we just supply. Even sometimes, outside the

country. But it's basically online. So, I mean, if we open maybe 20 branches, I don't believe we can get that outreach. I'm not even surprised that quite a lot of banks are closing their branches, and they want to go online, so yeah, I think it's the same with other businesses as well.

Sabrina

Before you came to the UK, you were a journalist for the Nigerian Tribune. Can you tell me a little bit more I guess about your time there, the kind of stories you would write and that experience?

Richard

Well, I started out by actually reporting daily news, you know activities, you know attend press conferences, go on the field to look for news. After a while I was appointed to cover a particular beat, which was the diplomatic side of reporting. So, where I had to liaise with the embassies and a high commission in Nigeria then including the UK, Canada and all that. So, I got to know quite a lot of the ambassadors of those countries that was back in the late 80s. Yeah, well, that was very, very interesting. Moving on from there, I was appointed to the defence, title , he defence correspondent. I wasn't paid much but it was a big name. So, I was attached to the defence portfolio and then got to know the leaders in the military, the Air Force and the Navy. Before I got appointed finally to report from the seat of government. Yeah, in those days where the President resided. So, we're about 30-34 journalists all over Nigeria, and our offices based in the State House there. Little offices where you know each paper or TV outlet is represented. So, I got to work there for a couple of years before I left.

Sabrina

So, would you be like working in very, like close quarters to all of these people, like within the government and within the defence and all of that?

Richard

Yes, yes.

Sabrina

Brilliant. So, what made you decide to leave that and to leave Nigeria and to come to London?

Richard

Actually, initially before I went back to Nigeria, I lived in London. I studied, did my diploma in those days, we used to call it HND [Higher National Diploma], in Journalism in the UK. So, I went to Nigeria to actually work for this newspaper and yeah, I lived in the UK then and I have to come back when I left the Nigerian Tribune.

It's a funny story, but I had to leave. Not that I wasn't treated well, but the government of the day was, 'cause when I left the seat of government, I was assigned a desk job like assistant sitting editor. So, I wrote a story. The government didn't like the story, so to speak. My name was kind of synonymous with a female name in Nigeria, a female can bear it. So, Tosin was my byline I used to use when writing. So, the military sent some people to come to the office to arrest me for writing that story.

So yeah, that's why I left. Fortunately, I was in the office then, but they didn't know me by face, they only knew the name. And the military guy came with guns and all asking for *where is the lady that wrote the story? Where's the lady?* Because it was like female name as well. My sitting editor then said, *oh, she's on the field. Which field is she? Is she playing football or what? We want her now.* You know that kind of thing. And I was right there. So, my sitting editor was arrested. He was taken away, you know. So, he got locked up for a couple of days and then so that was my last. I didn't come back. I worked, you know what you call working from home now, for about maybe six months and write my stories. I wrote my stories and post them to the office, but I never came back. So eventually I said *let me come back to the UK and then see what I can do.*

Yeah so, my sitting editor had to bear the brunt of my distance. He slept, in the prison for two days before he was released.

Sabrina

Did they ever find out it was a man that wrote the story? Or were they always looking for a woman? Or did you know?

Richard

I did eventually found out, but I think I still went on somebody in the government said, *oh, just, just leave them alone.* 'Cause the story after a week, the story become kind of stale. It's not something that was kind of in circulation as much anymore. So, the story died down

a little bit. So, I think the government thought it'd be peaceful then. They released the sitting editor and then that was the end of it.

It was, yeah. I don't want people coming with guns looking for me because I wrote a story. So that's why I left.

Sabrina

What led you down the road of printing and like all of that stuff? Was it like to do with experience or was it just something you saw a need for?

Richard

Yeah, I actually had intention of having my own publication or, or rather, starting my own business, you know, that was my dream. You know, working for the newspaper for a few years, I thought, *OK, when I leave, I'm going to have to start my own business*. I didn't get to work for the number of years I wanted. And I came to the UK, came back to the UK. And I had an opportunity, I saw an outlet to let. So, I took that opportunity.

Sabrina

I guess when you first started setting that up, did you come in like to any difficulty, was it or was it quite smooth sailing?

Richard

Actually I think, I mean those days it was the Council, the Newham Council, actually wanted people to, you know, start businesses and get some shops and all that. I got it from, it's a Newham Council property.

Actually, we started off and the place was used as a kind of restaurant or some kind of, food outlets something. So, there was there was a lot of work to be done, you know, removing a lot of the old cookers and scrubbing and painting and doing new floors and all. When I told the Council, they said *OK, we can give you six months free rent*. So, for six months I didn't get to pay anything. But I spent a lot of money actually fixing the place. Yeah, so that was a good one. Yeah. That, I don't think that happens anymore.

Sabrina

And I guess like, being involved within a community for like 25 years, have you seen like the have you seen that community change? Is there pockets of it that are still the same or has it just changed completely over that time?

Richard

The community has changed. Keeps evolving actually. To start with, the population has grown more than before, so the foot fall in our shop premises then was like, maybe barely a hundred a day. So, like now it's like maybe a thousand more. Yeah, a lot has changed. I was, you know, very few people like me around in those days, and then most of the shops were run by mostly white. And in the past ten years, with the advent of the opening of the Eastern European thing so, we have got quite a lot of traffic come from Eastern Europe and that actually in a way positively boosted the business as well. Because we've got so, so many different kinds of people came in. And then, yeah, yeah. So, there have been lots of changes. I was telling somebody a couple of years ago that in front of the shop, I can count how many cars that passes through in the 90s maybe every three minutes, you have about 15-20 cars, but now the traffic is more. Yeah, I would say of course it's changed a lot.

Sabrina

You mentioned a lot of the shops were owned by white people. Having been in London before, did that help, I guess coming back into that community or was it still difficult I guess, to meet people?

Richard

No, it wasn't difficult cause I was in in my teenage years, I came here, I was used to the everything. People actually were good to me when I started on the shop. I had a couple of English friends, older, older folks. Yeah, it wasn't difficult. I'm glad to say that I was received very well and encouraged as well.

Sabrina

In terms of working in the UK versus I guess working in Nigeria, do you notice any similarities or any differences? Based on your experiences is there anything that you prefer over there or prefer over here?

Richard

Yeah, it's on both sides there are pluses and minuses. So, in Nigeria for example surprisingly, you can get things done quickly, somehow you know if you meet the right people. But here, you have to go through some bureaucratic, you know, steps before you get things done. Sometimes it might take just a month to do something, but it might take maybe six months because you have to go through the process, which is good. If you are actually entitled to certain things and you apply, you get here. Back in Nigeria, I've not done

business there that much, but if you're entitled to it, that doesn't mean you'll get it. So, somebody might have more privilege, you know, have a kind of nepotism kind of, *I know somebody*, and they might not even be entitled to it, but they still get it. So that's the difference.

Sabrina

I guess finally, do you notice any like, cultural differences? Like, is there still a lot of like Nigerian culture within your own life in the UK?

Richard

The Nigerian culture I actually I can't do without Nigerian culture or doing something about Nigeria every single day, 'cause I do meet a lot of Nigerians every day. As you know, I'm a Nigerian so, we still meet and discuss about things.

Nigerian culture has a lot of, English or British inputs as well so, that, combined with the Nigerian culture we see maintained to a large extent in Nigeria and British culture as well. Wearing things like these suits and all that, you know eating. Not a lot of fish and chips in Nigeria, but still do that as well. But yeah, so we combine that and we eat our jollof rice and all that kind of thing. Yeah, the attires, the way we dress you know it's a combination of both sides, which makes, the Nigerian culture even more rich.

Sabrina

Thank you so much.

Richard

No problem.

End

All errors and omissions excepted.

