

Where **YOU** From?

Where you from?

The truth is... this question is not as simple as one may first think. From a literal sense it would be easier to say; born in the **UK, both parents originally from Nigeria, making** me black British. Simple, right – No. Where I'm from is merely not as straightforward as the things that appear official, such as a passport, a birth certificate a national record etc. but its something that runs deeper than that. Much deeper. For instance, those special moments in life, that shape an individual, crafting and sculpting their mindset and in turn creating a new outlook on the way things are viewed. One of my moments, I remember quite vividly was to be the first time I visited Nigeria. I'm reminiscent of the immense waves of heat I felt hit me as I took my first steps of the plane and onto the foreign land. For a country that is such an integral part of my history, my DNA, in all honestly felt quite alien which I suppose is the 'norm' when facing something new, I mean I dunno – although to be fair I was ten.

My emotion was a jumble if you like, but the thing to remember is yes, I'm black and yes, I have roots fully traced to that country yet I still felt like a tourist, an outsider. I had never been to Nigeria and everything seemed so new - but it wasn't like a film or something you'd expect to see at home on TV, the place itself I went to was modern and familiar in many ways coming from England. I must say seeing what the place was really like was a shock; expecting the dusty roads, huts etc. you know the 'uzu' whereas the only major lying problem was the heat. Which just goes to show the way the media moulds the public eye and their way of thinking. Illustrating to them a one-sided picture of how the rest of the world is, when in truth is not a hundred percent truth - they want you to see this when the reality is that.

Architecture for Lagos (city in Nigeria) appeared virtually like any other you would see in a major city, the place having the same everyday roads, traffic lights, all the usual really, so in terms of what someone may deem civilised it ticked all the boxes as far as I was concerned. These strings of realization and perspective thinking's, were now when looking back massively beneficial to me, teaching lessons related to prejudice, optimistic thinking and so much more that I'm sure are still waiting to be learnt.

The main point of the trip abroad was yet to come, I was to meet my extended family members in person. An experience I won't forget in a hurry. Whilst it's almost indescribable I will try and capture it with one word, and that word shall be "joy". The family, my family were so welcoming, treating me as a celeb and cushioning me with comfort and compassion, each of their faces along with my own beaming – huge radiant smiles, showering me in hugs. Nevertheless, it was love without words. The people I only heard from via, technology were now before my eyes, a part of me were in them and apart of them was in me. What I thought I knew about myself and where I was from, at the time seemed so small, so miniscule in comparison to what I was witnessing for the first time, My

family – Where. I. Am. From. I may have arrived an outsider but left feeling like I was part of something much bigger – a big spirited, welcoming community.

Where you from? A question which fortunately doesn't have to always be looked at from a literal perspective, because where you're from, doesn't just stop at your roots, doesn't due to your parents being from this place, stamp a sort of permanent marker on your ethnicity or your cultural personality. No. 'Where you from?' Can mean much more than that and is where my next point leads me.

We as humans, behave from a very young age especially, in a manner based on things surrounding us in life. We perceive different actions, good or bad and then subconsciously copy them. I'll give you an example, A movie you may have watched recently, you've sat down and enjoyed it thoroughly but at the end of the film perhaps on your commute home, you find yourself mimicking the actions and mannerism of your favourite character from that movie. Just me? Okay. The point I'm aiming to make is our minds, our physical bodies in fact, can act in a certain way just because of a certain thing. Now the example I just issued although being on the same lines doesn't even reach close to the surface of the extent of my point on how one fragment of reality can alter another. In my instance, in terms of what alters and affects my behaviour, now that would be God, the God, my God who sent his one and only son down to earth to save the sins of humanity, the God whom I know I can depend on, no matter the circumstance because my faith lies strong with my father in heaven, deterred by no man.

Christianity is a huge part of my life. To be Christian to me is not just a given title handed out because you've been to church on a few occasions, but that belief in your heart that Jesus died for the sake of your sins which I feel is what stirs me on every day; being kind to others, showing generosity, not to lie, now don't get me wrong, accomplishing this is not always easy and not always as plain and simple however the thought of these things in my mind helps and inspires me in trying my hardest not to slip up, shaping me into a better man a better human being, showing that where I'm from is not just anywhere but from Gods word, from his kingdom, from his example on how to live a good life. A godly life.

All these elements of my past have shaped me. I am proud of where I have come from; of my family, of my religion, of my roots. These are the definitive aspects of my life, an important part of shaping who I want to be.

Looking to the future it's important to realise that one may not know what they want to do, go or be, but personal values adopted along the way from this journey called 'life', importantly should stay the same. Knowing who you are and where you come from is integral for life. You know, when I talk about my ambitions those who know me personally will clearly see that becoming a professional footballer is plan A, the dream of billions and therefore in turn will deem it as impossible- but the very nature of the word "impossible" is that its root itself is "possible". I think my own roots and history provide strong foundations for where I want to go next because where I am from is a vital part of where I am going. I will be a success in my profession due to faith and the fact I believe, because if where I am

from has taught me anything it is that having faith in God and strong belief in myself will help me to achieve my dreams.

Now, as cliched as this may sound, a legend in my eyes and I'm sure the eyes of many, said something which when talked about in the same sense of looking to the future, waiting to see what comes next and knowing the importance of everyday life, resonates heavily:

“Yesterday, is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift, that is why it is called the present”.

By Ifeanyi Felukwu