

Respondent (R): Mr Tunde Ezichi

Interviewer (I): Kanyinsola Obayan

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Audio file information : [Mr Tunde Ezichi] [1hr39mins]

I: Okay, yeah, so I'm excited. I think he mentioned the book. A lot of people are doing books right now. It's so important because of that legacy, those stories need to be told. And the impact that was made should be shared with the world. So I'm excited about the book.

R: What actually prompted me to write the book was, as miniaturization and all that in technology goes on at quite a pace, people are beginning to forget the things that were in huge mainframes and all that. Things that they are holding in the palm of their arms to the palm of their hands today. And when one recalls the grinding that people like us did to program computers—

I: Punch cards.

R: Sorry?

I: I said you had to use those punch cards.

R: Exactly now, I tell some of the stories in my book. You know, well, when we were students, and some guy had gone through his program, the punch cards and all that. He was all set to go to the computer the following morning. Now, he was with his pack of cards. He ran into another student, and all the punch cards were scattered all over the place. I mean, yesterday, just pack them up and say, why? Well, you are packing them up. He got up and saw that the student was crying.

I: Oh, my goodness, why wouldn't you cry?

R: And he said to him, Look, I have packed it all properly. Don't cry, they're all here, none of them are missing. I said, Oh my god, I wish he knew what he had done to this student.

I: Oh my goodness,

R: That's one of the experiences with one card and all that. So one needs to document some of these things. So people will appreciate what really went into writing programs, what went into ensuring that applications are done. Today we talk about apps. We don't talk about writing programs anymore, But these are part of the stories that people really need to understand and know the history of the development of these things.

I: Yeah, I really want to thank you for putting that together. So without further ado, I don't want to take too much of your time. I'm going to start recording. I'm actually super excited to talk to you because you have a very interesting perspective. I've done a little background research on you. And I know a little bit about you.

R: Really? I wonder what you have heard about me

I: It's not what I heard is more than what I read. But I want you to tell me about your background like your educational background, your family background, ethnic background, I mean your name is Tunde Ezichi. Or is it Tunde Njoku? Can you tell me more about who you are?

R: Let me give you my background names. I'm Samuel Babatunde Amamucheckwu Aliyu. I used to be Njoku but now Ezichi because we changed our family name in 2008. I grew up on the university campus of the University of Ibadan. Since I am 74 years old now, It means that I've been on that campus right from the time the university moved to its permanent site.

I: Wow. Are you there now? Are you in Ibadan?

R: Oh, no. No, I am not. Okay, as a little boy, I went to Abadina school, one of the best in the country at that time, and finished my primary school there and I went to Christ School, Ado Ekiti. Heard of Christ School?

I: I think I have.

R: Don't say you think, you're from Ondo State and you never heard of Christ School. One of the best in the country.

I: I've heard of Christ School. But it must have been mentioned in passing because I spent most of my time in America. I'm not really so familiar with that. Even when I was in Nigeria, I only went to Ondo for the first time in 2015. So I wasn't going home. I was in Lagos or Ibadan because my mom is actually from Ibadan.

R: So we'll forgive you. We credit ourselves with being omo Ibadan, Omo Ibadan ki no so.

I: So o sure ni?

R: Anyway, I left Abadina school to go to Christ School Ado Ekiti. And I was in Ado Ekiti for 7 years after my school Cert in '64. I wanted to change schools but my father was so impressed with Christ School, he wouldn't hear of it. So I had to remain to do my high school there and my A-Levels and finished in 1966. Now in those days, there was no synchronization between the secondary school and tertiary education calendars. While the secondary schools ran on the January to December calendar, universities ran during the September to the following June calendar. After finishing high school in December 1966, I had nine months to wait before going to university. I remember in January 1967. I got home and I was wondering what to do for nine months because we

were waiting for our HSCE exam results. But, of course, I had my School Certificate result. I am a maths and physics student so one morning I took an analysis of the university departments and thought to myself, the one place I could best be featured to work will be the finance department in the university, which was under the bursary. So I just said to myself as a young little boy, I decided to march to the office of the bursar of a Retired Brigadier General. I went there and when I got there I saw the Secretary and I said I wanted to see the bursar. She said to me, oh, the Bursar isn't in right now. Please take a seat. Shortly after that, the Bursar came in and the secretary went to tell him that this young man wanted to see him. The bursar himself marched out of his office and came to me and said, Yes, my boy, what can I do for you? Come on in. He invited me into his office and showed me a seat. I said to him, Sir, I have just finished my A level exams and I have nine months to play with. I need a job. And he said you need a job? I said, yes, sir and I handed him my West African School Certificate. There were 10 subjects. There were six A's and four C's on it. Now his reaction was electric to me. He sprang up from his seat and said, follow me, my boy. So I followed him. And he just marched to another department and it was the account finance and account division of the bursary and said to the head of the place, Mr. Okuasaba. Find a seat on a table for this boy. He starts working for you. Mr. Okuasaba was wondering, what about his employment papers? Then the bursar booms out and says, don't worry about it, just give him a seat. We'll do the papers later. What I thought would be a very, very short thing and being asked to write an application and all that. Yeah, I have a job without writing an application letter to start with now.

Before I left home, I told my mother I was going in search of a job. My father got home before me and asked after me from my mum. My mum said, Ah, with trepidation, he said he was going to look for a job oh! I don't know. He hasn't come back. So everybody was waiting for me when I got back. Of course, my father was waiting. Where are you coming from? I said, Papa, I've got a job. The man who looked at me went into the room. And of course, when he came out, he was with a cane. I took off and he started coming after me and I started running until I saw a friend of his and I went around to Pa Festus. I said Pa Festus, please save me and Pa Festus said to him, Justus, what's the problem? He said, Festus, this boy has started telling lies. He will soon start stealing. The boy goes away from morning till evening and comes back and says he has a job. He didn't write an application. How come he has a job? It was Pa Festus who saved the day and said Ah that's why I'm coming to your house. It's all over the university that your son got a job without writing an application. And he said, where did you hear this? It is all over the place, so I was made to now recount to them what actually happened and transpired. And the irate man who was going to (if he had caught me) whip the hell out of me before explaining this, he was now smiling and grinning from one ear to the other. Anyway, for nine months I had a job in the Finance Bursary department at the University of Ibadan.

So from primary school to secondary school, I always came back home to the University of Ibadan to spend it. With the results I had, I wanted to study engineering.

But by 1967, I was in Ahmadu Bello University. The best engineering school was at Ahmadu Bello University in the north. But when I was in lower sixth form, I had taken a trip to Ahmadu Bello University to spend a holiday with a lecturer relative of ours and I didn't like the experience. First of all, the train journey to Zaria was quite an experience. I didn't like it. What with all the beggars jumping on the train and all that and you could do nothing about that. And that was an experience I didn't like. Then when I got to Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University, the place was very cold and I didn't like the cold at all. And the third thing was that down south, we were used to going to one or two parties. But up North, if you went to a party, first of all, there were no girls in the party or hardly any girls at all. If there were 10 girls, each of the girls would be a prostitute. I just said to myself, I don't see how I'm going to survive, so I canceled Ahmadu Bello from my VISTA. The other place I could go to was the University of Lagos. I had admission into these places. Those were not the days of Jamb so you could apply to as many universities as you like, and be admitted into them.

Next, was the University of Lagos. I had gone to the University of Lagos for a scholarship and stayed with my classmates. I had gone to Lagos for a scholarship interview. And I found that my classmates were still staying in dormitories. Now, I had already applied to study physics in Ibadan. I'd already even gotten a room. And because of the political situation, a lot of students from the east had not resumed. A room that was meant for two was allocated to me alone. Compared to my classmates at the University of Lagos, I was in a suite compared to the dormitory-style accommodation that they had. I quickly jettisoned going there and decided to study physics at the University of Ibadan. So I was there till 1970.

I: Do you mind if I interject here?

R: Yes, please go on.

I: Yes. I'm curious. I thought I read somewhere that you were part of that set that did the UI computing thing for IBM?

R: Yeah, I'm coming with the story.

I: Okay. I just want to make sure you didn't leave that out. Okay. Go ahead. Alright

R: Yeah, note that when I was in university it was the 1967-70 period and those were the Civil War. It just so happened that I was the only member of my family who was still left out here in the West. In the rumblings in January '67, my father had sent my mother and my five brothers to the east.

I: But are you not Yoruba too?

R: No, I am Igbo. Both my parents are Igbo. My name is Babatunde. But I was born after my grandfather's death and I was named by our neighbors where this is Baba. Baba lo tun pada yi oh, Baba lo tun de yi ooh.

I: Wow. I thought one of your parents was Igbo and one was Yoruba. That's what I was thinking

R: No, both my parents are Igbo.

I: Oh wow. Interesting. I love that.

R: Yes. I was named by neighbors and I grew up in Yorubaland. And as you can see, all of my primary and secondary schools have been in Yorubaland and university in Yorubaland. That's why I speak and write Yoruba.

I: Wow. I'm sure you did as well.

R: Yes, I also speak and write Igbo because that was one thing I was the eldest of six sons. I had to know how to write Igbo so he taught me that meticulously. Anyway, back to Ibadan, my father had sent my mother and siblings to the east. Since I had just gotten a job with a bursary, he was sort of like monitoring things, the political situation. At the end of January of that year '67, he said to himself, well, listen, you stay here. Let me just go back and see how your mother and siblings are settling down. By the time he crossed over to the east, the River Niger bridge was shut down. Nobody could pass through it either way. So he couldn't, all of them were over there. I was the only one left here in Ibadan so I was all alone from '67 to '70. Well, how did I pay my fees and all that? Well, let's just say I won a scholarship to go to Christ School and they also extended it to my university. Since I was there, by the grace of God, presenting good results. So fast forward to '70. The war started in January '67 and war ended in January '70. Now, January '70 was just six months to my degree exam. The first thing I did when the war ended was head to the east to go to my village. Now, that was quite a journey because before then, I had only been there once with my father in 1959 when I was just about 12. As a young boy, I asked a lot of questions. Fast forward to '70, I had to remember the things he told me then to plot my way to get to our village. Of course, when my siblings saw me, they ran away because they thought I must be a ghost. The news to them was that we all must have been killed. They went to call my mother. My mother came very slowly and called my name. She called not only my Christian name, Samuel but also my favorite name, Igbo name. I said, "Mama, it's me." She came and grabbed me and all that. My father wasn't in when I arrived, and he came. His question was, "How did you manage to get here?" And I told him the story. But anyway, to cut a long story short, you needed to see their state of health. They were all in various stages of emaciation. So anyway, I came back and that had a very traumatic effect on me. It actually affected my preparations for my degree. In fact, when the results of the degree exam came out, my professor called me and said, "What happened to you?" He said, "Anyway, the result I expect from you, I got a lower second class. That's not your result. But I have decided to offer you to come and do a postgraduate Ph.D. under me." He was shocked at the answer I gave him. I said, "Prof I can't, I must go and work." He said, "What nonsense is that? Somebody is offering you to come and do a Ph.D.?" So I said, "I'll see you tomorrow, sir." What I did was take two of my younger brothers to go

visit him. When we got into his office, he said, "Who are these? They are sick." I said, "Prof, these are two of my five brothers. You can see the state they're in. I cannot take up any postgraduate position now. I must go and find some work to be able to rehabilitate them." He says, o"Okay, I understand. All right, I'll defer your admission for one year."

That meant I needed to go and find work. I decided to go to the register. I think fate came into play because there was a senior of mine at Christ School who called me one morning and said there was a principal of a secondary school who needed science graduates. Since I am a maths and physics person, I fitted the bill. Now, in those days, science graduates' work paid 10,000 pounds extra a month over and above what art graduates were paid. That's a given. But then this senior told me that this Principal was even prepared to pay another extra 10,000 to attract me. But where was the location? It was in a village called OSU. OSU is a village between Ile-Ife and Ilesha.

I: Yeah, I think, it's in that place where there is Akara OSU?

R: Exactly. As I said, he got the principal to come to talk to me. And the principal said, "Would you like to come around?" I said—well, the man said to me, "There is no electricity there." I asked him, "But do you have pipe-borne water?" He said yes, they had pipe-borne water. I said, "Okay, fine. No problem. I will still come." The reason I chose the job was that I was not exactly an unpopular student in the university. If I went or took a job in either Ibadan or Lagos, the friends I had would come to my house virtually every day. Go and raid my kitchen, finish the food and say we are coming tomorrow. With that kind of scenario, I just would not balance right. I had quite a task ahead of me. That's why I took on this job. It was near enough to Ibadan because my last lesson was on Friday. After that, I just headed to Ilesha and took the transportation to Ibadan and had a good weekend and came back. So that's what I did. It was during this period that I was making a trip to Lagos when somebody I met on one of the trips said to me, "Ah, you're a physics graduate. Have you ever heard about IBM? Have you ever heard of computers?" I said well, yes, we know about computers and all that, but not much about IBM.

So he introduced me to IBM and I was invited by IBM. I believe that I scored well and I was offered a job. To cut a long story short, I was offered a job by IBM. When I saw the salary they were going to offer me, it was much more than anything I could earn even after acquiring a Ph.D. in a university. Are you with me?

I: I am with you, sir. So, let me interject here now that you've got into IBM. I actually thought you studied computing at the African education center that was established by IBM at UI. So I guess you didn't do that.

R: No. IBM had come. There were 55 students from all over Africa.

I: Yes, exactly. That's the African education center that was set up in 66. At UI

R: Yes. No, I wasn't. That was a special one. That was before they started recruiting graduates.

I: So then how did you learn about computing? Because at that point in time, you hadn't done anything with computers? Did they train you when you got the job?

R: Of course, as soon as you got the job, they started putting us through. IBM had fantastic manuals to train people. We had access to self-study manuals. And you had people to guide you and then depending on the topic and your progression in specific areas, they will also arrange for training programs at IBM education centers around the world. IBM was quite meticulous in ensuring that they trained their personnel to the highest quality. The thing here is that IBM regarded the whole world as their space. What they did was because in those days the people who are in this field were not too many.

I: Yes, exactly.

R Okay. As far as IBM was concerned, any personnel of theirs was a veritable resource to be used all over the world. If they found a problem somewhere and the person best suited to resolve this problem for them is in another part of the country and other parts of the world, they will fly that person in to come and solve the problem. Well, they took the training of their personnel very seriously. Seriously.

I: What was IBM Nigeria like at that time when you were there? Was it mostly Americans or was there a significant percentage of Nigerians? Because at that time, it was before the indigenization decrees or was it mostly foreigners working there and just a couple of handful of locals, or what was the composition of?

R: As I said, you could be moved by IBM to any part of the world to go to work. Postings and all that. Just as they also moved people from other parts of the world to come to work in Nigeria. We were the first set of graduates who went through university to be employed by IBM after the graduates from the IBM African educational center. There were 55 of them.

I: Yeah, I reached out to IBM and I have some archival materials. I have some photos from there.

R: Only about three or so of the graduates of the IBM African educational center ended up in IBM itself. Others went to other companies both in Nigeria, Ghana, East Africa. You have quite a number of people who came from outside and were quite a good international mix. Okay, let's intern at IBM. When I got employed in '71, I spent about six months or so in Lagos before I got sent to IBM New York. I was in IBM New York for a while doing courses. In fact, because of my performances, the brand manager in IBM New York wanted to poach me and told me "No, don't go back to Nigeria. We'll keep you here." Well, I felt that there was no place like home. I said, "No, I'm going back." Again, because of the policies then, I knew that if there was a problem and IBM needed someone to solve anything, it's my expertise. They needed to fly me from Nigeria,

anyway. And, let's face it at the time, things were quite good in Nigeria. I mean 1 naira was equivalent to \$1.50.

I: Wow. Yeah, I heard about those times.

R: Yes. So I said to myself, let me get back home, Jare. Yeah. So when I got back from New York, I was in systems engineering. My manager who was Swedish

I: Can I ask a question on what would be the equivalent of systems engineering?

R That's software.

I: Okay. Go ahead. Sorry. I just want to clarify that.

R: Yes. And maybe I should backtrack a bit. I had gone on before I left for New York in '72. I wanted to backtrack because you mentioned Tunde Yusuf.

I: Yes, I did. That will be good too.

R: A partner of his.

I: Yeah, I forgot Tunji Odegbami.

R: Yes. Tunji Odegbami and I graduated from Ibadan at the same time. He graduated in biochemistry but I had joined IBM and I had gone one morning one day to Igbobi college to try and get some forms for one of my siblings. When I met Tunji again there, we hadn't met for two years since we graduated. I thought that Tunji had also come to collect the same forms that I was looking for. But he said no, he was a teacher at Igbobi College. I said, "Oti o, do you want to keep teaching because when I get back to the office, I can talk to my manager to see whether you can join us." And he said to me, please, you know, do that. To cut a long story short, within a week of that conversation, Tunji had an aptitude test done and all that. He got a job with IBM as well. Fast forward again, when I got back from New York, my manager said to me, "Listen, we want to open another branch office in Ibadan."

I: And I have a question in mind, but go ahead.

R: He said he wanted me to head the systems engineering part of it in Ibadan and that he wanted two of us to go there. And he will let me choose any of the other systems engineers to go with me. He said even though he thinks he knows who I will choose, he gave me the privilege of choosing who I wanted to go with me. Needless to say, I chose Tunji Odegbami to come with me to Ibadan. So Tunji Odegbami and I were in charge of various IBM installations, including the University of Ibadan IBM center. That's how we came to Ibadan and were looking after IBM Systems there. It was in fact there that Tunji met Tunde Yusuf. Soon enough, I was also called back to Lagos and Tunji Odegbami was asked to stay back at Ibadan, so that's the story of that.

I: I have the follow-up question to that, sir.

R: Yes.

I: I'm interested in knowing what was the main clientele of IBM Nigeria at the time because it was mainframes and minis. Most of the people that used it were not multinational oil companies and maybe educational institutions. So who was the clientele that IBM was servicing that required them to open another office in Nigeria? because I thought there was a limit to the number of people that were using those types of computing machines at that time? Can you speak more to that?

R: Well, of course, as a company, they needed to expand their horizon. Mind you, in the IBM organization, you have a marketing department, you have the customer engineering department, and you also have the systems engineering department software at Ibadan at the time. The major clients were the University of Ibadan. There was IITA, the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture.

I: Yes, I know of IITA.

R: Okay. There was the NTC, Nigeria Tobacco Company, and there are quite a number of possibilities with the marketing that was about to open up alright. They saw there was a possible explosion at the time in Ibadan for the sake of computers. Mind you not only in terms of the number of clients but also in terms of expanding the capacity of the computers that existed in old installations. So, that really was there. Of course, Lagos still remains the major hub when you consider the oil industry, Nigeria railways, the Nigerian provident fund, and of course in the public service, Federal Ministry of Finance, and so on. So what are the questions?

I: So you were at IBM for I think about nine years. I want you to cover the aspect of the indigenization period and IBM pulling out of Nigeria and I think breaking up to DPMS or something like that. I heard some stories of that. Then, you also transitioned to owning your company. So, that'll be the next area I'm curious about

R: Well, there was the indigenization policy of Nigeria, which divided various companies into different categories. A category said that the equity holding in one particular set of companies will be 100% local. Category B said that equity in these companies could be 60% foreign and 40% local. Category C said it will be 60% local and 40% foreign. And it just so happens that when it comes to computers, they put them in category C which says that foreigners will own 60% while Nigerians must own 40%. Some computer companies were ready to comply. Companies like ICL—

I: Yes. ICL computers. That's the UK company?

R: Yes, UK. NCR I think also complied to some extent. But IBM seemed adamant and said anybody interested in IBM shares should go to the New York Stock Exchange. And so, since we were under a military government, it was like challenging them and the Nigerian military government was not going to let go. So what to do? IBM decided to move out as it were and would have some sort of arrangement that will still enable them

to operate. That's the concept of DPMS that came about in the interim. That was a situation.

I: I think they said GICEN and DPMS took over for IBM.

R: In the interim, there were a lot of certain things already happening in the technological world. The idea of other forms of computers coming into the marketplace was already gaining ground. The mini-computers now, notably, somebody like Don Etiebet.

I: Yes, he started Data Sciences.

R: Yes, he started at Earth science. He was purely a Geophysical, a geological company, doing data analysis, and oil data analysis for oil companies. Now, not only doing that but also doing geological surveys for both the Nigerian government and the oil companies. He was in the process of this then the question of using computers for a lot of these things came up and Earth sciences set up. They first called it a Data Processing Center for processing geological survey results. In actual fact, what was the name? Shell, which was one of the largest users of computing facilities at the time, was using Earth sciences data processing center for their data and geophysical analysis surveys. So, there was Don Etiebeth and earth sciences. It was eventually the need for computers by other clients that came up that Don Etiebet had to separate the geophysical or the geological survey aspect of his company from the actual computer acquisition and maintenance aspects. The geological aspects that remain with Earth Sciences and Data Sciences were then formed to deal with purely computer matters. Also at the time, there were security challenges faced by the Nigerian security agencies. In actual fact, it was as a result of the marketing processes of Data Sciences that the problem of the security agencies came to light. Okay, fast forward to Tunji Odegbami, Tunde Yusuf, Doyin Kukoyi, and Moro Bankole, all four of them. Out of the four of them, three of them were my colleagues at IBM. They got together. Tunde Yusuf was the one who had the major contact with the Nigerian security agency, and they set up JKK to provide computer services, hardware, and software, to the Nigerian security organization. From there, you had data sciences, you had mini computers. JKK, also had their own. Data sciences with PDP. JKK with the Data General. Now, at that time, the Central Bank of Nigeria needed to computerize its functions. They wrote their memo to the Federal Military Government headed by Obasanjo that they will require foreign consultants.

I: Okay

R: to guide them into their consumerization project. Now, one must give it to Obasanjo who said to them, "Are there no Nigerians who can do this?" They weren't giving him straight answers, he was sure that there are Nigerians who can do this. That was how one of the directors at CBN was given the task of seeking out Nigerians with the relevant expertise which could guide the central bank in their computerization project.

That fellow got in touch with another colleague of mine at IBM, Mr. Joe Nwoga, who unfortunately died last year.

I: Oh, I'm sorry about that.

R: And said, look, this is a situation with us at the Central Bank, what can you do? So that colleague Joe Nwoga, called another colleague of ours, Mr. Godi Anekwe, and myself, they said this situation has just been posed to him. What can we do about it? So we put heads together and said, Well, okay, we'll have to do a proposal to them giving them our background and all that and trying to get them to engage us. At this time, they were engaging us. To cut the long story short, the Central Bank needed something very, very quickly and very fast. We said the three of us will have to incorporate a company. With the whole time required to incorporate the company and then respond with that company name and the proposed time for Central Bank was so short, we couldn't meet it. Now, but in actual fact, our friend, Joe Mwoga, had actually incorporated a company name 'Komplek'.

I: That's where Komplek Nig—

R: Exactly, which he had incorporated hoping to use it sometime. We had the gentlemen agree to say, okay look, since this was already there, we could go to the Central Bank with Komplek and we can sort out the shareholding arrangements later on. So that's what we did Komplek, a corruption of the name of computers being complex things at the time.

I: Sorry to interject, that's 1978. I just want to make sure I have that.

R: Yes, that was about 78, when we made these initial proposals to the Central Bank. They accepted our proposal. And by 79, we had signed our contract with them with the use of Komplek. It was a very, very tough decision for me because about that time I had been offered another job to head the computer division of OPEC.

I: Oh, wow. OPEC as in OPEC.

R: Yes. OPEC Vienna. I went to the IBM Education Center in Vienna, Austria to teach. OPEC is right next to the IBM office there, and as I walked in, I had one or two friends who said, why don't you come and join us. I said, well, but then at the time, they offered me the job. But then this situation with the Central Bank came up and it was really a dilemma. I said to my wife, I said, Look, we have to look at this. If I take up this OPEC job, each tour of the job is four years. I can see myself doing two tours, which meant eight years. Now, if this Komplek thing with the Central Bank blossoms in eight years, we would have gone a long way, we would have built this up to something else perhaps. Whereas if we took the OPEC job after eight years, we'll come back and it will be like starting to build something again. So, as we decided to turn down the OPEC job, the economy of Nigeria started going not uphill as expected, but more downhill. After eight years, unfortunately, the Komplek partnership had to be dissolved. Nothing to regret because it was quite an experience too.

I: So you dissolved it by 1986 then?

R: Yes, about that. So let's see what has happened.

I: So what did you do afterward?

R: As soon as that was resolved, I started my own consultancy, Sigma Beta Alpha Limited, which comes with my initials, SBA. Sigma Beta Alpha. So that was the consultancy that I have been running until today. Well, you perhaps may already have known that I was also once involved in IT advocacy in Nigeria through first of all the Computer Association of Nigeria and subsequently, Nigeria Computer Society. I got elected as the president of the Computer Association of Nigeria in 1993 and I was president until 1995. I was also the founding president of the Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria in 1995. So if you have any more questions?

I: Yeah, to be sensitive to your time, I have two more questions. Then we can round-up for today and if I have anything, I can just probably WhatsApp you or just call you, subsequently. But the question that I have is that, given the fact that there was this rich historical practice of computing that had happened in the 70s and the 80s, why is it that Nigeria did not become a formidable force of technology or IT computing earlier? I mean, we see a lot happening in the 2010s onwards but we've been doing this since let's say really the 70s right. That's when we see a lot more indigenous computing companies arising, but I'm comparing it to, like Brazil, India, why didn't we have such a narrative take shape in Nigeria? So that's my question?

R: When you look at the Nigerian terrain. First of all, there was a lot of technophobia. In the sense that, first of all, the government needed to drive this alright and the people in government were not as enterprising. I mean, let me take for example, what is currently happening. In the INEC bill, you say you can conduct elections and all that electronically and all that. But when it comes to transmission of the result, you suddenly say to yourself, I mean, it's all part of calling people never wanting the truth to be known. And they'd rather stultify the growth of Nigeria because they don't understand it, they don't want things to move faster than they possibly can comprehend. And if the leadership is wrong, you really cannot move as fast as would have been desirable. I can't believe for the life of me that there are people and when I look at those who voted, that INEC should, first of all, get permission from NCC before they can transmit. I mean, it beats all imaginations, you do whatever like this. So a lot of things have to do with the leadership and governance of Nigeria. That has stultified the growth of technological advancement and a lot of the things that should have happened, needed to be very, very positively driven by the government. I don't know whether you see the sense I'm making.

I: Yes sir, so you're saying that there was a lack of government involvement or government assistance in aiding the growth of these industries?

R: I mean, for instance, it took a lot to be able to get government officials, top government officials, that is, to get used to seeing and using a keyboard. Well, then, the

sight of the keyboard connotes the secretary until some of them started going abroad. They need simple word processing. They go to the secretary of their host to say please do this for me. Word process this for me. Some of them got embarrassed when the Secretary said, look, if you go down the corridor, the room to your left you have computers there and they get there. Yes, there are computers there but they don't know jack. So, it took some time before the guys got used to the situation of a particular government establishment. Well, again, when I say you know the leadership, sorry to say, this country has been ruled for more years since independence by our brothers from the North. But you see that for them, it's the power. Everybody has to do something for them. You know, they just want to be giving the order. Nothing up there to say look, if we all can do the bid that we can, the quality of production will be better. And computers are there to really enhance our productive processes. So this guy, for instance, your ministry has been computerized and in the wisdom of those computerizing, even the minister or the permanent secretary should have a computer on his desk. So come the faithful day, the Secretary already has her own computers. And the permanent secretary is out and comes back to his office, to find that there is now a side table with a desktop computer there and a keyboard. The guy simply flips, "Who put this here? Secretary, Secretary What is this doing here?" And he says, "Sir, it's part of the exercise and all that." "Do you want to lose your job? You are tired of working here or you want me to be doing your job?" It's pathetic, and all that it took for such a person to be embarrassed abroad. The person who comes back home to say, "Ah, we must move with the world oh." That is just one thing, a combination or an aggregation of all of that has kept Nigeria the way it is. So any more questions?

I: That's a good one. Thank you so much for that response. So the last question is what is one lesson that you have learned over the years that you wish the current generation knew about technology, entrepreneurship? What is one key lesson that you have learned over your years of experience that you wish this current generation of technologists or entrepreneurs knew?

R: Well, I think that one thing that they must learn is that in order to progress technology, you need a lot of resilience and perseverance. Things have become virtually commoditized now, But that's not to say that everybody can do everything that they can in technology. There's a difference between a fantastic user and a systems engineer for instance. The fantastic user could possibly know how to utilize the outcome of the systems engineers works better than you in the applications. All right, you can really use that thing and know it like the back of his hands, when a problem comes. He takes it back to the engineer to solve the problem. So I think that with everything that affects the Nigerian polity, leadership is of great importance. And the leader must know exactly where he wants Nigeria to be. We all keep hearing about the story of Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew.

I: Yeah.

R: You have to think more deeply at such a level and then galvanize your own people to follow suit. That's all I can say at this point in time. And I mean, yeah, Nigerians who leave the shores of this country, and when they go abroad, they are doing extremely well.

I: Yeah, that's true.

R: If those people were in Nigeria, you are not harnessing their resources, their capabilities well enough that's all I can tell you.

I: You've said a lot, sir. Thank you so much. This has been a fantastic one. I'm really, really excited and honored and privileged to be able to have this opportunity to sit with you. You are a living history book. So it's great and I'm just in such a privilege. Thank you so much for everything for your time. And thank you for your bravery and courage. And the time, you know, it's not easy to be a pioneer in a time when there was nothing. It's much easier for people of my generation because we see so many examples. But I really have to commend you. And I'm really honored. And it's definitely a privilege. Thank you so much. I'm looking forward to reading your book. And learning more. I'm sure there's probably a lot of information there too, that will probably be useful for me. And my work. So excited about it.

R: So well. So this will be an ongoing thing. I'm available for any more questions.

I: Okay. Thank you so much, I really appreciate this. This has been amazing. I have learned so much.

R: Well, thank you for having me. I hope I haven't talked a lot of nonsense.

I: Yes. All right. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for your time and generosity. Have a blessed evening. Bye-bye.