

AJODA transcripts: 2nd April 2008

Coming over:

James: Adventure brought us here. Old age has caught up with us. Now we are here to enjoy our retirement. Doctors, architects, engineers, lawyers were our colleagues. We were met at our port of entry by the British Council and the Church Missionary Society. Don't compare us with West Indians. That's what's going on here. You've used us to develop England and now we are here after a lifetime of work. There is no welcome for us now. Everything has changed. The English are lazy and unfriendly now. Because we went back home and then came back here later, people don't feel we should have equal rights.

Georgina: When we came, we came to study and then go back home to work in Africa. Others came and stayed here. There are so many immigrants now that the welcome is not the same.

Agnes: When we arrived, we were received and escorted. We dressed well and our arrival was expected. People were holding up signs with our names on placards. We were greeted and we were taken straight to our reserved accommodation. We worked hard and did well, even better in our exams than the English girls.

James: We were invited into British homes for Christmas when we were students at what is now City University.

Agnes (? or Modupa) brought in article about archiving records and experience of Commonwealth immigrants in nursing in Lancaster and the lack of first-hand testimony about this experience from African and Caribbean trainee nurses.

Where did people spend most of their working life?

Modupa 21 years Africa – 19 years UK

Agnes 30 years Africa ,

Some half and half, some 10 or 15 in each country.

Some, esp James, in other countries too.

School:

Our teachers were English and they were very influential, with their focus on English history and literature. No-one taught us Nigerian history, only English history and all the schools were run by whites, especially the convent schools.

(Someone also remembered their father had served with British forces in World War II and another mentioned that father was Superintendent of Police under Sir John ??.

Scene in classroom:

Teacher: Good morning children....

Children: Good morning Miss.....

Teacher: Name a play by Shakespeare..... Name kings and queens Good pupils have a chance to go to England and study. What do you want to do when you leave school And why do you want to do it?

Remy: I want to be a banker and get money out of the bank (impressed when he saw his mother doing this at the Standard Bank and thought that'd be the place to work!)

James: I want to be an accountant and work with money

Theresa: I want to be a secretary, wearing smart clothes and working for a big boss and chatting in the office

Agnes: I want to be a nurse and to take care of people, children and old people.

Modupa: I want to gather children around me and be a teacher and watch the children grow up.

Bart: I'd like to be a lawyer or an architect with a big car.

Scene on arrival:

Georgina: WE came to be Nurses...People with placards with our names on welcomed us. They took us to a place to stay. They prepared us for a test... We received our uniform (blue and white striped)

Remy: Young bride needed to marry Nigerian man living in London and experiencing loneliness and frustration!

Nicholas: After greeting and going to hotel, I had one week familiarisation. I saw more of England than than I have ever since. Went to Bristol, Gloucester, Stratford on Avon and Oxford. Then went to work at Kings College Hospital as medical engineer. Need story about Pitman's College here.

First Christmas stories:

Elizabeth:

My first Christmas in London was very cold with a lot of snow. I woke up in the morning and went to collect my bottle of milk at the door. I could not open the outside door. I rang my landlady's door and told her I was not able to get out. She rang the fire brigade who came to get rid of the snow before we were able to go out that morning. In the afternoon, my landlady invited me for a Christmas dinner, roast turkey and a bottle of wine to go with it.

Bart: Christmas 1962. My landlady told me it was the worst winter in a decade. I was very unhappy with the weather but managed to get out to watch people shopping and to see the decorations and activities all over the place.

In Nigeria we do shopping but mainly for the family. It's a time to have new clothes to wear on Christmas Day to the service and in the Community Square.

In London I found the streets were extra quiet with nobody about, snow all over and very cold.

My landlady gave me Christmas dinner at home. It was different from the heavy traditional Christmas dinner at home. She bought me a little gift and I gave her some sweets which I had on my table which I had bought from Woolworths and which were not really for her! After the meal I had nothing to do. I was sad and cold so I covered up in bed. For me Christmas finished on that first day, 25th December 1962, but at home in Nigeria it continues for a week till the New Year. There people go from house to house for food and drinks. They get together at the Community Centre for dances and comedy shows.