

First feelings

At first I was anxious, nervous and unsure of what to expect of Nigeria and the people I was about to go with. I stuck at my brother's side as I didn't know anyone else... yet. At the airport I said goodbye to family, home and London. I was introduced to one of the girls who were around my age group; her name was Eberichi 15 years old. We got to know each other; things we like, who we knew; our eating requirements etc. From this I found out we were in a similar boat. She knew some people but lived far from everyone I also found out she was a vegetarian but vegan not by choice. We became friends and are to this day.

Aeroplane

On the aeroplane we experienced a few difficulties; the air conditioning was not working and the televisions likewise; we took of two hours later than planned. The food was not very satisfying it was; chicken and rice, éclairs that. Moving back to the journey; by God's grace we had a safe journey and a good landing.

Arriving in Nigeria

We had no problems with our passports and tickets but were waited at the luggage pick up for quite a while as there were about 50 suitcases to be collected. As soon as we stepped outside, the humid air hit us (it had just been raining and dried before we stepped outside). My skin felt dirty and it was too hot. We waited around for a bit for the Babcock vehicles to pick us up, the first vehicle was just for luggage so we had to say goodbye to our luggage for a while luckily we saw them again. We were all seated in a Babcock coach vehicles, the ride was fabulous as it had air condition. From Murtla Muhhamed Airport Lagos, we were told it would be a 45 minute drive to Babcock University; we were relieved to hear that, unfortunately it took 2 hours!! (One thing I learnt about the people in Nigeria and Nigerians generally is that when it comes to time keeping, for you not to be too disappointed, however long they tell you something's going to take, double it or triple it and that should give you the right amount of time without being discouraged)

Felicia Adebisi Dada Hall (Girls Hostel)

Girls were the first to arrive at their hostel, we were shown our rooms and our partners, my partner was a girl already in Nigeria called Esne Aja she had been in Nigeria for a few years but was born in America, we were told the people from Nigeria weren't joining us till the next day so I spent a night alone in my room. I met Ezne the next day and found out she would not be staying in the hostel with us as she lived on campus, but she was still part of our group. After we had settle in and put away our luggage we sat in the lounge and watched TV, we met two girls who were part of our group, they had also been in Nigeria for a few years one was born in UK and the other in America. I realised that in our whole group there were only about four people who were born and raised in Nigeria. Everyone else seemed to have been sent to Nigeria for schooling. I was given a different roommate who goes by the name

of Seeke; she was not a seventh day Adventist which was the first thing we had in common, we settled together fast and became very good friends.

School for children with special needs

We were around campus getting to know each other, but I felt like we had way too much free time. One of the first things we then did was we went to a school for children with special needs, the kids in this school were either lived there or only came there for schooling; I think some of their parents had abandoned them because of their needs We gave each of them presents which we had sorted out earlier that day; we gave according to age and gender, I could tell that some of the kids did not like their gift by the way they reacted, I would have probably done the same thing too if I was one of the children as they only got socks. The children and their teacher gave us names in sign language; your sign language name is given to you according to your gender and physical appearance. If you are a boy or man it is given by the first letter of your name above the waist and is mainly on the face and head. If you're a girl it is also given with the first letter of your name but from the cheeks down to the waist; mine was my right hand curled up as a fist and my thumb sticking out between my index and middle finger (in sign language it is letter T); I had mixed emotions after the visit to the special needs school thinking about the way they reacted to the presents, wondering what their lives really are like and if what we saw was not just a show. It made me think about how privileged I am and about all the things I take for granted.

King

Our next trip took 4 hours to get there it was to see the king of a place in Osun State. (I think, as you read this you will come to the understanding that I am a very forgetful human being) In the coach we all got to know each other more. Girls sang and annoyed everyone but they soon joined in, we rehearsed a song we were to sing for the king, it goes a little something like "*Oba o Oba la se Oba* " I enjoyed the air conditioning of the coach as it was a very hot day. When we arrived, we watched different groups prostrate for the king, greeting and thanking him.

One that caught my eye was a group of elders prostrating for the king, they looked at least 40 years older than him yet they had to prostrate for him. We were given a place to sit near the king, he made a speech. In this speech, he explained why the elderly men prostrated for him he said "because he's the king he's the oldest man in the village so even those that are older than him see him as the oldest and respect him" though, I was uncomfortable with this, on the other hand it's their villages tradition and I have to respect that. We also had to greet the king, the boys prostrated and the girls knelt down whist all saying "*Kabiyesi o*". A few groups sang and performed for the king then we sang for him too but it came across that we were English kids, as our lead forgot one of the lines and improvised, everyone laughed and we continued. When we finished we once again said "*Kabiyesi o*" boys prostrated girls knelt down then went back too our seats.

The King gave us a speech reminding us that Nigeria will always be our home. Also that we've just had the opportunity to be born abroad and we should never forget Nigeria. He brought out a cooking utensil Odo (mortar) which is used to pound yam. He thought we'd never seen it before and didn't know what it was (I am not sure about everyone else but I definitely knew what it was). To top it off, the king brought out a broom and tried to tell us we didn't know what it was; firstly we all had broom in our rooms in the hostels and secondly I use broom at home in London. I told the king this and he seemed surprised. Many people in Nigeria thought that we were just English kids who didn't know anything about Africa way of live and I found this very difficult to understand as our parents, relatives and the church always talk about African values and way of live. After his speech one by one we were made to come out and say our name and where we were from in Nigeria (Basically we said our First and Last name and the state our father's were born in) when it was my turn I said "Kabiyesi o" knelt down, stood back up, told him my name was Temitope Ajibade and that I was from Ekiti State he asked where in Ekiti State I said I did not know he laughed (I felt kind of embarrassed but didn't really mind) and went back to my seat.

We were invited to his house in the village. He told us before he became king he never used to like staying in the village and he always travelled abroad but as king he had to get used to staying at home. The thing that surprised me most about the King was that he spoke English so brilliantly with an elegant and clear accent. We were inside the house before the king and when he arrived once again we said "Kabiyesi o" boys prostrated and girls knelt down. Inside his house it was bright because it was mid day but there was no light switch or fan working, me being as quick as I was asked why this happened. The group I was with tried to shut me up but the king answered my question anyway. I thought because he was a king he would have light but N.E.P.A (controls light around the whole of Nigeria) still took the King's light. But I did know that N.E.P.A takes light at anytime of the day and night. He ordered his maids to give us drink (Fanta in a can. We took a few pictures with the King, he sat in his chair, it had his name engraved into it, I can't remember what his name was, as we referred to him as "Kabiyesi" all through. After the pictures the King went and we did the same. (Back to the coach for another 4 hours drive)

Abeokuta

In Abeokuta we did two things, we went to **OLUMO ROCK**. Olumo rock is the centre of Abeokuta. It is right in the middle of the city, which gives an amazingly beautiful view. We also visited children at **STEPHEN'S CENTRE AN ORPHANAGE AND SCHOOL**.

Stephen's Centre helped children whose families were involved in the religious war in the North of Nigeria. We brought some toys and clothes to donate to the orphanage. There were a few children who had come to talk to us and tell us about their experience of the war and what Stephen's Centre had done for them. One of the stories I could remember was that of a 17 year old boy, who was at home with his family when someone came to tell them there were a group of around three hundred Muslims coming towards their home (they were a Christian family) the Muslims broke down their door and were threatening to burn the house down. He, his brother and mother had locked themselves in a room and their dad was at the door. The

Muslims ordered the rest of the family to come out but his dad begged them to take him and leave the family. They brought the family out and made them watch him being burnt alive. I can't remember how the children got away but they said the Muslims took their mother and said they were going to convert her to a Muslim. The children were alone and hungry but by the grace of God they were helped by the Stephen's Centre which feeds, clothes and schools them. This story almost brought me to tears, not only did they lose their parents but they had too watched them die. A nine year old girl tried to tell us her story but broke down in the middle as it was too much for her to say as she felt she was reliving her worst nightmare. Our group took some of the children's detail and pledge to stay in contact.

We then set off to Olumo rock. I was not in the mood to climb any rock as I was so tired and hungry by this time we got there. One of my Nigerian friends summarised my mood by saying "people could tell something was wrong as I talk non-stop but go quiet when I am really very hungry". When we got to Olumo rock, we had a few issues in getting in (our group leaders were not expecting to have to pay to enter Olumo rock but luckily were well equipped to pay for it) eventually, we got in. When we were inside Olumo rock ground we sat down and ate, I was happy to receive food and life had been put back into me. There were goats that kept knocking over our bins and eating our unwanted rubbish. Food in belly, I no longer felt weak drowsy and tired. But had all the energy needed to scare the goats away but they just kept coming back for more. When we had finished eating and our tour guide was ready we started to climb Olumo rock. Our tour guide told us what the rock was used for and explained many things to us; He told us that Olumo rock was the hiding place during wars and warriors men hid there for up to 3 years. The caves were very small so I assume the people were either very small or came out crippled after spending so much time crouched down in there. We met some of the said to be ancestors of the warriors which were old women who happened to live their. (I did not believe this) Olumo rock was a good experience as I felt as it was a sense of achievement climbing it.

Visit to Lagos

We had a few more days around campus then we were off to Lagos, it was another long trip but we could see the difference between Lagos roads and other states, there were traffic lights, motor bike wore helmets and only had one passenger, the roads were neatly done and had very few pot holes. Our destination was Victory Sanctuary. We stayed in a house across the road from Victory Sanctuary which was more than very convenient, I stayed in a room with 8 other girls, yet there was a lot of space and we were not cramped at all, maybe because we were all small but it was a lot of fun. I toured the house and I can gladly say we had the best room in the house. I appreciate the way the adults made us kids feel comfortable and at home before themselves, as most of us were in rooms with beds, they slept in an office on straw mats. At Victory Sanctuary, we had devotion with a pastor that was very musically talented; at one of the programmes he played the trumpet for the congregation. (I'm not very good with names and I have forgotten his.) On the Sabbath day we went to Victory Sanctuary church service and the praise and worship was magnificent, it was wonderful and everyone was dancing, enjoying themselves, and we all glorifying God's name.

I did not stay for the whole of the service and missed the night vigil later that day due to the fact that my cousins had come to pick me and my brother up; we spent a day with them visiting family and sort of relaxing from our hectic yet fun routine with Cornerstone Fellowship. Whilst we were out, we went to Chicken Republic (it surprised me that overall whilst in Nigeria we rarely eat chicken) we had pounded yam made for us at our Uncle's house and played with our niece and nephew (Daniel and Daisy) we had a very relaxing day yet got caught in Lagos traffic. Back at the house and Victory Sanctuary, we had one more day in Lagos and planned to do what girls like doing most - shop till we drop, then relax at Lekki Beach afterward. First we had a seminar and devotion. Then we set off to ShopRite. At ShopRite, I felt things were over price. I wanted things that represented the fact that I had been to Nigeria. But what I found there were things from abroad; countries like England and America. After I realised I wasn't going to get anything that represented Nigeria I decided to buy a tie for my dad, the cheapest tie in the whole of ShopRite happened to be 5000 Naira which is equivalent to £20 which I believe is too expensive.

Not everyone wanted to go to Lekki Beach so I think we had sorted out that those that wanted to go to Lekki Beach would go and others that didn't would spend more time at ShopRite. I was eager to go to the beach, as I remember going there as a child and riding on a horse. In the end, everyone ended up wanting to go to Lekki Beach so we set off 2 minutes away from the house we were staying, as we were told we wouldn't be able to go to the beach anymore that it would be too late and we would arrive late for the banquet we would be attending later that evening in Victory Sanctuary. I figured out that since we left ShopRite we had been heading home the whole time. I was very disappointed for not going to Lekki Beach but just like everyone else I had to get over it.

We hung around the house whilst getting ready for the banquet, most of us paired up to walk into the banquet, I thought I was not dressed up enough to go to a banquet, yet when I got in I realised that the group I was with seemed to be the people that made the most effort with their dressing that night. Different groups performed that night and it was a very nice atmosphere. A few of us left early that night as we were tired yet ended up not going to bed and indulging in light conversation.

Back to Babcock

The next morning, before we went back to Babcock, we had a Seminar with a pastor (whose name I have forgotten – again!) First he spoke to us, and then we filled in self evaluation sheets, then we were put into groups and discussed our strengths weaknesses and a lot more. We did not have a lot of time as we had to get back to Babcock so were going to finish the sessions ourselves in our groups back at Babcock. When we arrived at Babcock, the leaders told us we would spend an hour or maybe two maximum. We were there for four hours; as they say time flies by when you are having fun. At Babcock, we continued our session as planned, giving each other solutions to our weakness and how we could improve them. Later that day we had a leaving party for Senator not knowing Tobi was also going but included her in the end. We listen to music, drank fizzy drinks and senator told us something about each and everyone one of us and gave us a bit of advice. I was surprised he could learn so much about us all in the space of few days.

King of all Yoruba Kings

We were given a wonderful opportunity to visit the king of Ile Ife. The waiting room was beautiful; we all sat in big soft king like chairs. I thought we were waiting for the king to enter the room we're in, and little did I know that there is more beautiful place in the palace to visit. We were then taken to a place where there was a small pool more king like chairs in beautiful layout. On the way to this room we saw an ostrich. At first I thought it was fake but as I got closer (it was behind a fence but it's head was so long we could see it sticking out) it swooped its neck down and back up, this startled me but gave me the proof that it was real. We all tried to stop and take pictures but I group leaders said to hurry on that it would be dark before we get back to Babcock (fortunately it was not). Luckily the camera man got a picture. Once again, we all got sat down and waited for the King, who was fashionably late. We were again reacquainted with the King of a place in Osun State and met many other kings of his level. From the information we were told they were not only kings but very well educated, some were doctors and business men. This surprised me as I thought they would only have the role of King on their mind at all times. We greeted them all with the traditional "*Kabeyesi o*" but this time there were two men sitting at the king of Ile Ife's feet saying "*Oban ki o*" any time someone greeted him. We were then seated at a very long table with two on each side. Ready on the table was a bottle of water, a fork and knife wrapped in a napkin with a tooth pick holding it together, it was very cute and the staffs made us feel welcome in my opinion. The food we ate was delicious, jollof rice, fried rice and meat. Waiter came around giving drinks; Fanta and Malt. One thing I noticed about the fizzy drinks in Nigeria is that they have their full taste and colouring, for example; the Fanta in London is yellow with a sort of a diluted taste and the Fanta in Nigeria is orange with a rich sweet taste. One thing I notice is that, in Nigeria, by your surname people can tell what part of the country you are from. Once again for this king, we individually said our name and the state we are from. This time I included my middle name but when the king tried to guess what state the surname "Ajibade" was from he was incorrect, he thought we were from "Ondo State" When we were ready to leave we set ourselves out to take a picture with the King. I enjoyed the visit to this King very much it was an honour and a privilege and I enjoyed myself.

Staff Nursery

Our first visit to the staff nursery school at Babcock, we looked at what we had to work with and what we were about to do. After dinner at the Vice-Chancellors' house we discussed on what colours we were going to paint it and allocated jobs to everyone. I scrubbed the walls clean, with a few others. We clean the room, painted it and re organised the whole place. We're very pleased with the way we redecorate the room and feel some sort of achievement and I hope they will remember us for this for this can of hand on job.

Vice Chancellor (VC)

Another thing we did at Babcock was we went to see the Vice Chancellor in his place of work, it was very nice, it had pictures of I think all the past vice chancellors, the room was decorated beautifully with plants, the air conditioning was very cold, so cold someone asked for it to be turned off. He gave us a speech then we went to his main office and people wore his robe and sat in his seat and took pictures. I had stayed up all night doing my hair, was very tired and did not participate in this. The VC did a great thing for us, made us feel at home with many words of encouragement during our stay in Nigeria which we were all very grateful for. We were given accommodation and eat at his house. He said since his children were all grown up and left home it was nice to hear the sound of children's laughter in his home again.

Talent night

Later that evening we had a social combined with a talent night so during the day we went back to our hostel's to practice what we were going to perform. Only the girls performed some sang, some danced, some read poetry and we all had games jokes contests too. Overall it was a great and fun night. We had the talent night on the basketball pitch, there were floodlights and plug sockets in the basketball net's post, which I found very unusual. The games consisted of musical chairs for younger ones then older ones, musical statues, who can eat corn the fastest, dance off's; old school verses new school and boys verses girls 1 on 1. The talent night was a big hit as everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and sharing goodbyes. The prize for each contest was suya which nearly everyone enjoyed. (The vegetarians obviously couldn't have any so didn't enjoy the treat.) Even those that didn't win anything got suya so it was a win win situation all rounds.

Last few days

As the days went on people slowly started disappearing, back to their homes and lives, well those that lived in Nigeria. I helped my room mate Seeke, pack and we exchanged items of belonging to remember each other by. She is a great friend and a bubbly lively character who knows how to cheer you up if your feeling down and can sense when something's wrong. I will miss her and Nigeria. We had our last Sabbath in the hall in the boy's hostel but it was just our group, as Babcock students had left to go home for their holiday. One of the older boys, Femi Adeleye, did Sabbath school then Pastor Olaore did the sermon. In-between his sermon he said someone had told him that I had a beautiful voice and he called me up to sing a song. I was shocked and very nervous but I rose to the challenge even though it was very short notice, I sang a song called "throne room" and was happy and proud of myself, as I am usually afraid to sing in front of crowds. And this really helped boost my confidence

Airport

At the Airport in Nigeria we all lined up to get checked in, my brother and I were the last to get checked in as I think they could not find our tickets, but sorted something out in the end. The plane journey was a bit better than the last one; we did not wait around for too long. We had a brilliant landing and gave thanks to almighty God. My mum came to pick me and my brother up at the airport. I was happy to see her and

happy to be back in London but will miss Nigeria for the time being. I said goodbye to everyone and set off home. I am still in touch with most people from the trip thanks to Facebook.

Recommendation

Encourage us to speak our local language by getting teachers in Nigeria to teach us whenever we're in the campus

Let do more hand on project like painting the orphanage and learn basic hair plating.

Encourage pen pal with the orphanage and encourage us to save part of our pocket money to help them

Thank you

I would like to say thank you to Cornerstone Fellowship for making the trip possible and a big thank you to Aunty Yemisi, Uncle Kayode, Mrs Orija and Uncle Wale for being with us, supporting us, helping us when we were down and always keeping us motivated through out the trip. Nigeria was a wonderful experience, I made new friends, learnt about my culture, learnt a bit about other people's lives and why I should be grateful and thank God every day for the life He has given me.

THE END!!!

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