

## From an Undergraduate to a Professor: Twenty Years of Evolution of my Workspace in Pictures

Twenty years ago, I created my first home office/workstation. I do 100% of my academic writing from home, not from the library or office. The transformation of my workspaces over two decades is directly connected with major changes in my career and family life. They are about books, archival materials, and computers as much as about memories of challenges and triumphs, of growing as a husband, father, teacher-scholar, and above all, a human. Below is a short biography of each workspace and their lasting memories:

### Photo 1 (Ibadan): 2002-2004

After living in Independence Hall for three years, I moved off campus to the University of Ibadan neighborhood of Agbowo where I rented a room as a 200/300 level student in 2002. Two months into the new space, I bought my first computer for N40,000—my savings from working as Professor Laurent Fourchard's research assistant. In the early 2000s, universities across Nigeria built iron cages or broke into colonial era concrete walls to install iron bars to protect computers from thieves. I didn't construct any iron cage for my computer, a used Pentium 4 desktop, even though a strong elbow push would force my door open. The strongest memories of this space include starting life with Olamide my wife, hosting tutorials with fellow undergraduate students, and typing my BA long essay/project (2004), which later became my first conference paper presented at Nasarawa State University (2005) and first academic publication—a 2006 article on Ibadan-Ijebu relations in a book edited by Professor Olayemi Akinwumi and Professor Okpeh O. Okpeh.

### Photo 2 (Austin, Texas): 2005-2006

My first workstation in the United States as a first-year graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. The apartment was an efficiency/utility. My workspace covered the entire living area, leaving just a small portion for bed. I lived here for just a year. My strongest memory is neither the library books nor the Mac Apple computer I was using for the first time. It is the archival materials I brought from Nigeria. I did my MA and PhD in 10 semesters (4 years and six months) partly because I arrived in graduate school in September 2005 with much of the archival materials for my doctoral thesis. I also remember this space for all the agonies of acclimatizing into American education culture, for the anxiety of being a young husband and father, and for writing my first publication on the history of sexuality and two book reviews.

### Photo 3 (Austin, Texas): 2006-2008

Itandola was born in 2006, as I completed my first year in graduate school. We needed a bigger space. So, we upgraded to a one-bedroom apartment. The workspace was in the bedroom I shared with Olamide and Itandola. For extra space, I removed the wardrobe door. I wrote my MA thesis from this room and started my book on nationalism. From here, I mastered "The Art of Not Paying for What You Can Get for Free!" When you have a family as a graduate student and your monthly stipend is \$1200, you must learn to do paperwork to apply for legitimate assistance. Itandola read the English alphabet for the first time—heartwarming!

### Photo 4 (Austin, Texas): 2008-2010

Itandayo was born in March 2008. Because my family size increased, we moved to a two-bedroom students housing. The kids had a room of their own, while myself and Olamide lived in

the second room, which doubled as my workspace. From here, my work ethic was fully formed—between changing diaper and feeding a sick child, to writing my comprehensive exam, doctoral thesis, a book on nationalism, and articles. I remember paying library fines for the books the kids destroyed under the pretext of "reading" them. I also passed my self-diagnosis for "selective hearing syndrome." When you have two attention-seeking toddlers and must write your doctoral thesis, you must learn to differentiate between "real" and "fake" cries!

Photo 5 (Sylva, North Carolina): 2010-2012

I started my teaching career at Western Carolina University in August 2010, five months after defending my doctoral thesis at the University of Texas at Austin. We had a major living upgrade because I now have a full-time job with a decent income. We rented a three-bedroom house. For the first time, Olamide would live without books in her bedroom, while also having her own study area as she returned to school for degrees in social work. We had a guest bedroom, in addition to a separate room for the kids. The laundry room was too big; so, I converted a section of it into my workstation! I published my signature journal articles and managed the anxiety of tenure and promotion. I wrote proposals for my book on sexuality—the most difficult book I ever published!

Photo 6 (Waynesville, North Carolina): since 2012

Ten years ago in February 2012, we bought our first home, where we still live. It's a five-bedroom house located in a golf course community in Waynesville, North Carolina. I converted the smallest of the 5 rooms into my home office. Olamide built her own workstation in another quiet part of the house. For the first time, I could lock myself inside a room and not be an umpire over the kids' unnecessary fight. Having a microfilm reader at home for 10 years quantitatively increased my primary source database through colonial newspapers, and the textuality and African centeredness of my writing because of the unique character of colonial literary culture. Within 9 years, from my present home workstation, I grew from a junior scholar to a full professor.

Moral of the Story--Life is work in progress!