[00:00:04]

You are listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. Hello, everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from HLS Human Resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his, and today we are talking to Kekely Dansouh from CJI who will tell us about her life, how long she is in this position at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us, Kekely, and please tell me your story.

[00:00:40]

Thank you, Edgar. It's a pleasure to be here.

[00:00:45]

Tell me a little bit about where are you from? Are you from Massachusetts area or different place in US? What's your story behind there?

[00:00:56]

A lot of people do not know this story, but I was born in Boston, and my parents are Togolese, which is a country in West Africa, and I only lived in Boston for a few weeks and they took me back to Togo. [OVERLAPPING] I grew up in Togo and I came to the US in 2014 to go to college.

[00:01:20]

Wow. Recently your parents lived here?

[00:01:24]

No, they did not live here. They have friends here, and so they would visit their friends from time-to-time. That's it.

[00:01:33]

Your mom was pregnant at the time, came to visit, had you here in Boston and then you went back to Togo?

[00:01:42]

Exactly.

[00:01:44]

You lived there for how long in Togo?

[00:01:47]

I lived in Togo for 18 years.

[00:01:50]

18 years?

[00:01:51]

Yes.

[00:01:51]

Your all childhood going to school there, everything. You finished high school and came back to Boston for college?

[00:01:59]

That is correct.

[00:02:00]

Can you tell us how was going to school at an early age, all the way to high school. How is the school in Togo? How is the environment, how you felt and comparison that we can make about what you hear about school here. I'm really curious about that.

[00:02:16]

Well, school in Togo is quite different and interesting. Togo is a Francophone country, and so the curriculum is based on the French curriculum, and my parents, especially my dad, I would say my dad, he wanted me to go to an English speaking school so that I could learn English before coming back to the US.

[00:02:41]

Oh, wow.

[00:02:42]

I did not get the opportunity to go to the public schools or just a French speaking school. Instead, I went to an English speaking school in Togo, and one good thing about Togo is there's a diversity of schools. There's like American International School which is founded by Americans in Togo, and a lot of children of diplomats go there and parents who are well-to-do also send your children there because there's the opportunity for you to come to the US right after that, there is Lycee Francais, which is also founded by French. There's the British International School of Lome, and so there is a diversity.

[00:03:29]

Good diverse option there for studying.

[00:03:32]

Yes.

[00:03:33]

But the public schools in general would be mostly French?

[00:03:37]

That's correct.

[00:03:39]

Now I'm even more curious before we even go with all your studying. You went to a school that's for English speakers in general?

[00:03:48]

Yes.

[00:03:49]

But your childhood going around and living around your neighborhood were French-speaking?

[00:03:55]

That's correct.

[00:03:56]

So you had French as your normal way of living there and then you would learn English at school?

[00:04:06]

Yes.

[00:04:06]

How was that experience, Kekely?

[00:04:09]

It was a fun experience. My dad speaks French. My mom speaks French, and just in general, we also have our native languages that a lot of people speak. Depending on where you're from, you can interact with other people in your native language and Ewe is one of the native languages, [OVERLAPPING] and Mina is also a native language. Mina is, my mom calls it a metamorphosis of Ewe. It's very similar to Ewe, but it's a simpler Ewe and a lot of people in the southern part, which is the city of Togo which is Lome speak Mina. We are able to interact with one another in Mina or French. It was an interesting experience. I could talk to anybody pretty much.

[00:04:58]

Kekely, how many languages you speak? [LAUGHTER] Let's start from there and then I can ask the question that I need to ask why you are talking. How many languages you speak?

[00:05:10]

Well, I would say four. I speak English, French, Ewe, Mina, and I used to speak Spanish pretty well, but I have not had anyone to practice with and I'm hoping to get back to speaking Spanish,and just learning more.

[00:05:28]

Nice. Ewe and Mina, I need to ask. We can remove this if you don't feel like. But can you just say a sentence? Bom dia. Oh my God, I'm speaking Portuguese. Like a good morning or something in Mina and Ewe so we can have a sense of what the difference is.

[00:05:55]

Absolutely. Like I said, Mina is similar to a Ewe. I just want to make a note that because we are a Francophone country, when we traditionally greet people in our native tongue, we would like to ask them so many things like how are you doing, how's the family doing? And it's a very long greeting. So they've cut it short and bonjour is the normal greeting when you see somebody in the morning, it either bonjour or bonsoir, everybody says that whether you speak French or not, but Ewe bonjour is ndi.

[00:06:34]

Ndi.

[00:06:34]

Yes. If you're walking down your neighborhood and you see a group of people, you can say Ndi Na Mi Lo which means good morning to you all. Mina also say the same thing pretty much [FOREIGN].

[00:06:54]

Sounds music, doesn't it?

[00:06:56]

Yes, it is.

[00:06:59]

Sounds good when you say, even when you just say ndi, you bring some intonation or a vibration when you say that, it's not just like saying good morning or bom dia in Portuguese, ndi. I hope I can keep that and remember that. Once you're in the morning here, ndi, Kekely.

[00:07:22]

Thank you.

[00:07:22]

How was your childhood in this vision? I'm sorry. Maybe I should go even farther if you are okay answering that. Because my experience in Brazil, for example, our families were huge. Uncles and aunts and you have so many cousins all over in the neighborhoods as well. Did you have that same experience? Do you have many siblings or relatives there where you lived. Did you have that more rich childhood in terms of numbers, I would say?

[00:07:57]

I have one sibling. My family, like my direct family is not a large family, but my parents have a lot of siblings, and so we have lots of cousins. Both sides, paternal and maternal, my grandparents were polygamous, so they had a lot of wives which means lots of uncles and lots of cousins. I did not interact as much with them because we lived mostly in the city, and most of our relatives were scattered all over. Some of them are in Benin. Some of them live in Ghana. There's some people who live in US, Canada. But I did have some interaction with some of my cousins on the maternal side.

[00:08:45]

Then going to school, you'd have your schoolmates or classmates, were they from your same neighborhood or from different places in the town?

[00:08:58]

My classmates were from different places in town and they were also from different countries.

[00:09:04]

Different countries, too.

[00:09:06]

We had a lot of Lebanese, a lot of Indians in my school.

[00:09:12]

They were living in Togo or they came to that school specifically because of the teaching terms of English and that kind of thing.

[00:09:21]

They were living in Togo.

[00:09:22]

They were?

[00:09:23]

Yes. Some people, if their parents are either a diplomats or contractors, they end up living in the country and so they are attending the same school.

[00:09:32]

Do you have in a sense, how big the school was or how many students in general? There's a lot of the students there or more contained.

[00:09:39]

Lots of students.

[00:09:40]

A lot of students.

[00:09:41]

Lots of students. I would say approximately maybe 200. If I'm not mistaken, 200-250 students.

[00:09:50]

Nice. That sounds so lovely. What you can tell us once you are as you were talking about Togo before you go in a different level of school there. How was living in Togo, food, for example, I have no idea what the regular food. Brazil for example, rice and beans, more lunch and dinner, and then you have meat and salad, whatever it is to accompany that but mainly rice and beans every day. There is no change. How was the food in Togo or celebrations that you have?

[00:10:30]

Where it sits, it sits in a very great place on the map, and so we have a beach and all of our beaches are lined with coconut trees, palm trees, so it's a very tropical country, and the weather is always beautiful and nice.

[00:10:48]

Is one of those places that you have sun all year long?

[00:10:50]

Yes, we do have sun all year long. No snow. I don't know what snow is until I came to the US. [LAUGHTER] Beautiful country, and also when you go to the central parts of the country or the northern parts, there's good land for agriculture, and so we're able to get fresh food. Also, we have fishermen who always fish, so we have fresh fish. A lot of the food is amazing because we get to go to the market. You can go to the market on a daily basis and get everything fresh and cook whatever you need to cook for that day. For us we have a variety of food. One thing about Togo is it's considered a cosmopolitan country because we've had a lot of cultures in Togo and so we've taken things from other cultures here and there. Even though we have our own dishes that we stay true to, there are some things we've taken from other countries. For example, for breakfast, we would normally have porridge, and that porridge is either made from cornmeal or a type of grain that's been grounded into powder. We would have that in which something we call botokoin. It's a dough, but it's a fried dough. It's crispy on the outside but very soft on the inside, and so you would have that for breakfast. But since we have the French that colonized Togo, depending on the status of your family, some people can afford to have like omelettes, croissants, baguettes for breakfast or fruits, cheese, you can have those things for breakfast. Sometimes we do eat rice and beans as well for breakfast.

[00:12:43]

You do?

[00:12:44]

Yes, and we call it ayimolou. Ayi means beans and Molou means rice. Basically rice and beans, sometimes we do eat that for breakfast.

[00:12:53]

But it's not lunch, dinner, like we say in Brazil or many Latino countries in America, Central, South America do, right? Would be once in a while, not something that would be constant?

[00:13:06]

Not really. I love ayimolou. I eat it a lot. I can eat it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and I don't mind. [LAUGHTER] Some people would do that as well. We just love rice and beans. That's one thing we love. Even though we have vegetables and everything, that's a staple in Togolese culture.

[00:13:23]

When you say this, I'm asking because Brazil is considered the most African country outside Africa, not for the best reasons. But we have these habits or we have this cultural influences that we thought or at least me and my ignorance thought that, oh, this is our way of living, rice and beans since I was born. We also have a lot of influence from different cultures because basically a lot of people from Europe and Africa came to Brazil in many different parts. The food vary so much from south choose to southeast, central west and northeast. But mainly would say rice and beans is the main idea. There's a lot. But then this past weekend, I went to the Graduate Program international party, and I was walking around it because I wanted to see all these stands and the food that they brought and the decoration that they put there which I think is a phenomenal celebration. When I was in the African part of the tent, the rice and beans. I was just looking and said this is just Brazilian thing here. What's happening? That's the influence brought from them.

[00:14:43]

We do have other foods such as fufu. Fufu is pounded. We bought either yam or cassava in plaintain. We pound it and it has a nice doughwy but soft texture, and you eat it with a soup of your choice. We eat it with goat meat light soup or peanut butter soup, or palm nut oil soup. We have other dishes as well, such akple which is maize, a bit like corn meal which you cook. I believe some other African cultures have a variation on that. We make that and you can also eat it with a soup as well. Ewokple is the Ewe pronunciation for it but akume is the Mina calling for it. So it's pretty much similar and we have a lot of dishes in Togo.

[00:15:38]

The yuca was a big influence there as well in terms of dishes and everything

[00:15:43]

Yes, we do have it. I believe yuca was probably introduced to Togo.

[00:15:46]

Yeah, brought from America, I think.

[00:15:48]

Yes.

[00:15:48]

Like the corn was, I think we owe America more than anything but [inaudible 00:15:52] yuca in some places in Brazil because indigenous called mandioca or manioc for many other Latino countries in South America. So it is incredible. That route has so many different things that you can do with it because you have the flour. You have a refined flour. Then you can go from bread to biscuits, and you can boil with a beef first or whatever meat you want. That is just boiled with water and salt and then you heat with barbecue, you don't need anything else. Just those two combinations is amazing. It's really interesting to see the food influence that we have from one place to another, from one group to another. The celebrations in your country in Togo, which ones were most important for you?

[00:16:50]

I'm Christian, my family's Christian, so we did not participate in a lot of the celebrations because they were mostly traditional celebrations. Some of them are like Kpessosso. I'm not really familiar with the history or I probably forgot what history is. But it's a festival where a lot of people come from Haiti, Brazil, different parts of the world, to Togo and Benin. They have this, it's a white stone and I think the white stone is supposed to have some protective properties and they protect that white stone. I think that stone has something to do with slavery and colonialism. I can't really remember the history, but it's a big celebration. A lot of people travel from all over to come and pay homage to the ancestors, pour libations and do all things. It's like a very big celebration. There's also another celebration. I can't remember the name. I should have probably written up these things down [LAUGHTER] before coming. But it's also a celebration from one of the rulers, like a very, I wouldn't say dictatorship but he was a cruel king. I think the Ewe people were able to get away from his kingdom and so they have a celebration for that. I can't remember the name.

[00:18:23]

Like an independent celebration.

[00:18:25]

Kind of an independent celebration. Nationally, we do have our independence date which is April 27th, and that is a big celebration. There are some other celebrations that are important to people in the country. For example, May 1st is very important. I think it's May 1st or April 1st, but it's called Fete de Travailleur, which is the party for workers. It's a holiday and so a lot of workers.

[00:18:55]

Must be May 1st because we have the same day for our workers in Brazil as well, celebration for the labor.

[00:19:01]

Yes. So people don't go to work. They celebrate, they go to the beach, they have parties. They enjoy good food, good music. That's also very big major celebration and there are also other celebrations such as Easter, Pentecost. Togo is a very religious country, I would say. Catholicism is big. We have other indigenous religions, and we have Islam as well. And so everybody has their own celebration, but those are big celebration. On weekends. there are a lot of weddings that happen in Togo. You would always see a wedding going on. You're either invited to a wedding or your the one having the wedding. [LAUGHTER]

[00:19:51]

It's better to be invited to the wedding most of the times, I hope. [LAUGHTER] Well, for some people they would say, no, I like to be that's my way. It sounds familiar in a way because Brazil also very much the biggest majority, I would say 90%. I'm just throwing this number out there, I'm not sure, but until recently used to be the biggest Catholic country as well.

[00:20:16]

I see.

[00:20:16]

But then we have the evangelical groups. But in terms of the Christian religion, would be the biggest majority there. Then you have the other influences and whoever migrate to Brazil and kept their traditions there as well. The African influence, the three major ones that I know of and I've read about and have been in ceremonies that they have, and I think it is incredible.

[00:20:46]

Would be Umbanda, Quimbanda and Candomble and then the Candomble is where the deities are just incredible. The clothes, the way that they dress when they are preparing to celebrate them is just wonderful, that's one of the biggest. I would say Christian and then the African influence would be I think the biggest spiritual or religious influence that you have there among with the other ones. You went through school all the way up to high school. Was high school easy way there too or considering what you always talk here about how hard sometimes for certain people go into high school here, the conflicts and bullying, all that a thing. You went through that or was it more easy way to go through?

[00:21:39]

High school was interesting, there is bullying because kids will be kids.

[00:21:44]

Like everywhere.

[00:21:44]

Like everywhere no country is immune from bullying. There was bullying, I did experience some bullying.

[00:21:53]

You did?

[00:21:53]

Yes.

[00:21:54]

I'm sorry.

[00:21:55]

But it was a learning experience for me as well. But in general, the courses were pretty intense because the professors or the teachers I would say wanted the best from us and so they put a lot of effort into the work that we did. The school that I went to specifically, the curriculum was similar to the American curriculum, so I was able to get a lot of things done before coming here to the US. One of our teachers was very into giving lessons to students for like the Toefl and SAT and so we went through all that process. I would say high school was pretty interesting.

[00:22:42]

It sounds intense.

[00:22:43]

It was intense.

[00:22:44]

In terms of academic.

[00:22:45]

Yes, it was intense and also because my parents they're strict, my dad really wants the best for his children and he wants you to make A grades and so you really had to put a lot of effort into the work you are doing.

[00:23:02]

I have a question there before I go to the other, because I think resonates with me as well. I always keep thinking first, just had a session last week where they say, I think when your child is speaking, your inner child speak in mind comes out say, I want to play as well. [LAUGHTER] Because when you say my parents were strict in terms of study of preparing myself, my parents were not as strict but the message was always there. My dad worked with construction.

[00:23:35]

I see.

[00:23:36]

I hated working with constructs. I helped, but it's not what I wanted. All my brothers said no, that's not. Dad used to say, if you don't want to do what I'm doing, study, go to school so you don't need to go through this. He never said, was never a question of shaming or anything like that. Was just he understood that I would not want to do that. He said the option is, you either study and move on with your life to go for a different area, or this is what you're going to do for the rest of your life. You're saying the same, that your parents were a little more restrictive because they were saying like, I want you to have a better future. That came. I know that as children or as young adults sometimes sounds like pressure but did you get that or looking back, can you see that as they were thinking about me, more than anything else because everything around is so difficult?

[00:24:35]

I think it's both two ways. Yes, I did feel the pressure and also the second part was I just wished it was not like that. The pressure is my dad had a specific goal he wanted me to be involved in politics, into political science and so there was this pressure of really doing politics. I wouldn't say I'm not interested in politics. I enjoy learning and hearing from other people however, I'm more of the history person. That touches your mark.

[00:25:13]

Exactly. I love to learn the history of other countries, why things are happening and basically have a comparative lens of what's going on between different countries. I believe the pressure from my parents especially my dad because it's always, you have to be in politics, you have to do politics. It made me, when I came to college my focus was on politics and also trying to please your parents and make them happy. I realized for me personally I did not get to explore other things in college. It was not until towards the end of college when I started taking some electives then I realized I enjoyed all the things.

[00:26:01]

That could be much easier maybe.

[00:26:03]

That would have been much easier.

[00:26:04]

More enjoyable.

[00:26:06]

Exactly.

[00:26:06]

Because easy, I don't think easy. Easy in the sense of, because when your focus is on some that you enjoy, it's easy naturally, not because it's easy is just because your mind is so on to that one instead of trying to, I don't like the subject that much but I have to pass so I have to figure out.

[00:26:28]

Yes.

[00:26:28]

What were the electives that you took that made you feel like, oh, this would be a channel here?

[00:26:34]

Education was the class I took. International Education and I enjoyed it. Learning about education systems from different countries, Finland, Australia, Singapore, Canada, I really enjoyed my education class. I also wished I took something in architecture. I love interior design and I love landscape architecture, because my mind was so focused on something else, I never took the opportunity to take a class and explore what I could do in that. Also I love work, because I love working with people and I love cooking as well. I wished I probably went down a path of maybe human resources or management, something along those lines.

[00:27:30]

You have a broad arch there you can go through. Then it feels like you have a three or four big options that calls your attention more than anything and politics.

[00:27:45]

Exactly. [LAUGHTER]

[00:27:47]

Maybe. Let's leave that there as an option. It is still there.

[00:27:50]

Yes.

[00:27:52]

Another curiosity is, I know that you prepared yourself in a school that was teaching English. You learned English, but you lived in Togo with a diverse culture. How was the transition coming to America for college? Did you feel that change? Did you feel the cultural impact or not?

[00:28:13]

I did feel the cultural impact because I came here by myself.

[00:28:16]

By yourself?

[00:28:17]

So I do not have any family here in Boston or any parts of the US. Back home it's a lot of community. Whenever somebody comes from a different country, we're very welcoming, we make sure that person is doing well, we set them up for success.

[00:28:36]

Yeah.

[00:28:36]

We basically pull all the strings we can pull to make sure things go well for them. But coming to the US, and also because my parents did not live here, they did not know how the system functions.

[00:28:48]

Yes.

[00:28:48]

So I needed to learn a lot of things and so the transition was quiet. It was a little difficult for me. I had to find myself here without my parents' guidance or them saying do this, do that, and so it was quite difficult, but in the end, I learned a lot from it and I'm happy I went through that process.

[00:29:09]

Even making that move from Togo to US starting college sounded more like, I'm still following my parents' advice in terms of what my future should be and find it so difficult that transition and even adaptation here to get through. You feel like you're in a better place now yourself with everything? Is this where you want to stay and go on with your life or you still have dreams to go back to Togo and work that eventually someday, I don't know?

[00:29:44]

Yes. I think all Africans we do dream of going back to our country and/or everybody who is in the diaspora we do dream of going back home and I would love to go back home.

[00:29:55]

Yeah.

[00:29:55]

The weather is a top priority for me. [LAUGHTER] I forgot about the coast and the coconut trees. Yes, I can see that and all year long summer. I can see that.

[00:30:08]

Yes. I'm happy to split my time between the US and Togo if that's a possibility for me.

[00:30:16]

That would be perfect, yeah.

[00:30:17]

If I can't do that, I found a country that's similar to Togo that I love, and that's Aruba very similar to Togo.

[00:30:25]

Oh, Kekely I'm so sorry. [LAUGHTER] Sorry. I cannot see the correlation between Togo and Aruba at all. It's like one awful place to another awful place. [LAUGHTER]

[00:30:43]

It's a beautiful country.

[00:30:45]

Yes.

[00:30:46]

I remember the day I got off the airplane, I was like, "This feels like Togo."

[00:30:52]

Yeah.

[00:30:52]

Everything about it felt like Togo; the people, the food, the weather, everything, and so if I can't go to Togo because the flight is long, Aruba is just four hours away from Massachusetts, so I'm happy to be there.

[00:31:06]

Have you been to other islands around the Caribbean?

[00:31:12]

I haven't, but I have a few of them on my list.

[00:31:14]

Yeah. Because I know a few folks from different places there. We have some folks that are from the Dominican, Haiti area, we have Yvonne from US from Barbados because I have to be very careful with my friends, and I have friends from Trinidad and Tobago.

[00:31:34]

That's nice.

[00:31:36]

It would be a huge offense if I say, oh, Yvonne is from Trinidad and Laverne is from Barbados. No, even though they're so close. But it feels like it is also very close in terms of the culture and the expression in that, when you have the kind out here it's just an explosion of, you know. It's such a beautiful, energetic thing that you see. Brazil has too. We have ours in many different forms there. I think that's what brings this in terms of a cultural aspect to happen is of people regardless of any history that you see there. But interesting that you say, "If I don't go to Togo, yeah, I think Aruba would be." Say, I wouldn't go to Aruba. [LAUGHTER] But that's wonderful. We've finished college and did you have a chance to go to work somewhere or how was your plan in-between before you get to Harvard?

[00:32:42]

So I went to a community college and then I transferred to UMass Amherst and while I was at UMass, I worked in the Commonwealth Honors College.

[00:32:53]

Yeah.

[00:32:53]

There was a position there as an office manager/students supervisor, and I did that because I was able to work with the residence directors, the RAs, the students, as well as the Director of the Residence Halls of a Commonwealth Honors College. I had that position so it gave me an insight into management, like managing other people, collaborating, doing teamwork and I really enjoyed that. Right after UMass, I had to come back to Boston because I needed to survive of course. [LAUGHTER]

[00:33:32]

The entire time that we studied, did you stay in Amherst?

[00:33:35]

Yes.

[00:33:35]

In that the whole complex which I found out is not much of a big town, but many colleges nearby that get together there. Right?

[00:33:44]

Yes, the five colleges. Amazing experience.

[00:33:48]

Diverse?

[00:33:49]

Pretty diverse I would say.

[00:33:51]

Yeah.

[00:33:52]

The experience with just the nature as well. Western Mass is just beautiful and students are able to take opportunity or take advantage of that and because we have the whole five college situation going on, you can take a class at the other five colleges as well.

[00:34:09]

You can have the experience there?

[00:34:11]

Yeah.

[00:34:11]

That's really interesting. Where do students get together to celebrate to have fun or whatever it is? If it's not a big town, is like college experience that are parties on campus? I'm asking because I have no clue.

[00:34:26]

I see. You'll be surprised, UMass is a very big college campus.

[00:34:30]

Yeah.

[00:34:31]

It's so big that we have our own zip code.

[00:34:34]

Oh, wow.

[00:34:35]

Yes.

[00:34:36]

So then you might have at least a small village in there as well?

[00:34:40]

Yes.

[00:34:41]

I'm saying a small village with all due respect.

[00:34:43]

I understand.

[00:34:44]

For the size of a day university, it might be you have something that everybody can converge and have fun.

[00:34:51]

Yes, lots of party at UMass.

[00:34:53]

Oh, nice.

[00:34:54]

Good food. Everything there is amazing I would say from my experience.

[00:35:00]

But that's perfect. Because sometimes I feel like if there is not a town big enough to receive all the students to have their celebration, a place to go, bars and clubs and things that they could at least enjoy because it's very academic focus of course, those years. So we shouldn't have to have something that they can express and just put it out there. But I'm glad that you are saying that they have all that sorted out which is a fantastic thing. Then you finish there and you come back to Boston?

[00:35:33]

Yes, I came back to Boston and I was just looking for positions and also still thinking about politics and looking at that lens. I wanted to go back to grad school, but in order to go to grad school I will need the funds to pay for everything and also just take care of myself. I was looking at Harvard Kennedy School and I decided to just apply for positions there so to get my foot in the door and get an experience of what it feels like before planning on applying for grad school there. Applied to quiet a lot of jobs there and I applied to just one job at HLS and I completely forgot that I had applied to a position at HLS and I got rejected for all the jobs. I had HKS. One day I received an email from Tara. She's like, "Are you available to come for an interview tomorrow?"

[00:36:33]

Oh wow.

[00:36:34]

I think she said tomorrow or the following day and I got myself ready, came for an interview, got the job and here I am at HLS.

[00:36:42]

Oh, my God. Look at us, then. Sorry HKS, you missed that. So who you interviewed with?

[00:36:50]

I interviewed with Tara and Katie from faculty support services. Yes.

[00:36:55]

Just wonderful people.

[00:36:57]

Yes, they are.

[00:36:58]

It's wonderful. Then was a position as a faculty assistant?

[00:37:01]

Yes, I started as a faculty assistant and I was supporting visiting faculty. Then later I went to supporting two permanent faculty. Once we got into remote working due to the pandemic, I found another position to come to CJI and so I applied for the position in CJI and I am currently a CJI which is Criminal Justice Institute.

[00:37:31]

Criminal Justice Institute?

[00:37:32]

Yes.

[00:37:33]

Who did you interview in CJI to get the job?

[00:37:36]

First I interviewed with Carol and Professor Umunna.

[00:37:40]

Professor Umunna?

[00:37:41]

Yes, that was the first round of interviews and then the second round of interviews was with Professor Sullivan.

[00:37:47]

Oh wow.

[00:37:48]

Which is interesting because I was already professor Sullivan's assistance.

[00:37:51]

Oh you were? [LAUGHTER]

[00:37:52]

[LAUGHTER] Before interviewing for the second round.

[00:37:57]

Did you know a little bit about Professor Umunna before Sullivan, you said that you already worked with them? I think would be felt a little bit more familiar and you don't have but interview with Professor Umunna. Did you have a little bit like, oh my god, or it was okay?

[00:38:14]

The interview was a challenge to me, because Professor Umunna, she's an amazing person.

[00:38:21]

[LAUGHTER].

[00:38:22]

She has a power in her than I can not explain.

[00:38:28]

Yes.

[00:38:29]

And when she was interviewing me, the questions that she asked made me be on my toes like to wake up. [LAUGHTER] All the things I had prepared for, I had to think more about the questions that it was not a regular interview. It was an interview that said we are looking for the right person. The interview went well with her, and they said we will let you know second round of interviews and second round was with Professor Sullivan. That also went well.

[00:39:03]

Nice. Of course you got the job.

[00:39:05]

Yeah.

[00:39:07]

How is it working with CJI? Is it that constant learning curve there? But my curious also is because of working under Professor Sullivan and Umunna in that environment, there is a lot of work that I assume going on, but they are incredible people.

[00:39:28]

Yes, that's correct. We do have a lot of work and I have three titles. I am a Faculty Assistant, I am the Administrative Coordinator of CJI, and I am the Trial Advocacy Workshop Coordinator, so I'm quite busy.

[00:39:46]

Oh my God, the entire [inaudible 00:39:47]. [LAUGHTER] Wow.

[00:39:51]

It's year round. We are always running around trying to get things ready and prepared. Whether it's the CJI itself or T&W, we are always preparing and doing things around. I am grateful for the colleagues that I have. I'm grateful for Carol Flores who is my direct supervisor.

[00:40:11]

I don't know Carol. I don't think I know Carol personally, I really need to get to know her.

[00:40:16]

Yes, she is amazing.

[00:40:18]

I heard a really great thing about her.

[00:40:20]

Yes. She's the Administrative Director of CJI. So together we work to help this clinic move smoothly.

[00:40:29]

It is a phenomenal clinic and all the work that they do as well.

[00:40:32]

Yes.

[00:40:33]

I will never forget there are things that I haven't mentioned this before and I'm going to repeat myself again. I had the chance when I used to work in DOS, they have the first, after orientation, Dean Manning, have lunches with each section for the first-year students coming in. At least on the time that I was there, he would have these dinners, quite fancy. Have been in the library Caspersen room?

[00:41:06]

Yes, it's beautiful.

[00:41:08]

When they set those dinners for that first section, essentially it look like a movie set. It's just beautiful. So Professor Sullivan was one of the Professor guests coming to be in that dinner with Dean Manning and 1L students for, I don't remember this section. He told the stories about his career and what he did and the work that had done. And he was telling one specific story that he will never forget of someone that he had helped someone that was in prison for, I believe 30 years or more. He helped to revisit that case and take that person out. Just being with someone that had that power, I don't know, I think that is an impact. This is one case. We've not talked about many others that probably happened, so it is something.

Outside of work, what is your things that you'd like to do? Movie or TV? Whatever, reading. What is something that you do for fun?

[00:42:20]

Cooking. I love cooking.

[00:42:21]

I like cooking too.

[00:42:22]

I love cooking too. That's something I love to do for fun. I love museums and I enjoy going to museums, looking at the latest exhibits. Museum of Fine Arts is one of my favorites museums here.

[00:42:38]

Your favorite museums here.

[00:42:40]

I know they have Hokusai coming very soon.

[00:42:44]

Wow.

[00:42:44]

The Japanese, artist he's coming back to the Museum of Fine Arts. So I am looking forward to going and seeing that. I love traveling and I would love to travel more.

[00:42:58]

I love traveling too.

[00:42:59]

Because I believe when you travel, it takes your mind away from a lot of things.

[00:43:04]

Yes.

[00:43:05]

When you experienced other places, other cultures and other foods. For me personally, it helps me to get a creative mindset. I'm able to do other things and think and bring up ideas of the things that I want to do and find solutions for other things. So traveling is another thing that I enjoy doing, and because in the lens of cooking and because I enjoy food I love visiting restaurants, and eating and trying different menus. I love doing other things too. I just can't remember something from the top of my mind.

[00:43:40]

Have been to Brazil?

[00:43:41]

I have never been to Brazil.

[00:43:43]

Please try and you'll have a chance. Rio is always a good reference because of the beauty more than anything, it is really an amazing landscape. What that city has, it's hard to see in so many different places that are wonderful places everywhere of course. But when you talk about Rio is not just because of carnaval, samba and soccer, whatever it is, is really go there to appreciate the landscape and the beauty of whatever is around in that city. But if you ever go, if you don 't think about Rio go to Northeast, go to Bahia. Because I would love to hear you saying how much influence that place has from old Africa and everything. I want to see if you find Togo, neighbor here. Coconuts is all there. Where there's the same. It's like I think they're all facing each other, I believe, because sun all year long Northeast doesn't have winter, it's an amazing place too. If Aruba doesn't happen for [LAUGHTER] that's another option sun all year long.

[00:44:56]

Thank you for this.

[00:44:57]

Anyways, Kekely this was wonderful.

[00:45:00]

Thank you.

[00:45:00]

Thank you very, very much for accepting the idea. I hope it was not painful I hope was okay. And I'm so happy that everything that you said about your experience in Togo, you are an American citizen, but you have a big part of your life in a beautiful place.

[00:45:20]

Yes.

[00:45:20]

I am always curious also to know about how life is in different countries and how childhood is and whatever leave. Because I think that brings me back to my own upbringing and how was compared to what you live here. So thank you very much once again.

[00:45:40]

Thank you Edgar.

[00:45:40]

Say hi to Professor Umunna and Sullivan for me when you go back and we [MUSIC] will talk again soon.

[00:45:48]

Thank you so much Edgar. I wish you all the best for the rest the podcast.

[00:45:52]

Thank you. For everybody listening out there, I will talk to you soon. Bye bye. [MUSIC]