

# The Journey

Personal testimonies of Africans living  
and working in Scotland



**JOM Charity**

# Introduction

JOM Charity, Oral History Research & Training Consultancy, and Communities Past & Futures Society, wish to express heartfelt thanks to Museums Galleries Scotland, Year of Stories 2022 Community Stories Fund, for funding this wonderful project.

Professional oral historians video recorded the testimony of Africans as they related stories of their physical, emotional, and cultural journeys from their homeland to Scotland. Each respondent explained their reasons for leaving Africa and for choosing to settle here in Scotland. We are indebted to those respondents who shared their stories and allowed their testimony to be featured in this booklet, and at several exhibitions and on the project websites.

Read on to learn some of those stories and view some of the beautiful artwork inspired by African-Scottish cultures, experiences, and memories.

If you would like to listen to the stories in full, please view the project pages at:

<https://jomcharity.com/> and  
<https://oralhistoryresearchandtraining.uk/>



## Featured Respondents

Josephine Oboh-Macleod (Chief)  
John Williams Osehi  
Dr Ade Aibinu  
Olivia Ndoti  
Giscard Kuimi  
Sean Michael McCallum Reid

## Project Team

Chief Josephine Oboh-Macleod  
JOM Charity

Dr Sue Morrison  
Oral History Research & Training  
Consultancy

Communities Past & Futures  
Society



## Josephine Oboh- Macleod (Chief)

Chief Jo is the founder of JOM Charity, which works across Scotland to promote and enhance well-being through art and culture. She is also a renowned artist and humanitarian.

“ I was born in Lagos, Nigeria, and we had a very strong relationship with my Dad’s village, a place called Ugboha in the Edo State, close to Benin City, and my Mother is from a kingdom called Emu Kingdom, in Esanland in Edo State, Nigeria.

I am called ‘Chief Jo’ because I was given the traditional Chieftaincy title from Emu Kingdom, in Esanland in Edo State, Nigeria, which was eventually recognised by the Edo State Government, and another title from Lagos State, Nigeria. It was given to me because they thought I had contributed a lot to the community.

I went to the University of Surrey and did my master’s in business administration; afterwards, I set up an artistic hospitality business. The art thing started at the age of sixteen while I was still apprenticing my Mum in business. So, I started buying and selling art and occasionally I would dabble into a little water-colouring here and there, but actually training to paint properly did not come until later in my life.

That was my journey into art, so when Norman, who is Scottish, and I got married, he definitely made it clear that he wanted to go back to his lovely Scotland in the United Kingdom. I had to think about it and then thought, “Why not, I’d love to go to Scotland”, because I’d visited it with him to see his parents and loved it, and that is how I ended up in Scotland.

When I moved to Scotland, I had to decide what to do as a career. I studied art, I studied design, and I studied photography; all those tasks that I wanted to do. I thought then that eventually I'll set up a charity and I will use this art, design and all that and see ways that I can use it to help others, because I find that when I'm painting and creating, I find it extremely relaxing and it helps me to overcome all my anxieties and keep my depressions at bay. I thought I could do this also to help people, so that started my idea and my journey, and setting up of JOM Charity, promoting art and wellbeing - healing through friendship, colours, symbols, art, music and dance, etc. I am experimenting with a new art form combining photography, digital art, African symbols, and paintings, to create a pleasing art form that sends a message.

Scotland is beautiful. I like the Scottish smiles, I like the warmth, I like when you meet someone and they want to talk to you, that is excellent about the Scottish people, I don't want them to change that.



Chief Jo is also a politician who joined the Conservative Party to encourage humanitarianism in politics, otherwise known as humanitarian politics. ”



Contact Josephine  
[jomcharityonline@gmail.com](mailto:jomcharityonline@gmail.com)



# John Williams Osehi



John Williams Osehi is the President of the Edo Community in Scotland and wants to see how African cultures can be brought to Scotland, as this would help the younger generation to understand more of the cultures from Africa. John

was born in Benin City in the Edo States, Nigeria. He initially tried to find work in London but was unhappy there and decided to relocate to Scotland. He learned to understand the language and he looked at job opportunities before deciding to call upon his mechanical skills and open his own garage.

“ My Father was a farmer, later going into a trade and becoming a mechanic, and trust me, he was good at it, and I learned that from him. I am proud to be a mechanic today. He’s a man I’ll always remember, a man with two wives, and had the whole family under just one roof, no division you know, and he is a great man. I have many things to praise him for. I really bless him and would have liked him to see what I’ve become in Scotland and what Scotland has made me to be. Sadly, I lost my Mum. She was a great mother; you’d never go hungry when she was around. A very hard-working woman.

When I arrived in the UK, I could not speak English. I would sit in the chair listening to BBC News and everything I heard, but when I go into the streets, it’s a different ballgame. I persevered and now understand. I have my garage and it’s one of the biggest in Scotland today. I do all sorts, such as recycling. In Scotland, I have apprentices with my co-Blacks here, and they bring their children into the office so we teach them one or two things - this is how we fix bicycles; this is how you take them apart; this is how we do cars. I learned that craft from my Father. I am trying to deviate

from that now because cars now are electrical and more complicated than they used to be and too technical now for me. Every time I go home to Africa, I have a charity I always go to; it's a motherless home, I give them a helping hand, buy some clothes, pushchairs, a bouncy castle, I donate to them and they're happy and because of them I find myself helping out. When I see children who want to go to school, I assist them as best as I can.

My wife in Scotland, yes, she's brilliant, her name is Zeta. I've got children before I met her, which is my three kids I've got today. Just like we are one, no matter your colour, we are one, and what you will not do to yourself, don't do to others. Unite and live in





this whole umbrella. That's what I would like. Even though we have different cultures, let's bring our cultures together and let the world know we are here, to stay; this is our home. Celebrate with the Scottish and Scottish celebrate with the Africans. ”

**Contact John**  
**keyjobstorage@yahoo.com**





## Dr Ade Aibinu

Dr Ade Aibinu was born in Onitsha, Southwest Nigeria. His family lived there for a couple of years and then moved to Lagos. He later moved to Abuja, and then to England to do a degree at the University of Hull and a master's degree in pharmacology at the

University of Glasgow. Ade furthered his education with research into drugs for diabetes at Strathclyde University. He described this University as a “melting pot” of people who originated from across the globe.

“ Glasgow felt to me like a very ancient city, with a lot of culture, rich history and proud people. In terms of my specific interest, I’m really into music; I play the saxophone and guitar, and I lead a choir of about 30 people. Those are my interests. I went to music school for a short while in Glasgow. I just learned sight reading and playing classical music; that’s just my hobby. I’m really passionate about education right now and I also work with the University of Glasgow in widening access for people of a disadvantaged background. So yes, I’m extremely passionate about education mentor-ship and on the side, I’m into music.

I finished my undergrad research degree and went on to do a doctorate. In 2015, after the General Election, I decided to join the Conservative Party. I knew it maybe was not the most popular party in Scotland given the history with Margaret Thatcher, but I still joined anyway. In 2017 I put myself forward for an East Glasgow Council seat, which I won, and was proud that I was the first Black councillor in the east of Glasgow. So, I know quite a lot about British politics. I think we need the right systems in place. I think we need to be much more articulate and clearer about what our intentions are as a

society in terms of cohesion, and how we intend to achieve these, and that's where the Scottish Government comes into place, local government comes into place, and even what you're doing at a community level in order to point people to those opportunities. I think I would like to see, as Africans first of all, is solving the identity issues. In the United States you can be Indian and still be a proud American, you can be Nigerian and still be a proud American, and that's

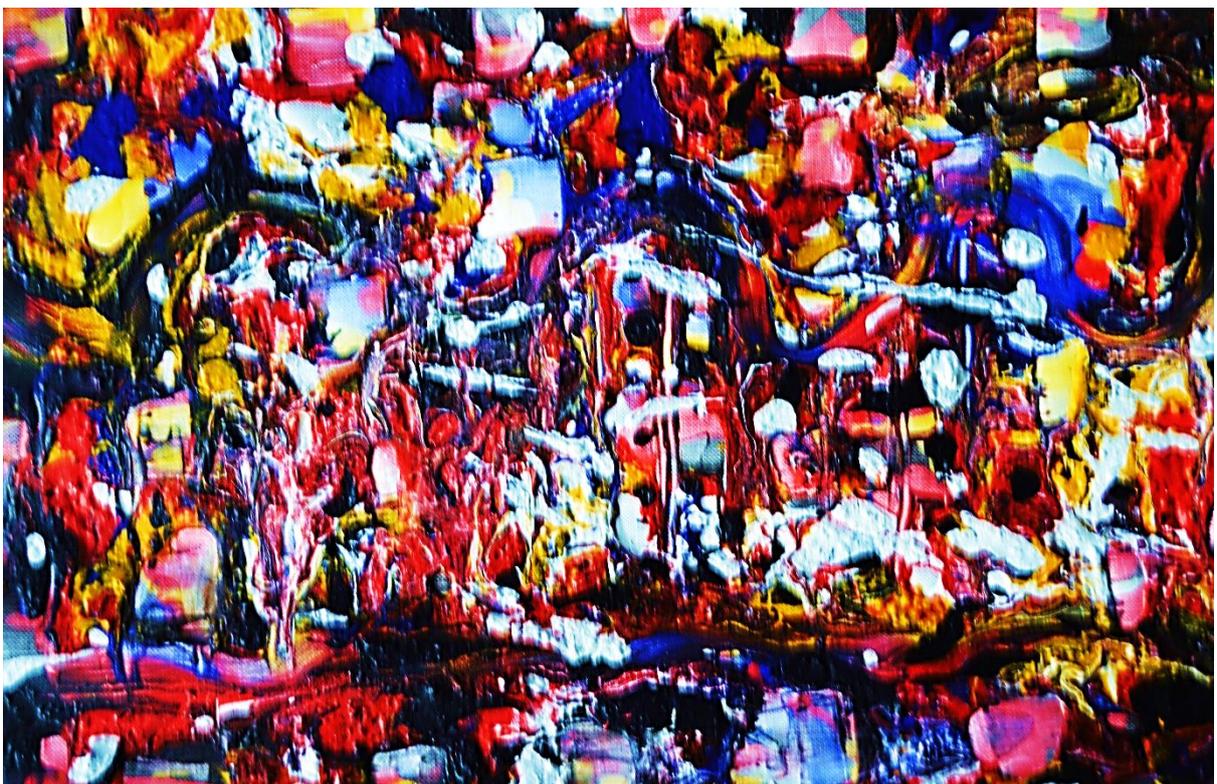


because they have a culture where there is a national conversation about things; everyone has a stake in the U.S. and it's embedded in their constitution. You can almost understand why this works because the U.S. is basically a country of immigrants. Here it is different because you can trace back to thousands of years; people were actually natives here. Whereas in the U.S., it is over 300 years old; it's a newly formed country.

I think there needs to be a national conversation in helping people to see part of themselves in Scottish life, and that's where the history of Scotland itself comes into play, in helping people to identify themselves as having contributed in one way or another as part of the Commonwealth. All these will foster a national unity and also foster a sense of identity, which would make people proud of their ethnic backgrounds but also proud of their adopted home. ”



**Contact Ade**  
**Twitter: DrAdeAibinu**





# Olivia Ndoti

Olivia Ndoti was born in Zambia and left there in 2005. Olivia refuses to accept discrimination in Scotland, having worked with and met many white British people in Africa who were not racist or discriminatory. She often recalls her Mum and her upbringing in Africa and being taught to treat



people with kindness and respect. She believes that people who are racist and discriminatory are sad people who are dealing with their own issues and does not allow that to affect her.

“ In Zambia, I finished my form 5 which is GSE, and my Mum got her promotion to a diplomat and we all moved to Malawi. So, we were in Malawi for ten years before I moved here, and when my Mum’s contract was finished, she was going back to Zambia, and I moved here when my Mum was in Zambia, and I’ve been finishing up my later adulthood in Scotland mostly for the past 17 years. I miss the food. I miss the community dances. I miss the community gatherings because, as I said, you don’t need permission to say, “You come to my house”, you just go. You have a bath, you know you’re going to your uncle’s, you know you’re going to a neighbour. There’s just that community love free-flowing. You just get up and land up in someone’s house and they welcome you, and the food is enough. There is laughter. They live in poverty but the happiness is so much there.

When I came here as just a normal person, I didn’t even know I was a migrant until I started learning about these things. I didn’t know what someone meant when they said they are receiving discrimination; these are things that never rang in my head or in our community, nothing like that. I learned about these things after living in

Scotland, that's when I started learning about this word that I'd never heard of in my country. Even the word 'discrimination', I think it never rang in my head or with my family. It's now with the social media, people are able to hear about how people can be discriminated and how someone can be racist towards someone, another human-being. The challenge is that we all have the same colour of blood, red, so we must be somehow connected as human-beings and not seeing the difference of the outward appearance of someone.



I think setting up the Women Integration Network (WIN) comes from my own life experience, being in the community, shuffling around to find out if I qualify for this, or qualify for that, and finding all these barriers that stop you. And that's when you start to think, it's because you're not born here that these things are not being provided for you, and you ask questions, "Why should this not be possible?" ”

**Contact Olivia**  
**Facebook: Olivia Ndoti**  
**Olivian15uniteglasgow@gmail.com**





## Giscard Kuimi

Giscard Kuimi was born in Cameroon in central Africa, and there he learned to speak many languages, including French and English. Giscard works with the African Futures Organisation, which aims to improve the

lives of Africans living in Scotland by raising awareness of problems with MPs and MSPs. He believes that there are now opportunities for further education for the African community in Scotland.

“ I came to Scotland in 2008, due to a political issue. When I first arrived in Scotland, and to integrate myself, I started having a chat with a Scottish community group and I got myself involved with different colleges to learn how to improve my English. So now I am doing well and my education life is better since I came to Scotland. My first impression of Scotland is that it is a very social place; it is a lot of fun here and I can say that Scotland is a good place to live. For me, I say that Scotland, every day I can see a lot of improvement from the Scottish Government and I’m so happy to see that. I see the way Scottish Government support minority groups. I am so impressed and so happy for that.

For me, I can say that in some parts of Scotland we need more improvement to areas than in some other areas. It is very important to have a diverse community and inclusion, and I am very happy as well because in 2014/2015, when I had the opportunity to meet the Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and I asked her this question, “It will be good to look at how people like me can get a job in a better sector, like the police, Home Office immigration sector, and fire intervention sector.” But I can



see today that this is getting better, because we can see the lady who is the Head of the University of Edinburgh, and I find it very cool. Things are getting better. I love Scotland.



What I want to see happen, is for Africans to get as integrated as they can, and I ask the Scottish Government to give as much help as they can to help us integrate more. That would be of more benefit for us and more benefit for Scotland. The more diverse the country, the more diverse the economy is.

I think it is important that when African people are organising their event, to invite the Scottish community. That will help as well, to reduce a little bit of discrimination and racism, that's my thoughts. At African Futures we do our best when we organise our event, we try to invite the Scottish to come and join us. ”

**Contact Giscard**  
**[africafuture01@gmail.com](mailto:africafuture01@gmail.com)**  
**[africafuture01.wixsite.com/africafutu](http://africafuture01.wixsite.com/africafutu)**





## **Sean Michael McCallum Reid**

Sean Reid was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, two years after the country achieved independence. Zimbabwe was known as the breadbasket of Africa. Sean travelled extensively as his father worked with a large international

organisation. Since arriving in Scotland, Sean has become a respected performance artist and presenter; he concentrates mainly on comedy and music. Sean has four children, Naia, Otis, Felix and Mylo, with his partner Korin, who is a school teacher.

“ I have really amazing memories, a sense of community, pride and togetherness, but because I was in Zimbabwe, I was more affiliated to my Mother’s side, speaking African, visiting villages, staying there, eating traditional food, speaking to my cousins; having that mentality that I don’t think is really here in the west. You guys don’t have this whole sense of community, that you’re in this together, you’re not leaving each other, you’re with each other for ever. So that was for the first five or six years and that was a really happy time and we got to move around. My Father is from Glasgow. He got offered a chance to go to Kenya, and from Kenya he just travelled around Africa and ended up in Zimbabwe working with Kuehne Nagel, and he was quite respected in that regard. My Mother is a special lady. She aspired to, obviously, to become a pillar within her community, but my Mother is one amongst many; but she is the strongest amongst those, taking care of everybody. She’s taken lemons and made lemonade!

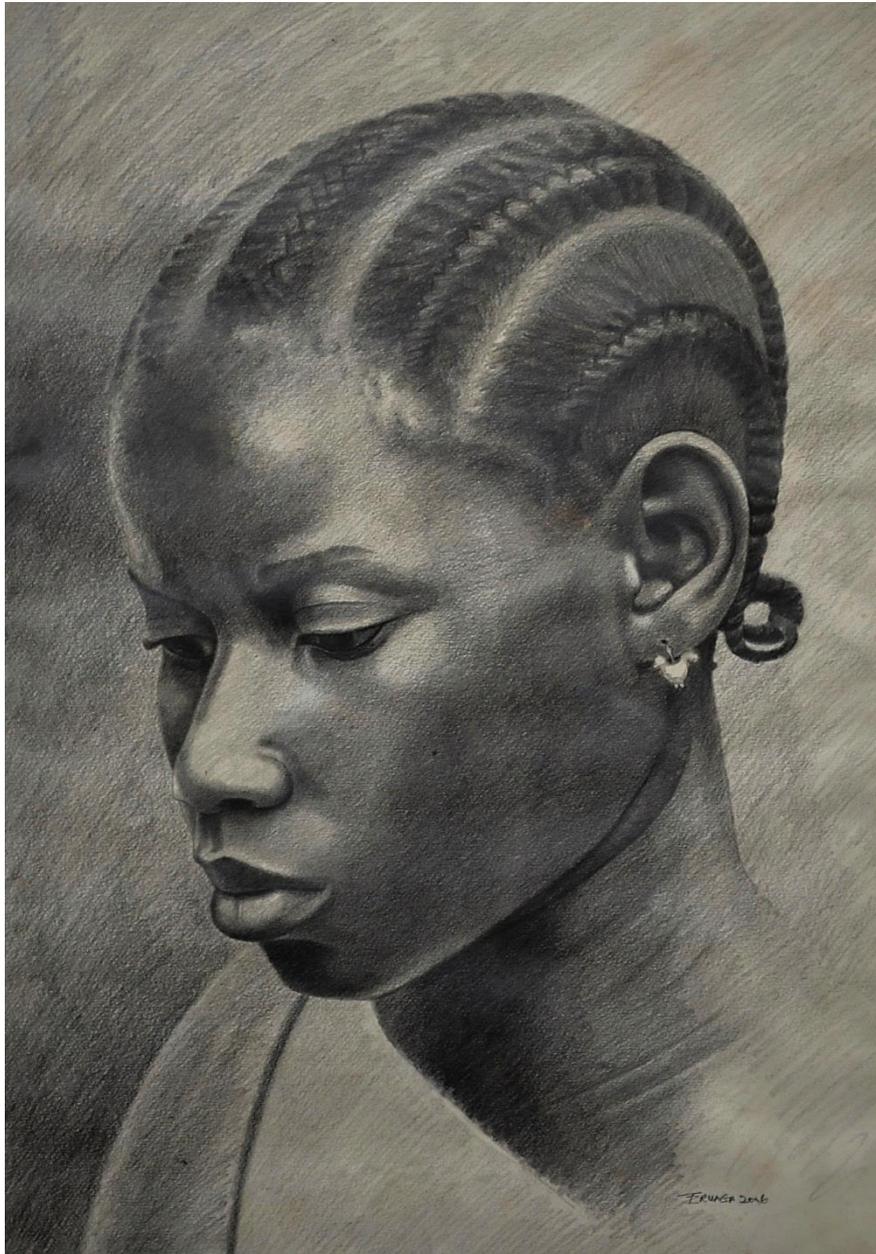
As a kid, I knew I wanted to do something within performance. I'm not one hundred percent sure that I knew I wanted to do the things I'm doing at the moment, but I just knew there was something in that. Well, at the moment I am working on my E.P. [which is almost finished] and I'm working on my next thing, which is an album me and my friend Patrick are working on. He is of Nigerian descent, I'm of Zimbabwean descent, and he also lives in Scotland, so we are going to call it Yams, Scones and Sadza. So, there's the three elements we're going to be putting into it and we'll see what comes out of that. We've got a couple of tracks written already which is kind of



exciting and it's a mix of Afro-centric stuff that I do with some Scottish stuff thrown in, so I don't think people will be expecting it and I don't think people will be expecting to enjoy it, which is also an added bonus so I think I will try and aim for that this coming year. Comedy-wise I'm back doing gigs post-Covid so that's been kind of fun, getting out and being in front of people because comedy-wise you can do that, music-wise is something I'm new to, to perform for people. ”

**Contact Sean**  
**ntbeats@live.co.uk**  
**[www.facebook.com/seanreidmusi](https://www.facebook.com/seanreidmusi)**





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