

GOOD MIGRATIONS

ARIK AIR PASSENGERS ON JOURNEYS OF A LIFETIME

TWO YEARS AGO, 31 YEAR-OLD FOUNDER OF IROKO PARTNERS, JASON NJOKU, TRAVELLED TO NIGERIA WITH A LITTLE CASH AND BIG AMBITIONS. TODAY, HE RUNS AN ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT PORTAL FROM LAGOS, LONDON AND NEW YORK, REACHING 2.4 MILLION UNIQUE VIEWERS IN 178 COUNTRIES.

INSET © PETER KRISTENSEN



impression on me. So, Nigeria has been very good to me, and I'm still super excited to be growing iROKO Partners from there.

In the last year I have been to Kenya, Ghana, The Gambia and South Africa. The trips really brought home to me the fact that all our communities are very different in subtle but significant ways. At the same time, Nollywood is super popular amongst all those communities. It reinforced my conviction that I have a lot to do in terms of efficiently bringing Nollywood to all viewers in all formats. At the moment, we are almost 100 percent focused on the African Diaspora. This will shift over the coming years and we'll re-focus on African nations as infrastructure is developed and broadband penetration increases.

America gave the world Netflix. Jason Njoku responded with iROKO Partners, the largest online global distributors of Nigerian music and movies. Njoku graduated from Manchester University, England, with a 2:1 in Chemistry and Management. Today, he's busy revolutionising the way millions of audiences watch Nollywood film.

In December 2010, a flight to Lagos changed my life. I made my mum cry but she had every reason to fret. It was a massive step. My company wouldn't have had anywhere near as much traction without a presence on the ground though, so it was worth it. In Lagos I hit the ground running, spending all my time in Alaba Market, positioning myself amongst Nollywood producers, learning the trade and laying the foundations. Business started with me, a phone and a laptop and progressed to a small office in Lagos and a team of four. 18 months later, we have around 80 staff with a presence across three continents. THAT'S a journey.

Travel within Africa is essential. Nobody can promote or sell Nollywood without spending a considerable amount of time there - it's impossible. My job as CEO is totally varied; whether it's recruiting new staff, speaking at industry events or closing funding rounds, everything I do is



focused on evangelising the merits of Nollywood. I lead a nomadic life but I love the variety of my role and the fact that every single day is different. It's what keeps me excited.

Moving to Nigeria was life-changing. I had to get to grips with Nigerian business customs very quickly. I also found myself having to overcome logistics issues I'd never encountered in the UK. But the positives far outweighed the negatives - a vibrant and exciting cultural sector, a tech-savvy workforce and a huge, scarily huge, opportunity for growth. Also - on the very first film set I visited, I met my fiancée Mary, who has left a lifelong

Nollywood is a cultural phenomenon. I don't use that term lightly. Nigerian music, on the other hand is not as popular - yet. The problem is with access and distribution; a problem we're in the process of solving via iROKING - the 'Spotify of Africa'. With iROKING - a smart and user-friendly music platform showcasing many of Nigeria's upcoming artists, our audience will have access, anytime, anywhere.

Nollywood travels with Nigerians around the world. If you're Nigerian and living in the UK, for example, you're going to want to access your culture and you'll probably be more inclined to identify with Mercy Johnson than Scarlet Johansson. So I think Nollywood has been able to travel because there's a captive, global audience that is hungry for the films and superstars it

produces. It's a slice of Nigerian life, wherever in the world you happen to find yourself. Africa shouldn't have to look outside the continent for entertainment channels. We're ready for the continent to come online. It's really exciting to think how many tens of millions of people we'll be reaching out to in the coming months and years.

