

MJOTA THE MOVIE

Malaria: A Preventable Disease

In July 2007, on my first day in Lagos, I was introduced to both the film industry and the pharmaceutical industry when my guide Pastor Osagie Egoro-Ighalo took me to a store-front pharmacist, which sold drugs freely to everyone, drugs which are only available in the United States through registered physicians and registered pharmacists. We then visited the world headquarters of Grandex, a pharmacist who imports these drugs into Nigeria from all over the world, and Aaron, who has been directing and filming movies in Nollywood for 15 years. Around the corner from Grandex was a building in which Pastor Egoro was hoping to set up the biggest audio and video studios in Nigeria, which was a sorry shell into which workers were shoveling gravel before leveling the floor with concrete so the floor would be raised 12 inches and avoid flooding in the rainy season. I had a personal interest in this building, I had lent Pastor Egoro the money to rent it, and as the months went on, lent him more money with which he said he paid salaries of his staff, and bought power, video and audio equipment.

In January 2008 I returned to Lagos to finish the movie I was making with Pastor Egoro that was of an article that was published in the Spring issue of University of the Sciences in Philadelphia Bulletin that can be downloaded from the MJoTA site, <http://mjota.org>.

In January, Pastor Egoro's studio had a floor, with carpet, sound-proofed walls and ceilings in the 2 audio studios, 3 editing suites spread over 2 rooms and a giant green room. During my visit the green room was rented out for a day to a company making a movie about a man and woman accusing each other of having low morals. The movie-making was recorded by 2 cheerful men, a New Zealander and a Kenyan who had flown from their homes in Kenya to make videos for an advertisement for their national airline.

During my visit, when I slept in a back room on a foam mattress, Berachah audio and video studios had 4 permanent residents, all young men, who slept together in another back room and when the power was on, sang, played instruments and supported the sound engineering for Nigerian gospel songs, and gospel highlife. When the power was on, everyone worked, whether the power was on at 3pm or 3pm. I fell into the same rhythm, falling asleep when the power was off and waking up to work when the



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light came on.

When I arrived Pastor Edoro and I finalized the scripts and the footages that would be part of the film, and got to work with a video editor Lycke who did animation for us. He told me he was also an actor and singer and cameraman; clearly he was having fun working in the Nigerian entertainment industry and I just loved his big pale blue aquamarine earrings.

In the United States, starting work and finishing work depends on ability, imagination, stamina and resources. In Nigeria, too, but resources has a whole different meaning. When I arrived in the studio on 23 January, the studio had not had Lagos power and water for 5 days; and in my 10 days in the studio in Lagos, power came on once for 7 hours, and with it running water; the rest of the time we were lucky to get 3 hours of power every other day, mostly 1 hour, and once, 3 minutes. When the power was off we washed out of buckets in the dark, and we relied on the generator which needed repair every day or 2, until it occurred to Pastor Edoro that his generator repairman might be feathering his own nest by keeping the generator in a steady state of disrepair. Pastor Edoro found another repairman, gave him a colossal sum of 30,000 Naira, and the generator was retooled and became reliable.

Lack of city power and having to turn on the generator is not seamless; the sophisticated audio and video equipment has plenty of surge protectors and rectifiers, but the surges when the power comes on and off, and at times when it is on, are too much for some hard-drives and other hardware, and parts constantly have to be replaced.

The way to prosper in Nigeria, and throughout Africa, is to see adversity as a small stone to be hurdled, and not an unscalable mountain. Pastor Edoro worked on his laptops, and went visiting writers, directors and television executives when nothing could be done in his studios, and I saw the 4 young men cheerfully cooking huge pots of food outside the front door on the night Nigeria beat Cote D'Ivoire in soccer. They had watched the game on a television in a local pub that extracted 150 Naira (USD1.40) from each for the privilege. Pastor Edoro and I worked on through the scripts and the footage, had more than a few blazing rows over footage that should be included, and finally on Day 10 he handed me a master cassette and 2 master DVDs, with 4 DVD copies. We did it, a 20-minute movie called "Malaria: A Preventable Disease" which describes the human tragedy that is malaria and describes how it can be prevented and treated.

When I returned to Philadelphia I saw that what



Osagie Edoro-Ighalo and his studio in Lagos, above and previous page.

looked brilliant in Lagos looked messy in Philadelphia, so I handed the master over to William J Curry. Bill Curry ran the video production studios that were based in Philadelphia, and although he had only been working on video a few months, he had 20 years on radio as an announcer so he really understands sound. He worked on the video for 4 weeks and finally on 01 May 2008, the week after I returned from my third visit to Nigeria, he posted *Malaria: A Preventable Disease* on YouTube for the whole world to see.

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