

True Confession

As A Kid, I Had A Lot Of Strong Women Around Me — Fabian Lojede

Fabian Lojede is a Nigerian based in South Africa. A former staff of Rosabel Communications, Lagos, he is one of the characters in the popular South African television drama series on MNET, Jacob's Cross. He plays the role of Bola Abayomi, the only acknowledged son of Chief Abayomi, an oil magnet battling for Africa's rich offshore oil resources. In Jacob's Cross, Bola is ruthless, unstable and will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Though, the drama satirises Nigeria and its oil wealth, Fabian believes that the problem is not peculiar to Nigeria. Recently, he was in Nigeria and visited Independent Newspapers Limited office and had an encounter with CORRESPONDENT, Vivian Onyebukwa where he talked about his role in Jacob's Cross, Nigerian movie industry and his life.

In addition to acting, what else do you do?

I am into marketing communications. I have a partnership with a company called Born Free Media in South Africa. We do a lot of TV and commercial production from content to execution. I also do a lot of writing and voiceover, which is centred around HIV/AIDS on the continent.

There is an organisation called African Broadcast Media Partnership (ABMP), which Nigeria is a part of. It is an association of broadcasters across Africa and what they have done is that we in South Africa are the creative arms of ABMP. We provide content for the ABMP and we broadcast all these HIV/AIDS content free of charge. We do it in Portuguese, French and Arabic. There is also a reality TV show called *Imagine Africa* across Africa that takes African youth and puts them in three different African countries and they are tasked with different things each week. But it is all centered on HIV/AIDS.

Does the character you play in Jacob's Cross have any attribute to your real character?

No it doesn't. I think the character is a psycho and I am not sure anyone can be like that. It is a very sick character and I hope no one is like that. I also hope that a character like that does not truly exist. Nevertheless, I think that it is a reflection of what is had in certain societies in the world. You need to show that even though it seems quite extreme, it is all geared towards exposing the worst and the best in a man. So, I have no problem with the character because the overall storyline is actually a positive one.

You have seen what the Nigerian movie industry is like. Now that you are out there, how can you compare it with that of the outside world?

The Nigerian film industry is really growing compared to some other African countries. Abroad, a lot of people crave to watch Nigerian home movie more than those from other African countries. I am proud of the Nigerian film industry because it led the way for others to follow. The private sector has done its part. They have built an industry and what it needs now is government support.

Can you recall your first day on stage?

Yes I can. I was very prepared that day. I was not jittery at all but the thing is that I have done mostly commercials and jingles. Agam, I used to do a lot of writings.

Tell us about your childhood?

I am a Mushin boy. I was born and bread in Mushin. I am from Abeokuta but I spent the first five to six years in Ilupeju, the Ilupeju that is very close to Mushin and I am proud of that. I love going there and hanging around.

Do you still go there now?

Yes I do. I just went there to visit my grandmother's grave but I have not really sat down with the boys because of time.

Whom did you live with in Mushin?

I lived with my grandparents because my parents were in the UK then but after that six years I went to meet my parents in the UK.

What was life like in Mushin and In UK?

I can't remember vividly what life was like because I was just five to six years old. But I can remember that I had a lot of strong women around me. My parents were in London and I remember being loved by all my family members. When I moved to London, I can remember it was a culture shock at first because I had never seen so many white people in my life. But I think I acclimatised pretty fast. I did my primary and part of secondary school there and came

back to Nigeria to complete my secondary school. I also attended the University of Ibadan

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where I studied psychology.

How has your upbringing contributed to what you are today?
I am not sure but I do remember that I would have been a good fiji or jini artiste because when I was a kid I used to sing Sunny Ade's songs before I went to London. I have always been creative. I think it is in me and I used to read a lot. I never read conventional things like biology textbook. Those days when we go to the library I would go to the adult section and read about politics or the first man that got his head chopped off for murder. I got these pieces of information in my head and I never knew they would be relevant to me later. It has served me well as a copywriter.

Are you married?

No, I am not but I would love to be married.

When?

Well, I have got my suit, shirt, ties and the people that will be willing to come to my wedding. I am just looking for the girl I will marry.

Where do you think you can find her?

I am very open right now. Since my younger days I have been specific. She has to be a Nigerian but I want to raise proud Yoruba kids. I am not trying to make tribal statements.

I am very articulate and I think that comes from my heritage. I am unashamedly proud to be who I am not because I feel superior to any other thing, but I feel that is the only way I can propagate Africaness. To me my contribution to Africa will be to raise Yoruba kids.

What is your relationship with women?

I am not sure I have any relationship.

Don't you have admirers?

Of course I do.

How long do you intend to stay in South Africa?

I come to do a lot of work in Nigeria and most of my dealings actually relate more to Nigeria and to the continent because you find out that a lot of Nigerian productions such as commercials are being done in South Africa. But even if I work in Nigeria, as long as I am doing the same thing chances are that I will still be spending a lot of time out there.

What does life mean to you?

Life to me is trying to influence the world positively, and my world is an African world. So that is why I take politics very interestingly. I am a political animal but I am not a political activist.

Do you intend to go into politics?

No. I think there are some people that are great for politics and there are some people that are great for political thought.

Which one are you?

I am great for political thought.

