

### **America – A Whole New World!**

I am Ghanaian, and I have lived in Ghana, West Africa most of my life. Often times when people hear of Africa, they immediately think of a desolate third world place, with unexposed and somewhat backward humans struggling to get the very basic of life's requirements. Truth is, this couldn't be further from the reality of Africa today. Africa has and continues to morph into a well-developed and contemporary region amidst actual struggles and I believe with time the world will be open to the true state of Africa. That notwithstanding, coming to UD and America has opened a whole new world to me for which experiences I cannot even begin to recount.

Prior to my coming here, I had spent some considerable time in the United Kingdom and also some countries in Europe. I had also previously visited America once and these collective experiences made me confident that my transition into the American lifestyle would be breezy. That said however, nothing could minimize the excitement at the idea that America would be my primary home for the next couple of years, and this excitement has not diminished yet. This new reality and excitement became even more authentic when I walked into my rented apartment. I remember darting a quick glance around and then turning to my husband in nervous excitement as we smiled to each other, our minds seemingly communicating telepathically. In no time, we agreed to head out to Walmart to get a few essentials, which was where I got my first reality check in this new land – I needed a car! Now having a car has always been somewhat of a normal thing in Ghana, but not necessarily a necessity because of the abundance of public transport continuously plying the roads. The transport system in London too was so efficient that having a car was tossed to the back burner but here I was just realizing that this machine which I had never considered would be vital in making my stay here comfortable, and for a seamless fusion into American lifestyle.

Now when I settled into the business of why I'm actually here, another reality dawned on me. I remember the first day I stepped into my lab at UD, and the feeling of immense fulfillment as I smiled at the organization and the quality of equipment ready for my use. The friendliness and willingness to help totally demystified graduate education for me. The pressure I had built up in my mind stemming from possible pitfalls in my knowledge repertoire quickly dissipated as I realized ready and friendly help was available. Unlike the professors and instructors in Ghana who often come across as unapproachable demi-gods, I am particularly pleased that my supervisor takes special interest in my progress, is willing to have discussions and readily responds to emails, some of which I must admit I am even too hesitant to send. The relief and excitement every time my email beeps with a response almost immediately still gives me the fuzzies to this day.

I got another cultural shock as I took a couple of undergraduate students through some courses. Now I understand for Americans it is typical to express one's self freely, however in Ghana it is strictly forbidden to talk back to anyone in any superior position regardless of how right you may think you are. Conversely, the brazen nature of these young Americans as they express opposing views and indeed themselves, their ability to engage in very hearty discussions and probe novel concepts will remain with me wherever I go, and even as I continue to peel back the layers of "Africanness" to seamlessly fuse into the American system at the same time being conscious to not abandon totally the values and cultures that makes me African.

As I continue in this adventure, I realize more and more that there's no place like America. The highways are expansive, the supermarkets grand and the system all round efficient. Boy! This land of the free with individuals from literally every corner of the world chasing opportunities in trying to be better. I have so far travelled to New York and Florida states and the differences between them is testament to the uniqueness of America. My taste buds have been excited by cuisines from different parts of the world. The COVID pandemic

highlighted the efficiency of the address and delivery systems, which may be taken for granted but based off of where I am coming from is quite commendable. I now understand why America holds such global appeal and I couldn't be happier to call it my home for the next few years. I know and look forward to more culturally diverse experiences to make me a more rounded global person.