

*The podcast is organized into an episode introduction; the main interview with the podcast guest(s); voiceovers, where the host pauses the interview to expand on something in more detail; and episode credits / acknowledgements. This is not a verbatim transcript of the original interview. The podcast episode was edited down to focus on a specific theme or narrative, and also for concision and clarity.*

*Yorùbá language is central to Yorùbá life & art. Where Yorùbá words or phrases appear, I have tried my best to include accurate written tonal marks – much indebted to Yorùbá encyclopedias, and the work of many language specialists, scholars, and generous aunties. But still, these tonal marks aren't comprehensive -- there are subtle variations from region to region that may not be reflected here. I marked Yorùbá words whose tonal marks I could not complete or confirm with a lighter shade of gray.*

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## introduction

Welcome back to season three of the *Fields of The Future* podcast. This season, we're talking about lace in Nigerian culture by looking at and working with laces closely, and also speaking with different experts who can share perspectives on lace in Nigeria, Europe, and among the Nigerian diaspora abroad.

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### voiceover 1 – setting the scene

When I think about Yorùbá celebrations, there are many pictures, memories, moments in my head. An auntie, dressed in full regalia at a reception, the wide sleeves of her búbá, expanding majestically as she komólès to the ground.

Ayefele blares in the background, stage lights illuminate the dance floor, making the tiny gemstones glued onto the lace of her búbá twinkle. The holes in the lace reveal small slivers of skin, like the open work on her highly prized aṣọ òkè – ẹtù, to be exact. And beyond her is a sea of people in that same cloth, gisting, laughing, dancing, eating together. They are family, friends, loved ones and supporters.

Today, in part two of our conversation with Ms Onuoha, we talk about this practice of aṣọ ẹbí, or family cloth.

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**mary:** Before we start, I would love for you to give us an overview on the practice of wearing aṣọ ẹbí, and how it developed.

**Ms Onuoha:** Okay, thank you for having me, Mary. Aṣọ ẹbí literally means "family cloth." Credit is often given to the Yorùbás for the use of aṣọ ẹbí. They started– they were the pioneers of the aṣọ ẹbí tradition. And so in the early 1900s, they started this family unification, family solidarity with wearing the same kind of cloth to an event. And then, it was just to identify the family members. But over time, it's spread into anybody who would call him or herself a friend of that family. It's extended to family friends, colleagues at work, church members, members of the same section in the mosque.

So, people would wear the same kind of cloth to parties. At times, they would color. They would say, “àwa tiyàwó” – that is, if it was a wedding – “àwa tiyàwó, máa wọ blue, àwọn ọ̀kọ, máa wọ pink,” that kind of a thing. If you walked into a party, a wedding party, or any kind of party then, your color, the color of your

attire, would tell whose guest you are. Automatically, walking into the party, you know where you're supposed to be. You find your friends or your family easily.

**mary:** I remember there was a wedding I had, and I thought, this time around, let me just match the colors. The colors of the aṣọ ẹbí were a beautiful deep blue and deep green. I thought, let me just match the colors and then I can wear an àdìrẹ blouse, and I'll wear an aṣọ òkè, ólekú style [as a] a short aṣọ òkè wrapper. And I thought in my head it was so cute. And then I got there, and it was so obvious— you know, I became very self conscious, because I wasn't wearing exactly the same aṣọ ẹbí as everyone else.

**Ms Onuoha:** Exactly.

**mary:** And I had never experienced that, because I had never declined aṣọ ẹbí when it was offered to me. And so even though I was matching the colors, I thought, I'm still doing the right thing, I'm matching the colors. But for some reason, it was like I became so self conscious that I didn't buy the specific aṣọ ẹbí. And nobody said anything, but you can tell when people are looking at you, kind of, and you're starting to piece together, what are they thinking? "Why didn't you get the aṣọ ẹbí?" Yes, I'm curious if you could talk more about the significance of aṣọ ẹbí culture – the uniformity. [And how, sometimes] matching colors is not enough. What is it about buying the aṣọ ẹbí for that event, wearing it all together, sewing it into something, that makes it so significant?

**Ms Onuoha:** If you wear aṣọ ẹbí, you tend to have this emotional satisfaction. People wear aṣọ ẹbí to please the celebrant. Because if you do not buy, if you don't partake in buying that aṣọ ẹbí, the celebrant could just misunderstand it as you being not happy with what they're doing, or— I have a story.

In 2015 or so, thereabout, there was a lady who was going to get married. We lived in the same street. And then, they wanted me to buy aṣọ ẹbí. When they're doing these parties, it is not the celebrant who sells aṣọ ẹbí. That's the job of somebody else – another close person, or somebody else from the family or somewhere. It was a wedding. And so they said that I should buy the aṣọ ẹbí, and I was like, "No, I don't want to buy aṣọ ẹbí. Just tell me what they are wearing now. I will wear something." They said, "Ha, kò ní dáa béyẹn. Ha, ó máa [dàbí ẹni pé], ẹ ní bá wọn jà. Şé ẹyin àti māmá Tọpẹ ní jà ní?" You know, that kind of a thing. I said, "No, but why?" Eventually, I had to buy an aṣọ ẹbí and we went for the wedding, even though it wasn't really necessary for me.

And there is also the tradition of – what do they call it now – gifts at the party, souvenirs. When you get to the party, and you're not wearing aṣọ ẹbí, they will just pass you by. You'll just see them taking their souvenirs somewhere else, as if you really care. They'll just look at you and say— (*trails off*). But then when you ask, "Ha, titèmi ñkó?" [they'll respond], "Àwọn tí ó wọṣọ la ní fún." You know, that kind of a thing. And you're like, what is happening here? Am I not at this party? So, aṣọ ẹbí, hmmm. It's emotional, psychological satisfaction, number one. Identification, to avoid discrimination at an event. Again, aṣọ ẹbí, it brings beauty when you see people wearing the same, it's actually very beautiful. It makes the whole place shine. It makes the whole place glamorous. People buy it to have a befitting ceremony.

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### **voiceover 2 – reflection on personal aṣọ ẹbí stories**

As I listen back to this part of the episode, I had to ask myself, "How much was real versus what I put on myself out of self-consciousness?" Because when I think about it, there are events where there is no aṣọ ẹbí or color matching at all. You just come, celebrate. There are events where there is only color matching. So, just wear this color, pick something you already have, no need to

buy fabric. And then there are events where there is a specific aṣọ ẹbí, like the one I attended or Ms. Onuoha attended, and people are free to decide what to do.

Now, just because you can do what you like, doesn't mean you can control how people respond. So sometimes there is wahala as in the story Ms. Onuoha described, and sometimes, no wahala. I made the decision not to buy aṣọ ẹbí for this event because I knew I already had similar colors in my wardrobe, so why not try to use what I had? When I spoke to one mummy / auntie who does this as well, this approach has worked for her. She usually just lets the celebrant know out of respect that she's not buying the aṣọ ẹbí. She makes sure to give a gift or show support in other ways. And she's consistent in her decision, to avoid any confusion. You can't have one auntie saying that you bought aṣọ ẹbí for her event, but not mine, after all. So it can be done, and respectfully at that.

So why did I struggle with it? Hmm. I attribute it to my inexperience. Me, myself, I'm still learning the code, the way of doing things, and that's something to unpack for another day. But what I do know is, the ceremony was moving, and more than anything – aṣọ ẹbí or no aṣọ ẹbí – it was an honor to be present for this celebration of partnership, friendship, and love. And, to help usher in a new beginning in the lives of these individuals, and their families. I'm sending them thoughts of peace, and may their foundation be rooted in wisdom.

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**mary:** As aṣọ ẹbí has gone from being something that's more intimate between families to being something that you'll have celebrations – 300, 400, 500 people – and all of these people are buying aṣọ ẹbí. How has this influenced the textile trade, textile industries – and not just lace, but really the entire cannon of Yorùbá textiles? And even Nigerian textiles [more generally], not just Yorùbá.

**Ms Onuoha:** I have colleagues whose weddings we've had to order aṣọ ẹbí from Abẹ̀òkúta. We go to Abẹ̀òkúta and choose designs for àdìrẹ. So, normally, a woman or a man who would have produced just one bundle of the guinea brocade for the àdìrẹ would produce 20 or more depending on the number of people who are joining in the aṣọ ẹbí. So, economically, it helps the local industry here, aside from those who go abroad to go and make orders and help in design. They also do it here. The aṣọ òkè, those people who weave aṣọ òkè in Iṣẹ̀yìn and Ọ̀yó, people go to them and say, "We want this design," or, "This time around we want a gèlè, aṣọ òkè." Or, "We want this color. We want this design for the bride's family." Everybody wants to look stunning and smashing and beautiful in colors. Everybody is trying to look for a design to outdo the other group. So, economically too, it has helped the local small and medium scale industries in Nigeria.

**mary:** And one thing I remember reading in *African Lace* was the significance of the photographers as well–

**Ms Onuoha:** Oh, yes.

**mary:** —who capture all of this. The photographers, the magazines, the bloggers, now, Instagram, WhatsApp, it's all part of it–

**Ms Onuoha:** Mmhmm, yes.

**mary:** --where, if not for these channels, all of these things can't be disseminated. So, it's all created so much of an ecosystem around these textiles.

**Ms Onuoha:** One thing, when we had the *African Lace* exhibition, we incorporated designers – fashion designers, about four of them from Nigeria – to make the lace that we were given by the HKG and HOH and all those people in Austria, the factories. They donated some laces that we now asked these designers here – two ladies, two guys – to make clothes from lace. You won't believe the kind of fantastic designs that came out. Somebody like Frank Osodi, who does ball gowns, he made beautiful ball gowns from lace. Wedding gowns, gowns that could be worn for very serious occasions. They came out very well in lace fabric. And then we also had to incorporate the fashion magazine people, the *Ovations*, the *City People*. And they play an important role in this, because without their photographs coming out and really highlighting the occasion – the moments of the day, how people are well dressed, how people are seated elegantly and all that – lace, or whatever other fabric, may not ever get that kind of recognition.

So, we brought in photographers who gave us some of their photos that were covering events – of course, with the permission of the people who had the event. And we went on to link it to how this aṣọ ẹbí has actually helped to empower people economically. A lot of people, male and female, today in Nigeria have become professional photographers. And they are living well, doing well. It's all because of the aṣọ ẹbí. We have a lot of dressmakers, tailors, so to speak, who would– (*trails off*). Because you can't take the aṣọ ẹbí and put it on your shoulder, you want to make something nice. So, [aṣọ ẹbí has] created an economy, a sustainable one, for these dressmakers, for the tailors and the fashion designers, for the photographers, for the photo magazines. And [people] flip through the pages just to look at beautifully dressed, designed women, and men who are elegantly dressed, just sitting. No serious issue, just flipping through the pages and looking at pictures. People are happy. And then [people will] copy the styles they find there, look for the fabrics they see there, those kind of things. People are just happy doing it, and it's creating a market. So, the aṣọ ẹbí tradition has come to stay. In fact, some people are speaking out against it, but as people are speaking out against it, people are moving further. It's evolving, going places.

In 2015, I was in Chicago. Now, if you do not know how to tie your gèlè, just have your gèlè with you. Go to the venue of the party. You'll find someone. You'll give some money, and they'll tie it there for you in two minutes. You're good. The first time I saw it was in Chicago, and I was like, "In Chicago??? People are tying gèlè in Chicago?" (*laughter*) I was surprised. My friend said, "Ah, don't worry, Louisa. You don't know how to tie *abi*? Neither do I, let's go." When we get there, I said, "Ah, how are we going to do this then? She said, "cha, let's go." And then when we got to the place, you'll see them lined up, boys, girls, "Auntie, *ṣé ẹ fẹ wé gèlè ni?*," "Auntie, do you want to tie your gèlè? Do you want to do your headtie? Come, lemme–," and they will do it for you, and you'll give them 20 dollars, 10 dollars, 15, like that. You can even quickly do a makeover right there at the venue.

So, all these people– if not that people are having this aṣọ ẹbí tradition of looking beautiful and just wanting to outdo the other party. The small scale industry and large scale industry, equally, aṣọ ẹbí tradition has helped improve the lot of those people.

**mary:** And I'm so glad you mentioned that, because I don't think I've been to a single party where there hasn't been someone in the bathroom or in the corner somewhere, or in the back, who is tying gèlè. Always, always, always! (*laughter*)

**Ms Onuoha:** You always find them, wherever the party is at–

**mary:** Exactly.

**Ms Onuoha:** –Nigeria or abroad, anywhere! It's interesting.

**mary:** And I'm glad you brought up the head tie, because that is such a significant part of the entire outfit. You really can't do lace without gèlè and ipèlè, it just doesn't look right. *(laughter)* And I want to say this – I've selected a number of aṣọ ẹbí from my own collection, I've been looking at it for this morning. And what I've noticed is that, the majority of textiles that I own related to Yorùbá culture are because it was aṣọ ẹbí for an event, for a wedding, to support somebody. So, I'm thinking even about my own learning and my own experience and connection to Yorùbá culture, and if it wasn't for aṣọ ẹbí, there are a lot of things I wouldn't know or understand about textiles, because I haven't lived back home. I've mostly grown up in the United States. I'm just thinking about how aṣọ ẹbí not only is responsible for community and solidarity, but also the transmission of knowledge – making sure that parts of the culture remain and stay true from generation to generation.

**Ms Onuoha:** To generation, yes. Aṣọ ẹbí has played a considerable role in transmitting knowledge about our local fabric from generation to generation, because it doesn't just stop with those people who live at home. I have friends in the diaspora whose children haven't been to Nigeria at all, but they know that when there's going to be a party – like a wedding, a housewarming, something to do in the church or mosque – they know that when there's going to be an occasion, it has to be a traditional wear. And the traditional wear often is either aṣọ òkè, or lace, or àdirẹ. They already know that these fabrics, that they are Nigerian, they are traditional Nigerian wear that is supposed to be worn for an important occasion. And so this means that aṣọ ẹbí, the tradition of aṣọ ẹbí, has helped in transmitting this knowledge of our fabrics from generation to generation, no matter where the person is, no matter where they live.

**mary:** You mentioned that there have been some critiques of aṣọ ẹbí. I just wanted to expand on that a little bit. What are some of the things that people say maybe in critique of it?

**Ms Onuoha:** While I would say that aṣọ ẹbí is a social leveler, some people say, "no, it isn't," because if you do not have the money to buy aṣọ ẹbí, people go into debt to just buy aṣọ ẹbí. That shouldn't be. And why do they want to do this? Most of the time, it is just for you not to be – I won't say criticized – but for you not to be pushed aside when you're not wearing aṣọ ẹbí. No matter what you are wearing, if it's an aṣọ ẹbí party, you just look out of place [when you're not wearing it]. But I must tell you that the voices who are speaking against aṣọ ẹbí, their voices are very, very low. There have been people who are speaking for. Their voices are very, very loud. People at some churches would say, "We don't do aṣọ ẹbí in our church. In our church, we do not approve of aṣọ ẹbí. If you call me for a party, I will wear what I have, and come. So, if [there is an issue] because of the aṣọ ẹbí, I will not come."

We had a party in my family when my father passed, and my colleagues were saying, "Ah, Louisa, we're going to do aṣọ ẹbí, o." I said, "I don't have the time to do aṣọ ẹbí." Somebody took it upon herself, a colleague and a friend of mine said, "I will do it." So, she was the one going to the market to bring aṣọ ẹbí and sell to people. I remember a particular one who was going to one of those churches who would say they don't do aṣọ ẹbí. She came to me, she said, "Ah, auntie, it is because of you o, I want to do this aṣọ ẹbí. I have to wear this aṣọ ẹbí, but I don't have the money. Please, can you help me tell the woman doing it. I've gone to meet her, and she said I should come and meet you. She said she will not sell to me." So, I had to look for money and give to her. I said "Ẹ lọ bá a, ó máa fún yín." And she wore it, and that's the only time I've seen her wear aṣọ ẹbí. That tells you the importance people place on this aṣọ ẹbí. They want to fraternize with you. It's like standing with you in solidarity.

**mary:** I noticed that one thing people are doing to just be more balanced with the cost – I was at an event in Abẹ̀òkúta, and there were two aṣọ ẹbí. There was one lace for the family, but then there was also ankara. For the reception, there was ankara that most people could afford, that was maybe only a couple thousand naira that made it so that people wouldn't be going into debt to buy lace. It was just the

immediate family that wore the lace. And then everyone changed into the ankara, and the entire community had the ankara later. So, that's one thing I've noticed, that people are starting to be considerate about the cost and making sure that, if you want people to be in solidarity with you, make it possible for people to be in solidarity with you.

**Ms Onuoha:** Exactly.

**mary:** One other critique that I'm aware of is about the accumulation of laces. You'll buy aṣọ ẹbí for an event, you'll wear it one time and then maybe you wear it to church after—

**Ms Onuoha:** And that's it.

**mary:** Exactly. What do you think about this, this piling up of laces that many Naija women have, and are wondering, "What do I do with all this lace? Where am I going to wear all this lace to?"

**Ms Onuoha:** (*laughter*) Okay, yes, in National Museum Ìbàdàn in, I think, 2015, 2013, 2014, we had an exhibition on textiles. A particular woman – very well known in Ìbàdàn – and her family said that her mother has soo much. That she doesn't know what to do with them, and she has her own too. So she brought her mother's entire wardrobe. Her mother had passed at that time at about 100-and-something. She had laces from far, far, far back. Not just lace, she had sányán, she had ẹtù, she had aṣọ òkè, so many things. The woman came with about three big boxes. We couldn't display everything. So, we told her. "Ok, fine," she said, she just wants them displayed. We were doing a textile exhibition at the time. And so we, the curators, we all sat down and thought, why don't we just rotate this exhibition? Let's do aṣọ òkè, and ẹtù, and sányán, and we agreed.

And so most of the woman's collection were displayed, and we put there – I've forgotten the name of the family now, but – courtesy of "blah blah blah" family. And people were coming in and they were seeing old designs that people were not even getting anymore, but [they were] quality. So I asked her, I said, "But, ma, you have acquired yours, right?" She said, "Yes, I have them. And my children don't really– they're not really particular about these ones, and I can't be wearing them. They are old designs." So, that's just a major challenge that I think, in the future, we would look for ways not to waste. I have a friend, he takes old laces and old aṣọ òkè and old fabrics and makes them into very nice designs – artistic designs that not everybody would want to wear, because not everybody would appreciate that kind of [thing]. Except for those of us who are artists, who are art-inclined, who know the essence of this. So, those are the times when you can actually do anything with these fabrics. Otherwise, they are just going to be there. So, I think we need to start thinking of what we can do.

**mary:** Yes, but from what I'm understanding, it requires creativity to figure out what to do with all of these things. I can't remember the name of the artist right now, but as you were speaking, it reminded me of an artist who takes all of these leftover bits of fabric from tailors, and creates beautiful, beautiful paintings. I can't remember his name right now, but he's based in Nigeria, and his work is exceptional. And that's someone I can think of who is figuring out what to do with leftover fabric. Even just the way you've described—

**Ms Onuoha:** Maybe you're talking about— Is he based in the UK?

**mary:** No, based in Nigeria.

**Ms Onuoha:** Mmm, okay. There are quite a number of them who use fabric to—

**mary:** –to make paintings.

**Ms Onuoha:** Yes, there are a few of them who do that. But how many people– I mean, how many of this fabric– (*pause*) the rate at which people buy clothes, you know. Those who go to parties quite often would not want to be seen wearing what they've worn to this party, too. At times, for me, I think it's just crazy. Because she will say, "Ah, you want them to– Ha, mi ì fẹ́ kó di national flag o, kí wọn wá máa mọ́ mí pèlú kiní òun ni mo wọ lọ sòdò àwọn kíni ni last time yẹn now. So, [báwo ni mo] ẹ́ se máa..." (*trails off*) They change their wardrobe on a regular. And then you keep wondering, where do they take those clothes to? In that case, it's a bit of a waste for me.

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### voiceover 3 – artists working with textiles

I went back and did a little digging on this artist. I'm referring to the poised portraits of people, carefully arranged from what seems like millions of tiny little pieces of pattern fabrics by the artist, Uzoma Samuel Anyanwu of Uzo Creative Artz. I learned of Anyanwu's artistic practice through a November 2020 talk by the artist and educator, Pájú Láyíwọlá, where she reflected on her career and textile arts in Nigeria, from past to present.

Some of the other art practices mentioned in that talk were the super textured portraits of people in scenes in their homes, on the couches, on the floor, talking amongst friends, created by Marcelina Akpojotor, who combines scraps of ankara with acrylic paints; or the sculptural flowers of aṣọ òkè, akwete, damask, velvet, and george created by Omoligho Udentá; and artworks where the textiles, the stories behind them and the people who wear them are the subject of the artwork itself, such as in the drawing, "The Narratives in Nigerian Textiles," by Nwakuso Edozien.

And these are just some of the artists who choose to explore textiles within the realm of contemporary art. We not even scratching the surface of countless textile artists, educators and designers, whose art is the textile itself. I'm thinking of clothes that are breathed with new life – rejuvenated, reenergized – after being re-dyed by kampala artists, like Brother Sunday of Vabric Heritage in Abẹ̀òkúta. So, these are just a few of the artists that have been doing this work.

But as Ms Onuoha pointed out, there's still a question about the amount of cloth that's used. I mean, one painting can't take care of it all. Even hundreds of paintings can't take care of it all. I do wonder, are there still ways to show the support and solidarity that's part of aṣọ ẹbí without accumulating so much?

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**mary:** One interesting thing I've found is when I– for example, at some point last year, me and my mom went through a lot of her laces and aṣọ òkè and head tie, and I noticed that she was able to tell me the history of each lace. (*laughter*) Where she wore it to – you know what I mean – who she bought it from. And that's one thing that I find so interesting, to go back to your point about all of these collections, because essentially, [people] can track the provenance of their laces, their textiles.

**Ms Onuoha:** I tell you, yes.

**mary:** I was just amazed by how much is in all of these collections, how many stories.

**Ms Onuoha:** Exactly.

**mary:** And so that's one thing I'm trying to figure out now. As I look at all of this – I agree, it's a lot. Sometimes you wonder, "Why so much?" But at the same time, in my age, it's important for me to understand the history behind it, so we can continue to hold onto it and figure out what to do with it next. So, I agree with you, it's a lot, but I hope that there are also ways for creativity to happen, for us to make sure these things don't go to waste.

We've talked a lot about how, even just over the past 50 years, textiles have been dynamic. They've changed, they've evolved, they've stayed the same. My question for you is, where do you think aṣọ ẹbí and lace specifically is headed? Based on all of the things that we've seen, and the things that we haven't seen yet, what do you think the future might look like?

**Ms Onuoha:** Going by all that we are seeing and how aṣọ ẹbí is doing presently, one thing I want to say, certainly, it's not going to leave the surface of the earth, not so soon. Rather, if you say, "It's wasteful." It's this. It's that... If it's too pricey, people will look for alternative fabrics, and use that as the aṣọ ẹbí. That aṣọ ẹbí that it's called – this family uniform, identification for my people, people who love me, not just family any longer, my own people, my group – is not going anywhere for now. Rather, I see it infiltrating into some other cultures, even outside of Nigeria. If, in the northern part of the country, people who don't even care about such things can begin to do aṣọ ẹbí, then how much more those of us in the south, who love partying, who love glamour.

**mary:** And I'm glad you brought up the transmission of aṣọ ẹbí to other cultures within Nigeria and beyond Nigeria. What was the timeline of the transmission of aṣọ ẹbí from the Yorúbás to the Igbos?

**Ms Onuoha:** The Igbos actually had been involved in aṣọ ẹbí even in the 1900s, yes, and it wasn't as elaborate as it is right now, because what they used to do then was just the blouse. They would wear a white blouse. I remember my mom has quite a number of that, white blouses, lace blouses with the openings, the embroidered lace, then they would use the wrapper. They would tie it with the wrapper– the hollandaise or the george wrapper. So, that's how, way back, they've been wearing that. It's a form of aṣọ ẹbí, but then it was just amongst the women, the wives of the house.

**mary:** Mmmm, okay I see.

**Ms Onuoha:** Yes, that blouse was what the man, the first head of the trade delegation – Hundertpfund, I think that's his name, from Austria – that was the first thing he saw and took the story back home. Because he's from Vorarlberg, he went back home to tell them in Austria that these people like white lace. So, you have a sure market here. Why don't you begin to...*(trails off)* And the Igbo women have always been known for that. Now, it has gone beyond that. Then it used to be wives, anybody who was married, mothers. We, the maidens, wouldn't wear that.

But these days, the Yorúbás style of aṣọ ẹbí have rubbed off on the young ones, the men, and even the women. So what they do now is you'll find younger people doing aṣọ ẹbí of lace, just like the Yorúbás. Especially when you have people like some of us who were born and bred in Lagos in the West. When we're going home to have an event, or even in Lagos to have an event, you'd hardly know that we're not Yorúbás, because we're going to give you lace in any form that you like it. You see us appearing in lace and aṣọ òkè, but we're Igbos. Some of our people used to speak against it, then. They'll say, "Why do these children like to dress like Yorúbá people?" But I mean, there's nothing static about any culture. We



combine things; we borrow from other cultures; people borrow from our culture, and all of that. So that's just it.

**mary:** I won't keep you much longer. I'm just grateful that you've taken the time to be with us, and I just can't say thank you enough.

**Ms Onuoha:** Thank you for having me, and I hope we will have some other time to talk about some other aspects of our culture together.

**mary:** I hope so too. My mind is already going in a million different directions.

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