

## Nigerian Women Interview Thomas Reuben

**Note:** Reuben is his father's name. Thomas is a driver and has a farm behind his house, near a river so he can farm even in the dry season. Thomas was engaged to Anna when she was about 16 years. While they were engaged, Anna came down with a very serious illness that left her deaf. Even though most of his friends encouraged him to break the engagement, Thomas proceeded to marry Anna. Anna still speaks Hausa and can read Hausa lips. Anna cleans and cooks for a university guest house.

All questions were asked in terms of "the typical Nigerian woman."

### Demographics

1. Age: 41
2. Age at which married: 30
3. Children: Janet (girl, 12), Mary (girl, 8), Emmanuel (boy, 3)
4. Education: Completed primary school but did not have the money to continue. As an adult, Thomas started working for a man who paid for additional schooling so Thomas could learn how to read and write.

### Behavior

#### B1. Daily Schedule:

- A. *What is a typical Nigerian woman's daily schedule?* When she wakes up, she greets her husband. She will come down, kneel, and say "Good morning, my husband" with respect. Anna did when we first got married. But now, we... When you grow some children, that love is there, but not much like before. When we get married the first time, she brings food for me and she put her knee down like this. [Gets down on both knees and motions like presenting a plate of food.] Now she doesn't do that, she says Janet, come get your food for him. "Good morning my husband." That is the first things she does. Then we have work to do so we shift to where we work. She goes her way, I go my way. If she comes back from work and I am not yet back she will take care of the house, sweeping, cleaning, getting ready for food. If I come back, she has to greet me, "Welcome, how is work?" Then she is cooking, I will find a chair and sit beside her and we be discussing how is the work today. After that the food is done we eat, we pray, then we go to bed again.
- B. *What activities does the typical Nigerian woman spend the **most time** on each day?* Villagers, they spend all day in the farm, the women. Nigerian men they will farm like my village. We don't weed in my village. The women does these things. If I farm, the women will spend all the day in the farm removing the grass.

#### B3. Responsibilities around the house

- A. *In your household, what duties is the typical Nigerian woman responsible for?* She is responsible for cooking, cleaning the house, washing our clothes, mine too, bathing the children, sweeping the compound, she takes my water for bath – take the water to the bathroom for me.

- B. *What duties are your husband (father, mother) responsible for?* Farming, he does the work like me now, I am working, I farm, to feed them. If I don't do the farm, I wouldn't feed them. You must feed the family. If she is sick, I have to take good care of them and I have to pay the school fees for the children. Now as the civilization comes in, we have to share it 50/50 together. If she is working, I am working too. We have to share, if we take the children to school, we have to pay the bills together and sometimes we have to buy the food together too and I know she can help. But we don't sweep, we men. We are saying if you take a broom to help sweep my compound, it is not my job so then tomorrow she will say, "Go and sweep" again. We can help, but in Nigeria we says if we do it once, she will be telling you go and do it again.
- C. *What duties are typical girl children responsible for?* Like my daughter now, she is responsible, if she grow up we have to show her what to do, washing the plates, cleaning the house, sweeping, a lot of home work, we have to show her what to do.
- D. *What duties are the typical boy children responsible for?* If he grows up, too, I can send him to the farm. I won't farm myself, I will tell my son to go and farm for me. And he can wash my clothes. If they are grown children, I won't let my wife wash my clothes, I will tell my children to do it.

## B5. Money

- A. *How does the typical Nigerian woman earn money?* Like this, we have a lot of women and different jobs they do. If we went to the farms, you would see the women cultivating and getting paid for that. Some women they break rocks. [They literally have hammers where they will crush rocks into smaller bunches and sell them on the side of the road.] They carry cement blocks [cinder blocks] on their head to the builder so they will get paid there. My mom, she does that too, she carries cement blocks. In 1979 we did that together with my mom.
- B. *What does the typical Nigerian woman spend money on?* She spends her money on food and good clothes, especially clothes. Some of the husbands, if they see their wives working they will not give money for the food so the woman doesn't want to see her children starving so she will buy the food.

## Values

### V1. General Societal Views

- A. *What makes a good woman?* If she has a good character, she has a good love to her husband and she has respect for the family.
- B. *What makes a good man?* If he has the love to the woman, to his wife, to his family entirely and he takes good care of them and he fed them very well, clothe them.
- C. *Think of differences between men and women. What are things that women should do that men shouldn't?* Kai! It is a big question there. How can I take it? I can go anywhere I like but women cannot do that. I can wake up now and go to my friend's house but she will not do that. She will not just leave me along and go her way. We Nigerians, we do that.
- D. *Do you think it is better to be a man or a woman?* Man because why? I am afraid to give birth, I know it is very, very painful, I don't want to become a woman because of

that. [Nigeria also has the highest mother mortality rate of any country in the world, so it is also possible that is influencing his fear of giving birth.]

## V2. Rites of Passage

- A. *When is a girl considered an adult?* In Nigeria here, you know how the things are changing now, by 12 I believe, 12 years they will be adult. Sometimes now with this sexual harassment and the rest, the girls doesn't reach that 12. By 10, 9, they become mothers. I know a lot of them that came across such things.

## V3. Marriage

- A. *Does the typical Nigerian woman look forward to marriage?* Yeah.
- B. *How much was the bride price you paid for Anna?* I paid N5000 in 1996, that is what I paid but then there is the soap, palm oil, salt, goats, and blankets and wrappers that I gave before they gave me the wife.

## V5. Community

- A. *What activities does the typical Nigerian woman do with other women?* If they share like, they are close by [geographically], they share food. If this one cooks, they say, "Take this plate to this house." They will exchange plates. They will share a meeting together come to their house and you know. [This is not a formal meeting, but when people come together to meet and greet.]
- B. *How does the typical Nigerian woman meet women friends?* Like in the market, they make friends in the market, in the church, in where they work, make friends anywhere.