

## Royal CSU Student Means Business

Kelsey Peterson

Sneakers, jeans and a Colorado State University t-shirt cling to a student holding an iPhone in a local coffee shop – not exactly the image that comes to mind when you hear the words “Nigerian prince”.



“You can’t just think about the future or the past, you have to think about how now affects everything,” said Olu Ogidan, junior business major at Colorado State University – and, yes, Nigerian prince.

Being the lesson his parents wanted him to learn most, that advice previews a majority of Ogidan’s everyday decisions.

“My dad came here in 1982 for college because he got a scholarship from the United Nations; my dad’s blind, so he came here for school,” said Ogidan. “My mom came here in 1992 and married my dad – that’s pretty much what she came here for – and ten months later I was born.”

Ogidan was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, but still has a plethora of family living in Nigeria where his parents are from. His family currently resides in a village called Isasin, which he visits often.

“My grandpa is the king of a village and he has had many wives in his lifetime,” Ogidan said. “He’s an old man now, but his youngest child is 15 years old, so I have a lot of relatives.”

Though born in America, Ogidan is multi-lingual and speaks the language, Yoruba. He also carries a deep understanding of the culture and claims there to be many differences between the two. The difference in culture plays a large role in his day-to-day life as a college student.

“I tend to think of things in a cross-cultural setting,” Ogidan said. “Sometimes I’ll think in the other language and then sometimes I’ll think in English and I can’t really

sit here and tell you it makes sense logically, but it makes me think more deeply about things.”

Ogidan had several college options available to him and was even offered a full-ride scholarship to Tougaloo, a historically black college in Mississippi, which he turned down. Although the financial aid CSU would provide was a pull, the real choice was based upon his attachment to the Colorado Rockies. Still, earning his business degree at CSU was a difficult choice to make.

“As a black guy in the college of business I find it really difficult to talk to people that I don’t already know that I haven’t met outside the college of business,” Ogidan said. “Not that people look down on me per say, but I don’t know, to me people just don’t seem as open to me or receptive to me as they do to people who look like them. A lot of time I’m the only black guy in my class and that’s just the reality in the Business College and here in Fort Collins.”

Being “THE black guy” in class does impact the way Ogidan thinks and acts in a school setting. It can add pressure, but it also adds motivation in a way most students do not experience. If given the chance to rewind, he would make the same choice in a heartbeat.

“I just feel like I do have to do well and it makes me want to do that much better,” Ogidan said. “I’d say it motivates me to do as best as I could and to make sure the way I present myself doesn’t come off as what people tend to think of black people.”

Daisi Adenowo, who has known Ogidan since the age of four and refers to him as a cousin, has experienced the same kind of pressure in the college setting. He fights to break stereotypes and bring new meaning to the term, “African American”.

“In our society we think of education as more of a white people thing and black people in media are portrayed as gangsters or people who can’t do anything but play sports,” Adenowo said. “To come to college and be one of few African American students who aren’t playing sports, who act white, who speak properly, even text properly, it’s kind of weird to see.”

CSU provides a number of resources for minority students; however, Ogidan does not often take advantage of their services. For what he believes might be his own fault, Ogidan doesn’t feel as though he can really connect with the people at the African American Cultural Center.

“All my life I found it hard to make black friends because I don’t talk like them and they make fun of me because I don’t talk like them or I don’t dress like them or I don’t act like them,” Ogidan said. “You know the stereotypical black dude, like they’re supposed to be loud and talk with an accent and sag their pants a whole bunch, and I don’t do those things. I know that not everyone is like that, but the older you get the more you realize how those scars haven’t completely healed.”

Adenowo agrees. “Honestly, it’s really hard for an African American or minority to fit anywhere in college, cause if you’re in college and you’re a minority you’re going to be like one of three or the only person in a class of 100,” he said.

According to Colorado State University’s 2012-2013 *Fact Book*, 16 percent of students at CSU are ethnic minorities and about 2 percent of the student body is black. Ogidan, who can recite those statistics off the top of his head, believes them to show a seeming lack of diversity on campus.

“I really do want to see more black people, not even just black, but minorities on campuses, not because I’m some sort of hater of white people, but just people don’t understand how isolated you can sometimes feel when you can go an entire year and not see someone who looks like you,” Ogidan said. “That would be a great thing to see is increasing the diversity of campuses like CSU.”

Regardless of classroom setting, Ogidan studies hard with the hope to someday go back to Nigeria and help them sort things out. There are a multitude of things he thinks can be improved on if people were given the tools to do so.

“They have a terrible infrastructure, their healthcare system is terrible, you know there are just a lot of things we consider basic here that they don’t have,” Ogidan said. “I really want to start something simple like paper bags, cause that’s got to provide jobs. They don’t have a recycling infrastructure, but at the end of the day paper bags do biodegrade – they’re just trees – and that’s a lot better than burning plastics, which release all sorts of toxic chemicals into the air.”

Whether Nigerian prince or business student, ultimately, Ogidan wants to help allow the people in his village to take care of themselves. This would enable him to continue living in America, while still visiting his family in Nigeria.

“Colorado is home and always will be home, but I do see myself going there, maybe starting something, training people and handing over what I’ve started to someone else,” Ogidan said. “People have the capacity to learn – once you teach a man to fish he won’t go hungry anymore.”

**Pull Quotes:**

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**Sources:**

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(I spoke with him several times via email, but he was never able to set up a time with me to interview, so I ended up not using him in the story)

**Additional Research:**

*Fact Book*. Institutional Research, 2012-2013. Web. <[www.ir.colostate.edu](http://www.ir.colostate.edu)>.