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Building Social Bridges
by entrepreneurial thinking



Role models Germany



Demian Onwuegbu: „It has been a very long journey!“

Introduction:

My name is Demian Onwuegbu, I am 48 years old and was born in Nigeria. I am an accountant by profession and have a daughter. I speak 5 languages (English, German, Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa) and some Russian and Indian.

The journey:

It has been a very long journey. When you think about how difficult it was at the beginning, it is hard to believe that I am now in a situation where I feel welcomed. I have found peace. In the beginning it was intense.

Profession:

I studied in Nigeria and also worked there. In 2005 I came to Germany. My studies were not recognised and I was in the asylum procedure. It is difficult. I started from scratch.

My first wife helped me a lot. Without her, I wouldn't have achieved so much. She showed me that you can build something if you put your mind to it. I was an accountant in Nigeria. Here I started working at KFC in the kitchen. I am a hardworking person and I worked well. My boss was happy and I worked my way up bit by bit from shift leader to restaurant manager.

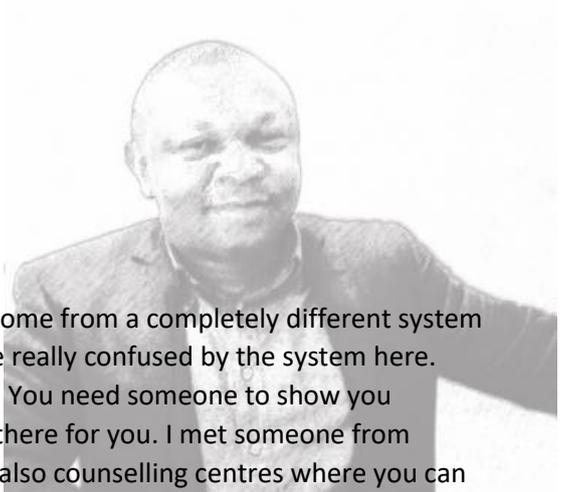
The way I worked, the others realised that even though I am a black man, I have something in my head. As an African, discrimination and racism is a reality. A lot of people don't get that, but we Africans know that.

Language:

Language is an obstacle. You come to another world and you think: how can I understand this language? Language is really a big challenge. Many of us have been here for years, but the language gets to them. The language is the first step. If you know the language, you can communicate, you need that also at work and in social life. After that, you can learn the other things step by step.

Then you have to answer the big question: What do I want to achieve? What do I want here in the first place? This is not my country, but if I think it's better here, then I have to make sure that I can do better here. Then I have to build something for myself. Then you have to build up a life here. You have to! Language first, then find work, do training.





Networks:

In the African community we are there for each other. We come from a completely different system where the social organisation is different. Some Africans are really confused by the system here. They really need help. Some live here but are just strangers. You need someone to show you something. Everyone needs someone to tell them: I will be there for you. I met someone from baobab e.V. and started working with them. Now there are also counselling centres where you can go if you want to. It's better now than it used to be.

Role models:

A good friend of mine told me at the beginning: "Go learn the language". That was right. He put me on the right path. I think that's an important point, that you have someone who tells you: "I'm going with you, you're not alone". Someone who can strengthen you. If you have that role model, in the end you can go on by yourself.

Qualities:

I have always believed in myself. Even if there are challenges, I know I can do it. I am always curious. But everyone is different. Everyone has to find that out for themselves. People are different. I think self-confidence and support from others is important to get out of low points. I think I did well. I accepted the challenge. I'm that kind of person, I try, even if it's hard, to make it work.

Racism:

It's difficult to be accepted as an African. It's a struggle, always having to deal with it. It's a big challenge for us. You just have to be strong, but many are traumatised by this experience. You can see that. Some are afraid and give up. No one has the right to belittle the other. To say: You are worth less than them, no one deserves that. What we as Africans sometimes have to deal with, no human being deserves that.

Goals:

I would like to continue to be active in the African community. I have taken up the fight that I want to help young African people. That they can see that there are opportunities here if you want to achieve something and make an effort. To find yourself, to build a family, to do something for society. That you as a human being can also have a nice life and be happy. I enjoy helping people and realising during counselling that there are people who can use this for themselves.

Success for me is when I end up with someone I can love. I have my daughter: watching her grow; trying to build a better society for her so that she can enjoy life as a human being. We are all human beings. Everyone deserves a chance.



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