Fidelis N. Umeh was born in Nigeria and lived there through his high school years. Today in Chicago he values the diversity of cultures he encounters. "One attraction for me about Chicago is that it is a lot of little cities, a lot of little cultures. I'll never forget when we were looking for an ethnic restaurant, and we got into a little Yugoslavian restaurant where they spoke little English. It seemed so close to being Yugoslavia itself. By the same token, when you walk into an Irish pub you don't see it as Chicago--you feel you're in Ireland. ... It is essential for a person to have a cultural identity. It is an anchor."

Fidelis Umeh grew up with strong family values consistent with the traditions of the Ibos, a culture within Nigeria. "One thing that we Nigerians, particularly the Ibos, have inculcated into us from youth is the value of education. It is paramount. And the drive to succeed--my culture says that each person must work very hard and that is essential to success, which is very important. And we have support from family that keeps us going when things are difficult. Sometimes perseverance can make the difference between success and failure."

Fidelis Umeh has succeeded in the business community, which some people see as a separate culture all of its own. He is president of SEI Information Technology, a company that employs hundreds of highly skilled individuals and that provides technical support to major businesses. At the same time, Fidelis Umeh has maintained a commitment to his original culture.

In 1991, he founded Enumbra (Nigeria) Foundation. "I formed a group of Nigerians to reconstruct an anchor for them that will fit into the American society but at the same time will give them something to fall back on in times of adversity. I feel it is a strength, it allows us to be individuals.

I started the group in 1991. It has one specific mission, which is to bridge the gap between our people and the people in America. The target is to build an anchor where the Nigerians can feel their identity and at the same time become more connected to the Chicago scene. The problem that we have with our children is that either our children don't have an understanding of the Nigerian culture or an understanding of the American culture. The focus is on children through adolescence. The adults get to benefit from the network."

So far more than 300 families have registered, and the Enumbra Foundation is working with about 500 children. We have started with story-telling. We are telling the children the stories that our families have told for generations. Each story has a moral, an idea that it teaches the children. The children learn the moral. They also learn more about their own heritage.

With as many as 30,000 Nigerians in Chicago today, the potential is very great. The vision of Enumbra is that "the Nigerian community should be able to be assimilated into the American society with their own identity intact. They don't have to relinquish their culture. They will in fact be able to enrich the American culture. The American culture
has benefited from this in the past. This is a building block for having another sub-
culture in Chicago that will integrate into the Chicago mosaic."