

An African Heritage in Chicago

Common Core Anchor Reading Standard 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Fidelis Umeh was born in Nigeria and lived there through his high school years. Fidelis Umeh grew up with strong family values of the traditions of the Ibos, a culture within Nigeria. "One thing that we Nigerians, particularly the Ibos, have taught 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."

He moved to the United States when he went to college. After he finished college, he stayed connected to his family in Nigeria. He returned to Nigeria at least once a year. But he made his home and career in this country. He became a business leader.

Fidelis Umeh has succeeded in the business community, which some people see as a separate culture all of its own. He planned projects. He designed systems. He brought new ideas to businesses. He has been president of a company that employs hundreds of highly skilled individuals. At the same time, he kept his commitment to his original culture.

In 1991, he founded a group to support Nigerians in Chicago. "I formed a group of Nigerians to be 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."

"It has one goal, 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."

"We 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. They will appreciate their heritage. They will realize that they have to work hard, too, to achieve progress."

With more than 15,000 Nigerians in Chicago today, the potential is very great. Fidelis Umeh said that "The vision of Enumbra is that the Nigerian community will bring the traits that are valued in their heritage as they join the American society. They will in fact be able to enrich the American culture."

What do you think the main idea is of this passage?

Underline five examples or facts that support that idea.