

What HOMECOMING™ Represents For A New Generation Of Nigerian Immigrants

Every Easter, the streets of Lagos thrums with life in a way that feels both nostalgic and futuristic. Music, Fashion, Sport, all come together in perfect synchrony to become one at the homecoming festival. But beneath the layers of curated aesthetics and A-list appearances, HOMECOMING™ is becoming something much deeper: a cultural reawakening for a generation of Nigerians who left, and are finding their way back, a celebration of return. For many in the diaspora, it's a pilgrimage back to something real, a reconnection with roots, identity, and the version of Nigeria they've longed to know.

The HOMECOMING™ Festival, founded by Grace Ladoja in 2017, was designed as a celebration of Nigerian creativity in music, fashion, art, and sports. But over time, it's become a symbolic portal—one that allows second-generation immigrants and diaspora Nigerians to bridge the gap between identity and origin. In an interview with British culture bible, *Dazed*, Grace expanded on this idea: “I see the opportunity to galvanise the incredible creativity of this young generation and share it with the world.

HOMECOMING™ exists to ignite a celebration of cultural heritage and creative exchange, through the lens of music, fashion, sport, art and education.”

The first-ever edition of HOMECOMING™ in 2018 was a literal return to the motherland for UK rapper, Skepta, who came back to Lagos to reconnect with his roots. Skepta immersed himself in the culture, collaborating with local artists and releasing a Nigeria-exclusive Nike collaboration inspired by his Yoruba heritage. His presence set the tone for what HOMECOMING™ would become: a space for diaspora creatives and returnees to rediscover and celebrate their identity while bridging the gap between where they're from and where they are now.

For many young Nigerians in the diaspora, HOMECOMING™ is a return to identity, a reintroduction to a country they've long associated with family stories, childhood summers, or cultural pride from afar. It provides a rare chance to witness, participate in, and contribute to a Nigeria that has evolved in their absence, but still welcomes them with open arms. As Seyi Albert, an artist business manager to Ayra Starr, puts it: “HOMECOMING™ offers Nigerian diasporans an invaluable opportunity to reconnect with a home that continues to evolve in their absence. I've witnessed how the festival creates a curated experience that helps bridge the gap between nostalgic memories and contemporary Nigerian culture. For many returnees, it provides a soft landing - a way to navigate their relationship with Nigeria that honors both their heritage and their global experiences without requiring them to choose between identities.”

Beyond the celebration itself, the festival opens the door for something more enduring—collaboration. As Albert notes, it's not just about cultural reconnection; it's about building pathways for deeper engagement: “The beauty of HOMECOMING™ is how it naturally facilitates meaningful connections between diasporans and local communities through shared cultural appreciation. This model can be expanded beyond annual festivals into ongoing initiatives that leverage diaspora networks for knowledge transfer, investment, and collaborative projects. I've seen how these interactions often start with cultural

reconnection but evolve into business partnerships and creative collaborations that benefit both sides. The key is creating more platforms that sustain these relationships throughout the year.”