



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Lagos Igbo Hangout: *Celebrating Igbo Identity in the Heart of Lagos*

By Idenze Ezeme

Ozikoro.com · Cultural Heritage · 10 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

**Introducing our Official Merch for
the 2nd Edition of the Lagos Igbo
Hangout.**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

Ozi Ikòrò
LAGOS IGBO HANGOUT

Lagos Igbo Hangout: Celebrating Igbo Identity in the Heart of Lagos

By Idenze Ezeme · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

In a bustling metropolis like Lagos, where cultures converge and identities often blur into the city's constant motion, preserving one's roots can be both a huge challenge and a statement of pride. For many Igbo people living in Lagos, finding a space that celebrates Igbo culture, language, and sense of belonging has long been a yearning left unfulfilled. That was until the Lagos Igbo Hangout emerged, a community-driven festival that fuses tradition with modernity, bringing together Igbo people from different walks of life to celebrate who they are unapologetically.

Now in its second year, the event has become more than just a gathering; it is now a movement that is redefining what it means to be Onye Igbo in urban Nigeria. It combines cultural exhibitions, music, dance, games, and conversation, which are all woven into a vibrant display of identity and unity. At the heart of it all is a team of passionate organisers who believe that Igbo culture must not only be preserved but also lived boldly in every space, including Lagos.

In this interview, the convener of the Lagos Igbo Hangout shares the story behind the festival, how it began, the challenges faced, and the vision driving it towards becoming a national and possibly global celebration of Igbo heritage.

When did the idea for the event first come to you, and what was the motivation behind turning it into an annual festival?

The idea for the Igbo Lagos Hangout was born out of a conversation. In March 2024, I met up with a friend from Enugu who had recently

relocated to Lagos. During our discussion, she expressed how challenging it had been for her to find Igbo people in Lagos with whom she could speak the language, relate freely, and build companionship. As we conversed in Igbo, it felt refreshing and meaningful. This inspired me to host a small gathering for a few mutual friends who had also moved from Enugu to Lagos, initially intended as an intimate event for my close circle. On May 3rd, I posted a tweet about the idea, which unexpectedly gained significant attention and became the foundation for the formation of the Igbo Lagos Hangout.

The Official Merch for the 2nd Edition of the Lagos Igbo Hangout.

What were the early challenges you faced in organising the first edition?

One of the major challenges we faced was financing. Turning a vision into reality requires significant financial resources, and securing those funds was a hurdle. Additionally, we encountered tribal bigotry in Lagos State, exacerbated by the tensions surrounding the elections at the time. This led to considerable online backlash and numerous threats, making last year particularly challenging. Despite these obstacles, we remained determined to achieve our goal, and the event was successfully hosted.

What is the central goal of the Igbo Lagos Hangout? Is it more cultural, social, or something deeper?

The central goal of the Lagos Igbo Hangout is to create an atmosphere where there is a cultural touchpoint from various generations. What we are doing at Lagos Igbo Hangout is connecting Igbos to their roots, especially here in Lagos, where there is a toxic environment for you to be openly Igbo. So we are very, very intentional in creating an atmosphere where people can express their cultural identity without any form of intimidation, wherever they find themselves. This is the common goal of the Lagos Igbo Hangout.

How do you see this platform helping Igbo people in Lagos bond beyond the event, economically, socially, or politically?

And so far, so good, the Lagos Igbo Hangout has played a major role in connecting a whole lot of people back to their roots. One of the things we have done in our community is that we have grown our community base to a minimum of over 5,000 persons. This has, in turn, helped us to harness and make more people fall in love with their culture. We have a lot of young people who are looking forward to our annual event, where they come and showcase what makes them Igbo proudly. This has really created a sense of brotherhood among a whole lot of Gen Zs.



Vibrant Colours, Culture and Excitement at Lagos Igbo Hangout. Photo: The Guardian

In what ways does the festival celebrate Igbo identity differently from other cultural events in Nigeria?

For the Lagos Igbo Hangout, we do a unique blend of cultural activities with our urban flair, in the sense that culture is ever-evolving, so we try to merge our local culture with what is obtainable presently.

For the Lagos Igbo Hangout, we infuse a whole lot of cultural touchpoints, which include but are not limited to masquerade displays, native games like ncho, and Igbo questions and answer series. We try to ensure that our branding and everything we do align with the Igbo culture so that once you step into our venue, you'll have a feel of what to expect.

This year, we also have traditional wrestling to remind the younger generations of what it means to be addressed as a dike in Igbo folklore. These are some of the things that we do with our content and our activities. And then, as Igbo people, anyi na-achosi mma, so we had our beauty pageantry as well — for ndi n'acho mma. This is one of the cultural aspects that has been lacking, so we make sure that we do all these activities to remind people of the essence and detail in Igbo culture.

Amazing faces at the Lagos Igbo Hangout.

01

How do you ensure that the culture is not only showcased but taught, especially to younger generations?

One of the things we have done with the Igbo Hangout is consolidation. We try to ensure that the event is not a jamboree. Towards the rundown to our event, we organised regular conversational spaces where we brought in resource persons to come and teach us about the intricacies of the Igbo culture, and show us certain things that we might not know as well. So we try to be very, very cautious while learning the Igbo culture and its traditions.

What has the response been like from the Igbo community in Lagos since the event started?

Oh, the response from the Igbo community has been nothing short of very, very marvellous. I must, at this juncture, recognise some bodies who have been very intentional in setting us up. The Ohaneze Ndi Igbo has been our key partner, the Eze Ndi Igbo and his cabinet have also been our key partners, and then the general online Igbo community has received us with open arms — supporting our events with sponsorships, free tickets, and a whole lot of freebies. This has really proved that we Igbos truly love ourselves beyond what is seen on social media.

The Lagos Igbo Hangout has grown to be more than just an annual event. We have presently consolidated our community, and in turn, we have improved our community objectives. We now carry out corporate social responsibilities and community-driven projects to impact the lives of Igbo people in Lagos, not just our community alone. We have really ensured that the Lagos Igbo community is now compact and precise, with registered members. We know our members, and we can account for them. It has given us a sense of brotherhood in Lagos.

Do you see this as a step towards building a stronger pan-Igbo identity within urban centres like Lagos?

Oh yes, the Lagos Igbo Hangout has been building a very strong pan-Igbo generation where everybody is aligned with thinking for the greater good of Ala Igbo and thinking back home. There is a saying that the Igbo language is currently endangered, so what we do with the Lagos Igbo Hangout community is ensure that we keep our culture alive, which is very important in this present generation and dispensation.

Is the festival open to non-Igbo Lagosians as well, and if so, how have they engaged with the celebration?

The Lagos Igbo Hangout is open to all friends, all lovers, and all well-wishers of the Igbo culture. It is not strictly an Igbo-Igbo affair. I mana ife eji abu onye Igbo erika. The Igbo race is a global race, so we

don't limit participation to just Igbo people. It is open to those who are cultural enthusiasts who would like to know more and love the Igbo culture.

How would you define the event's role in reconnecting Igbo people in Lagos with their roots?

For our 2025 edition of the Lagos Igbo Hangout, we had people from many different tribes come together, and they truly appreciated the Igbo culture. The Lagos Igbo Hangout has successfully challenged and changed many negative narratives. It has given us proper representation in Lagos, and even our host communities and the indigenes of Lagos are very happy with the formation of this community and the event itself.

How do you ensure that different Igbo subcultures (e.g., Riverine Igbo, Western Igbo, Northern Igbo, Cross River Igbo) are represented?

One of the things we do in the Lagos Igbo Hangout is our intentionality. We know that the Igbos are not just dominated in the 5 eastern states, so we stretch forth our nets and incorporate even the Western Igbos and those we call Ndi Mba Mmiri ... the riverine Igbos. We are very keen and deep on inclusivity.

What are your long-term plans for the Igbo Lagos Hangout? Are there plans to expand to other cities?

Yes, for the Lagos Igbo Hangout as the brain behind the National Igbo Festivals, we have successfully expanded to Abuja and Port Harcourt, and we are looking at touching other African countries as well. It is very important not to gatekeep the culture. The culture must be made open, and it must be propagated.

Do you see this evolving into something like an Igbo cultural week or a touring festival?

Oh, definitely, with proper funding, especially with the structure in place, we can have a festival tour ... a cultural week where different Igbo exhibitions will be executed.



Cultural dance at the Lagos Igbo Hangout. Photos by Broveens42

Are you collaborating with traditional leaders, cultural organisations, or state governments for support?

At the moment, we collaborate with traditional stakeholders only. We are yet to get recognition from any state parastatals, but we know, hopefully, in the future, we will definitely get them.

Lagos Igbo Hangout has really opened our eyes as to why this should have been started earlier. This is just the second year of this, and we have pulled a combined audience of over 30,000 people. Off the Lagos Igbo Hangout, we have had 50 marriages presently. We have about 10 from the last edition, and we have a whole lot of prospects from this one. We've been able to bridge the gap between a whole lot of people. When they come into our event and meet their favourite person, their favourite influencers, it has created that inspiration and motivation for a whole lot of people.

How do you measure success for each edition of the hangout?

One of the ways we measure success with comparison to our previous edition is in numbers, content, and reviews. For our first edition, inasmuch as we had about 5,000 persons in attendance, we didn't have a whole lot of cultural activities as compared to this second edition, where we pulled a whole lot of numbers. We pulled about 8,000 persons, we had a whole lot of cultural exhibitions, we had pageantry, we had Ije Nri ndi Igbo, where food from different tribes was being prepared.

What message would you like to share with young Igbo people who are disconnected from their roots?

For every young person anywhere you find yourself in the world, I firstly want to tell you that you have to be intentionally Igbo. Inasmuch as we might struggle with a few things, you just have to make sure that you have that Igbo consciousness wherever you are, and then you should realise that you represent a global tribe of very proud people. So you must carry yourself as an Igbo man with your head held high. You must be intentionally Igbo. You can't shy away from it.

A vibrant celebration of Igbo culture, colours, and community spirit at the Lagos Igbo Hangout!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Idenze Ezeme

Nze is an Igbo history and culture enthusiast with an in-depth passion for exploring the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and historical narratives of the Igbo people. His works is mostly focused on pre-colonial Igbo societies, traditional belief systems, leadership systems, and the impact of European colonialism.



Ozi Ikòrò

History worth reading.

African history · culture · indigenous knowledge
