

This interview was edited for clarity and time.

Restoration: What caused you to leave Fort Green after 25 years? And kind of a sub-question to that is how has that neighborhood changed since you first set up.

Michael: We moved because the rent is so crazy within that area. Moshood and I got together, that was in '82, and things were really nice. We had a lot of black entrepreneurs on Fulton street. Four W, Blackberry, and few others.

It was really nice on Fulton Street. Now it just seems like everything has changed and it's forced us to come this direction. I feel a lot of people are going to be moving towards this direction because things have really changed. I mean, once the Apple store came on Flatbush and Hanson place, it just changed everything. Dance Africa used to be on Ashland place and Fulton Street, and went all the way around. This year, they cut it off. So it stopped in the middle, near the Apple store.

Now I said, what's going on? So the traffic, it was on Fulton Street, and I said look at this. Things changed you know? I feel it's better for Moshood to be here than over there. Because our people spend money and when tourists come in they just want to take pictures, then they walk out, that's it. When people from the community walk in, they spend money. They buy t-shirts. They buy dashikis, wraps and all that, which is good. They support us. So when coming this way, down to Restoration Plaza, it's best for Moshood. I'm loving it

R: What excites you most about this relocation? What kind of things do you see, envision that can happen here that maybe weren't possible at Fort Green?

Michael: Just being around our community is what I really love. Just to see how we network and come together on so many things. I'm so happy and thrilled to be here.

Just by standing out there, talking to a lot of people that walk by the plaza, I feel happy because they sit down and talk. A woman came in one day to the plaza, she told me "Oh we're excited, we live down the block we're going to come to this store all the time." I said great, I'm here.

R: What do you say to people who have been shopping with you guys for years? Or newer customers?

Michael: We have some fantastic things lined up that's going to blow everybody's mind. Wait until the fashion show, you're going to see some really outrageous stuff. Moshood is going to expand to several things. Making kids clothes, which he was doing in the 90s. He's just gonna expand to several other things I mean, who knows. I tell him, this is what's new and he goes for it.

R: What is the inspiration for the upcoming fashion show on July 28th?

Michael: It's going to have a Nigerian flavor with an urban flavor too, which is going to bring it together and make it look really good.

R: What is the significance of moving into a historically black institution like Restoration? What kind of ripples do you see that having?

Michael: Yes, yes, yes. I was talking to a young guy yesterday and he was talking about opening a café or how about a beauty salon, things like that. Black owned. You know, because people, after they eat at Applebee's, they want to shop. They want to look around. So from Applebee's to Moshood, they can walk around to the café. So if we had little cafes around here it would be great, you know, just within the plaza.

R: How does Moshood work with local community members who are either skilled in the fashion industry or want to work in the fashion industry.

Michael: He works with practically everyone. I mean they come in, he talks to them, gives them pointers on what to do and what not to do. They sit there or stand there and they listen, and they're happy that he's giving all that information. And he feels good too giving it to them.

Normally when students come in they just want to be in here within the store and just talking to Moshood, because he's a legend. And just by talking to him and being there, they excited you know?

R: In Moshood's 25 year history, what other businesses have been inspired from the brand.

Michael: There's several. I mean, Moshood helped me along too, belts are my forte. He gave me the opportunity to do what I do. I'm a designer too, but Moshood gives me the freedom to create other things using his logo. And that logo is so powerful. I mean from Brooklyn all the way to Japan. We have people coming in from Japan just buying tons of Moshood and bringing it back there and wearing it. They just love that face, you know? Which love it too. It's not a face it's a mask, but I love it.

R: What is the significance of your logo "the mask and face"?

Michael: In Nigeria, some tribes cut their face, and the scars left behind are like a tribal signature. And then the bones, our lips, our nose, that's that mask that you see. It represents people of the African diaspora. A lot of people didn't know that. They look at it and say, oh what is that? But then they look at it and you explain it to them about Nigeria, what they do, and then they start looking into it and they say, oh wow they actually do. Yeah, it's energy.

R: How did you and Moshood meet?

Michael: I met Moshood at City College, and this was, I think it was the late 80s. At a fashion show. And I was totally impressed by the runway and the models walking up and down that runway.

When Moshood came to Brooklyn, I used to live on Adelphi and I used to work for a store called Blackberry and when I saw the guy put the sign up saying Moshood I said, wait is that Moshood? Because I said I seen him before. So I said let me go in there and see what's going on. So he said yeah Moshood is coming to Brooklyn. He called me, brought my portfolio there, opened it up, it was a marriage right there.

R: Who have you seen rocking Moshood who you were impressed to see?

Michael: Sir Lawrence Fishburne. Isaac Hayes, god bless him, he loves Moshood. He would come into the store and just buy Moshood and wear it.

Stevie Wonder, Erykah Badu, Shaka Khan, Temptations, Otis from the Temptations, Maxi Priest, Angela Basset, wow, Al Sharpton. It's endless.

R: What's your fondest memory in 25 years

Michael: Just being with him, meeting a lot of his celebrity friends, his Nigerian friends and just the energy that he has is so positive

It's all about networking. I mean he would come into the store and give them that warm welcome. And that's what people want. You know when you go to a store you don't want ... You want someone that's going to welcome you and smile and if you don't have any money he'll give you a t-shirt just like that.

It means a lot. These people came in yesterday from Africa, he gave them all t-shirts.