

Bayola Emmanuel Interview

Speaker key

IR Interviewer

IE Interviewee

Speaker	Transcription
IR	<p>Hello Mr Bayola Emmanuel and thank you for your time. I am interviewing you in connection with Bridges Culture. Our cultural heritage project tracing journeys and resettlement experiences of Congolese in United Kingdom.</p> <p>Let me remind you that our interviews will be shared online, and archived in Libraries, Archives and Museums. Therefore, I will require you to sign and consent that you have given us permission to do so.</p> <p>Now, let start with a brief introduction of yourself, tell our listeners who you are, what do you do for living and many more? Thank you</p>
IE	<p>Hello, my name is Bayola Emmanuel. I am a Congolese from the Ba Kongo Tribe. Bakongo, whose origins can be traced in now northern Cameroon, Angola, Congo Brazzaville. They are seen as indigenous people and Land owners.</p> <p>I wish we had times. I would have told you a bit History to give you a bit of insights about Kongo Empire, its glorious times and leaders.</p> <p>Let me go back to the subject.</p>
IE	<p>I first arrived in the UK to pursuit my parent's desires to offer me the best education as possible. My Father was the main bread winner of the house and after his death, things became unbearable, and I had to go back. You know in our African families, in such circumstances, the Elder will confiscate all the deceased properties and possessions. And being the son and first born, I should in fact inherit all of my father's possession. My Big uncles and all family Elders couldn't agree to it... They disliked my mother and allowing the first son to inherit his father's possession means that we have allowed the women to benefit from it. Such a move should be opposed. I didn't have any other choice as I felt threatened, felt in danger and the only other option was to stay in the UK.</p> <p>I was forced to apply for Refugee protection from the Home Office. I had no monies with me. I studied, and the father who uses to take care of me is no longer there... I had nothing, no income, and no other solution than to stay here. The</p>



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	<p>family was threatening me, I felt in danger and the only choice was to remain here, and in remaining here, I had to apply for asylum as I said previously. I stayed, waiting for the case asylum outcomes, and I arrived here on student visa, things become even complicated. I stayed without any documentation while my case was under consideration by the Home Office. Without monies, I was evicted from my student accommodation, and went to apply for benefit. They offered me a shared accommodation. That's how I stayed pending my immigration decision. Hum... 2 years later, I was granted a stay, which come with some restrictions on what can I or not do. I had to wait 3 years of residency before resuming my studies. I was granted 1 year temporarily admission, which needed to be renewed every year until I resumed my studies.</p>
IE	<p>During that period, I met my current wife; we started living together and later decided to get married. That's how we started living together and we have been together ever since and had our children. I have grown up children. I was working at the same time, I was working at.... hum, how was it called again...hum...it was the train company that employed me. I started as a cleaner; a then went on to become a train driver. However, I had kept my studying dream alive. I went back to university and graduated. As I was less interested in the train driver job, I was back there asking if they can offer me another position. They offer me a customer service and ticketing jo. I had my entire career there, progressed through the ladder. Then I decided to go back to Congo and do Politics. After working in Politics for many years, I then decided to come back to England. I was still married to my wife, kids have grown, my Politics ambition didn't work as planned, I decided to return here. It's been 2 years since I come back from Africa. I am doing few jobs here and there, trying to survive and life goes on. I am not complaining.</p>
IE	<p>Then... with regards to your question how I arrived here... When I arrived, things were easy. Although it is a foreign country, I didn't know anybody, ... from my home country, we are bilingual, an Anglo-French country, as far as I am concerned, we grow up in Douala, where people speak French, even though I am from the Northern part of the country. And when I came here, there was a language barrier still, but for most it was a new country, the weather, it is a new country, new people, new customs. One has to adapt and it wasn't easy. We... at that time, there was nothing more we could do except going to college and universities. It was a priority. There were few black people around. Generally, we use to visit our friends who were staying in Sheffield, outside London, and a bit further Manchester, and Birmingham. The latter was very interesting as you can bump in into few black people. However, further up in some area, we could really see a black person. I remember once we went to visit a friend, there was a woman who approached me, trying to find out if the black colour in my skin could come off. Trying to make sure if I have not painted my skin and the black colour could come</p>



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	<p>off. It wasn't easy. There were people insulting us, calling us names. But, what can you do, you get used to it. It's a foreign land. Hum... that the way bit is. But even People in Africa have similar behaviour. They would insult, sometime wondering if it's not a pig.... There is always that inferiority complex towards the whites, hum... people.</p> <p>In Europe it is more to do with medias, the way they portrayed black people, that's what make people wonder if there are animal or real human being like us (white). My arrival here was with a student visa, I came to study, my parents were well off and I came to study, so it. I was threatad normally, we encountered racism of course, but it is more in streets, people coming out to see who are these people... black of course. On day, I remember visiting a friend, as soon as we got to the station, there taxi lining up, we jumped into one, and the cabdriver didn't even ask us where we were going. He drove off straight to where our friend Rubin was staying. He was right to assume that the village had only 1 single black resident. If we have black visitors in the village, they can only be here for their fellow black mate. This is exactly, what, we experienced during our time. So, I arrived here to study, if you are in a country for study reason, we need to have a visa, I already had my student visa and after 3 months I had to renew it... Renewing a visa requires you to provide evidences that you have started a course... it was easy, what was needed is to show that course fees are paid and that was not a problem at all. Hum... as a student, we had access to health services, hum... things become a bit tough, when I applied for asylum, my visa has expired and I had to send my passport to the Home Office. Things become tough as I didn't have no means of identification, no means of showing that I had the right to stay in this country. I came as a student, then applied for Asylum, kept the same name, took all documents to proof that I am what I claim to be, and I couldn't go back to Congo... hum... these 2 years in the waiting, and it was not easy, not easy at all. I couldn't work, and I didn't have any ID to enrol at GPs, now that I have moved to a new area, no GP Surgery could enrol me, and I had to go back to my previous surgery where I was first registered before applying for asylum for treatment. I can assure that it is a very uncertain time and I wonder what's happening to those who are claiming asylum now, I know things have changed a lot... There were few people at the time but now the country is flooded with people... an I wonder what change will Brexit bring. I predict hard time a head for Refugees and asylum seekers who are destitute and found it hard to access vital service such employment, health. As you know here, if you have no stay, you do not speak the language either, it is a misery and dangerous...and being in a foreign land, you have to battle hard, fight harder... It is what it is, this is what you have to endure, ...</p>
IE	<p>Hum... Yes, I am... I consider Africa as my land. I came here, studied, worked and finally left. I left of course, but after some years, things didn't work according to plan, I have again decided to return to England. Because, I have grown up children,</p>



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	<p>I wanted to see my grandchildren; hum... it is obvious that I return here. But let be honest, I still consider Africa as my Home land. I still consider myself here as a Foreigner. My skin tells you everything. People can see that I am black and blacks are immigrants. We arrived here ... people sometimes don't know the reason of us being here, I understand how sometimes they give us that bad look....</p>
IE	<p>I miss my county, I miss the music and the outdoor life. Here everything is in closed door. Whereas home in Africa, people will freely great, people are very generous. Here people live for themselves. You have neighbours you never met and if you try to say hello, they become suspicious. Wondering if this is not a scam or hurt game in planning?</p> <p>I think live in England and London in particular has become more cosmopolitan. However, if live in here such as Hatfield or some more remote area, you find people who consider themselves as nationalists. In cities, it is much different, we meet diverse people.</p> <p>Also, I have realised that even East European residents who have settled here, many have not leaved with black people before, they are less tolerant. I understand that it is a new experience for them as well. That's my findings, I could be wrong about it. They are less tolerant than the English counterparts who have lived with black people and people of different heritage for generations. And what's funny is that they quick realised that are Foreigners themselves and things are done differently here and become understanding. I think that's how I will put it.</p>
IE	<p>Yes, of course I regret coming to the UK. There are opportunities here of course but people stay where they feel at home. Here is a second home for us. We are African first and accept the fact that we live here, have married whites, had children with them. And we have no other choice. We respect this country, as it has given us countless opportunities. The country has good system, infrastructure and what the current generations want. Even internet, which is seen as a luxury in Africa are in almost every house. Whereas in Africa, people to struggle to access it.</p>
IE	<p>I regret that I had to leave my country. However, I don't regret deciding to stay here, as I have had a lot of opportunities. I have learned plenty things, skills, and many more.</p>
IE	<p>As far as knowing if I have something that I have kept dear in my mind, I would say: yes, of course. My behaviour, respect. Hum.... You know that I went back to Africa for work, I have a very important position, had lots of benefits to go with my position, a lot, and look at me here, being confine in a small apartment, where I have to do everything on my own. Whereas in my home Africa, I am a big boss, I had people working me. Of course, I do regret because that is kind of live you will never get here. Regardless of that, we value our culture, value our way of life, whether it concerns food, behaviour, music and quality of live,</p>



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<p>IE</p>	<p>I believe that our culture is very rich, you have traditions and celebrations such wedding, burial, memorial, people’s behaviours, respect towards elderly and peers, and many more. It is that beauty, that richness, that diversity, that culture we miss. If you visit your mother for instance, she welcomes you with songs, dances, people will run to catch a life chicken for your meal. She does all that to show her love, her appreciation for you finding time to travel miles and miles visit her... it’s all that people of seeing all neighbours coming to great you and show you their love, and more again when you wake up in morning you find most of them lining with any little gift they can found and hand it to you. That environment, that beauty and quality of life is what we value and miss. And this is what we... We are trying to teach our children and grandchildren. As you know, I am married to a white; she has learnt and owned the African culture. She witnessed everything when I went back to Africa, I took her with me, and we lived as like bosses, billionaires. We had 4, 5, 6 people allocated to our service. Can you imagine having 5 or 6 people working for you in England! You must own Millions of Pounds. That’s the kind of life my wife and I were used for, the respect, the honours, nothing compare to what we have here. We remind our children that they have that African Heritage in them, if they feel like living in Africa, and then feel free. Go and settle there, it’s also your home. We have travelled around with them, but they still prefer England. We have to accept it. The goodness is that they know how to behave if they meet an African person as well as how to behave both here and in Africa alike. We encourage them the best of both World. African will welcome them, it’s their home. They were born here of course, but they can choose where to live. We have decided to give children a free hand to choose what they want. Contrarily with us, parents were the ones deciding what we should do. Of course... of course if there is something we should leave to our children, we should say, respecting one another, charity, sharing, empathy, achievement, thanksgiving, family life, of course yes. You may not have it all, but helping your partner to achieve, team working, the culture where by those who don’t have share with the less fortunate and vice versa, respect and all those good values we share within our culture should be embrace. That black stain in them should be not seen as a disadvantaged but it must be considered as a wealth of diversity which they should celebrate. This is how I normally see it.</p>
<p>IE</p>	<p>In England, things are well ordered; some people don’t take advantage of it. In Africa, parents have to work to ensure that your family has what they need to live a good life, good education. Whereas things are different. There are what they called “rights” and people end up taking advantages of. All that makes Africa a different place to live. In the same way, we have to teach our children that they are fortunate to have food on the table every single day. Many children around the world suffer from hunger. Therefore, they have to appreciate life and appreciate the fact that they live somewhat a happy life. That’s what we teach our children. Work, working spirit, employment is another thing which we teach our children.</p>



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	<p>The holy Bible teaches us about work: if someone doesn't work, they don't eat either. If you want to be a blooming, a successful man or women, you need to have a career. You must work hard, put more effort into work, in everything you do., being people of colour and following the discrimination that exists in many places, they have to be exceptional to make, twice harder to be up there. Where their white counterpart spends 1 hour, they have to double it, to get recognition. If you are an average person, believe me, it's going to be tough there. Therefore, you need to be a first-class person. Only then, you can expect to be leading out here.</p>
IE	<p>In terms of achievements, I don't regret coming here. This country has given me opportunities, has welcomed me as one of its own, it's allowed me to visit the world, travel everywhere with my British passport. Things that my Cameroonian passport couldn't have allowed me to do. In fact, I used both passport and choose which one will be beneficial to use in every circumstance. That why, when I went back to Cameroon, I used my Cameroonian passport to and work as a national of Congo. If it was a job requiring an expat, then I would have used my British passport. Working in Politics, I have to use my Cameroonian Citizenship and my wife worked as a Cameroonian as well, despite of being white. That was the case.... If I consider whatever experience I have acquired in this country... I am very grateful.... This country made me what I have become.</p>
IE	<p>For those newly arrived in the country, Africans... mainly when they arrived, they come with all misconceptions, how life is better, people are happy, Until they realised that things are not what they believed... Life is tough, even though you made it here... Imagine somebody arriving during winter, you don't know anybody, you don't speak the language... this is a disaster...somebody realising that things are far from being whatever they heard.</p> <p>I meant they have to learn the language, having clear goals, knowing what you want to achieve and work hard towards achieving these goals. It requires lots of sacrifices, that are how... how you can move forwards.</p> <p>Furthermore, I remain attached to my culture. It's very important; people need not to forget where they come. I always say to my children, as soon as you walk out there, people can see that you are mixed race. That stain must have an origin, and that origin is African. That's where a half of you come from, you must be proud to have that black blood in you, that determines your origin, this is how we empower them</p> <p>The country has really changed. If I look at the transformation from the time we left for Africa and when we return after 8 years later, was extraordinary. Things have really changed; life has become tough, though for us who enjoyed a different UK that what we live in now. I can understand those who have just arrived and never lived that time. Bus fares have gone up, we say to ourselves, what is going on here. We have indeed left for Africa; I think we had a better quality of life than those who stayed here. When we arrive in Africa, we realised that everything slowed, we had</p>



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	<p>time to rest. Whereas here you are always on the move, we wake up early in the morning, you have things to run into, shopping, plenty things. In Africa, I can decide to rest and have someone to do it for me. That's another beauty of Africa. I think it was a good decision to return to Africa, and I believe that it has added few years in our life. Here is very stressful. People have to find time to go on holiday but in Africa every day is a holiday. Its sunny, life is good, people working for you, you delegate tasks, its slow a bit the usual and stressing life of Europe. Where, we run for tubes, trains, fearing of missing them, running for meeting, bills, there other mails which remain unopened before you realised it is another missing deadline for a parking ticket... you don't know what to do... its so tough. Life is very demanding here.</p>
IE	<p>We are calling upon those who have been here long, to find time to visit their countries of origin. It's expensive, with the extended family expectations, of course. Saying that you wouldn't go back isn't a solution, I think. It's obvious to them to ask for assistance from a relative who live abroad, whom they believe to have made it in life. They never been here, and would never understand it. Therefore, I really believe that it is important to go back, if not to live but to see what has happening in Cameroon. If you still think that it is not for you then fine. Unless you had time to see and assess the pros and the cons before deciding.</p> <p>Also, things are changed for worse, in regards to bringing up children, especially boys. There are black to black killings here and there. The medias do not mention it sometimes, burial here and there, it's not easy. I really don't know what brings all this. Is that the pressure of UK life or what? People are torn between deciding to remain here to see your children killed or go back to Africa? My wife and I always argue on whether we should live in Europe or Africa? She prefers Africa. I am against that, due to lack of health care. We have to be very careful as we don't have a good health insurance policy that could cover us out there. If you fail sick and unable to meet the necessary bill or get an appropriate care, you may lose your life.</p> <p>We were fortunate to have a position that we could effort a treatment in Europe or in Asia.</p> <p>Also, I really support this project. It is very interesting project... It is part of Archives that our children can access in later life, ... It is important that we live them testimonies, lived experiences that could help and encourage them as a reference of what we did in our time, what can they do better..... I think, we are living them a legacy, something stronger, that would be useful in their life one day,</p> <p>We have friends, relatives who died and were buried here. Great greater children, and other generations may ask themselves who did they make here?... hum... these are testimonies, archives material that people can visit and learn more about francophone black people arrived in the UK and what they went through.</p>
IE	<p>I believe that they will learn that those who arrived here where not just beggars,</p>



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	<p>but they work hard to earn ends meet. They didn't come here to benefit the system but they worked instead. We have friend who have access to public funds but work and live their life independently. They pay their taxes.</p>
IE	<p>I fully support your project. That why I didn't think twice to take part to the interview. I said yes, although I don't have free time, I am busy, I know that we were meant to a month ago, but I am a busy man. I am glad to be here, I hope I have answered most questions. If you have further questions, please feel free to call. I know that your colleague told me about the exhibition, where all the interviews will be listening to. I am fine with that. I am sure it will help the younger generations to learn about us and our experiences.</p> <p>This is a very nice initiative and it worth supporting. Thanks to Sangayi association. I believe that you will develop more other project to educate our community, and I hope we will be able to do it in future.</p>
IE	<p>Be assure, I am very flattered for making your time and travel to interview me,</p>
IE	<p>To conclude, I think I have already concluded. I would urge our Africans friends, especially those from Cameroon, to not forget where they come from. The country needs them and They need to be brave and go back. The country needs their expertise, whatever experience and skills they have learned here. There is skills shortage in Cameroon. We have a country with lot of potential but it doesn't reflect the quality of life. It is very important that experts, people who have acquired knowledge and experience somewhere else decide to go back to their country of origin and share whatever skills they have acquired in the Diaspora. We have lived in the UK which has 500 years, 200 years of democracy. Here, we can learn new things, not only to copy them in Africa, because African has their ways of seeing things; however, this leadership framework is very important for Africa. We have learned from the experts and I believe that we are better placed to share it to fellow Africans. As for African Leaders, I would urge them to prioritise people's interest in whatever they do. Africa has lots of potential. With a good management, Africa would have come out from where it is today. We would have been so far and other countries in Africa would have benefited as well. This is how I am going to end it.</p> <p>I praise God for giving me this opportunity, and as soon I found other information, I wouldn't hesitate to contact you. I believe this very interesting project, I wish you to succeed. Please feel free to contact me if you think that I should add something.</p> <p>My British wife acquired a Congo Citizenship, and I think she can contribute to the project. I guess! I don't know if it is possible but I will appreciate if it is possible. I have been told that I still have time! As for food, my wife and I enjoy African cuisine. I eat African food 5 out 7 days. Children like it. We combine dishes, we have a normal breakfast but the meal is always heavy, African way. We have that</p>



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	<p>diversity and it works well. We have the best of both world and it's wonderful. Imagine you taking the best of the world; you will have a nice diversity and an extraordinary richness, extraordinary richness.... And I say only those who have not learnt, can bring tribalism, superiority or inferiority complexes that exist, whites towards black and vice versa. Let me share something with you. Long back, I used to do packing job, I met a mixed-race girl who was talking to me, asking me where I was from, she was pleased to mention that come to know African through her mother who had an African boyfriend. That guy is fantastic. I used to have little respect to black; I can assure you that guy is fabulous. He was very educated, very educated. He was doing dirty jobs here and there before I knew that he studied at university. He started helping me with my studies; he was good in math, English and many other subjects. He helped me bust my school's performance. It was because of him. And I have lot of respects for Africans since that time. I used to see them as people who died from hunger, and come to do dirty jobs. Now I realised that many of them even his friends, where highly educated, they had big qualifications, and I wonder why people lack them respect. Is it because they do dirty jobs? They could do better, really. People only judge them for their skin colour. The skin colour, yes, but we have the same blood. That's what the girl was telling. Just because she met the step farther, he isn't a step farther because he never marries the mother, The mum's boyfriend. The remarkable man who has really helped her. That is how she learns about African, she didn't know them... and I believe that ignorance is a key to lot of misconception. White supremacy, black inferiority has always been fed by the medias, the education system, the country. If it wasn't for that, colonialism wouldn't have happened. It was fed by the appetite of one race feeling superior to the other and thinks that other should learn their way of life. This is how the African is seen, with regards to European. Without this discrimination, we are all equal. And I urge my children not to pay attention to that... they will encounter racism one day, even though they consider themselves Europeans.</p> <p>I would like to see the new generations learn what their parents did and went through. I know things have changed a lot and they have to know it as a piece of history. If we don't say that then no one will. It is very important.</p>
IR	Thank you so much

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