

Eyale Pierre - INTERVIEW

Speaker key

IR Interviewer
IE Interviewee

Speaker	Transcription
IR	Good afternoon Mr Eyale Pierre
IE	Good afternoon all
IR	Thank you for your time. This interview is about Bridging Cultures. A heritage project funded by Heritage Fund to collect stories of Congolese who migrated in East London. We are all Volunteers from Community Active Support (CAS). My name is Jose and I am being assisted by Elodie and Jean Marie.
IE	Thank you to have chosen me.
IR	Can you please introduce yourself to our listeners?
IE	<p>Thank you and you are welcome to my place. My name is Eyale Pierre. I was born in Kinshasa-DR Congo in 1960. My mother told me that I was 5 days old when the country has its independence from Belgium Colonial on 30th June 1960. Independence child became my nickname and I was much loved and cherished by all. I had a normal and ordinary upbringing.</p> <p>My dad had us 7, all boys. However, as in all African families living in Cities, we had cousins, aunties and uncles who used to stay with us.</p> <p>My Uncles were very much involved in trading. Buying and selling goods from Angola, Cabinda and Congo Brazaville. And when I turned 19, I asked my father to give me a lump sum of money to start my own business. Which he did, as I was the one helping my uncles labelling merchandise and collecting monies from debtors. had always dreaming of travelling around trading World and He knew that was something I will be good at. Then, I travelled with my Uncles to Moanda, a coastal city, in Western Congo, boarded with Angola to purchase goods such as powder milk, oil, soaps and many others items enough to open up a small business stand.</p>



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	<p>When we arrived back to Kinshasa, one of my Uncle suggested that I should rather have a corner within his shop to see how things work in practice before going solo. And being just 19 years old, I would be exposing myself to possible abuses.</p> <p>This turned out to be the best idea ever, as I could get away of some running costs such as rent, unnecessary and uncontrolled daily government's taxed payment to feed hundreds of corrupted local officials. Few months, I met a family friend who worked at the Foreign office and asked me if I was ever tempted to go and study a broad? I said to him that was my dream and I always shy about it. He invited me to his office and within 3 weeks, I was in a plane to Europe.</p>
IR	Did you attend any school in your childhood?
IE	Do I look like I didn't?
IE	You seem to have missed it. Tell us about it?
IE	I went through a normal school system. I started my primary school at the age of 6 in Kinshasa.
IR	Please describe a normal day at school?
IE	<p>That was a special time. We had schools' buses which you don't have here and children in DR Congo will have to wait longer to see this coming back.</p> <p>On a normal School day, I would wake up at 5h 30, get ready, have my breakfast, and queue up at 6.30 am to jump into the Bus taking us to School. As soon as we get to school, we would line up at the school yard, sing the national anthem, before making our way to our designated classroom for a 7h30 start.</p> <p>Break time lasts 30 minutes from 9h45 - 9h15. The School served rice and biscuits at the break time. My Father was so strict as many other parents of that generation. Education was their priority, to the point that, in other to be given a permission to watch a TV or go cinema for a movie, or play a football match, one would have to pass a series of questions to test your level. He would ask question such as: counting to 100, times tables, alphabet, reading a poem and many more.</p>
IR	Did you do Secondary School?



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IE	<p>I completed my secondary education. During our times In DR Congo, the education system from 0-18 years (adulthood) comprises of 4 Cycles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nursery/maternal Cycle (2 years): 3-5 years old 2. Primary cycle (6 years): 6-12 years old 3. Orientation cycle (2 years): 12-14 4. Secondary cycle (4 years): 15-18 years old. <p>we used to 2 years in High School after 6 years of primary education. On completion of the 2 years, pupils are assessed and choose what field would they want to pursuit and are referred to those Colleges for the remaining 4 years of the secondary school.</p> <p>Only after completing the secondary education that children have to take 4 days final exams leading to “Diplome d’état” State Diploma. It can be compared to A level in England or bacalaureate</p>
IR	<p>Now, tell me about your journey to Europe and experience of life?</p>
IE	<p>It was ever easy to come to Europe. I arrived by Belgium, where I met friend, made new ones. Life was good, parties and parties. I arrived in Summer. Though, it was a bit cold for me, friends give me clothes to wear. And a month, everyone started disappearing and coming back late at nights, everyone was busy and when I asked a woman who used to clean our apartment, she laughed and asked if I was living in a different planet? She went on saying that people are busy with their lives, they have to study and work at the same time to survive, away from their parents.</p> <p>I befriended the women and she started telling me what was really life in Belgium. As Schools term have already started, I have to choose whether to wait for the next term in Belgium and share all expenses with other or return to Kinshasa, times to prepare for the next term. I chose the first.</p> <p>Looking at how much it costed for me to come, the neighbourhood talks, I would be seen as coward and I decided to stay.</p> <p>Soon after I decided to stay, my father died and that really affected me and I turned into drinking, smoking. I was kick out of the apartment, my visa could not be renewed and my life has taken another direction.</p>
IR	<p>How did you find yourself in England?</p>
IE	<p>I was asked to leave the Country by the authority as they couldn’t renew my visa.</p>

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	<p>To avoid arrest and forced deportation back to Kinshasa, my women friend advised me to cross the channel as I could easily be spotted in Netherland. I borrowed a friend's ID and managed to cross to England via Dover. Arriving at Victoria station, a contact picked me at the station and took to his House. He helped me draft a letter to Homme Office the next day informing them of my situation and within a week I was given a temporary stay and Britain becomes my second home ever since.</p> <p>The process took years, no contact with the Homme Office so ever. I felt ignored by the Authority. I wasn't the only one who felt ignored by the Authority. It was the Asylum system then. Things have really changed for the worse.</p> <p>Six months after my arrival, I was given permission to work. Not only that, I had access to accommodation, an income support, access to healthcare and write to study. This assistance to poorer people, refugee and asylum seekers is an Act of generosity from the whole nation to the disadvantaged people and as a Christian I always pray to the all mighty God to bless this nation and its Queen.</p> <p>Here, I am now working full time, a taxpayer for the past 25 + years. I have a stable family. Life has its ups and downs, discrimination, racism, the weather but overall, I am pleased to have agreed to come here.</p>
IR	Do you regret coming here?
IE	Not at all. Rather happy overall.
IR	Do you consider yourself African or British?
IE	Anybody can tell from my look that I am a proud Back African. I see myself as Back African Congolese British.
IR	Do you think of going back to DR Congo?
IE	Of course, for holiday yes. I have spent more than 30 years in Europe and I don't see myself being used to that kind of life anymore. I am a proud African indeed but when it comes to going back definitely no. I belong here. I have made Britain my home. I have taken my children on holiday there just to show them where I came from. Now it is up to them to choose where they want to live.
IR	What will be your legacy to your children and next generation of Congolese in the UK?



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IE	<p>This interview will stay as a legacy to the next generation. They would know that a Congolese man named Eyale Pierre arrived in the UK in the 1980S and lived in East London, and made London, the UK his home.</p> <p>He didn't speak English when he arrived and advised all new comers to first think of learning the language to address all communication barriers as it will help speed up the process of integration into the new land.</p> <p>Also avoid living cluster communities as it concentrates bad behaviours and community labelling and stereotyping while keeping their cultures by organising cultural events to teach children and other communities who are now part of their neighbourhood what their culture is.</p>
IR	<p>Any other thing to add?</p>
IE	<p>I have lots to say but time isn't in our side.</p>
IR	<p>We will make you listen to the interview or send you copy of the interview's transcription should you wish to add or substrate anything.</p> <p>Thank you for your time</p>
IE	<p>Thank you to you.</p>

[00.57.31]

[End of Audio]

Duration 57 minutes and 31 seconds



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