

# Mananga Hibert Interview

## Speaker key

IR Interviewer  
IE Interviewee

Speaker	Transcription
IR	Hello Mr Mananga, 3:40pm, This interview is about Bridging Cultures. A heritage project funded by Heritage Fund to collect stories of Congolese who migrated in East London. This project is run by Community Active Support (CAS). So, mister- give us a brief introduction, do you mind telling us who you are, what do you do for a living, a bit of information for people who are listening to us to know exactly who you are.
IE	Hello, my name is mister Mananga, I am an artist, I'm now retired, now I'm a music teacher and also a performer, I've been here for quite a long time, and I'm still enjoying being here. So about the other immigration things, I have travelled from Africa to come here with a band to do tour, and then as I had another things, I use to teach in schools, I teach college, primary, secondary, colleges, university, and teachers, I teach African music, African rhythm, so I've done journeys of England, America, Spain, Finland, Germany, Tokyo, so many countries like, around the world and then now I'm retired, but I'm still doing piece and pieces of performance. So about the country, the country is okay but you know, as a foreigner, there's something called you need to adapt to live here because it's not your own country, that's why you need to adapt living, be gentle with the people, be kind to all people, but sometimes we get homesick.
IR	Before we get to that mister Mananga, do you mind telling us- we haven't finished our own introduction, are you married, you have children, this and that, whatever, those kind of question which we need to find out as well from you.
IE	No, I'm married, I have three children, one boy, two girls, age of 15, 14, and 12 [inaudible 00:03:04]
IR	That's good, okay. Now when you travel, just tell us a bit when you travel and arrive for the first time in the UK, how was it?
IE	When I first come- first time in the UK, I was surprised to see the country,



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	the way it was organised and things, but some other part of the- as I want to be an artist, we travel around the country, England, we see so many people, we meet a lot of Africans, whites, English, and other white from eastern Europe.
IR	So, the people you met, the people you met I know they are from different background, but when you travel, was that easy for you to get here, was it harder?
IE	No, for me it was easy to come here because I came by contract, I had a work permit, and then we came to perform here, we did a tour, it was easy, I didn't find it difficult to come here.
IR	So, you came here as a performer in the UK and everything was arranged for you.
IE	Everything was arranged.
IR	Is that for yourself or for the whole band?
IE	The whole group, yeah.
IR	And how many were you if I may ask?
IE	We were 12 piece.
IR	Okay. So now when you came in, you find yourself in a multicultural society where you see different people, tell me a bit how was it?
IE	Yeah, as an artist, for me it was normal because I find so many people, I travel a lot, but when I meet people, I met here a lot of people, I have to do my best to adapt to live in a nice society with them, try to cooperate, understand one another, and they cooperate, and I find it not bad for me, so it's good.
IR	Yeah. You have travelled before maybe, you have met different people already, so you're used to that kind of environment or living in a multicultural society, isn't it?
IE	That's right, yeah.
IR	All right. And being a musician it was- you were meeting different kind of people.
IE	Different people, yeah.
IR	And then it was much easier for you.
IE	It was much easier.
IR	All right. So, you didn't choose to come here, isn't it, it was for work, it's just work that brought you here.
IE	Yeah. Just the work brought me here, yeah.
IR	So, what- did you decide to go back after your first contract when you came in or you just stay here permanently?



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IE	No, no, no, no. So first time I came here, 1976, and then we did a tour about a year, we went back to Zimbabwe, to Africa, and then '87 we came again here, we did a tour, went in Europe, and after that, after a year, we went back to Africa, from there I left that group, and then when I was in Africa, I find another contract to go to Japan, so I travel to Japan, there in Japan to perform in a night club for a year, back to Africa, I stayed in Africa-east Africa for about six months, and then got another contract to go back to Japan in different club.
IR	So, you came in '76 for the first time, this is a time whereby I don't know, were there a lot black people around?
IE	There were black people but few.
IR	Very few black people.
IE	Very few.
IR	And then how were you perceived at that time, if they see a band of black people performing, this and that, whatever, people did like or they did not like it?
IE	People did like the music, they like the music but the difference was if you meet for example with a white person or white lady in the street, they are very fear by the black people, colour, yeah, and there's something I show it in Japan, they like us and I went to one shop to buy shoes, I find the old lady, she took my hand, she start to move it if it's dirty.
IR	To see if the colour will come off.
IE	If the colour will come off, so as I know it, it was not strange for me, I was just laughing because those people, they never been- they never see a black man before, even one day in a club one lady ask me if we have houses in Africa, but it was like a joke, I told her we don't have house, we sleep on the trees, and that I tell her- I did told her that even the embassy in Africa, they give him big trees living there with his children, and she say, "Okay, is it true?" I said, "Yeah." and then she disappear for two weeks, when she come back, she come to work to apologise for the question she ask me if we have house in Africa.
IR	So it means she knew what she was asking, isn't it, because if she is asking you like, if you live in a tree and then you answer that no, your ambassador, the representative of your country, my country lives in a big tree because it's being- we fear his family, this and that, whatever, and then the lady came back two weeks after to apologise, how does it make you feel there?
IE	I feel proud, even here I was in a Bath, another city near Bristol, I went to a club with a white lady, she told me that club is racist club, and then I said, "No problem, let's go." we went there, she went to order drink, and then



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	<p>suddenly I see a man coming, a white man coming towards me, and he told me, "Do you know you are black and I am white?" I said, "Yes, I know you are white and I'm black." "So why do you come to our country?" I said, "Look at me, I'm black, we didn't choose to come to your country, you people, you come first to Africa, brought the African here as a slave, that's why you see the African they come here, as me I came here as a teacher, I'm working in a school with your children to teach them the African culture, and then if I finish my contract, I'm going back to my country because I love my country, I won't take your country and put it in my hand and take it to Africa, no, and I didn't come here to beg."</p>
IR	Very interesting.
IE	<p>Yeah. I came to work with your children in school, I visit school from primary to secondary and college, and then the man look at me, he gave me a hand and then he left, he didn't talk nothing else, it's not once we went to Scotland and we meet another white man, he came and said, "Hello, you know you are black, I'm white." I said, "So what? That's your colour, this is mine, there's no problem, I know you are white, I'm black. What is it?" the man just look at me and then he left, he didn't say nothing, so as I understand, the difference in the culture, difference in the colour, you don't need to be angry, be polite and ask the man polite, you will see the difference.</p>
IR	<p>Yeah [inaudible 00:12:09] you just being accepting, isn't it, you are accepting who you are, you are proud of being black, this and that, whatever, and any question they ask you say, "Yes, I know and I'm proud of being black." and then those who ever come with- that resist attitude end up being confused, isn't it?</p>
IE	<p>Yeah, they calm down and they'll be confused and they will give respect and then they will left you, even when I come I was married first by English woman, but Christmas like this we go to visit their friend, their parents or the grandparent, they are teaching me how to take- to hold a fork and a knife, and when we finish that, to show you how to put the fork and knife after finish eating, and the morning the grandparent of my wife says he'll give me tie, he said "Here, you have to wear a tie." but I know all that, I said, "Yes, I know how to wear a tie." I took the tie, I made it to myself and put it in my neck, he say, "Oh, so you know about it." I say, "Yes, I know, it's not strange for me, I've been around the world." he looks me he was like, astonished.</p>
IR	So how could a black person know how to tie.
IE	Yeah.
IR	How to do a tie, how to eat with forks, this and that, whatever.



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IE	Yeah.
IR	I think it's ignorance, what do you think?
IE	No, it's not ignorance, but some of the white people, they never been to Africa, the way they think about Africa black people, they thought we are the animal, even in Japan they are looking as if we have a tail in our trouser, we put it down, I said we don't have tails, we are just like people, we are human being, and then when we play music, they come, all of them they are playing, they are dancing...
IR	Say how come these black people can make us dance.
IE	Yeah, yeah.
IR	That was a very nice experience. What it has on me, and I'm happy by the way you approach it, isn't it, not by anger but by more understanding, that show your level of education, of awareness, this and that, whatever, saying, "Okay, I may end up meeting a hostile person, how am I going to address it." Did you went to lessons or just come up...?
IE	No, because I...
IR	...with yourself and then how you are to address it? Go on.
IE	Was that <b>Mima</b> ?
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IR	Yeah, go ahead.
IE	Me, even in Africa, in my own country, I start to travel when I was 17, I travel my own country because I was like- I wanted to learn the rhythm of- rhythm and the culture of Congo, so I did a tour of our country before I move- I left Congo and then I went to Rwanda, I went to Uganda, I went to Kenya, I went to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and I went to west Africa, I was in the central Africa, I was in Nigeria, Cameroon, Togo, and the Abidjan, so I met so many people, I'm used to the people you know, and to learn a different culture, so when I come this country, it was not- it's not a new country but different experience, you see white people, black people, different culture, so I was used to that.
IR	So that's good, you are a legend, you travel all Africa throughout, teaching, performing, learning the culture altogether, this and that, whatever, that has really, really equipped you with a big personality and how even to behave in the public, so have you ever looked back and say- since you came here, say, "Oh, Africa, I miss Africa." or you have already settled here or you are just being more here and there, performing...?
IE	No, to be honest, I miss Africa, according to what I've learned in this country, but Africa is much better than England, and what is England good is peace, here there is peace, and the- and peace from the government,



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	they know how to make everyone happy and quiet, there's law, if you don't follow, you see the country is bad.
IR	You'll be in trouble with the police.
IE	Yeah. It's better to follow what the rules of the country for you to be happy with a country.
IR	To be an obedient citizen.
IE	To be an obedient citizen, that's right, yeah. And [inaudible 00:03:08] your paper is good and you don't have a problem, but Africa has got love from everyone, for example I will say I went in Gambia, from England I went to Gambia like holiday, not Congo, but where I arrived in the morning, when I come out in the area, everyone's greeting, "Hello, hello, hello." but not here, here when you greet somebody, he's looking at you, "What, what do you want?" they are very serious, they don't just answer, you say, "Hi sir." they will look at you like a stranger, yeah, but not African, African, yeah, African we are open.
IR	If you meet a stranger, you are happy to meet and to greet, you welcome the person and say, "Hi, welcome to our land."
IE	Welcome, we're open. (Speaks in Foreign Language) You know, very nice, I feel happy, the whole- the first day I arrive in Gambia, I come out, I feel very, very, very happy.
IR	That's the new person.
IE	That's the new person, everyone's greeting you on the street, children and then the old people, "Hello, come on, hello, how are you?" so it was really good which is different what I can see here, you don't know your neighbour, if you even know your neighbour, you can't talk to the neighbour because he doesn't know you, whenever you greet him, he look at you as a stranger, but Africa we are open, we don't have that.
IR	So that what makes you- that makes you miss Africa.
IE	It make me miss Africa.
IR	So after being all those years, but let me go back to those- I know you didn't have any- to the immigration bit, so you never encounter any difficulties because you came as a performer, this and that, whatever, traveling around, you kept renewing your stay, this and that, where finally you had your permanent stay, so you never had any problem with that, okay. So when did you finally decide to stay here, when you finally said to stay here and then say, "Oh, I miss Africa." this and that, whatever, how do you behave yourself, do you consider Africa all those years as an African or you consider yourself as a westerner?
IE	No, I consider myself as an African.



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IR	Why after all those years?
IE	No, because we have something we called culture and we have it, with western people and African, there's a big difference, the way we're brought up from our parents, the way our culture is in Africa and here is two things, it's different, but if you want to leave, our problem in our country is leaders, they make trouble because they want money, they don't want [inaudible 00:06:27] our country, yeah, we are not a secure country, that's the bad thing in Africa, all leaders, if they could have learn what we see in Europe, we could have even be better than here.
IR	So apart from that, I mean you've kept your identity, you kept your culture, I know you are performer, you are musician, you are legend which is okay that you are- your roots are more into culture, isn't it, so yeah, I can be- that can explain the fact that you are really, really attached to it.
IE	That's right.
IR	Yeah. So if you consider yourself as being African, what do you do to make sure- what do you do to make sure that culture is embedded to the community where you live, around yourself, this and that, whatever, how do you do to embed it?
IE	For me, the way I live here, I try to communicate with my fellow Africans and we meet some other people from my country, other people from a different country you know, Nigerian, Congolese, with Ghanaian, Zimbabwean, all African, I know how to couple them you know, I never had a problem with these people, but as where I came from, I can't forget them, there's something which we're missing from Africa.
IR	Which is your roots.
IE	Roots and the sun. While you are there in Africa, you just feel bright, everything is good, everything is nice, I mean I went to east Africa, I start to see memories of my own country, and I was very happy every day, I'm laughing when I see my fellow people do their work, Africa the way it is, I was very, very happy.
IR	So we took- we spoken about the culture, this and that, and is the food also is this?
IE	The food.
IR	Have you kept the same regime or you've changed your...?
IE	No, no, no, I keep to do in the same regime, but there's a difference with the food we are using here and the food in Africa, Africa, they have what you call it, we have a proper food, organic, because of the- our soil, but what we're eating here is frozen food.
IR	Frozen processed food...



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IE	Processed and all that, but we don't have- it doesn't give you enough energy, but if we go in Africa, eat African food, you find yourself you wake up, even your body, your mind, your soul is different.
IR	But that was from your mind, isn't it, because food is food.
IE	No, no, no, it's not food is food, but the food we are...
IR	...although organic food is expensive but food is still food.
IE	No, that's what I said, we in Africa, African people, they're eating organic food which has got no chemical, which is not processed, that's the difference, yeah, but here everything is frozen, is well processed, everything, that's the difference.
IR	And music-wise.
IE	The music, yeah, music is okay, music is okay, music, we have to do our own and then we work in cooperation from those who are back at home, listen the style, the play, and we change, because when I was here, my first band, after I came to stay here, the first band that I made was mixed with white people, I'm from Congo, instead I play rumba, I'm playing jazz, jazz is funky, because the area I was, there was not enough black musician or Congolese musician, as an artist you need to cope with the situation.
IR	You need to adapt.
IE	To adapt, yeah.
IR	Okay. So now that after all those years you've been here, it looks like you have maintained the same diet, you've maintained the same behaviour, this and that, whatever, then what has it made you look compared to the others, are you more conservative or...?
IE	No, no, no...
IR	Or you end up adapting because you say you have to adapt your music, this and that, whatever, why don't you adapt your behaviours with- you don't have to adapt the way you eat then?
IE	No, I adapt, I adapt the way I eat, the way my behaviour, because I'm from- where I was born, where I was brought up with my family, my daddy, he use to have two women, two wives, and altogether my family, we are 11 and I was the last one, and the way we were living with my brother and sisters, we were like friends, the family, we were like friends, my brothers, my sisters, all love each other, so I keep that love with me when I start to travel, if I meet you, then I consider you like my brother, the same mother, same father, and I didn't know that somebody has to hit someone until I come to see it I Kenya, somebody say, "No, I don't like you, you do this." I was surprised, "Why? Why this guy talking about this?"
IR	Because you are brought up in a world without discrimination.



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IE	No discrimination, no nothing, you know, I treat everyone like my brother or sister, but now I start to see the difference from other people, the way they brought them up, they're different, and so I start to be distant with the trouble maker.
IR	So now that you've come, now that you've seen, have you seen any difference in a way, because if you are talking about- let's talk about behaviour, how do they- you see these people here behaving compared to the others, you talk about hit where you see somebody hitting another person, so any other thing you've experience throughout your stay here?
IE	Yeah, yeah. I experienced racism, there's racism, it's all over the place in Europe, America, Asia, because I've been all over the place, all over the world, I see there's racist.
IR	So, do you have any situation how to counter that, how to...?
IE	No, because I know that there is- I have to be prepared to adapt the situation or to know that this person doesn't like me, I have to be distant with him, you see, but I don't have to bring the trouble, I know how to give each other space, because...
IR	You said that you had a family, you have a family with children, this and that, whatever, what do you teach your children, because the children, they were brought up in a different environment like yours, is this environment a bit hostile to them, this and that, whatever, I don't know, so how did you bring up...?
IE	My children bring- when they are in this house, this is Africa, when they go outside, it's Europe, and I teach them how to behave and to respect the adults, how to respect the teachers, how to get out of trouble if they are in a group, so I teach them to cope with the situation.
IR	Yeah. But what do you think- if you said your house in Africa- if they're in your house, they behave like they're in Africa, but if they're outside, that's a confusion.
IE	No, no, no, no, no.
IR	It is a confusion, because those children are born here, they live here, everything is here, they never been to Africa, they intend maybe not to go to Africa because Africa is a foreign land to them.
IE	I know, but all that's coming from you as a father or the parent, the way you're living with your children in your house is like the way you live in Africa, respect, love- love, respect, end of the rule, they have to understand your rule of the house, rule of the parent, rule of children, how to respect them, they have to respect me as a father, and...
IR	But while people, even European, they do the same thing, isn't it?



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IE	No, no, no, no, no, they're different.
IR	How are they different?
IE	They're different because they are very free in their mind, they're free, they can say anything to their parent, some of them very rude, because I've seen it when I first come in Brighton, I went into one family, and one young girl, she was about seven, she's telling her parent, "Shut up mum. Mum shut up, shut up." and for me I didn't- I feel very bad, I say, "Why will a child can say to the parent shut up?" In Africa you can't say to your parent, "Shut up, ma."
IR	Even if they are wrong, you can't.
IE	No, they teach us discipline, respect, and love, love to respect that you know that this is my father, this is my brother.
IR	Even if he does wrong, he's still my brother, he's my father...
IE	He's my father.
IR	You can't tell him off.
IE	No, no, no, no. There's a time you can say to dad, "No, dad, that is not correct." but in good manner you know, but not here, in here, all the children they are free so it's difficult to control them, and many kids they are rude, so you need how to be with them, otherwise the- they're going to mess you up.
IR	So that experience makes you treat your children- I mean teach your children how to behave.
IE	Yes.
IR	So, do they behave as Africans or do they behave as Europeans, they're mixed for...?
IE	They're mixed now, their behaviour...
IR	Or they choose the best of both world?
IE	They choose the best, because I know now they are very good because they learn to behave from here, from the house, and in the school, they are doing well, they are not in trouble because they understand what we are telling them or taught them how to live in a society.
IR	So, all those experience, does it make you think, "Why did I come here, I would have stayed in Africa." it comes a time where you say to yourself, "This was a waste of the time for me coming here." is it?
IE	I think it was a waste of time sometimes because I am developing something and see the difference from them, they're good sometimes, it's the thing that we miss in Africa, we don't have it in Africa, they have it here, they use brain a lot, not physical, yeah, that's what we have... (Pause) Nowadays in Africa, there's not- in our time, we had a lot of respect for the



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	elders, but now, it's not no more, the people have become different.
IR	So, things have changed also in Africa.
IE	Yeah, things have changed. Why, because like our country, it's because of war, the country is not stable, there's no education, no hospitals, those kind of things, it's very strange in Africa.
IR	If you look at this new generation, people have arrived after or recently, this and that, whatever, or those children who were born here, this and that, like you and the others, blah, blah, the extended family, friends [inaudible 00:21:04] friends who you have, if you sit down and then look at them, what do you say, how do you see them?
IE	Those new comer from Africa, they just come- they try to cope or to adapt this country, but some of them, when they come they're quiet, if they get used to the country, they become badder than those who are born here you know, they adapt the mentality of those boys here, they become even worse.
IR	So why is that then? Because they came from where there's no education- there's no good education, there is education, there's no good education, no sustainable peace, but as soon as they land here, they even become worse so what is missing?
IE	Yeah. Because when they come in from there, they have that respect and behaviour, but in this country, because there's a lot of freedom from the children and they have to adapt to that freedom, they use it in a bad way you know, they use it in a bad way, they said, "Oh, I can do this, then because I'm a child they cannot arrest me, because I'm a child, I can do this." so it become even worse, one day- I think I was in bus, I see the young boy like, 12, 13, they're entering the bus and I see one slapping one white man- a man, old man, the old man didn't do nothing, saying, "Why you look at me, why you look at me?" the boy slap.
IR	With no reason.
IE	No reason, you see. That's not good behaviour.
IR	I suppose that brings that anger on those children, is there any reason for your own experience, why those children with no reason they have to behave that way [inaudible 00:23:33] they are black children.
IE	Black children. It's the system, some of them they start to use drugs, and the whole thing is just messed up you know, the children like, our own children, they have too much problem.
IR	So, if you look at all those years, your experience, you are legend, you've done a lot, is there anything or any way you want people to remember you?



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IE	To remember me?
IR	Yeah.
IE	Yeah.
IR	How do you want people to remember you?
IE	People that remember me like, in this country as an artist, I have- my profile is on Google, someone will type my name in Google, you'll find my biography, if you go to the BBC radio three, Africa on your street, my biography is there because I've done a lot with BBC.
IR	So those who cannot read, those who are listening to this interview, if you want them to remember you, how do you want them to remember you as?
IE	They have to remember as an artist from Africa, those who have seen me, because I'm performing with so many festivals, and my stuff is in YouTube.
IR	So, they wanted to remember you as an African, as a performer, or somebody who has been here for 30 years plus.
IE	Just to remember as an artist.
IR	As artist and a performer.
IE	And a performer.
IR	So, anything you want to add in whatever we have said, maybe there's a question which I didn't ask, anything you want to expand to close this interview?
IE	To close this interview...
IR	Any statement?
IE	Yeah, my statement is this country is not bad but we have to remember where we come from, we have children, sometimes they have to see and visit Africa to learn our own culture, where we come from, because we are two things different, two people different, there's in Europe and we're Africa, you can't be- I can say now I'm British, but I'm not English, I'm British because I lived here for a long time, it's just the start which they gave me, but I know where I come from, I'm a black African.
IR	Thank you mister Koko for your time, I really appreciate.
IE	You're welcome.

[00.59.54]

**[End of Audio]**

**Duration 59 minutes and 54 seconds**



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