

Francophone African

Oral History

Interviewer: Today is the May 13th, 2017, I am going to interview you in the relation to Francophone African Oral History project. Good morning!

Interviewee: Good morning.

Interviewer: May I ask you to introduce yourself please?

Interviewee: My name is Mardochee Koko, I was born on 10th March 1998 in Luanda/Angola

Interviewer: Which part of Luanda were you born?

Interviewee: I was born in Mabore.

Interviewer: Can you talk about your family?

Interviewee: I have two sisters, I am the only boy in the family, my parents are separated.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

Interviewee: In Angola, in the School called Judaika and I had spent almost 3 years there.

Interviewer: What age were you at that time?

Interviewee: I started there at the age of 5 and halfway through then I came to Europe.

Interviewer: Do you still remember the School?

Interviewee: Yeah, I still remember the school, it was really tiny and small, if you are late you would get hit in the hand and if you don't pay the fees you would get kicked out of the lessons.

Interviewer: Did you have friends at School?

Interviewee: In School, I had a lot of friends because I was making jokes, my friends were like a family to me, we grew up together and our parents were friends as well, even when I go back to Angola, we are just like family.

Interviewer: Did you finish your primary education?

Interviewee: No I did not finish my primary education

Interviewer: And what happened?

Interviewee: When I was in Angola, my parents were struggling, at one point they could not send me and my big sister at school at the same time, so I had to stop and allow my big sister going to school. I stated school at the very young age, I was supposed to be at the year reception but I was doing year 1. There was a saying that children get witchcraft at the nursery school that's why my parents had chosen to put me at year 1. Unfortunately, I had

to stop so my sister can continue School as my parents could not afford the school fees for both of us. I started thinking of coming to Europe.

People would come to us, saying that they going to plan the trip but they would always have tricked us, until my uncle who worked for the Army, stepped in and got us the right travel documents and we had managed to travel. We travelled to South Africa then to the UK.

Interviewer: Did you travel as a family or by yourself?

Interviewee: We travelled as family; me, my big sister and my Aunt, just three of us.

Interviewer: Your parents stayed?

Interviewee: My parents had stayed due to the lack of money, they could not afford the travel tickets for all of us and my dad could not let my mom go because he fought that my mom would be lonely, which I think it was the biggest mistake from my dad because I believe that it is always best to let children with they own biological mother instead of giving children away with someone else, the atmosphere is always different and you get treated badly. I was only 5 years old and there was not much I could have done, I would do what I was told to do but I can still remember.

Interviewer: When did you come in the UK?

Interviewee: I arrived in the UK in 2003.

Interviewer: Can you described your journey?

Interviewee: My journey seems really long, we got a plane from Congo to South Africa-Belgium then to the UK.

Interviewer: Were there someone expecting you at the arrival?

Interviewee: No one was expecting us but my dad had a big brother who lived in London, he had his own family and never really wanted to cross pass us, he thought that if he got involved, something might go wrong with his family and maybe he would get told to go back as both my dad and him are from the Congo, my uncle had fled the war in Congo and we came from Angola, so he was scared that things going to get confused from the Council if he get involved with us, so we had to go in separated path.

Interviewer: What did you do?

Interviewee: Being little, I cannot really remember everything but I think we went to the Home Office, we told them what had happened but they did not believe us even though it was a **Huge War** in Angola, in **Savimbi** era, a lot of people got killed, awful things had happened at that time.

Interviewer: The Home Office refused you and what happened next?

Interviewee: They refused us twice and the third time they had accepted our claim, I think they had checked they news and everything that was happening in Angola then finally they had accepted us and we were given accommodation in **Coventry** for a couple months.

Interviewer: Which school did you go in Coventry?

Interviewee: I went to *Gosford Park School* in year reception for a couple months then we moved to Newtown in Birmingham, that's where I went to school from year 1 to year 6 and I had completed all my primary education there.

Interviewer: Which school was that?

Interviewee: It was *St George Primary* School.

Interviewer: Were you bullied?

Interviewee: At the start, I got bullied because I could not speak English, sometimes I would get told to swear and I would say it loud to the teacher and then I would get into trouble because I could not understand any English word, I also find it hard to socialise from the area I used to live, it was Black community area, there were a lot of Jamaican people there and I could not fit in, but the time I get to year 2, I could speak English properly and I started making friends, playing football and going out.

Interviewer: You had finished your primary education, then what did you do?

Interviewee: After that I went to *Heartlands Academy* from year 7 to year 9, from year 9, I had a bit of family problems, I went to the Congo in holiday with my Aunty but she had lost my passport, we had reported it to the Embassy but they refused to give me the emergency travel document, they claimed that because I was under 16 years old they could not give me an emergency travel document, so I was stuck in the Congo for 4 months.

My dad is Congolese so his mom is there, I stayed with my grandmother but things that were happening there, I never seen it before, there were a lot of trouble, people getting chassed for no raison, a lot of shooting and killing and one day I went to my cousin's but we got chassed for no raison.

I spent 4 months in the Congo then I went to Angola at South African Embassy and they issued me with an emergency travel document, that's how I came back in the UK. By the time I came back, it was too late for me to do my GSEC, so I had to go straight to College to do functional skills, it was not a right level for me. I was determined to succeed in my studies because I was really a good student and before I went to the Congo, I was also dedicated to football, I told myself that I would like to be a footballer but everything had changed since I lost my passport in the Congo, my life had changed since then, but I believe that everything happened for a raison, it made me a man, it God's plan.

Interviewer: You still go to College?

Interviewee: Yes, I still go to College, I am on my last year on level 3, I have passed all my courses and hopeful next year, I would be going to University

Interviewer: What would you do at University?

Interviewee: I would like to do a teaching course.

Interviewer: What about football? You still play?

Interviewee: I still play but I am not as good as I used to be, even people I used to play with are telling me that I am not playing good anymore, even my coach of under 14 club tried to boost my confidence and passion to football, he told me I should start to believe in myself that I can make it, I have talent but I should believe in myself.

Interviewer: Which part of Birmingham do you live now?

Interviewee: I live in Lea Hall/Stechnford.

Interviewer: Who do you live with?

Interviewee: I live with my two sisters and my nephew.

Interviewer: Since you come in Birmingham, what has changed?

Interviewee: When I came in Birmingham, I have lived in different area: Newton, Aston, Elderton, Branford... I would say, Birmingham has changed a lot, it is more multi-culture now compare to back then, people got mixed up, white, black or Asian live together and people get married to a person of different culture and background.

Interviewer: Apart from going to College, do you work?

Interviewee: I am currently working part-time at **FIVE GUYS**, the money support myself and my sisters as well.

Interviewer: What exactly do you do at *five guys*?

Interviewee: I work in the catering and customer service, I either cook the food, work in the till or help on the floor and wash up; basically, I do everything around the work-place.

Interviewer: Do you have friends?

Interviewee: Growing up, I had bad people around me, they would either smoke weed or sell drugs but the good things about me is that I made the decision to follow the right rout regardless of what people say that "*children who grew up separately to their parents end up bad*" but I think it's up to yourself to choose the right rout. The friends that I hang around with, have ambitious like me and they want to get somewhere in life, I do not hang around **MacDonald or KFC** and I do not get involved in illegal activities, like robbery, selling drugs or taking drugs; I do not smoke and I do not drink, even if you try to influence me, I will not do it.

Interviewer: Have you ever experienced racism?

Interviewee: Yes, to be honest, long time ago when I used to play with this one football team in **Small Heath**, everyone was **white**, some was **Asian** and I was the only **Black** there, sometimes they would make stupid comment like "**Pass the ball to the Monkey**" and I would get angry and discriminate them back, I do not believe in racism and I think we are all the same, the leaders of the world should tackle that issue and get rid of racism, it's not right. I see Black footballers get called Monkeys in the pitch, I really hate it; we are all human, no one is Black or White etc.

Interviewer: Where is home for you, Africa or Europe?

Interviewee: I would say the home is back in Africa but due to the things that I went through back there, I would not go back, but Africa will always be my home. If it gets safer, I would love to go back but now it's not safe.

Interviewer: How do you keep in touch with Africa?

Interviewee: I try to keep in touch with home but sometimes it is hard, the internet connection is not that good and people have difficulty having phones but I manage to communicate with my grandmother in the Congo, they have quite a good connection.

Interviewer: How do you keep your culture ties?

Interviewee: To be honest, because I grew up with people from different cultures, I also listen to different kind of music, I listen to Congolese music, Western music etc. I grew up more here and sometimes I do not really follow African culture in the way I should because I live over here.

Interviewer: If you do not follow your African root, what do you think your children going to be like?

Interviewee: I get what you mean but the main thing for me about the culture is the language, I speak three languages: Lingala, Portuguese and English; out of the three, the language that I would not want to forget is **Lingala** because that's my root, Lingala is spoken in the Congo and Angola as well.

Interviewer: What about the food?

Interviewee: To be honest, I am into anything, and my favourite African food that my mom used to cook is **Tschaka Madesu**, I love it, I even told my girlfriend about it and she cooks it for me and my friends.

Interviewer: We are at the end of our interview; do you have anything to add?

Interviewee: That's the most of it to be honest.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time.

Interviewee: Thank you and have a nice day.