

LBE 2009 – Migration

Episode 9: Return to Mali

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Characters:

Scene 1:

Narrator (Male or female)

Mamadou Diaby, 31

Scene 2:

Narrator

Daouda Tounkara

Intro:

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series about migration between Africa and Europe. For the majority of Africans Europe seems to be the Promised Land. Many young Africans try to find refuge in Europe, to escape unemployment and misery at home. They are ready to do almost anything: some become so-called illegal aliens after their tourist visas for Europe run out, others risk their lives by crowding onto boats to reach Europe's coasts by sea. Mamadou Diaby and Daouda Tounkara are two young Malians who chose the first option. But they were disappointed after a few years in Europe and decided to return home.

Scene 1:

1. SFX: Customer reception

2. Narrator:

We're in the capital of Mali, Bamako, in Mamadou Diaby's furniture store right in the city's main shopping district. Mamadou is sitting at his computer – there is a television on in the background – and he seems to be a happy man. A few years ago, he would never have thought he would be in this situation today...

The young man is from Mali's Soninke ethnic group, a people which likes to travel. At the age of 23, he decided to go to France and planned to make a fortune. Just a few years earlier, he had left school to set up a small business in Bamako. In 2001, he landed in Paris – it was the first time he had been outside of Mali. He just couldn't get over it:

3. O-Ton Mamadou, French :

"It's always difficult; it's like going to another world. Mali and France, or Europe, are not the same. There's a huge difference. It was the first time I was traveling. The first time I'd gone to Europe."

4. Narrator:

Having arrived in Europe on a three-month tourist visa, the young man later decided to stay – illegally. Then he had to face the tough reality of the job market:

5. O-Ton Mamadou, French:

"Everyone knows that it's not easy to work in France. You can't work if you don't have papers. You have to have a residence permit to work. I didn't have one. So I could only work illegally – that's what happens if you don't have papers."

6. Narrator:

Illegal immigrants without papers can't get help from public organizations to get a job. They are not recognized by the local authorities and have no rights. They have to work illegally – they end up washing up in small restaurants, sweeping the streets, or cutting hair etc. They are never paid properly. They are often abused by their employers, who make the most of their illegal status.

Illegal immigrants usually think they have to accept everything even if it's below the belt. They don't protest or complain because they're scared of having to deal with the police. This could lead to them being deported back to their country of origin. Immigrants are often caught in routine police checks.

Mamadou was lucky. He managed to stay in France illegally for seven years. But in the end he could not stand it any longer. He felt exploited by his employers, who made the most of his illegal status, and he was scared of being caught by the police. At the end of 2007, he went back to Mali.

7. SFX: in the shop

8. Narrator:

Mamadou opened a furniture store in Bamako with the small amount of money that he had managed to save. He gives us a guided tour:

9. O-Ton Mamadou, French: Guided tour

"These are the beds, they were imported from Dubai, from Turkey. Here we have computer desks imported from China. This is dining room furniture that I import from Dubai. There are desks, armchairs, bookshelves."

10. Narrator:

Mamadou has no regrets today. He has contracts with public and private organizations. He travels a lot because of his work:

11. O-Ton Mamadou, French :

"I stock up in Europe and in Asia. I go to Dubai, to China, to Turkey to buy stock and to sell it off in Mali. Even if I went to France I wouldn't stay. I might go there on holiday. You can see what I manage now. I wouldn't leave all this behind to go and suffer in France."

12. Narrator:

Since he has lived in Europe and in Africa, Mamadou feels he can compare the two:

13. O-Ton Mamadou , French :

"I live better than many Malians in France. I can't say I have a better life than all the Malians in France but many of them there are suffering and finding it really tough."

14. Narrator:

Mamadou is only 31 and yet he's already a Chief Executive Officer. He has six employees and says young people should be a bit more far-sighted:

15. O-Ton Mamadou, French :

"It's hard to see these young people of 15, 16, 19, 20 who want to go to Spain, to Italy, who throw themselves into the sea, who take seats in boats that later sink. There are so many people dying in their attempts to get to Europe. Life is not necessarily better over there. We've been to Europe, we know what the reality is."

16. Narrator:

Mamadou says there are massive chances in Africa. The continent needs all its sons for its development:

17. O-Ton Mamadou, French :

"I would like all the Malians who are away, all the Africans who are in Europe, in Asia, everywhere in the world, to come home and to do something here. They don't have to invest in my area, in furniture. There are all sorts of things to do."

Scene 2:

18. O-Ton Daouda beneath Fakoly's music, French :
« This is a clip I made with Fakoly Doumbia, the Malian singer...
(fade out under following text)

19. Narrator:

Daouda Tounkara is another young Malian who had dreams of the European El Dorado. Like Mamadou, he left school, went to France and then came back to Mali to build up a life for himself. We visited him at his audio-visual production studio in a popular district of Bamako. There are computers and video editing equipment. There are also cameras. How did this former immigrant get all this equipment?

20. SFX : Music Fakoly

21. Narrator :

In January 2002, Daouda went to Paris. He planned to stay as long as possible although he only had a tourist visa. But very quickly he had to face the realities on the ground:

22. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"It wasn't easy in France. I went for seven months without a job. I was discouraged, but I fought and in the end I stayed in Europe for almost five years."

23. Narrator:

But he did jobs he would never have accepted to do in Mali: Cleaning in a factory, for example, or gardening. However, gradually he started taking pictures at weddings and other events organized by Malians because he also knew how to use a camera.

24. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"We all worked illegally. We all had odd jobs and were paid in cash, no checks. As soon as you would see a policeman, you would be scared. It wasn't easy at all. All this stress made me come home."

25. Narrator:

But the decision was not easy because he did not have that many savings. Daouda spoke to his friends who suggested he should contact the International Migration Organization. He received some management training and the NGO promised to help him once he had gone home. In 2006, the young man boarded a plane bound for Mali. Two months later, Bamako's IMO office bought him a camera, a computer and some other equipment. The audiovisual production studio was born. Two years later, Daouda is satisfied:

26. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"It's OK, it's OK... it's better than being on the run from all of Europe's police. I'm doing OK. The little money I earn is plenty for me:"

27. Narrator:

Now there is more equipment and the studio has three cameras and four computers. This is proof that the business is doing well. The boss also has long-term plans:

28. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"My ambition is to expand my studio, get new equipment, not necessarily to set up a television studio but to have first-class equipment."

29. Narrator:

Daouda, who employs two to five people, depending on the workload, has already made a dozen video clips with Malian musicians that have been broadcast on national television. He has also covered weddings, birthdays and other such events. Does he want to go back to Europe?

30. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"No, not really (laughs), I won't say I would never go but it would just be for holidays. If it's for work, no thanks!"

31. Narrator:

Just like Mamadou, the furniture seller, Daouda wants immigrants to remember their countries of origin:

32. O-Ton Daouda, French :

"My advice to young adventurers is to come back and do something at home. That's my opinion anyway. That's what made me come back to Mali."

33. SFX : Music Fakoly

34. Narrator:

After experiencing Europe, Mamadou and Daouda both realized it was also possible to succeed in Africa. You just have to have ideas and a passion for work.

Outro:

That's all for today's Learning by Ear program about migration. Our reporter in Mali was Mahamadou Koné. Thanks for listening to us. If you would like to find out more about this topic, or listen to any other Learning by Ear program, or to this particular episode again, please visit our website at www.dw-world.de/lbe.

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