

PUBLIC LECTURE

Migration and Politics in Africa

Ken Bugul

SUMMARY

Public lecture presented at the BYU Kennedy Center for International Studies, 28 February 2018

MAREN MONSON, KENNEDY CENTER (Introduction): Ken Bugul is the pen name of the acclaimed and influential Senegalese woman writer Mariétou Mbaye Biléoma and means, in the Wolof language, “one who is unwanted.” She is one of the most renowned authors in francophone African literature. Her writings are also some of the most disputed due to her controversial positions on social issues. She is the author of ten novels published to date, the first being *Le baobab fou* in 1983 and the most recent, titled *Cacophonie*, published in 2014. In 1999, she was awarded the Grand Prix littéraire de l’Afrique noire for her third novel, *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. In addition to the theme of women conditions in Africa, her works also deal with politics and migration. In her writing, she calls for a collective awareness of oppressed African people who can no longer languish in lethargy and feed on endless illusions. The title of her lecture today is “Migration and Politics in Africa.” In addition to discussing these topics, she will address how she includes these themes in her works as an artist writer. Please join me in welcoming Ken Bugul.

KEN BUGUL: Good morning or afternoon, yes, afternoon. *Bonjour tout le monde*, good afternoon everybody. I’m very happy to be here and very glad to be among the students and the directors and teachers and friends; I’m very impressed. And I’m very happy to be in Utah because it is one of the states in America I want to visit: Utah, Wyoming, and Montana. So, this year, Utah. I hope next time, Wyoming. And Montana. Just for the landscapes, the mountains, the stones. I like nature and the environment. I am so happy to be here. Fortunately, there is no mountain. If not, I am not going to talk – I’ll watch the mountains, but . . . so, I’m going to watch you.

So, my English is not very good. But anyway, as what I am talking about is something I’m feeling deeply in me and something from Africa, living in Africa – and I’m very happy living in Africa – facing all the situations, all the issues, why the everyday struggle because we are always struggling. I used to say that in Africa we don’t have problems; we use our time looking for solutions. So, this is dynamic in struggling every day for finding solutions instead of crying, “Oh no!” and, “No, no, no, no, no, no.” People say, “How do you do in Africa? You are poor; you are this and that.” I say, “Oh, boy! Huh?” We don’t realize that we are poor because we are busy finding solutions and struggling – and enjoying, still, one moment of life, one second, one hour, one day. Every moment is important. So, to be in the process of enjoying each moment as if it is the last one make the things very dynamic, and I’m very happy for that way of life.

And last time I was in Germany, I was telling to the people that probably we are not looking for being developed country like Europe or European countries or like America. We just want to be just a little – not too much because the day I am going to be in developed country in Africa, I will lose a lot of, how do you call that – to be *involved* in being ready for any moment and looking for solutions. But if I have everything, I am just going maybe to bore myself, so I am very happy to live in Africa.

So, when we are talking about migration and politics in Africa, it's big issues. I'm just going to give you an overview because if you want to talk about it, we need maybe two, three, four, five sessions because Africa is a *very* big continent. And from the north to the south, eastern side and western side and Sub-Saharan Africa in the Sahel completely different from the western side, you have central Africa. So, it's big, huge world, it's a *world*, Africa is a world, because even a country is a world. So, if you have 54 – we don't know sometimes if there are 53 or 54 or 55 because of South Sudan and in Somali some of them say, "We are a country" – so, we are, let us say 55.

So, the problem of migration. Usually in Africa, in the old days before the colonizers came, even before that because the first colonization we have in Africa was coming from the Middle East and Arabic world with Islam living [in] Arabia along the north of Sahel, the north of Africa up to Spain and none of the part came down through the desert up to the northern Sahel countries of Mauritania, Senegal, you have it in Mali, Niger, where you find much more Muslims than if you travel to central Africa, for example. They did not go further because of natural obstacles like lakes or rivers or mountains or forests or whatever. But in the Sahel region, those countries close to the Sahara, the invasion of [Arabs], but with religion, with Islam. Before they came, we used to live to enjoy life because we were living, sometimes I say, in two brackets, "primitive" lives – but I like primitive life. It does not mean that we are wild people or we are in the forest like the lion and *no!* It is just enjoying. If you are hungry, there is a fruit, you eat the fruit. If you are thirsty, you have natural water, you take it. Just to live simply, but good. But when we start having these people coming in Africa, our problems started at that time.

And, then, with the colonization, what we have from the worst, I think, we have with the colonization from English people, from French people, Dutch people, German (up to the Second World War, not too much German), Italian, up to Ethiopia, etc. – Libya, Ethiopia. But mainly, English, French, mainly. And, they decided in the end of 19th century, for their own purpose – I don't know where they were sitting, somewhere in a European city, in an office – and they took Africa like a cake, to just share it among the colonizers. So, France says, "Yes, me Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, up to Congo-Brazzaville" – 16 countries were colonized by France. And then we have England in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Ghana, in Nigeria, Kenya, and then the rest of Africa up to South Africa.

And, when they started, now, designing the countries and making borders, it is where we started really having a problem of *borders*. Because they did their own borders according to their own interests, and like the children saying, "No, give me more," "No, take this," "No, I like this one," "No, this one is for you." And then they were just like children in front of a cake or something like that.

And, the problem that it brought – particularly, you see, in Senegal, Mali, Guinea, we have the same people living in different countries. For example, we have a rebellion in the south of Senegal, in Casamance, and that rebellion is lasting since the '80s. And it is difficult to solve the problem of the rebellion because the people of Casamance, half of them the origins is from Guinea-Bissau. You have the Balanta people are shared between the south of Senegal and the other part is in Guinea-Bissau. You see, for example, I was living in Togo during five years. In Togo, in Benin, you see the people traveling from Togo to Benin to bury people. So, when we are at the border of Benin and Togo, you see, how do you say, when a dead person – *le coffins?* Caskets, yes – crossing the border because somebody died in Togo but the village is in Benin, and somebody dies in Benin – no the village in Togo. And this comes from how the European people sitting in Berlin – I think it was in Berlin – just traced the borders of the countries, not taking into account who are living there – the people, from same language and family, living there. They don't mind about that. It was just equation of, "No, this is good for me," "No, give me a little bit more," "No, reduce here." And, reducing, they were dividing people, families, etc. So, the problem of the borders started with the colonization.

And, up to today we can't find a way to solve the issue because it brings a lot of conflict sometimes among countries. Between Mali and Burkina Faso, there was even a war – a *war!* – just to say, "The border is here," "No, the border is there." The situation between Senegal and Mauritania, we are trying to behave like gentlewoman and gentleman, but the situation is very tense up to today because we say that the river Senegal is our border because during the French colonization, Saint-Louis was the headquarters of the French colonizers for west Africa. And from Saint-Louis they were covering Mauritania and the rest of their colonies in Africa. And the French people say that the river Senegal is a border. But before that we did not have problems of border. The people of Senegal in the northern part, they can work on the other side of the river – even there is a movie called "On the Other Side of the River" – during the rainy seasons. And people from Mauritania were coming to Senegal with the cattle to find food, etc. There was no problem. But since now we are talking about *border*, we say that is a natural border. We have a lot of problems, a lot of conflicts. And even sometimes, sometimes people are killed. And in the '80s, Senegal had problem with Mauritania, dramatic problem, and they were killing each other. And the Senegalese people, they killed a lot of Mauritians who were living in Senegal. So, we have those problems of borders inherited from the colonization.

So, the people who are moving. So, we used to have those movements of people among the continent like that because of the borders from the colonization. So, moving, migrating, in those days in Africa, within Africa, was something very natural. So, there was no problem. We started having problems in the maybe '70s, '80s. Big countries like Nigeria said there were too many foreigners – African foreigners – in Nigeria because people went there for, because of the oil, they were producing a lot of oil. There were people who were saying that Nigeria is very rich. So, people were saying, "I'm going to Nigeria." But there were so many in Nigeria that want they put everybody outside. We had that also in Congo-Brazzaville. They sent out many other Africans who went there, also for the oil. It is a country, very big country, forest with a lot of resources, and not many people were living in the Congo. We used to have those kinds of problems.

But now, when we started facing now the big migration outside Africa to Europe. Now, we can talk about the modern migration. If not, in Africa, we still have migration. People are moving a lot, much more within Africa than outside of Africa. People think that all African people are

migrating. *No!* It's a very small, little percentage compared to the migrants in from other parts of the world. We still have this migration within the continent, still. But, we talk about the migration from now Africa to Europe.

What I can say about Senegal, for example. The migration, we used to have types of migration. Because in the early 20th century, it was France, our colonizer, who asked one of our politicians, Blaise Diagne, that they need soldiers for the First World War, 1914–1918. So, I think that it was Clémenceau who was in France asked that Senegalese man Blaise Diagne: “I need 50,000 soldiers from Senegal.” And, Blaise Diagne sent 71,000 – more than what Clémenceau needed! So, those 71,000 from Senegal, from Mali, because in those days, with the colonization, it was called *L'Empire*. It was called Sudan – Mali was named [French] Sudan – and Senegal they called them *le Soudan*. Even after that we have problems with Mali already for a while, but fortunately there was no war. And those 71 – some of them, of course, they died during the war, some of them came back, and others, they stay there for a while, and stay and become French people.

And, the second movement of people from mostly all over Africa to go to Europe during the Second World War. All those *Tirailleurs*, called the *Tirailleurs sénégalais*, but in fact you have *Gabonais*, you have *Burkinabés*, you have *Maliens*, you have *Guinéens*, *Sénégalais*, but all of them were called *Tirailleurs sénégalais*. So, some of them died during the Second World War, some of them embark, and some of them stayed. And from the Second World War up to the '70s, there was no strong migration from Europe.

And, from Senegal, the problem was in the '70s the country went through drought – *sécheresse* – of seven years. And the people couldn't work because no rain, the cattle was dying, the people were dying. So, we had people migrating to Europe, particularly to France because of the language and they were much more used to France as the former colonizers. But the men went for migration, they work. In those days there were no visa also, there were no visa, from Senegal you can go free to France anytime you want. And the men went to work; when they get the money, they return back home. And they were doing that; there was no problem because there was economy migrant. There was job for them. They do the work, season job. They do the work, get the money, and go back home. And if they want to return, they return – there is no problem of visa – and go back home.

And, in the '83s, Mr. Chirac came as president of France, and the Minister of Interior Affairs in France – you say *Intérieur* – was Monsieur Charles Pasqua. And, Monsieur Pasqua asked of Chirac that now we must ask visa because many people are coming, etc. We must now impose visa with our former colonies – Senegal and others. And because France was facing also some economic problems, they say, “No, we are going to give the job available to our people instead of giving it to the foreigners, as African people.” And the machinery of, for example, cleaning the streets. The African people went there to clean the streets with a broom or like that. But now you have vehicles with broom; they can broom without a human being. So, they say the broom, the machine, cleaning the street is better than using a human being. And those type of concentrations.

And, it is from the visa application that the problem started. Because when the people now, they can reach France, when they enter they don't want to go out. Because they say, “If I go back

home, maybe I'm not going to find a visa to come back again." And they want to bring their families to stay with them because they don't have papers, maybe, etc. They want to bring, they start having the problem of family, [something in French], bringing family. They wanted to change the politics, no, no, no, etc. until now the situation, which is very bad. But now, those migrations were for economic purposes. But in the '90s to the 2000s, many students went to study in France, did not want to go back home because they know that there is no job opportunity. So, as they finish their studies in France, in Europe, they want to stay and work there instead of going back home. Maybe they are not going to find a job. Or if they are going to find a job, it would not be a worthwhile job, a job which will fulfill their expectations, etc., so most of them stay.

Now, it is 2018. These last 20 – yeah, 15, 20 years – let us say 20 years, we have a big migration to Europe or to America. Everybody, I have a nephew; he is living now in Washington, D.C. He went to America, and he is now American citizen living in Washington with a wife and children, etc. But, those migration not for job opportunities or this and that. It is because the country also was facing political problems in terms of democracy; in terms of respect of human rights; in terms of conflicts, ethnic conflicts; in terms of economic disaster; in terms of massive rural *exode* [exodus] to the big cities, etc. So, many people say, "It is not possible to stay in this country; we have to go."

They were trying to find a visa, to find a flight, to go somewhere and from there. And we see that from Senegal, most of Sub-Saharan Africa, even northern part of Africa, as a road/route(?) to now have a visa to go to the north was completely difficult with this economic situation also in our countries. People say, "We are going to take by boat. If we reach the island, the Spanish islands of Canary because it is not very far from the African coast. If we come to the isle(?) Canary, we will be in Europe, and from there now we can go to Spain, and from there we go to Europe." But the restrictions were so bad that some of them say now, "We have to go through Morocco," because through Mauritania, Sahara, the country with the conflict, was not very sure. So, they say, "No, it is better to go through Algeria to the mountains, and then from there we go to Morocco and find way to cross." Because Morocco is at fourteen, the city of Tangier is at fourteen kilometers from the south of Europe. Tarifa is just in front of Tangier, fourteen kilometers. So, it will be easier, maybe, to find. So Europe put a lot of restriction and gave a lot of money to Morocco, Algeria to block the passage of migrants coming from Sub-Saharan Africa and even from Morocco. So, because they have a lot of migration, Morocco, Algeria, all of them want to go to Europe. So, the Sub-Saharan African people say, "Let us go by the east," because they have heard that Sudanese, Somalian, people from Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia – they are going through Egypt and go to the desert of Sinai to cross Israel. But they don't want to stay in Israel. Maybe the Ethiopians because we have Jews from Ethiopia. Maybe if I can go to Turkey and then I reach Greece. If I reach Greece, from Greece I am going to western part of Europe. Many people were killed in the desert of Sinai, many people. The situation is very bad, actually, in Israel because it took a policy to ask the people, "If you want to go back home" – they have thousand, thousand, and thousand – "we give you 6,000 Euro" (or 3,000 Euro, something like that). "If you don't want to go back, we are going to put you in jail." And many of the migrants are on strike because they don't want to go back home, and they are today in jail. I think the United Nations is asking Israel to be a little bit human with those people, but by the time being, I don't know what is happening.

And, now the migration we have from Sub-Saharan Africa. So, that route was complicated, closed; we don't go by that way. Now, we have the desert of the Sahara from Niger, from Mali

and Niger. But, Mali, actually, with the situation at the northern part of Mali with Al-Qaida in the Sahara, with the terrorists, with the situation of the rebellion, the northern part of Mali is very bad for migrants. Some of them are used as terrorists or they are killed or they are exploited, etc. And now the road is Niger. Niger is between Chad – if you have looked at the map, you see Niger. All Africa from the south, the east, the western part, the central part, all of them are gathering in Niger to go to Agadez because Agadez is the door of the desert. And, from Agadez, trying to find transportation to go to the southern part of Libya and from there to have access to the Mediterranean coast, Mediterranean, to have something to cross the Mediterranean Sea. And this is the drama that we are facing today. How many thousand and thousand and thousand, ten thousand people, young people, young! Young people. Strong, young, beautiful, yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah – young people are always beautiful! The old ones also, eh? We are trying, eh? We are struggling, eh? They are dying in the desert even before reaching Libya. But, all the time people are saying, “Oh, the people are dying, the migrants are dying in the Mediterranean Sea. Some of them are slave in Libya.” But they don’t talk about the migrant who are dead in the desert, many, many, many of them. And now, everybody knows what has happened, what is happening, the chaos in Libya, with the terrorists, with the militias, with the villagers. The situation is so chaotic that we don’t know what is happening, really. And, we know what the migrants have met in Libya in plain terms of slavery, exploitation, the racket. Some of them are hired by the terrorists to become terrorists with money, etc. So, this is what is happening now. And, the European people are looking ways and means, how to do something, etc. – but, nobody can stop the migration.

But concerning our people in Africa now, the politics with migration, it is any country of Africa, from Morocco to South Africa, from Senegal to Kenya, any country has done anything to stop the migration. Even, I am telling them that our leaders actually are very happy with the migration – if somebody can reach a country. Because now, if you ask young people, “Where do you want to go?” they say, “Anywhere.” I say, “But you want to go to France? America? Where?” “Anywhere. I just want to go!” So, that is drama for young people: “I want just to go!” And because when somebody reaches a country and finds a job, a legal one or not legal, *mmm*, yeah, *mmm*. Anyway, the person can have revenue. And when you get something, the very first thing to, you ask where is money transfer office, money withdrawal – Western Union, Ria, there are so many – to send the money to your family. And, the money, the migrants are sending all around the world is much more important, one time, two times, three times, five times, ten times the amount of the aid of developed world for the development of Africa. What the migrants are sending is ten times much more important. And that money migrants are sending are going to families. That money is sending children to school. That money is giving access to some healthcare issues. That money is improving the nutrition, what you are eating. The migrants are having Africa like a baby.

Because, if all our leaders are not doing *anything* for their populations because they are busy with corruption. They are busy sending their money to Bahamas, Caymans, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, in banks. They are busy of being reelected. They are busy being attached to the power – until they are ready even to go surgery to be attached to the chair of power. “I’m not going.” “Yes, please, call the doctor, can you tie me with power?” And, they are not doing for what the people need, just a minimum, a minimum, not a lot, just a minimum of a decent life. Just you can eat, even if he doesn’t want good food. One day to take the children to school, to take the children to healthcare, small healthcare, primary healthcare – just the minimum for a decent life for common people. All of us must have access to a minimum of a decent life. A minimum! All humankind and animals, my friends. We have all need to trees. We have – we *must* – it is do

something which, it must be, I don't know, a *law* that every human creature, the trees, animals, the human beings – we must have access to a *minimum*, a minimum, of decent life.

And, the African leaders, none of them – I tell that, you can call them, I say *none* of them, *none, none, none*, this big continent, none of them is meeting the expectation of the population. So, they are happy with that. They are not doing anything. And some European or developed countries are giving money to block the migration of their people. They are not doing anything. They are not providing education. They are not providing training. They are not providing job. They are not providing leisure. They are not providing a healthy environment. They are not providing culture. Culture! Culture! Culture is very important, as important as food, each one. I think culture is much more important than food. Because if you have culture, you are not hungry as somebody who is stupid. Somebody who has no culture is always eating, eating. *Nom nom...* But, if you have culture, you know, your head is busy with something else. Then when you don't have culture; culture is very important to provide to the people. We don't have access to all that.

How can you leave young people without education, without training, without job opportunities, without perspective? Only corruption, reelection, keep the power, being in the power forever. It is not possible! So, they don't use the money to do anything for those people to stay in their countries. It is not because they don't like their countries. They *love* Africa. Africa is countries you must *love*. It's beautiful! It's big! Somebody can't say, "I don't like Africa." No, it is not possible. No, no, no, no. *Everybody* loves Africa. Maybe you don't know Africa – you say, "Oh, where is it?" It is odd. It is not hard. And so, all the young people *like* their country. They want to *live* in their countries. But how can you live in a country in front of the *disaster* of the behavior of the African leaders? So, they don't have *any* policy or whatever they are encouraging. Because the migrants, when they get somewhere, send the money; this bring a balance. So, you don't see the failure of our government and our leaders because the migrants are providing what our leaders had to do. So, this is a problem. So, they say if the problem there is no more migration, I think that many of our African leaders will return to those days in conflicts, in wars, in genocides, and whatever can happen. But, I always say that the African people, we know that they have failed, but the responsibility of the countries, the western countries, Europe, America, where the migrant want to [go], they have to take their responsibilities, not talking about the migrants, address to the migrant, but address to the leaders of their countries. The leaders, the government was not doing anything for their people, putting their people in such situations.

I think that the developed world must do something and change relationships with those countries which are not well [lead] by good leaders. But the problem is that many developed countries can't oblige our leaders, because they have economic interest in the continent, because the African continent is the continent where you have everything. You have – look at the waters – we have the Mediterranean Sea, we have the Atlantic Ocean, we have the Indian Ocean, we have the Red Sea. We have everything in Africa. And, all over, you have gas, you have oil, you have fish, you have diamonds, you have cobalt. Guinea-Conakry, a small country, one of the...

Aaah! They say, "Mariètou, you talk too much!" Maybe my glasses are not good. "Mariètou, you talk too much. It is time for questions. Now. *Now!*" So, thank you. No, I am joking. She says it is just time for questions.

And, many countries are interested in our resources, in our cobalt, rutile, etc. So, they are protecting some stupid leaders so they can exploit our resources, make our people poor for a continent which is so rich! And, rich for the future, not rich for... Africa is important for the future. And now, we used to have our former colonizers, the western world, but now we have China coming. China is really in Africa, exploiting – not dealing with what is happening. You can die or... It is not our problem. We need our resources. We have Turkey – when I was living, the president of Turkey is in Senegal. We have India; India also is coming slowly. But, China is really the big grabbing. So, they are interested in our resources, and they are not interested in the people. So, if you are not interested in the people, how can you solve the problems of the people?

So, that is – I'm going to stop because I'm asked to. Ask the question, so I can continue to talk about [this]. Thank you so much!

MICHAEL DAVIS, KENNEDY CENTER: *Merci!* We'd like to thank Ken Bugul for her remarks. And before we turn to questions, we wanted to really quickly thank the Kennedy Center and the Department of Africana Studies for sponsoring this event. Quick reminder that tomorrow Ken Bugul will be speaking again, on the situation of women in Senegal. That will be sponsored by the Women's Studies program as well. That will be at this same time in the basement of the JFSB, room 92. Thank you once more, and I think – questions?

LESLIE HADFIELD, BYU AFRICANA STUDIES: We have some time for questions, and if you will come to the microphone here, state your name and your major, if you are a BYU student, and then people who are listening and watching later will know who you are. Thank you.

QUESTION: Hi, Miss Bugul. My name is Hamilton Bretherton. I'm studying political science. I actually served in Benin and Togo, so I've seen a lot of what you've been talking about. And so, you talked about how immigrants sending back money is what is really helping the people and that the foreign aid that other countries send does nothing. What would you change, say for the United States? How could we send money so that it is used effectively and not for corrupt reasons?

KEN BUGUL: Well, thank you. I think that the countries even don't – the aid is not in terms of money. Not only money, not only cash; it is in some programs, etc. And, when it comes, they don't know in which areas we need that aid. Sometimes it is politically used. For example, somebody wants to be a member of the parliament can use the aid from United States to dig stupid well in his village, and with *casquette* [cap] – “thank you, America”; with t-shirt, “thank you, America” – because it is just for their demagogy purposes because they want to be elected next. And, the rest of the aid is in their pocket or used for themselves. So, even that's why I say, “Stop the aid.” The aid must be stopped. You can't say since the 1960s that many of our countries are independent from our colonizers. Almost 60 years we are always talking about aid for development in Africa. And how can another country help a continent and how can a country help another country in its own development which must be done according to its own realities and needs. It is what we need: our reality. My reality is not to put this [sweater] in Africa I'm, you know, living like that because it is not cold in Senegal. Now, these days, a little bit, 16, 17 [celcius] where I was living, but usually it is warm, 25, 35 degrees. What we need to eat: We eat yams; we eat our green leaves. We miss our smells, our smoked fish, our smoked oysters. We don't eat fresh oysters. We have a

lot of oysters in Senegal, but they are smoked oysters. And we – what we need... But, the aid of development is not coming for that. The aid of development because it is from a country to a country, because it is from a government to another government, and when it is from a government to another government, they don't take the populations what they need because it is a governmental affair. United Nations, all of them, they are governmental, and it is government to government. Some NGOs, some, not all of them because... These days we don't talk much about NGOs because they are doing bad things. But some NGOs, non-governmental organizations, or some associations – even the associations are better, who are going to Africa or Latin America or Asia and being in touch with the people, asking for their needs and with their collaboration and their local expertise, do something to improve something, and when they leave, the others can continue. But if you say, "Aid to development," you bring machines. When you go, we don't know even how to switch it off. And when there is a little problem, oh? How to repair it? Because we don't know it. We have not done that machine. So, I say, "Aid, stop!" Because, if we stop it, even so we will go through some troubles, but after the troubles, the situation will be more clear, because we will put the responsibilities of our leaders just now, next, now, no more aids. What do you do for your people now? I think that that is very important. So, stop to aid of development.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION: So, would you like immigrants to keep sending money back home?

KEN BUGUL: No. If the migrants don't send money back home, they need not to stay in the country. Because they migrate for that, to find money to send.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION: Oh, okay. If proper aid is given, will there still be a necessity for them to send money back home.

KEN BUGUL: No. Proper aid must be now prepared on new basis. How it is going to be given and *appliqué* [applied] on the field, according to the needs of the people and follow up and follow check. If we did that like that, the aid is oriented in that new way, you will see less migrants from Africa.

KENNEDY CENTER HOST: We know people need to leave for their other classes, but we do have time for one more question.

QUESTION: *Bonjour!* [Student expresses thanks in French and asks his question first in French, then translates himself into English.] So, I'll ask that in English now. So, my first question is. . . My name is Emmanuel Reyelts; I'm studying international relations. What do you wish young people in America and Europe would know about Africa – what would be your message for them? And, the second question would be what can we do as young people to help in any ways? *Merci beaucoup.*

KEN BUGUL: Thank you. I have to answer in French or in English? English? Oh. . . Thank you. Very important questions. I'm particularly very much interested in young people. For the young people in America or in Europe – young people fall into brackets developed countries, Western world or whatever – it's already, first, to open their minds themselves to the rest of the world to know what is happening. In universities, they must teach about other countries, Africa, Latin America, Asia, and it is important you have the [Kennedy Center] here, you have Global Women's Studies, you have Africana Studies, you have the Humanities in French, Francophone literature, it

is a small window opened. But we have to widen it to make it a big door and then even to remove the door, just to do – flow into the rest of the world. It is important to know because most of the time the medias or the information we are collecting are not reflecting the reality in the continent, particularly for Africa – I know Africa.

Not the reality. Most of the information on Africa all almost clichés, old considerations, clichés or stereotypes – but they don't talk about Africa. But, like I'm coming here, maybe probably you come to Africa, traveling to Latin America, other countries, to be in touch with the *people*. I think that the young people are the resources the world need to change the things for tomorrow. So, the institutions, the universities, the young people *themselves*, they must open themselves to know what is happening in the world. Most of the time I say, "It is good to have your remote control, your button, your *push-push*, everything, you order here, *check check*, the pizza is coming, check, your door is open, check." You know, you think that we are happy. No, no no no no no. You can't be happy in a world where there are many unhappy. It is not *possible*. So, to think a little bit about that, what is happening these days, why we see all these frustrations from the world, why through all this anger, why all this hunger, why all these children dying, all these women dying – it is not possible. They say Africa still maternity and childhood deaths is still so big in Asia, what is the problem, what is etc.?

So, open yourself to that and to *read*. It is good reading. Books from Africa. Novels. There are novels. To watch cinema, African cinema. You have very good, important movies to look for information on Africa and to make up your mind and think in terms of ethics that it is not possible that I have eaten and my neighbor did not eat. It is a question of ethics. And, pay attention to the destruction of the environment in the world, even in America, but particularly in our continent. You know, Gabon, you see Gabon there. Gabon, after Amazonia, is the second ecosystem of the world – but now the Chinese [are] *destroying* the ecosystem of Gabon to take the manganese. There are even some rivers they are turning, destroying villages, our sisters, etc., for the manganese. And, the ecosystem of Gabon is covering Africa, but it's covering also a big part of the world, like Amazonia. The destruction of the environment. But, mostly the waste, you see?

I think that, in America, people they eat too much, they drink too much, they sleep too much. The beds are too nice, the windows are, the curtains are too nice. And, when you come to a house today, you come back next year, they have changed the window, the curtains, they have changed the furniture. I say, "Last year when I came, it was red furniture, armchair." "Oh, we changed." "*Ah bon?* It was good! Why do you change it?" They change their car, they change their smartphone. Why, young people, are you interested in the next Galaxy, in the next Samsung, in the next Apple, with this update, with this. . . A telephone is just you put a number, Hello Ken Bugul, how are you? Okay, when are you coming? Okay. We are waiting for you. Bye! *Ciao!* Finish. Why do you change the smartphone every six months and those the system is taking the money, and their pockets are big and full of money and don't know where to put the money. And, why do you, you are like conditioned, you can't live without the next smartphone of Apple or Samsung Galaxy – I don't know. To think that – make up your minds. Say, "What is life? What is – I'm here for what?" To give a sense to the life. To give. And you will not be boring. You will not be frustrated. You will feel much more happier because you are thinking of the others. I think that the new generations must think of a better world for everybody. If there is a better world for everybody, there will be no problem. And, countries who are complaining about migration... if we have access to education, a minimum of education, a minimum of health, a minimum of...

when we are even healthy, educated, we can have our own business. We need not to find the job from the government. We can have our – you will see less migration because we are – the migrants are not happy abroad. African migrants are not happy abroad. The best place to live is in Africa. But it is the situation is difficult, so the young people must think of that. Your department of Women’s Studies, Global Women’s Studies, African Studies must put emphasis, reinforce the knowledge of the rest of the world and organize even some travels, some exchange programs for students to travel to Africa or Latin America or to the rest of the world. I think that the future of the world is in the hands of the new generation. Not in my hands. Yeah, I’m an old lady. I am trying, I have done, I am still doing – but, my time is finished. It is your time. The young people.