

Video file:

Belgium_Gent_Kanobana_Sibo_Dutch_PHCH3089.MOV

Belgium_Kanobana_Sibo_access_PHCH3089_Proxy.mp4

Crew 1 [00:00:00] The engine has been turned on.

Crew 3 [00:00:01] The engine has been turned on.

Interviewer [00:00:09] Okay, I—first, protocol questions. Can you quickly tell me your name? Your full name and to say you give permission to film this interview?

Kanobana [00:00:21] My name is Simon Kanobana and I give my permission to record this interview.

Interviewer [00:00:26] Okay, let's start with the introduction, so can you repeat your name again and also say where you live and add Belgium? Because, of course, it's for an international audience.

Kanobana [00:00:37] My name is Simon Kanobana. I live in Ghent, a town about fifty kilometers from Brussels, Belgium.

Interviewer [00:00:44] Yes. And can you tell now how you and your family ended up in Belgium and which path you have taken here.

Kanobana [00:00:54] To tell how my family got here in Belgium, I actually have to go back to my father's story, because my father was born and raised in the colonial, in the p—in colonial Congo. I'm going to start there. To tell how my family ended up here in Belgium, I need to go back to my father's story. My father is from Congo and came here when he was eighteen years old, studied here and met my mother here. My mother is Belgian and they both went back to Congo, which was then Mobutu's Zaire and that's where they lived and that's where I and my two sisters were born and then as a child, as a five-year-old child and my sisters are older, I came back to Belgium. That idea was to be here temporarily because we were also in the eighties, so when I was twelve years old, we—we went back, we lived in Lubumbashi, but then we only stayed there for a year and then we came back to live in Belgium and ended up staying here. So that's pretty much the story of how I got here and how my family ended up here.

Interviewer [00:02:12] How did you learn about the slave trade and colonization? Was that in the family context, education or whatever?

Kanobana [00:02:25] [00:02:25] I didn't learn much about colonization and slavery in the family context, although it was implicitly always present. [9.9s] My father was eighteen years old at independence and so he experienced colonization during a time, because this was the colonialism of the fifties and that's actually the least negative colonial period, because at the time, Belgium actually started investing in [inaudible] health and education, much more than ever before. So that's a completely different context. My dad—[something falls on the floor]. Okay, I will start over completely.

Crew 3 [00:03:11] Yes.

Kanobana [00:03:11] Actually, in the context of—I have—I haven't really learned much about colonization or slavery in the family context. Now, my father was eighteen years old

when he came to Belgium to study here, so eighteen years old. That was in 1960, that was eighteen years in 1960. So the entire period that he has experienced, the 40s and 50s, is in a way the least severe period of, or the least negative period of colonization. Especially during the 50s, so the period during which my father went to school, the Belgians did invest in education a lot and in, in, healthcare during that period. So my father hasn't really experienced, yeah, say, the, the, the, the hyper-negative side of colonization. In addition, he was part of a local elite, my grandfather was also converted to Christianity, and he was educated in colonial schools run by missionaries. So he actually got a very western upbringing in a colonial context. So that's, that's my father and, of course, my father told a lot about the colonial period when we were at home, but what's more interesting has—is also what he said about the postcolonial period, so the 70s and 80s when he worked there, and how actually there in that context, the colonial dynamics that already existed in the 40s and 50s, actually continued, and that he was very much confronted with yeah, with brutal racism and a, a ver—a colonial social structure, in which he tried to function. So my knowledge about slavery and colonization is rather, rather autodidactic. I've always been interested in knowing more about my history and my background, both when it concerns my Flemish ancestors as well as when it concerns my Congolese ancestors. So I'm very interested in the Flemish movement too and fascism, etc. That, that intrigues me enormously, because those are my roots too. But on the other hand, there are—is there my colonial and Congolese background, where it's much more difficult to find concrete information and where, yeah, I have been looking for information through various means. And that has happened through books, through Frantz Fanon, through Césaire, but also through hip hop and through rap, so rap music and through reggae, so the diaspora has also inspired me enormously to look for my, my roots and to understand where I come from and how it all—how I actually ended up here.

Interviewer [00:06:05] From which region is your father?

Kanobana [00:06:09] The region where my father comes from is the region of Bukavu, so that's an area on the border with Rwanda. There were some, even a lot, yeah, a lot of unrest and still is. That's the region where my father comes from, the Kivu.

Interviewer [00:06:25] So he arrived in 1960. Belongs to the first generation of Congolese students who indeed came to Belgium to study after independence. It's not unusual that he had children with a Belgian woman, but the fact that they are married is exceptional, because that usually didn't happen. So it was usually the case that the students returned home after their studies, without the children's mother and without the children. Did you know any such families? Where indeed there was a marriage and where the parents stayed together, or?

Kanobana [00:07:06] Okay I'll tell you something about what you just said to, to, outline the context, huh. So, as I said, my father came here to study at the age of 18 and is part of the first generation of Congolese who, at independence, were given the opportunity to pursue an academic education in Belgium. We should be aware at this point that Belgium has invested very little in an intelligentsia in Belgian Congo. So there were very few people with higher degrees or with technical skills that were necessary to allow the country to do well at independence. So he belongs to the first generation. And indeed, my father met my mother quite early, actually, when he arrived here. They were friends. They belonged to the same social circles because my father in Vilvoorde, there is also, as well the same school where Paul Panda Farnana also went to. So an, an, an agricultural school that he went to before becoming an agricultural engineer. And so my mother is from Vilvoorde and they met in cafes and, and they were part of the same networks, but they weren't

immediately a couple. But my father was already a friend of the family at my mother's house. So in this way he already knew his future parents in law. But over time, they fell in love with each other, they started a relationship with each other. And when my parents went to my mom's parents to say like, Look, we—our relationship is more than a friendship. We want together, we want to get married, raise a family together in Congo. Then this was yeah, then it didn't come across well at all. So especially my, my grandfather, so my mother's father, condemned this relationship, even though he thought my father to be actually an exemplary Congolese, he thought it was a step too far for my father to marry his daughter. And he basically rejected my mom, saying, You're not my daughter anymore, if you marry this guy, you're not my daughter anymore. That didn't stop my parents. So they got married in Kinshasa after all. And yeah, they started a family there. Well, I must add that, for example, my great-grandmother, so my grandfather's mother, she did not condemn this relationship. And when my parents came to Belgium during holidays, she also always stayed with my moth—with my great-grandmother, who thought that her son was, yeah, a little stupid, kind of foolish, to condemn this interracial relationship. My grandmother said, yeah, it was difficult for her, so she had to live with my grandfather, but she secretly went to see her grandchildren because she was curious to see her grandchildren. Now, after I was born, I'm the only boy, so my grandfather was a patriarch, but at that moment a number of things did change in his mind. And since I was a boy, he still wanted to see his grandson. Although he never really showed interest in seeing his granddaughters. Anyway, so my birth has caused a change, a shift, causing my grandfather to succumb to accepting an interracial relationship after all. Now my parents are still together today. My father is 80 now and I must honestly say, that's quite an exceptional situation. My parents have known other interracial couples, so there are other friends of my dad's who also had romances, so not necessarily married but had relationships. You know, it were the sixties, so, they did know some, but very few—some couples did get married—but very few of them were actually able to—yeah, continued to exist as a couple, so in the end they broke up anyway. And you have to realize how much pressure was put on those people, like what I'm telling you now about my grandfather and my grandmother and on mother's side, so the, the, my white grandparents. Yeah, they condemned that. Yeah, that takes a lot as a daughter to say: "[Guardian(?)], I'm just going to Congo, I live there and what my grandfather or my father thinks doesn't matter. I'm in love with this guy and I'm raising a family with him." We all know in every relationship, the first few years are really fun, but after ten years of yeah may—every relationship becomes difficult. Yeah, and then when you put the pressure of racial tension on it, those family tensions, that can put a lot of pressure on a relationship. And that was no different for our Congolese side, because my, my—the parents of my father, they also condemned that relationship. Right? For other reasons, they had a feeling that my mother, that white woman who marries a Black man, was probably not a serious woman, not so different from a prostitute. Right? So they had that, that, that idea of how, how can a white woman, a serious white woman, want to marry a Black man? That, that, that seems, that seems inappropriate. So they had prejudice towards my mother that she would not be a serious wife for their eldest son. Let us also make that clear: my father was the eldest son. But my mother is, yeah, a special woman in this respect, I must say. She went to the village of Miti, near Bukavu, pregnant, heavily pregnant, but with the support of her, my father's sister, so an aunt of mine who was a nurse. She went there, heavily pregnant, and gave birth to my sister there and actually gave my sister to her in-laws there. Saying like, "Look, this is your granddaughter" and this has, for my grandparents on the Congolese side it was okay, you're our daughter. So they have at that time when my sister was born, so my eldest sister, they welcomed my mother actually with open arms within the family. That does not mean that there were no tensions, no jealousy and—it was—there were a lot of tensions, but my parents maintained their relationship through all circumstances and never

broke up. Not without crises, of course, but they're still actually a very cute old couple today. I'm not sure if YI answered your question though, but this was what inspired me.

Interviewer [00:14:04] Yes, yes! Very good. So you grew up in Congo and Belgium. How were you perceived in both countries? Was there a difference in this respect?

Kanobana [00:14:19] So yes, I have, I lived in Belgium as well as in Congo as a child. And of course, my experience is quite different in both countries. I would dare say that when I was eleven or twelve years old, I lived in Lubumbashi and I became very racially aware in Lubumbashi. As a mixed person, I'm perceived as *mzungu*, in Lubumbashi, so *mzungu*, means white yeah, or a white person. I am, I'm a white person in that context. Not just because of my paler complexion, but also because I was part of the upper class. So, calling someone *mzungu* in Congo not only has something to do with you being white, but it can also have to do with the language you speak, the way you speak French, the way you speak Swahili, the way you dress, which school you go to. All of those things make you a *mzungu*. That means that Black people too can, may, be called *mzungu* or they say [Lingala] *mzungu*, or things like, or like "Like a Flemish person". "Flemish person" actually has the same connotation. So I have had a completely different experience—I have the experience of being perceived in Congo as a *mzungu*, as a Belgian, as a white man. But when I am in Belgium, yeah, I have the experience that I am perceived as, yeah, brown, black, immigrant or, at least, a suspicious Belgian. I have to justify myself. Why am I here? Tell me your story? How come you're here? Now, I've never experienced this need to justify in Congo. Yes, in Congo, I may be a *mzungu*. Everyone sees that, says that. But at the same time, I am also a brother. So there is no, no contradiction in this way between being *mzungu* and being at the same time a son of the nation. If I tell, yeah, that I was born in Bandaka and you speak a little Swahili or a little Lingala, no matter that you're *mundelé* or *mzungu*, you're simply someone, a Congolese as well. While here in Belgium, there is indeed a contradiction. You can't be an immigrant and say at the same time, but I'm also a son, I'm a proud Fleming too. Sorry, but that, that, that, that seems to be a contradiction. So you can, well, maybe there's less of them these days—I'm also talking about broader societal discourses that, that, that [inaudible] are not necessarily what Assida Kanko would say, because this—I don't think that's a, a widely held opinion. But so I have a completely different experience in both contexts, and that's why I also have the experience of what it's like to be white and what it's like to have white privilege. I'm well aware that in the Congolese context, I have a lot of white privilege and even though I'm, I wouldn't dare say, stigmatized, but even if people see that I'm probably not a 100% Congolese—that, this being different is never a stigma, is never something that, that's never a burden. Yeah, it's never something that weighs heavily. Rather, it is a compliment. Or maybe it's a com—sometimes it's not always a compliment, but at least it's jealousy. At least something like, Ah, you're rich, you, you have access to, to power structures. You, you, you are better off than the average person, so there's a very clear—in a way, you're being placed on a pedestal as a *mzungu* in Congo. That's a completely different experience, so that's in a way, you're recognized as different, but not different in a negative way. While here in Belgium if you're different, yeah, it's rather, because you're, yeah, probably—at best, you're very athletic, a good soccer player, or you're good at dancing and can sing well. That is, those are positive things, but intellectually or as it comes to reliability, on—are you someone we can count on where, and—probably not. That, that is the stigma that you experience in Belgium. And that is also something that I have learned at home. At home around the dinner table, it was often repeated that we had to do our best twice as much to get at least half what the others got. So we were, were very, yeah, there were very high expectations about school results. We had quite a strict and—education—and, and, and, quite, yeah, ambitious upbringing. Well me, I'm not

blaming my parents for this at all, it has had, it's, it—we've all turned out pretty good. It's no guarantee, but that's the way it has went.

Interviewer [00:19:06] To—

Crew 3 [00:19:06] [Inaudible], because it made some noise. It's that—it's that, which made this noise, I have the impression.

Kanobana [00:19:12] [Inaudible].

Interviewer [00:19:18] It's possible.

Crew 3 [00:19:18] It's possible, it isn't too much, heard too much, but [inaudible].

Interviewer [00:19:22] Are there certain stories or songs, or memories or traditions related to the colonial period, that you've learned from home?

Kanobana [00:19:41] Yes, there are, there are a number of things from the colonial period that I inherited from my family situation. However, it's important to say that as a small child in Bandaka, in Kisangani, I had few memories and few experiences that would be confronting. At that age, you're not concerned with colonization or race, any of those things. It actually plays a very, very small role in your life at that time. Now in Lubumbashi when I, as an adolescent, yeah, it was very strongly expressed and I think I in this context—because Lubumbashi is a hyper-colonial city, I think other experts could explain this better to you, but Lubumbashi is in a way a bit like South Africa, much more than Kinshasa or Bukavu, or other places in the Congo, because it was really created by the colonization in service of those mines, with a lot of migrants, a lot of people who come from all over the Congo, who all came there to work in that city. So in that context, I am confronted with the fact that the domestic staff was called "boys". That where they lived in the back of the house was called the "boyerie". That there was, that there really was—now that the elite was suddenly partly Black, yeah, there was still that, that, that colonial connotation. It was still a "native city", which perhaps wasn't called like this anymore, but it was clearly where the working class went to and they sometimes had to walk for 2 hours to get to work in, in, in, in, the rich neighborhoods. And those are things about which, at 11 years old, at 12 years old, I asked questions at home to my father when I was like, yeah, That's actually strange, isn't it—"boy", that means "child". It wasn't a child, right? That's an old man, that's a grandfather why do we call him boy? Isn't that wrong? and all that stuff, that's what I tried to understand. What, what's actually going on here? And so those are things that, that, that my father explained to me. And at those moments, my father also talked about the colonial period and about the fact that there were schisms there, that he has had a lot of luck actually—that you had to be born in the right place, at the right time to have the chance to go to school. And then you had to have the chance to be among the smartest at school, otherwise you only did primary school. And then you went to secondary school and suddenly it was all in French and you couldn't speak French. My father didn't know French at the age of twelve and that was a very perverse system to get them to learn French. It was with a certain kind of card that they had to pass on to each other, so it was forbidden to speak, for example, a, a local language, usually Swahili, which was the language of communication among the different groups. It was forbidden to speak that language, or any other language. And if you caught someone—so you had an espionage system where students were pitted against each other to snitch on each other with a card and by Friday afternoon, the last one holding the card, had to clean the toilets over the weekend, had to do tasks for everyone. And if by Christmas break, because they

left in September at boarding school—not coming back in the weekend, three months away—if you didn't speak French by Christmas break, yeah, you didn't have to come back. So you actually got a very selective system there, in accordance to which that, it, it was either assimilate to colonial expectations or you're out. Yeah, it's very simple. And then you don't participate and you actually have very few opportunities outside of working in mines, or yeah, basically carrying out forced labor, or fleeing inland, but that's also with a lot of uncertainties. So that was the, the—and I'm talking about the fifties. Yeah, the best years of colonization turned out to be super selective and super, yeah, oppress— actually, there was a lot of oppression and, and, and children were exposed to it. So that's kind of, that's one of the elements that I learned from my, from my father about the colonial period.

Interviewer [00:24:03] Can you tell us the story Muhumusa as you learned it.

Kanobana [00:24:07] Yes. Now I have—there are also other stories that I've discovered, through other ways. But I've always—I have a really good relationship with my dad. We talk to each other a lot and my father, like many Congolese, is very interested in politics. So, we—I grew up in a household where, although strict and with very high expectations, but there was a lot of discussion at the table and I was also allowed to ask a lot of questions, things I didn't understand. And so, like I said, I've learned a lot from our colonial past by being self-taught, so I, I, I read books or I heard songs or I watched movies and then I asked my dad questions about that past. And one of those things is, yeah, is simply reggae music and Bob Marley basically. Bob Marley, yeah, I know he is very popular, but I like to keep listening to his music, that, that remains something that, that, that's close to my heart. And there is one song by Bob Marley, “Jump Nyabinghi”, that I went looking for. What is this, Nyabinghi? What's that, Rastafari culture? All those things are—I started to investigate, only to find out that Nyabinghi, actually refers to Muhumusa, to a, yeah, a, a figure in the history of the Great Lakes Region, so that's an area of Bukavu, but also of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, all around this region, around Lake Victoria, Lake Kivu, Tanganyika Lake, and that's where I discovered that, through a long detour, it ended up in Jamaica, this figure, who is still revered as a kind of African queen who opposed colonization. So I, I, I tell this to my father because I found out like, Ah, but actually that goes back to Rwanda and thought, well, what does it have to do with Rwanda? And I tell—I asked my father like, yeah, Have you ever heard of this, of Nyabinghi? And when I asked this, he changed suddenly. It was as if—like where, where are you coming from now? I really saw a kind of fear in his eyes and a, like, at the same time, a Where does this come from? And I'm like, Yeah, why are you reacting like that? What's this “Nyabinghi”? He says like, “Yes, actually, I don't know exactly, but as a child, I remember that older people spoke about it and only did this in a whisper and that there was a, that there was a certain mysticism, but also secrecy surrounding it, and that “I” was certainly not allowed to talk about it. So when this, that, this not—was a prohibited subject, that, that, that was prohibited, because it was dangerous to talk about it, as well with regard to the colonial powers. So that I was certainly not allowed to talk about it at school because that could lead to immediate reprisals. Now, who was Nyabinghi? Nyabinghi was actually a, a, a, a, a person. Yeah, it actually refers to a person, I think from the 18th century, who was a queen who was supposedly murdered by her husband, and consequently a lot of negative things happened, so plagues, diseases and the like, they talk about a, a famine, a tidal wave and they were attributed to the fact that this man had killed his wife, that very influential woman and that she, as a ghost, revenge, took revenge on her murder. And during the 19th century that story became more and more a story, was referred to Nyabinghi to talk about fate, and sacrifices were offered to Nyabinghi for both—to ensure a happy outcome for certain things, because Nyabinghi was associated with both luck and bad luck. Now, this person was reincarnated each time into a woman of a certain importance in that region.

And again, we shouldn't think about colonial borders, or yeah, like this is a Rwandan thing, or this is a Burundian thing. No, this transcended every form of state borders we know today and even ethnic borders as we know them today, so in Uganda, the Bakanda, also knew Nyabinghi and the people of Congo in Masisi also knew Nyabinghi, so this went beyond those borders. And at a certain point, at the end of the nineteenth century, well, I'm the, I think—I've forgotten the names, but so you have a certain succession to the throne that's being contested by the person who is at the time the reincarnation of Nyabinghi, Muhumusa, and she—not because she wants to be king or queen herself, no—but she contests the way this succession to the throne has taken place and she, she, yeah, a lot of people are rallying behind her and, at that moment, this heir to the throne, to consolidate his succession to the throne, because you should know, we speak about kings and all, but it wasn't always from father to son, it was a much more complex thing. Anyway, this man who then proclaims himself king instead—and notices that Muhumusa actually doesn't agree to his succession to the throne, that he's not the right person to lead, to be leader of, Rwanda at that time. Instead of, yeah, creating support among the Rwandan population, or the people of the Great Lakes, no, he's seeking support from the new colonials who arrive there, the Germans. Right? And he's actually asking for the support of the Germans to guarantee his position as king. So there's a king who's basically collaborating with a new power which is arriving at the scene and then a whole revolt emerged. So, at the end of the nineteenth century, early twentieth century, a revolt against the German colonizer who is being directed by a woman. A story that no one told us, which I actually picked it up through Reggae music, so through Jamaicans who picked it up from a Jamaican newspaper, which picked it up from an Italian newspaper that apparently picked it up from a story that apparently happened in Ethiopia, well, at least, who associate it with Ethiopia. And who associate this with communism, or well, the stories from [inaudible]—absurd circumstances, but basically have, have—after being handed down a lot—the Rastafarians have actually adopted it quite correctly. In any case, have picked up the meaning, perhaps not the right story, but the significance of that story and that has given me, as a child born in Congo, but who has grown up in the west, in the global north, has given access to a history that was actually taken away from me and that my father was also deprived of and that I'm now rediscovering.

Interviewer [00:31:51] Okay, it's exactly 5 to 11. I have—I could go on even longer, but I suggest we go to the last questions and there are two so you can decide for yourself how much time you want to take for answering both questions. So the first question is about the way you identify yourself and the second question is actually about decolonization: what does it mean? What's your contribution to it? And what would, say, a world that's truly decolonized look like.

Kanobana [00:32:34] That's a very big question, yeah. Okay, that's a tough question to know which, what my identity is, or how I identify myself. We all know that we have multiple identities. I am a father, I am a son. I am a citizen of Brussels. I am also a citizen of Ghent by now. I, yes, I'm Belgian, I'm Flemish, I'm a French speaker too, all those things. And so I, me, I think I—and I think everyone does this, you, you, you also find identities in yourself that, according to established discourse, can be contradictory: how can you be both French and Flemish? Yeah, sure. Or how can you be both a person of color and a European? But yeah, why not? So all those things that, those, I had—they're a part of me. So to go and say yeah in what way, who—what is your identity? If—when I hear that question, I immediately think yeah, What's your ethnicity? What's your nationality? I also think that most people who get that question immediately think of nationality and ethnicity when they think of identity, while, of course, identity is much more than that. Anyway, let's talk politics. What has the biggest political implication? It's not

which job I have or the fact that I have a child and that I'm a father. The political implications are mainly rooted in ethnicity and nationality, and then okay, my nationality is Belgian, but I have, yeah, had several passports in my life, because I was born Congolese. I only became Belgian at the age of eight. I once had a Rwandan passport after 1997. I have a Belgian passport today and, in that Belgian context, I have opposed self-identification with Flanders for a long time. Although I went to school in Dutch, although most of my friends are white Flemings, with whom I have very close ties. And yet, I grew up with the idea of, No, no, I'm not a Flemish, because Flanders, yeah, or very—all the images I associate with Flanders were very much connected with, to fascism, to the extreme right. When I see a Flemish lion, I don't think—then, then, then, I think “threat” rather than “love” and, and, and, and so that, that became very difficult to embrace “Fleming”. Well, I also see this with white Dutch-speaking residents of Brussels who also have trouble identifying themselves with the Flemish story. But over time, I've become more and more—maybe also because I live in Ghent—but it actually started before, rather out of a kind of, a kind of, of wanting to challenge, because I wanted, yeah, I wanted to challenge certain concepts and identity structures and I've started to identify myself more and more as Fleming and I'm doing this today. You say, Yes, of course I'm a Fleming. Against all expectations, I am a Fleming and I'm even proud of that. I'm not proud of what the Flemish people have done or of fascism, certainly not of that, but in a way, I'm like what, that's no problem to, to be a Fleming. Why would that be a problem? Now, you should know, I was raised in French, so in a French-speaking context, identifying myself as a Fleming is also pretty much, yeah, a, a difficult process. But I, I'm not embarrassed about that. Another thing I identify with, which is also quite, yeah, from the last fifteen years, is I, I identify as Black, now. Look out! But you are *mzungu* and *mundelé*! How can you be Black now? Yes, I identify myself as Black and that wasn't always the case. So I've been hesitating for a long time, *métis*, mixed race, a mulatto if necessary, but that's a bit of a problematic word. But I felt that I was always kind of getting into trouble, saying, I'm neither fish nor meat and by identifying yourself as mixed, yeah, you're actually confirming that pure races actually exist, but that you don't belong to them. And basically, throughout history and in recent years, I have increasingly begun to identify myself as a Black person, but then I also give my own meaning to it. Not like—so just like I say “Fleming”, but I give it my own meaning. Right? And I think being Black is just like, it's not actually a category. Rather, it's an attitude. A position that, that, that you take, of course, with regard to Africa and is also a form of embracing my African roots. And I embrace my being Black. Especially as a person who grew up in Europe, where I'm often identified as part of the African diaspora, I find it very logical to be Black and to give it my own meaning. So that's not—there's no pure blackness, right? We all know: Africa is the most diverse place on Earth, genetically, culturally, linguistically. Yeah, like the “African”, that's simply a hyper-diverse—a, that, that is—the differences between Africans are bigger than between a Finn and an Italian, yeah? The only thing that Africans have in common is the racialization as Black, but there, and I'm inspired by the *négritude* here, we want, we can, we can draw an idea, to distill a real form of humanism where we don't look at ethnic differences, religious differences, linguistic differences, no, really recognize our mutual humanity. And I'm inspired by Césaire, mainly, but also by Fanon, to rediscover and, and, and recognize that humanity through my being Black. So a Black Fleming. Yeah, so I'm a Black Fleming.

Interviewer [00:39:01] Thank you. Maybe you can—it's 11 after 2 now, I'll just give it to you—2 after 11.

Kanobana [00:39:08] Yes, 2 after 11. Shortly [inaudible].

Interviewer [00:39:09] So maybe say something briefly about decolonization.

Kanobana [00:39:13] Ah yeah!

Interviewer [00:39:14] Of course, you tell as much as you want, but—

Kanobana [00:39:17] That's a tough one, isn't it? That 's—Okay! We have been confronted with the concept of decolonization a lot in recent years and I remember, gosh—not so long ago, yeah—no, no, beco—in recent years, we have been confronted with the idea that everything needs to be decolonized. I'm not against this at all. I'm actually a fan of that idea, although nowadays, I might hear that the national bank wants to decolonize. But then I think like, Okay, if a national bank wants to decolonize, it should shut itself down, because there aren't many other options. Now, the university also wants to decolonize and here I also think like yeah, then we really need to think structurally different about what a university is. Because decolonizing is going back to the post-structuralists and to deconstruction, so Jaques Derrida, to deconstruct, try to dismantle. So abolishing actually, dismantling certain power structures that exist today. For me, decolonizing is decentralizing power too. We really have the tendency—and I don't think that's a human characteristic—we tend to see this as human, I don't believe in this, but we tend to think that hierarchy and centralizing power is just natural, normal. That's because it's just necessary, especially when we have to live in big cities with so many and, in, in states, that's what we need to get things in order. I don't really believe in this and I don't really believe in it. Simply, not just out of principle, but also because I want to keep stimulating my imagination about what it means to live together as people. And I think we've forgotten, we've been greatly forgotten, we often think the western model is the human model. And so we need to decolonize that. This, we really need to forget, because before the advent of the Western model, there was an enormous diversity societies around the world. And that concerns gender, it concerns race, it's about race, yeah, it's about ethnicity, about all the ways we now think it's simply normal to be part of a certain group with a certain language, a certain culture, that you identify with it and that that's the most important thing to sharpen your political awareness. We consider that to be normal and I disagree. That can't be the only thing we can reproduce as humans, even if we know—especially when we know how much damage that world view has done. Quantitatively, it may all seem to be going very well, because we have recently reached 8 billion. We've never been with so many, so quantitatively—humanity has never done so well. But, on the other hand, and that's colonization too, is destroying biodiversity, the mental traumas we're all struggling with, with. The, the, the, the horror of national borders and what it does to people. You have to imagine that people in the nineteenth century, when Europeans went to America, you had to be healthy, but you didn't need a passport, you didn't need a visa, right? Until, until the 70s, people were quite free to simply come and go as they pleased. It wasn't until the 80s that it was consolidated that you can't just cross a border. And who gets rejected every time? Yeah, the Sub-Saharan people, Africans. It's easier—it's hard to come here as a Syrian, but it's even harder as Congolese to come here and basically that doesn't make any sense. That's just inhuman. Now back to decolonizing, so decolonizing is that, isn't it? It's, all that inhuman stuff that we just consider normal, is just getting rid of it, because it—it just has to stop. It makes no sense.

Interviewer [00:43:21] Thank you.

Kanobana [00:43:22] Yeah, I can say more, but I think that's the crux of the matter for me.

Interviewer [00:43:27] Okay, fine. It's 6 after 11. I don't know if you want to say anything else yourself?

Kanobana [00:43:38] Do you want to say something?

Crew 3 [00:43:40] Me, I take some photos. Christine will ask me to take some photos but—yeah, okay.

Kanobana [00:43:43] Me, me, I, no, I can't think of anything right away, but maybe you're like, Yeah, here you said this or that, which I need to explain something, or?

Crew 3 [00:43:52] Nah, I have no questions—frankly, to me the answers, it was comprehensive, yeah.

Interviewer [00:43:58] All right, thank you. Then I suggest we leave it here. I thought it was really good.

Kanobana [00:44:02] Yes!

Crew 3 [00:44:02] Yes! And, you— [end of recording].