

AFRICAN IMMIGRATION RESEARCH PROJET- FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

By Karima Zerrou

Dr Mark Naison:

Today is November 18th 2008 at the Bronx Museum of Arts, we will be interviewing DJ Khoule, whose real name is Mamadou Khoulé and the major interviewer is Karima Zerrou. The interview will be conducted in French.

Where in Senegal did you grow up?

A Dakariof, dans Dakar proche de l'aéroport,
In Dakar, close to the airport

How old were you when you first came to the United States?

20 ans
20 years old

How long ago was that? In which year?

C'était en 2000
In 2000

When you were in Dakar were you very involved then music?

Oui J'étais le meilleur DJ de mon temps
Yes I was the best DJ at the time – the No1 DJ Senegalese at the time

Your name there was DJ Khoule?

DJ khoulé

How old were you when you first became interested in music?

À l'âge de 15 ans
At Fifteen years old

What was the music that you were the most influenced by as a DJ?

Tu sais au pays on mélange tout, Hip Hop etc. En boîte de nuit on écoute pas trop la musique africaine donc on met surtout les musiques américaines et occidentales etc.
Back home we liked to play everything mostly but in the clubs, you can hear a lot of western music hip hop music not too much traditional music

Who was your favorite hip hop artist when you began?

Tupac!!!

When did you get your first table to work with (table de mixage)?

C'est le foyer des jeunes de mon village qui me l'on donné, j'avais 15 ans
The community house gave it to me, when I was fifteen years old

Is that a community center?

Oui c'est en général la que les jeunes se regroupaient pour des activités
Yes that's usually what you would have for young people to gather for activities

What sort of housing did you live in? Public? Private houses?

Les parents achetaient des maisons
Parents were buying houses

The community center was just a place where the young people gathered and there had turn table? Turn table with Vinyl's or Cds?

A ce moment en 2000 il n'y avait pas de Cds on a commencé par des audio cassettes
In 2000, there were no Cds, and we used to mix with tapes

And you mixed with vinyl's too? Only tapes? How did you do that?

Non je n'avais avec que des cassettes, on avait 2 machines à cassettes une pour écouter une pour balancer
No just tapes, I had two set for tapes, one was to listen and the other was to throw down

Did you have a mixer?

No

Where did you learn the skill? Anyone taught you?

Quand j'étais jeune j'aimais la musique et les gens du foyer m'on donné de quoi mixer pour la communauté
When I was young I loved music so the community house wanted to encourage me and gave me the opportunity because they saw I was passionate

Did you play a musical instrument?

No

Did you dance?

Yes

Were you like a b-boy dancer or a break dancer?

J'étais un bon danseur j'ai même gagné des prix pour ça, pour la danse traditionnelle : le fonorat pas de break dancing
I was a good dancer; I even won prizes for it, but for the traditional dance called Fonorat not break dancing

Young people dress hip hop style and baggies clothes in Dakar?

Oui ça c'est sûr, on est plus américain là bas!
Yes for sure, in Dakar they are often more American than here

Did you have MTV in Dakar?

On n'avait pas ça ! On avait des amis qui nous envoyés des vidéos
No we did not; friends would send videos from the USA

Did you have family or friends in USA when you were Younger?

Oui j'avais des amis!
Yes I had friends, connections here

What was like your first party when you were DJ in Dakar?

J'ai organisé des soirées vendredi samedi dimanche et même Mercredi, à notre âge, 15 ans tu ne faisais pas de soirées jusqu'à 4h du matin. On commençait à 9h et finissais à 2h -3h du mat !

I was organizing evenings Friday Saturday Sunday and even on Wednesday, not party up till 4 am but short evening till 2ish party because we were young, like 15

Did your skill come from the music you played or the things you said? Or you mixed better? What made you so good?

J'avais tous les sons, et je mixais tout !!! En Afrique on danse tout !

I had all the new sounds; I would mix them all, in Africa we danced on everything!

Did you ever rap?

Non, j'ai jamais essayé. Mais j'ai managé un groupe de rap à Dakar

No never, but I managed a rap group in Dakar

Did you know any of the people who were performing on the Africa underground?

J'ai le CD

I have the CD

Did you expect to come to united states eventually or you just thought you were going to stay in Dakar?

Oh moi mon papa c'est lui qui gérait la sécurité de l'aéroport donc je savais que j'allais sortir.

Oh yeah my dad was the security of the airport and I knew I was getting out at some point

Did you have family in NY when you came here?

Oui j'ai de la famille ici

Yes family relative

And they live in the Bronx?

Certains habitaient à Harlem et d'autres dans le Bronx, un peu partout

Yes in Harlem, in the Bronx, all spread out

As soon as after you came here did you start DJ?

2002

So meanwhile what kind of work did you do?

Je travaillais dans une compagnie de boutiques qui vendait des trucs

I worked at a store selling stuff

Did you graduate from high school in Dakar?

Je suis allé jusqu'au lycée mais pas l'université

I went to high school a little but not to college

Did you go to the university when you came here?

J'ai voulu faire technologie ici mais c'était trop cher

I wanted to do technology when I came here but it was too expensive

When you were DJ where was your first DJing job in NY?

La plantation est un night club dans le Bronx

Plantation, a night club in the Bronx

The plantation is it still there?

Yes

Was the crowd all African or was it mixed?

Mélangé

The crowd was mixed

How big is the plantation?

Plus de 250 personnes

More than 250 persons

By the way what made you leave Dakar you were doing so well?

Je suis venu car j'aimais la musique et à la TV tu vois l'Amérique et tu dis c'est a voir

I came because I loved music and watching America on TV made really want to see what it was about

Did you produce mix tape in Senegal?

Nan jamais

No never

And here?

J'ai fais une compilation mélange de musiques africaines et j'ai vendu

I did an African compilation and I sold it

Do you sell your compilation? Where could I buy the compilation?

Au magasin à la 116ème mais depuis j'en ai plus refais car il n'y a pas d'argent généré

In store, 116th but it was in 2004, I didn't do again because there is no money there

Where you were working in the plantation you were working with Cds then?

Yes

When you do a party do you bring your own equipment or do you use the equipment of the club?

Ca dépend si c'est dans un club j'amène mon laptop ou bien mes cds, mais si c'est dans une place j'amène tout mon matériel

It depends if it's a club I bring my laptop or my CDs but in a hall I would bring all my equipment

Do you work with vinyl or Cds?

Cds

How do you keep your collection of music up to date how do you get your tracks?

J'ai deux ordis et je copie les cds ou je prends sur internet

I have two computers and I burn cds and download

Which type of music you most like to play in your sets?

A part la musique africaine, j'aime le hip hop, dance, R&b, trip hop...

Besides African music I like hip hop, dance, R&B, trip hop...

So you have a show on the radio show "voice of Africa"?

Oui de 11 a minuit les mercredis

Yes from 11pm to Midnight on Wednesdays

Who is your audience? Are they mostly Senegalese?

Oui on parle Wolof

Yes, mostly Wolof

Did you DJing in walof when you talk to the people?

A la radio y a que les sénégalais qui écoutent c'est une radio sénégalaise, je travaille pour une association sénégalaise c'est pour ça...

Only Senegalese listeners as it is a Senegalese radio, I do it for the association for American Senegalese

The association of American Senegalese is they located in the Bronx or in Harlem?

Ils ont ici à Harlem

In Harlem (116th)

Association of Senegalese of America

Do you or this organization?

Je travaille à la radio –

I work for them, for the show

When you do parties? Where are most of your parties now?

Chaque trois mois j'organise des soirées, ça dépend, je choisis la salle

Every three months I organized African parties, I chose the venue

Senegalese still know your name so they come to your party?

Yes

Where are the halls you rent for the parties?

Le 31 décembre on a une soirée, 144 and Lennox

Like this upcoming 31 we have a New Year's Eve party

What is the name of the club?

C'est une salle de basket

It's a basket-ball hall

How many people were come in your parties?

D'habitude on a de 300 400 500 personnes

Usually 300, 400 sometimes 500 people

Do they have food also?

Des fois on vend

Sometimes we do sell yes

So you promote your own parties? Why not more than every 3 month?

Parce que la communauté sénégalaise ne se déplace pas souvent, si tu veux les mobiliser, il ne faut pas trop organiser

Senegalese don't like to go out all the time so if you want them to come, you can't organize too many

What about clubs, do you also dj in club?

Non j'ai arrêté l'année dernière car ma femme était tombée enceinte

I was doing a lot of clubs but my wife got pregnant so I stopped for a while

What did you feel when you first came here? Were you disappointed in the US when you arrived?

Oui, je suis déçu plus tu es la, plus tu as de factures à payer, trop de bill à payer, c'est trop cher

I am disappointed, A lot of bills! The longer you stay here, the more bills you have!!expensive to live rent Electricity, food, etc.

What about like the worst situation? Was that more difficult than you were expected?

Nan c'est pas ça c'est juste que depuis que je suis là je travaille

No that's not it; it's just that since I have been here I have been working

The DJ is the supplement your normal work? You could not just be a DJ?

Ca dépend, l'argent tu ne sais pas combien tu vas mettre. Comme l'année dernière, je travaillais dans un Bronx, toute l'Afrique se retrouvait la bas tous les week end, « Paris Bercy », 175 Street and Macomb

It depends, it's unstable you do not know how much you are going to make . Well last year I was working in the Bronx in 175th in Macomb all Africa was there every week end "Paris Bercy"

Are this mostly People from France speaking Africa or you get Malian Senegalese or including Nigerians etc.?

Tous les africains sont la ; Ils veulent que je revienne mais le problème qui se pose dans les boites de nuit, tu y es tout le temps, vendredi samedi dimanche, à partir de 10h tu dois être la bas pour pointer

All Africans are there. They want me to come back but it's a problem for me because you have to be there all the time, Friday, Saturday, and on Sunday after 10pm you need to be there

Is there much contact or socialization between Africans and African Americans in the Bronx or do Africans tend to stay in their own community more than socialize with African Americans, Latinos?

Bon on est ensemble

Well, we are together

Are you in a big apartment building? All communities get only well

Yes, yes

When your children get to be school aged, what is your sense of the school in the Bronx?

Il vient tout juste de naître on y a pas encore penser

We did not think about this yet as he was just born

Would you put him in the Bronx school?

Ca dépend on verra ce qui est le mieux

Depends, we will see what the best thing to do is

Do you see yourself continuing your DJ carrier as you get older or your do see yourself with your family doing other things?

Je viens tout juste de commencer, j'ai la vie devant moi

I feel like I have just started! My entire life is ahead

Are there Many DJs other than the two of you who are in the Senegalese community?

Y en a 2 autres

2 others

Do you travel to other cities?

Je suis tout le temps dans d'autres états Philadelphia, Ohio, Washington

I'm often in other States like Philly, Ohio, and DC

So the Senegalese know DJ Khoule in the US, have you ever gone to Canada?

Non j'ai pas de papiers

No I do not have any papers, I would have liked to

If you do not have papers you might not come back.....

So you have to have a green card to go outside and come back? Does your wife have papers?

Oui on s'est marié mais j'ai pas encore fais les démarches. Je ne suis pas encore allé voir un avocat.

C'est de l'argent et il faut les payer

We are married but I did not undertake any steps yet or saw any lawyer because you have to pay him for that

So is it is the same Problem if you go back to Senegal you might not be able to come back?

Yes

How long have you been here already?

Je suis la depuis 2000

Since 2000

Has your family have ever come to see you?

Mon père était là mais ma mère, elle essaye de venir.

My dad was here but my mum she is trying to come...

Wow it is like the video "this is my America"It's very expensive to get a green card?

If you take a lawyer how much you think he will be?

On s'est marié il y a à peine un an et plus, donc si je laisse du temps ils ne se diront pas que c'est un mariage arrangé

We have been married a year and some ago now so I want to wait a little longer so they do not think it is an arranged marriage ...

We know a Ghanaian who got married 6 times, 6 arranged marriages before he got his green card

Have you ever DJ on television?

J'ai fait mais pas ici, au pays

I have already done a TV show at home not here though

If you had the best Senegalese dj and we got this museum for you... How many people do you think you could bring here?

Ca dépend de la promotion

Depends of the promotion

If they could fit 500 people, you could get 500 people?

Bien sur,

Of course

This is the perfect location, so I think we should do something with the African Community at the Bronx Museum

When I moved here in 1999 there were not so many Africans, but now they are all over the streets

Les Africains habitaient à Harlem mais maintenant c'est cher,

African lived in Harlem but Harlem became so expensive so, they came to the Bronx

The Bronx is where everybody is living now because people got pushed out of Harlem by the rising rents

Moi je payais 1000 dollars dans un petit appartement a Harlem ...

I was paying 1000 dollars in a small apartment in Harlem but I was told if I was to renew the least I would pay At least 1300-1400 dollars

Are they other African families in your building?

Oui, il y en a trop meme

Too many actually

Is this a tall building?

Il y a 6 étages.

6 floors

Do you see a life here; do you see yourself staying here?

C'est ce que j'ai dit à ma famille au pays

I was just talking about this with my family back home

Where is she from, your wife?

Sénégal

Moi je suis la, Pour l'instant je n'ai pas encore décidé d'y retourner. Si je retourne au pays qu'est ce que je vais faire, ici j'ai l'opportunité de faire DJ et de travailler,

For now, I am here I do not plan to return. If I go back home, what am I going to do? Here I have the opportunity to DJ and work

Do you think the schools here are better than there are in Senegal?

Ca dépend, les gens qui ont étudié au pays, sont plus fort que ceux d'ici. Au pays tu travailles de 9 a 5 ici on te dit de choisir tes heures

Depends but seems like people who study back home are more educated than those here. Plus, back home, you go from 9 to 5 whereas here, you chose your own schedule pretty much

People do not work as hard here?

Non c'est pas ça, mais au niveau éducation, ils veulent pas bousculer les gens ici

Not really but it's just seems that they do want to shake people up here when it comes to schooling

Back home we had to think outside the box, outside of your lessons

Do you think in the job you have worked coming from a better education a background has helped you or the people think ok you differently because you speak different languages ?...

Les africains sont polis, On ne vole pas on fait rien

Africans are very polite .They do not steal nor do anything

Coz that's the impression that I have talking to people who hire African workers, you are seen as the best labour force even at Fordham all security guards are Africans, in the stores also...

Would you see yourself eventually owning a club, or do you see yourself working as a DJ, would you like to own your own club?

J'aimerais bien, parce que les sénégalais même si ce n'est pas les soirées il y a les baptêmes, les réceptions, ils n'ont pas de place, ils louent à 2000 dollars !

Senegalese may not go out all the time but they always have some to celebrate like you have birth, weddings ...they have not enough room they have to rent up to \$2000

That would be something where you could become a center for the community in the Bronx great!

Is Barack Obama becoming president have a special meaning to you as somebody who comes from Africa or he's just another politician?

Je l'ai soutenu, J'ai même donné de l'argent pour sa campagne. Ce n'est pas le fait que c'est Obama, c'est un noir cela nous donne de la fierté

I supported him and even gave him money for his campaign. I am proud because he's black of course

Before we end is there anything that would you like to say from you're your experience here as people will listen to this or read this?

Ce que j'ai appris ici, la bas au pays tu vis avec ta famille, même si tu gagne un peu d'argent tu n'as rien à faire. Ici tu dois travailler pour te nourrir sinon tu seras welfare

What I have learned here is that back home you live with your family you work, a little money and thats it, here you have to work hard to feed yourself otherwise you are welfare

You have to work harder here than back home?

Yes

Si s'était quelque chose à refaire je ne serais pas revenu. C'est une prison sans portes

Yes, if you had to do all again, I would not come here, I would not have come *it's a jail without doors*

Si tu ouvre ta boite aux lettres tu ne vois que ce que tu dois payer.

It's nothing else, here it's all about bills.

What about credit cards?

No just Debit card only

Yes because that's what killed a lot of people here

A jail without doors? hmm....

Yes you are free to go but you will never go

The irony is what made the US what it is, if you take them from NY, it will not run the same way

Yes because we do the things they would not do

Yes this research is showing us all of this through your stories; at least the truth is on record. It was amazing, thank you to both of you