

Fallou Ngom

## English Transcript

My name is Fallou Ngom, and I was born and raised in Casamance, in the Southern part of Senegal, in a city called Ziginchor. I spent all my childhood there; I went to school at Lycée Djiniabo de Ziginchor, which is the local high school. And I was not the best student; I have to say that I was not very good at Math, but I was very good at languages . So my neighborhood was populated mostly by mandinka, pulaar , mankaañ, manjàk , a few sereer , some joola and some wolof . So I grew up in an environment where the norm was to speak many languages. In fact If you spoke one language, you were weird. If you speak many languages, that' the norm . So I was raised there ... I was born and raised there , but my family is actually from the North . My dad is from the region of Thies, and my mom is from the region of Kaolack. But when they were married , they moved to Casamance, so we were all born and raised in Ziginchor. Although my height is northerner—skinny and tall compared to the people in the South—my culture is definitely Southern , and in the North people would look at me and think that I am a Northerner, but when I open my mouth , they would immediately

know that is guy is not from around. So my childhood up to when I went to the University of Saint Louis in the North has been a life of diversity, and encountering religious tolerance and cultural tolerance and living with people with different faiths. As a matter of fact, I never knew that religion was a problem; I grew up in an environment where we celebrated all the holidays and I remember I went to church... we had many Roman Catholics and Jehovah witnesses and because they like to discuss, we used to spend a lot of time talking and discussing and drinking tea. So, it is interesting that it's only when I left that environment that it was clear to me that religion could be a source of problem, but it had never been a source of problem for us.

I went to school there at the Lycee Djignabo and then from there, after the bac, which is the high school diploma then the national board of education looks at your grades. If you were good at math, they will send you in the math department ; if you good with languages , they will send you , depending on where you excel. Clearly I was not a genius in math, because I could not memorize those formulas. But my language skills were very good and I was at English and Arabic and some other languages. So, I was sent to the university of Saint Louis. So we were the second generation of the University of Saint Louis. The University of Saint Louis opened its

doors in 1990, and we were the second generation; our generation arrived from 1991 onward. So we called ourselves sanaar. All the people who went to that university referred to themselves as people from sanaar, and sanaar is the name of the two villages that surround the university. The one in the front is a pulaar village; it is called sanaar Peul. And the one in the back, it is called sanaar wolof. And that's and that's why it was sanaar camp. So ... and then we count. If you say I am from Sanaaar one , that means your from the first generation. If you are from Sanaaar two like us, you from the second generation So I studied there. I was sent to the English department and in the English department there were only two tracks. There was one for linguistics, and one for literature So, we all had to take the same courses from the first year to the second year .But at the third year of what we call license, that's where the specialization began And then so... if you were good at languages, then you'd go to the linguistics track: it was called grammar and linguistics specialization .And if you were interested in literature, then you'd do the literary track. So I clearly chose the linguistics track. So I studied there until 1996 when I received my certificat de maitrise, which is the fourth year after my initial admission to the university. And after that, I won a teaching assistantship to go to the University of Montana in Missoula to teach French for two semesters. Clearly I was very lucky ...

you know I competed and I won and when I arrived it was very interesting because I never knew that the United States was that big and that diverse. My only recollection in those days of what I knew of the United States was the big cities Chicago, New York and all those big institutions So I arrived in Montana in 1997. So I spent from 1991 to 1996 at the university of Saint Louis . As a matter of fact I think it was September 1996 that I arrived that I arrived in Montana in the middle of the beginning of winter; it was pretty brutal. But it went really really well. I spent one year there and I did my master there in one year; that's very important. So when I arrived, I was teaching two classes , but I realized that I was wasting my time because after all I was teaching and the pay was too small, I mean you know.. I was not getting a degree. I asked: "what were the requirements to get a master's degree"? They told me: "no ... you're from a French speaking country and your English is not very good . We don't know if you're gonna be able to do a master's and you don't have time. But I told them, "Well let me see the program." I looked at the program and I knew some of those courses I could even teach because I had already studied those courses as an undergrad in Senegal. So I talked to them and explained to them that I needed to take... you know... to have a degree. And they told me: "well the only option you have is to do everything in one year. Could you do it?" I was about two

weeks late. I looked at the program and they were very helpful in letting me try it. So I took the maximum courses. I divided the program in two. I took the maximum course in the first semester, and I got 3.8 out of 4 GPA, and they realized I could do this stuff. And in the second semester, I completed and then I was awarded the masters degree. And then from there, applied to the university of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where they had a linguistic and wolof program. And there I was admitted and then I left in the following fall—fall of 1997—to go to the University of Illinois where I studied and finished my doctorate. And then after that, in 2002... s I was there at the University of Illinois from 1997 to 2002. After that I move to... I got a job at Western Washington University which is located at the border with Canada in Washington North of Seattle, about two hours North of Seattle. So I worked there as an Assistant Professor of French and Linguistics from 2002 to 2007. And then in 2007 I won a Fulbright lecturer/researcher to go the University of Saint Louis where I was a student—interesting in the same department where I was student in the past. During that time I was also negotiating with Boston University because I had already applied for the position of the big chief John Hutchinson. So I joined Boston University at the end of my Fulbright year in Senegal. So I am now here as an associate Professor of Anthropology and then I direct the African Language Program.

