

LAUREN HALL-LEW

It's. Yeah. Okay. We're going to go ahead and get started. Can everybody hear me in the back? Yes. Okay, great.

I am very happy to welcome you all to the first lecture in the People's Global South Speaker Series. It's sponsored by the PPLS Committee for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion or EDI. I'm Lauren Hall-Lew I'm a sociolinguist. I'm in the subject area of linguistics and English language. I'm the former director of the PPIS EDI Committee and I'm the organiser for today's event. I want to thank you for coming in person today. Debora and I were just saying this is the largest event that either of us have been to since the beginning of the pandemic. It's really exciting to see you all here. I know a lot of people couldn't make it, of course, for all the various reasons. So just so you know, today's event is being recorded and the Q&A session will be recorded too. If you would like to ask a question that you would not like released on the recording, that's fine. You can just ask me later.

Our invited guest will be speaking for about half an hour today and then we're going to have a five minute break right after the end of that. So you can gather your thoughts and think about the questions that you are going to ask. And then in the Q&A section, we're going to prioritise questions from students first before going to questions from staff. When you ask a question, it would be great if you could speak clearly. So the recording could pick up and also say your name. And if you're a student, your year and your programme or say your role at the university. And then immediately following the Q&A session, you are all more than welcome to stay for the wine reception and a menu that is entirely vegan.

So the Global South Lecture Series comes from an idea from 2017. This was by a psychology master's student and now a Ph.D. student, Jess Brough, through her membership in EUSA's LiberatEd student organisation. Jess was inspired by the 2017 Women and other Minorities in Humanities Conference, which was held that year by the Philosophy Society. Jess's proposal was for LiberatEd Psychology to have a seminar series to address, quote, a problem endemic to the field of psychology, which favours the research of Western figureheads and leaves non-Western psychologists underrepresented and underrepresented. The goal was, quote, to seek out the work of non-Western researchers and researchers of colour who have been excluded from the canon. When that proposal struggled to find external funding, PPLS stepped in and agreed to sponsor a speaker series with representation from across the school's three subject areas philosophy, psychology and language sciences. And now, after two years of delays due to COVID 19, we are delighted to welcome you all to this event, which is the inaugural talk of the Global South Speaker series featuring the University of Edinburgh's 54th Lord Rector, Ms. Debora Kayembe Born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Debora earned her law degree at the Université Libre de Kinshasa and was called to the Congolese bar where she specialised in international law. Forced into exile for her work. She came to the UK as a refugee in 2005 and was granted political asylum. She moved to Edinburgh in 2011 where she qualified as a barrister. Since then she has served on the board of the Scottish Refugee Council and is a member of the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Courts and then International Criminal Court Bar Association. In 2016, she became the first African woman to join the Royal Society of Edinburgh, where she has been active in representing refugee minorities and sits on the working group for Africa. Her achievements and contributions were honoured when she became the first African to have her portrait displayed there.

Debora launched the Freedom Walk campaign in 2020, a civil rights movement which lobbies to promote, quote, social reforms, racial justice and community harmony in Scotland. She comes to this fight in part through having experienced a series of awful, high profile instances of racial abuse here in Scotland. Debora is one of the individuals profiled in a brand new television programme, The Truth About Scotland and Racism, which will broadcast tonight at 8 p.m. on BBC One Scotland. In 2021, Deborah Kayembe became the first person of colour to be elected Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh. And while she is most renowned as a fearless human rights lawyer, she also proudly identifies as a linguist. She is the kind of linguist that some of us are, but not all of us are. And that is a polyglot. Her proficiencies include Luba, Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili, Portuguese, French and English. And I imagine some in the audience might want to ask her a little bit about some of those languages. Debora has worked as an interpreter and translator for African African refugees in the NHS. She created and directs her own language services company, Diversity Translation Services Ltd, and she served on the Institute of Translation and Interpreting for ten years. She is passionate about the value of languages, especially with respect to identity, social justice and global democracy. And we are absolutely honoured to have her here today. The title of the talk is The Importance of Languages and Cultural Diversity in the Conflict Zone as Instruments for a Durable Peace and justice. Please join me in welcoming Ms. Deborah Kayembe

DEBORA KAYEMBE

So much so. But anyway, if you want you know, I'm very nervous to be here. It's been 20 years since I've been in a place like this. Listening to me, you know. I've been doing a lot of talk around the world, but in a setting like this. Oh, wow. So I do. Lecture very differently. What I do usually it's I speak a little something related to you, a little link. That will allow your brain to do a little dance. About your field and what I'm telling you. And then I will. Allow you to ask me questions. So I need to give it much, as much as time on the questions. But because the plan is I'm doing my speech first and then 5 minutes and then you come back and I'm sure you get the question before the 5 minutes comes out. That's that's my plan, hopefully is going to work.

So the importance of languages and cultural diversity in a conflict zone as an instrument for peace and durable. Peace for for durable peace and justice. Now conflicts start with war. And here. We are really going to look at how these people are surviving, who are surviving war could be helped to rebuild their lives. True language and cultural diversity. We are going to examine the best actor and those who have a big role to play on those people's life, which is the interpreter and the translator. We call them linguists in the UK. Usually they call me the interpreter. But when I'm in America, they say, "Translator, can you speak?" So that's the way. We are not defined. But I like the way the university says linguist. They speak several languages.

So as we know, war is an intense armed conflict between state governments, societies and paramilitary groups, such a mercenary insurgents and militia. It is generally, generally characterised by extreme violence, aggression, destructions and mortality. Using irregular or irregular military forces. Civilians in war zone are subject to war atrocity such genocide, while survival may suffer through psychological-- witnesses. The destruction of war. War. Result in lower quality of life and worse outcome. So the refugee, generally speaking, is a displaced person across national boundaries and we cannot or unwillingly return to home to the well-founded fear of persecution. Such person may be called asylum seeker until granted refugee status by not by the contracting state or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. If the family make a claim for asylum now there are some terms that identify the refugees throughout that process and usually it refers to calling them the refugee relocation and that is a non organised process for an individual transfer from one country to another.

Now look, I want to talk here about three very important terms that use around refugees today to. Identify what is really every. Country around the world supposed to make, to put in place to support people who are coming out from the conflict zone or surviving after being in a conflict zone. The first one is the refugee resettlement programme. The Refugee Resettlement Programme referred to a process of basic adjustment to life, often in the early stages of transition to a new country, including securing access to housing, education, health care, documentation and legal work and employment in some time, including process. But the focus is generally a short term survivor need and rather long term planning. Refugee integration means simply that the dynamic a long term process in which the newcomers come fully and is equal participants can be receiving the society compared to the general construct of settlement. Refugee integration a greater focus on the social and cultural structural dimensions. This process included the acquisition of legal rights, mastering the language and culture, reaching safety and stability, developing social connection, establishing the meaning of mark of integration such as employment, housing and health.

The third one is refugee work. Workforce integration. This understood to be a process in which refugee engage to economic activities of employment or self-employment, which are considerate with individual professional goals and previous qualification and experience, and provide adequate economic security and prospects for career advancement. So in many countries, refugees are supported by linguists because first of all, the language that the refugees speak is not firstly the language of the country where they end up with. So it now recognised that the linguist to play this role of a bridge connector, a connector. Bridge between the state, the new place, and the person who wants to settle and share and become the new place. Become for that person a place of healing. And that is where the linguistic division. No. These linguists are clearly code interpreter and translator, and they speak more than two languages and someone just say, "Yeah, I speak all this language." "You say that?" "Yeah, that's the language I speak. And I am about to speak" Multilingual speakers-- And it's not a secret that the number of people speaking several languages are more and more than the one the one who speak only one languages. And this multilingualism is useful use for trade, and it's an advantage for people wanting to participate to globalisation and cultural openness. People who speak more than one language has been reported to be more adept at language learning compared to monolingual, and I personally believe that multilingualism is a complete competence in mastering one more, one than more, more than one languages.

So my experience working with refugee resettlement project around the world, I have work with two most predominant one, the first one with the American, and that one is of two, despite refugees from what the American call a displaced a dispatching place where refugees have been there maybe for ten, some 16 years and waiting to be sent to be bring to America during those time the spending at this refugee camp, they are three things that have been done with them. Testing for illnesses, HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis. Priority are given to women and children and families, small families that you recognise, a husband and a wife. And then once this process is done, these refugees are now sent to America. So the. Following day they. Arrive in America. On the following day, not a break. They go through a long process of interview where they've been offered at the end of the interview. 40 hours of manual job, whether you speak English or not. That's the Americans.

In the U.K., the refugee scheme programme run by the mighty, ruthless and unhuman. U.K. border agency. And I know exactly what I'm talking about. Adding to the process and the difference between these two you set them programme is that. No one in the U.K. is that you go through the process inside the U.K.. And the American one. It's where you you find as you are refugees and you've been picked up from there, brought to the United States of America in both side. The work on exploitation begins. So the travel to the promised land finished the minute you get to the land. Simple as that.

Now. Perhaps it would be very interesting for you to understand my journey to multilingualism. And I know very little person know that I am a linguist. I think this is going to be an opportunity for me to share that experience. With you. My journey to multilingualism started at a young age. I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo back in 1975. The country was known as Zaire, the most stable country in Africa. Mobutu Sese Seko, the president then run the country with the iron fist.

My parents were from the eastern Congo. President Mobutu would not allow educated people from the east to live peacefully in their own lands of origin. So in order to control the country, you will migrate entire family from the east. To the west. He says it was the best way to combat tribalism. Then my mother tongue, my parent was Swahili. However, during the regime of Mobutu, he managed to impose Lingala, his tribe language, as the language of the army and trade. So because Mobutu himself was a man of the army. So everyone in the army was wealthy. If you work for someone from the army, you are wealthy. And if you want to be successful in the trade, you need to speak Lingala.

Now, imagine that we are from eastern Congo. We speak Swahili. And we've been taken off the east, the Congo to the west of Congo. Where the language is not Swahili is Kikongo. And when you go outside, you don't speak Swahili, you speak Lingala. So that's how he wanted to control the country. So while in primary school, the country curriculum will be delivered within the four national language of the Congo, Swahili. Lingala. Kikongo and Chiluba. So from the east. Those who are staying from the east in primary school. There would be no French. No Portuguese. Only Swahili. On the eastern. From the West Congo? No French? No. No English. No Portuguese. Only Kikongo from the North. Lingala. But Lingala was everywhere. And then Chiluba. In the middle of Congo.

Now, not to mention that the Congo has 345 tribe. Each of these tribe have their own dialect. So that was they speak. The time, at that time. So we all had to learn Lingala. Without that particular language, it was impossible to prosper under Mobutu country and the Mobutu regime. In my home, my parents prohibited Lingala. You could never spoke Lingala in the house. So my parents thought that it was bad enough we could not live even our own native land. But to be imposed, to learn another language was not. Was bad. I'd forget. So if my family moved to western Congo in that part of Congo that recognise today. Today Congo Central. I have learnt to read and write in Kikongo. That's the first ever language I learnt. It wasn't the language of my parents, or my cousin. It was, it was the local language imposed by the government. But at home we think we keep up with our eastern tradition and origin. And my parents will only speak to us in Swahili. Even the conversation in the street was in Lingala. Both my parents would not tolerate that at the house. That would never happen. Their worry was, more we learn the local language, more we copy the custom of that place, which was very different than the culture we have had from eastern Congo. So that was no negotiation, zero tolerance. So they were conservative at this best. But the trouble with them. They have multilingual children being brought up in the house. That was the big trouble for my parents.

So I went. But then when I reached the age of eight years old, I was able to speak Swahili. Lingala, Kikongo, Chiluba and I could write in Kikongo and Lingala. At that stage eight years old, no French. No English, no

Portuguese. It was the vision of Mobutu, the glory of Africa, where children of Africa will learn first the language of Africa. So I then began. To learn French in secondary school, because that was the national curriculum.

Then with my parents becoming wealthier, my parents made the decision to remove me from the public school to a private school where Belgium's curriculum was taught. So very quickly, I pick up in French and English. Well at the new school, the course, the lesson would be in French and English. I then continue in the same way at the university level to Kinshasa, which is the the equivalent of Université Libre de Brussel, so that the equivalent in the Congo and continue to my life as a lawyer.

But it's not a surprise. A new language came to my life. And that was in another unexpected language. It was through marriage. My ex-husband was an immigrant. Family from Angola. They have a lot of similarities between the people living in the west and south of Congo and those from Angola. So they are Kikongo speakers and Portuguese was the official language. Now having lost his family living in Angola and Portugal and coming home and visiting my in-laws, coming in and speaking in Portuguese, I have no other choice than to learn Portuguese very quickly. You don't ask me why? Because there was sometimes a strange girl coming and say it's a cousin. "Is this your cousin?" "Yes, she's my cousin." And suddenly you speak both in Portuguese, and in reality, she was a mistress. And then my husband never made an effort to me understand Portuguese because he knew the minute I understand the language, and he knew I was very good and pick up on languages. In the meantime, I know that I will discover all his secrets. So. The start date of my knowledge of Portuguese was not until just at the time my marriage was dissolved. My interest in Portuguese, gone. I didn't want it anymore. Sometime our interaction with language is determined by the interest we are making of it. Falling in love with a language is determined by the narrative beyond what you need to learn from that language.

The importance of multilingualism come to my life at that time and when I arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker. Seeking refugee status Under political asylum. After many years of fighting for human rights in the Congo, the United Kingdom is a signatory of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention. As well as the 1976 Protocol. Therefore, I had a responsibility to offer protection to people who seek asylum, and that is all in the legal definition of refugee. And who have written the person we're supposed to be this persecution, we be protected in this land. But the reality most of you, as you know in the UK cut to legal aid, prevent asylum seeker getting good advice, arguing the case effectively. And this cut in legal aid did not go further than just getting the interpreter and a translator who made their life successful can make the lives successful in the UK. So when legally it came. It went to court over the fund available for interpreter to support. The refugee comes in. It looks like every refugee who comes in the UK must speak English. We talk about "Must Speak English" later on. Okay.

Now. Concerns were also raised about the treatment of of those in detention, the practise of families and boarding your children in immigration detention centre for a long period. This reality has been part of my life, the two years that I was seeking asylum in the UK after I was granted refugee status in the UK. I had no other desire to fight the injustice that I have lived through the asylum process. I began to volunteer for the African community, particularly those who are coming from this great lake speaking Swahili, Lingala, French and English. With the years of experience of promoting equality and diversity. My assignment went very successfully for the refugees and very quickly most of the case I was having, it was like a win win case. If someone for many years a struggle to get results. With the National Health Service. The minute I come inside to help on on interpretation they have condition improve immediately. And that was the case all the way. To these the justice system in the UK and very quickly my reputation travel from the UK to USA to New Zealand. As result after three or four months. I decided to join the Institute of Translation interpreting and becoming a professional linguist. The years that followed, I was granted access to offer my services to Her Majesty Government Services, the UK Government HQ, Department of Work and Pension Belmarsh Prison. Belmarsh Prison being there. Dagobah Prison. I'll be there. And Lambeth Palace Places where the UK might be. Power plays around the control and imperialism that exist in the world and have learnt so much from being just the person hidden on the back of the phone, translating the conversation between them.

In the US, the UK issued a second project. I did work with the food stamp programme. The US Department of Human Services. Medicaid, the newly established affordable healthcare by Barack Obama. At that time I was in America working for that. And the US resettlement programme in the corn of Africa and Mexico border in Tiajuana. Ten years on, I could say I have conducted over 1 million interview to resettle refugees around the world. These are story to tell to the world about inequality, racism and exclusion of people who are not native or English who does not speak English. That was at the heart of my political activism. And political activism is to

believe, to be to promote the concept of social good. The way the political activism is expressed is through lobbying, campaigning, voting, petitioning. These long hours of Working, allow me to collect data that serve as a basis for my quest of justice and peace and the change for a better world.

Before I get to some shocking story with you I had during that decade, during the decade that I worked, as I say, multi-lingual facilitator, I wanted to speak to you about the importance of multi lingualism. The benefit of multilingualism practises in education is essential to everyday. It includes appreciation of cultural awareness, its academic and education value and thus creativity adjustment in the society. Appreciation of local languages. Whenever two people meet, negotiation takes place. If they want to express solidarity or sympathy, they tend to seek more common future in their behaviour. If speak, I wish to express distances and even dislike of the person they are speaking to. The reverse is true and the difference are sought. So multilingualism is the freedom to promote our identity, culture and the respect of our own cultural differences. We often come across this phrase, "we speak only English here," and I call it the symbol of institutional racism. It's often used to non-native English speaking people by racists, and almost assumed that if you speak another language than English, you are not welcome here. You are not worth it. I said, this. Is not true. I believe English is a better language alongside other languages around the world. But I cannot underestimate the power of English languages in its influence in science, culture and interaction with universities around the world.

So what I want to see more is the opportunity given to other languages in order to promote cultural understanding in other parts of the world. Meaning the way to make trade move around. Grieving, dancing, dancing. The cha cha cha. Those things, those opportunities with the language interaction can make the culture. Better. And that multilingualism can make it all possible, particularly with survivors of war. These are people in quest of peace and justice. And it is the role of the it is the role of the linguist to make that possible. And that's why it is important that during this action of lobbying, this action of petitioning, that it's important that we manage to use all the language necessary around the situation to demonstrate the need of change in our society. Linguists should be aware of the role that it carries as political activists in order to denounce inequality, promote diversity, and encourage storytelling of the new culture in the country. If you tell your story to someone, your journey, it will inspire one person, that person to tell the story to another one it to inspire another person. And that will push people to make the change we need to see in society the change for social good.

So one of the best qualities that linguist shall carry is one of the facilitator. During the interpret-, the interpretation session, cultural diversity must take into consideration all the culture, the cultural differences during interpretation. As an assessment, a linguist must have a passion for languages. This ability to understand the spoken word so they can they can convey the meaning an accurate message, the ability to communicate well with people from all background or culture, while using a broad vocabulary on multiple languages. In the context of refugee, cultural diversity is paramount in order to provide the right support to the victims of war.

Today, I have three examples for you. This example as lived example, it's something I personally went through during the interpretation session. The first one is the story of Mr. Saidi. Mr. Saidi was a patient. We arrived in Oregon, Portland, Oregon, accident and emergency back in 2012. He was brought to Oregon for high blood pressure. But during the evaluation, you find out that he has diabetes. He had high cholesterol. He has high blood pressure. So he has all this disease. But Mr. Saidi spent sixteen years in a refugee camp waiting to be brought to America. During the first session with the nurse who does what the American called the physical, the physical is a session where the nurse. Will examine a person naked, so the nurse might pass the fingers some places to evaluate whether you are sickness, and all those diseases that they checking for. So Mr. Saidi, on the phone. Heard about the story. In America, women taking a man clothing off. So before even the nurse begin,

"Aye Debora, are we starting now?"

"Yeah. Let's go, Mama. Debora."

Oh, {in Swahili}, "Mrs. Debora, tell him not to- tell her not to see me naked. I'm not going to do that. No, I'm not going to do that."

Okay, uh, "Marion, do you know. What you just told me?"

"What did he say?"

"He doesn't want you to see him naked."

"Okay, But he he need to do that. Otherwise, I'm not going to get..."

So and I said to Marion, "Marion, I'm not going to interpret either. Because this is the respect of an individual. Go there and find a male chaperone. To help you."

"Oh, Debora, I'm afraid we. Don't have me-"

"No, these are not going to go unless you find another interpreter. This is not going ahead."

So we have to return five weeks Mr. Saidi will come the day the chaperone will be there. So the physical took place. Now, the difficulty was for Mr. Saidi to be able to control and to see how he can manage his medication, because he was a high press- price of high blood pressure pills, cholesterol pills, all of this. For someone who does not read or write. So then there was a fantastic doctor in the hospital, Dr. Jake. The first time I had to work with Dr. Jake at the end of the decision, he said,

"Debora, can you give me your private number, please?"

And I said, "I can't do that."

He said, "Debora? It's for Mr. Saidi, please."

So I gave my number. So we worked with Mr. Saidi for seven, four, four, four months. Test, test, medication, test, test, medication. Then Mr Saidi, they knew my name, the minute her get to Get to reception. He tells the people, "Interpreter Debora!" So even everyone in hospital knew. Mr. Saidi you will only have Debora for his interpret- for his interpretation. And we managed to continue. There were days Mr. Saidi was brought to us in the mission unconscious, and Dr. Jack woke me up about 2:00 in the morning UK time and said, "Deborah, Mr. Saidi has been brought here, is unconscious. I don't know what happened." So the trouble was that Mr. Saidi struggled to take his medication because it is not understood that, Mr. Saidi it was 16 years at the refugee camp. Working in the farm. Is now. Being sent to Washington DC to be a shopkeeper. Do you w- How can he survive that?

So Dr. Jake said, "Debora, I'm going to try my best to ask in the refugee resettlement not to send him to Washington DC, but to send him to the South. Because then you can farm to find a farm where he can look because that's all he know how to do." That was the grave mistake of my career. I had Dr. Jake to get Mr. Saidi in the South because we thought would be the right place for Mr. Saidi to go. Two months. No trace of Mr. Saidi. Until the day I received a phone call from the hospital down South from a certain Mrs. Saidi. And Mrs. Saidi is telling me that,

"My husband talked about it before he passed away."

And I said, "What?"

"Mr. Saidi die." She used to call her husband, "Mr. Saidi died."

"Debora they forgot this medication in in Washington. He came to the South without his medication. He passed away."

This is the story I'll never forget my whole life. Mr. Saidi left, lived for 16 years in a refugee camp in desperate conditions surviving, only to die in America six months later. Where is peace then? Where is justice there? He left a young woman and seven disabled children in America, seven disabled children in America. Those children suffered the first war in the Congo, the second war in the Congo. Luckily, they managed to get to the Nyarugusu refugee camp near Rwanda, and they lived there for 16 years.

Now, often in America the role that the linguist play in people life cannot be underestimated and the skill that we have and multilingualism has to take into consideration. The cultural diversity and the cultural differences is the second story.

We're still in the hospital in New York. That was that was one that I had a phone call. So the nurse goes,

"is the interpreter? -- there is a man here. He can't say to me, anything, can you hear me? Can you hear the person talking? What language does he speak?"

"Swahili. {in Swahili} {in Swahili} {in Swahili}"

"Hello, my husband, my wife has beat me up."

"Your wife hit you? Yes, my wife hit me."

So they, the nurse is busy, so [s]he's got the phone and say,

"Debora, "what am I supposed to do, call the police on him?"

and I say, "Put the phone down! You calling the police? over this man? He will die before he get to the police station. He's a black man. Are you mad?"

"But he's violent to his wife? Yes. In Congo, in the Swahili culture, if you have a drunken husband coming home. You are your wife allowed to slap him. And it's not a crime."

"What?"

"He hit-"

"Yes, that's the culture in the Congo. So you need to teach. The wife that here in this country. That is unacceptable. You can't do that here. You can do that in the Congo. It is not a fault."

And I tell the husband. "You know what? They are saying they are going to call the police, you, they want to take you to detention and your wife will be arrested for slapping you."

"Don't do that. love my wife."

Yeah. So that night that finished really bad. If the police had come to the accident and emergency and pick up that black man, drunken? Will be another George Floyd, unnoticed there. So that is another example.

The last one I want to share with you is the one at Dungarvan prison. Who knows about Dungarvan Prison? Our prison here in Scotland for refugees and asylum seeker raise you hand. Oh, that's good. So a few of you knows about Dungarvan prison. Dungarvan prison had once a woman. She was eight months pregnant in detention. So that morning, I received a phone call to translate for that young woman. And I said to her,

"How did you end up here?"

Said "the police officer arrest me at home, because my husband was supposed to be arrested and he wasn't at home. And they brought me here."

You know what I told the doctor? "This woman is not supposed to be at that place. But I swear to you, if you don't make a recommendation for that woman to leave prison today, the newspaper up there will know about this story."

Sometime in our role as linguists, we need to be activists at its best. An innocent woman was brought into prison in order to. Force her husband to show up to be deported. And she was eight months pregnant. That's push me to campaign for the closure of Dungarvan prison, and I keep campaigning for it until today because that only one example was good enough. To understand that inequality and racism are still in the, are the way we treat people in this country. People are not born here or does not speak the language from here. The woman was released the following morning, only to be sent to hospital to give birth. So that's why I'm saying that.

Throughout the years I spent trying to understand and trying to help people to settle in this country. My skill as a multilingual helped me to be the person who will collect enough plausible example to go up there on the street and to say, "Listen, you are saying this and this. This is what I have been through the last three or four or seven weeks. This is what I saw." Confront the reality to the policy that exists amongst us that always don't say exactly what it is about. How you as a multilingual, as a person of different languages who can have the skill to change the world through what you know and through what you think is right as a human being.

So multilingualism for me is an instrument to combat institutional racism and discrimination. Combating inequality, racism, exclusion could be successful through multilingualism. Speaking many languages does not only mean that you are able to understand this language, but your thinking of your brain, goes to the diversity in which you express yourself through language. I am very comfortable where I go, everywhere. Unless, if I don't speak fluent Spanish, I can does the cha cha cha! I can still does it. Because they've got a similarity on those many languages, on those many cultures I have embraced. Multilingualism is a necessary mantle for which is instrumental for restoring peace and justice amongst the victim of war.

In reparative justice, for instance, I remember during my year as assistant to the prosecutor at International Criminal Court, she would tell me, we need to arrest the president of Ivory Coast, the one who was in prison there. I play a good game that put him down too. Gbagbo? Oh, God. She Tells me, "Debora, we need evidence against this man to put him in prison." And the victims, I have to approach the victim to look at exactly what happened in Ivory Coast in terms of violation of human rights and to bring the case against the president of Ivory Coast. Then I came across where many of African young girls have difficulty to speak international language.

They're still in Wolof, they're still in the local dialect. And the respect that I have for them to express in their own voice help me to understand the context in which they have been victims of war crimes. So I never hesitated during my work to ask for another interpreter, which is well adapted to the language to come alongside me. To collect evidence on violation of human rights. So this will be a three Way interpreting session. When I ask my question in French, because she understand a little French, then repeat them in Wolof, and she responds with Wolof and some French on it. And I have my case, a wonderful case, the day I present the recommendation to the prosecutor said, "Debora, are you a hell of a woman?" "Yes, I'm a hell of a woman." Bring the guy to prison. And it happened. And I was happy for that.

So if you wish to build a society with less hatred, you shall make the society multilingual. So stereotyping, prejudice around culture will fall. And we have an open eyes. To the rest of the world. Thank you very much.

LAUREN HALL-LEW

Thank you so much. So, as I said, we'll take a five minute break. So at 4:00, yes. Come back and students get the first crack at asking some questions.

<BREAK>

LAUREN HALL-LEW

So who would like to ask a question to get us started? Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Thank you so much. Good topic. Absolutely wonderful.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I actually have a lot of friends who do similar work. at non-profits in the United States and something that they talk about a lot. And I'm curious that there is a feeling of there is a concept or a word that's really untranslatable. And trying to be honest about a person's experience and what they've been through, but finding that there's not an accurate way to portray it in a different language. Do you have any experiences with that?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yes. I had I had say I had struggled. Sometime during my assignment during an interpretation. Session very technical words in English that need to be translated into Swahili. Swahili is better, but a language like Lingala, which is not been taught in secondary school or high school. But that word was really well, taught in high school or university with English. But in Lingala, where there is no education level for it, I had to struggle. So sometimes I have to mix together French and Lingala in order to compensate the emptiness of the sense that the English word brings to the table. I had that a lot because really we see what when you work with the Americans, you have huge forms to fill with people. You would use forms asking questions that is at the level that you. Arrive in America and you're trying to reinsert the society by being ready to go to work tomorrow morning. But where in the UK is a bit different, That long hours of interpretation is inside the building at immigration and sometimes they don't even care to translate them. I agree with you, but I am. I personally, because of the differences we have in the level of education of the language, I have to compensate with the international language that the country is use. And this instance is French.

Yeah. You're welcome. Come on. Questions. Come on.

LAUREN HALL-LEW

Are there any students here who have thought about going into translation studies?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Making a transition. So this talk was not interesting {laugh}

LAUREN HALL-LEW
Oh, no!

DEBORA KAYEMBE
Come on.

LAUREN HALL-LEW
Maybe now they're inspired to take, sometime.

DEBORA KAYEMBE
Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
I didn't want to ask a question before because it's kind of too big of a question.

DEBORA KAYEMBE
Okay. Okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
It comes to people seeking refugee status. What could countries do to ease that burden? Because it is currently such a harrowing process. So difficult. Even in cultures that are relatively similar. That discrimination that continues on for generations afterwards. Is there a country that has a good model of accepting refugees and immigrants in general? Or what can we do to kind of make this process not as painful?

DEBORA KAYEMBE
I think being a refugee itself, just refugee to leave your home, to leave your family, to leave your environment of life where you were born, just like me. I've been out of the Congo for 18 years every day. And this afternoon I heard someone in Congolese person, a filmmaker who was making is trying to make a film about me. And he said, I've been out of the Congo for six years, and the day I returned, I lost my mind. And I told him, so I've been out from 18 years, what's going to happen to me? {laugh}

So it's already very difficult. The problem is, it's not that the country does not need to control immigration, because, believe me, in international law, the immigration is a matter of national security and therefore is is paramount to the security of our nation. It's important. The problem here is to make this system more human. You know, I said that the UK border agencies is ruthless and unhuman. I mean, they think I went through immigration process. It was unnecessary. And that's stopped [people] to become, uh to get the refugee status in the country. No. I finally become a refugee. Why I needed to go to all this suffering? Why did I need to go through this process of humiliation? So what I want countries to do when it comes to immigration to be a little more human and to give to people a little dignity. Because just the fact that they left their home because of war took their dignity away from them. And that is really tough. It's really tough.

I have two children born and raised in this country. They have never been to the Congo. And my worry every day is what would happen to them that they don't go to Congo. It's a challenge. But I also know the importance of going to the place where your ancestors been and the positive affect they give to your life. But for me, it's another task to feel. Now that I feel that it's about time I go, you know, the children. What's going to happen to them? What's going to happen to me? So humanity, dignity is the policy that I need to come alongside of immigration policy. That is. Everywhere in the world. Yes. That's okay.

LAUREN HALL-LEW
The floor is open.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
And so I just wondered if you could talk a little bit more about your experience working in the public sector as well. I did some research on language support in that sector and I was wondering about, in the introduction it was mentioned you set up your own interpreting and translation organisation and I wasn't just wondering what doing that work might have--

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yes, it was the basis of- First of all, it was the exercise. I did through volunteering, because during the two years I was an asylum seeker, I was not allowed to work in this country. So I started by volunteering for the others because I saw through my own process how my case was dismissed without good cause, only because the interpreter they use at that time did not know, even the Congo as a country. He said. "You come from the jungle." I come from the jungle? Really? These people get to law school at the jungle? But that was the interpretation of the country where they interpreted interpret at the time.

I seek asylum in this country. So the experience I had, already working, the job of work. all pension, is regulated through The United Kingdom government. So you got the bosses who organise all this, the company, they are based in London and here you only have the interpreter working side by side with others. What I noticed most of the people working in department to work on pension, helping refugee. They have no idea what is a refugee. They have no idea for how long these refugees are here. They have no idea what the resources, what the government does, giving the place to support the refugee in order to settle in the country. That is something is very important to see here. If the government wants to have refugees settling in the country in appropriate manner, and in dignity, they have to train people properly. There is a lack of training. And that is real- It gets as bad as Ignorance.

So as as an interpreter at the side, I have to say,

"No, no, no, no, not- that- she come from this, That doesn't apply to him, This, apply for this one."

"Oh, really? I didn't know that."

"But what are you doing here?"

You know, so that these things I've been through that a lot and it's. Become very frustrating. And the other thing is. You bring people in this country, they carry a weight, and you ask them to apply for universal credit on a computer. They've never seen the computer before. So these people are condemned to live in poverty and the government is. Complaining the country's poor. No, you bring people in the country in order to exploit them and then you don't give them the tool even to feed themselves. Then ask, why are you bringing this people here?

She can't read or write, and you're asking her, "Go online and apply for- You see the link I'm sending you? You put the password-" And the person in Swahili say, "what is the password?" I've been frustrated many times about this kind of behaviour. You almost have the impression these people have been brought in here to die in a better a comfortable environment. They couldn't die in a refugee camp, come die in the UK. Everything will be fine. And that is absolutely wrong in this society. It's absolutely wrong. It pushes people to treat people badly where they are a victim of an unjust and discriminatory system that exists and impoverish them. And they don't progress. And they say, "They are poor. They needed a clinic," but how many chance did you give them to go further. How many chances do you give them in this society?

Next one question. Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Also not a student.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I, I wanted to hear more about how your expertise applies to your role as leader of this university and talk about combating institutional racism. We've seen how monolithic monolingualism operates in our assessment, How we prepare our students for future work as staff. I'm just fascinated and excited to hear about what this experience and perspective bring might bring to our team. Your way of thinking about language and multilingualism in uh the University context.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

In this university context. I have to say for the first time you can ask our marketing services university director now can have interviews in French. Before it was only English. You know, director can conduct a meeting at university in French in a different language, the language of his choice. It's happening.

I think the the other thing with the curriculum, and I was talking with Lauren now, she's trying to explain to me how languages and cultures are dispatched in this university. There is some gap there. That need to be reviewed in terms of teaching the language, the culture. It's very important that we need to include all the part of multilingualism to make people understand the culture. Because I have the impression Edinburgh is much more on the theory that give that give the stand to English, that gave the door to English. It doesn't give the door to other languages. I want English to stay. I don't want English to go anywhere. Don't get me wrong. But I want the opportunity to give in to any other language if the opportunity can be met, because that would make us a stronger society. That's how I see. Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm a perpetual student. {laughter}

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Good for you!

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Who would point to as a model for the a of the strong a use of multilingualism. The human system of asylum, and refugee status?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

For for hu- For human system of asylum, I couldn't find any model by now. It's very difficult. I mean, it's so difficult. And I take it that every country has its own realities. And I think, as I said, it's the humanity and the dignity that need to accompany them. A, a model country on diversity of languages. Hmm. I would Turkey. It might surprise you. Turkey. You know, when you're in Turkey, I feel very I felt very comfortable in Turkey because Turkish people, they have their own Turkish language, but they don't shy in talking Arabic. They don't shy of speaking the Turkish mixing together with French. You know, when you speak Turkish, all the words coming into Turkey are French. They're not English. And they are eager to learn English. Every time you are, "You're from England, I need to come to English, Will you marry me? Will you marry me so I can learn English?" You know it's a country- {laugh} It's a fascinating country. It's a country where people are not shy to embrace other culture. Not at all. You know. I was quite. Shocked to, To experience that, because it's almost an Islamic country. You have the. Impression, oh, they're not going to do this in Islamic countries. But again, I was quite surprised the minute I landed that airport. "You come from England. Will you marry me? I need to learn English." It was very, very, uh Innovative, life experience. {laugh} Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm Olivia--

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yeah. Mm hmm.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You have me thinking here, This is talk about language, obviously, but I've been listening to you, and I've heard you say words. Refugee. I heard you say asylum seeker and I've heard you say migrants. And I'm just wondering, I'm thinking about those specific words and how we define those words across the society and how we reflect on them. Is there any impact, in your opinion, on those words and maybe using them differently, or are they synonymous? Are they different? How does that impact how you perceive migrants or people in motion, people who are moving from their country of origin?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

My perception is every single one, every single person is a migrant. It goes from one place to another. When we come to the daily, the legal terms, this is where this is defined, the migrant because and then the person who is an asylum seeker, will all, will only be asylum seeker until is been granted refugee. So that title, of this asylum

seeker, is gone. That day is been granted, refugee is finished and the refugee is a person who choose to live in a protective status.

So if now people were always- and I say that's racist. They used to say, "Debora is a refugee." I'm not a refugee I'm a British citizen! This is my country! You don't call me asylum seeker anymore. You don't call me. I am a migrant who came here and who's now a citizen of this country. This is my country.

But you know, the Daily Mail. Know what The Daily message about me, when I was elected? "Ex-lawyer" "Ex-refugee" Have you heard about that? Honestly. That's racism. You know, that's racism. The ex-lawyer ex-refugee from the Republic of has become the Rector of Edinburgh University Really? So it's really the legal. Term to define the person. But in my. Perspective. We are all in migration migrations all around the world. It depends how you come to the place. In Africa we don't like calling people Refugee, you've got 'expat'. Oh, make sure it's this one, 'expat.' That's it. {laugh}

Yes. Ah! {laugh} This is the CEO at Multilingualism.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You raised the bar from all fronts here.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I work on multilingualism, as you know, at Bilingualism Matters, we say bilingualism, we really mean multilingualism.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Mm hmm.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Thank you very much for supporting us. Already. But as I was hearing you I was thinking, First of all, we've been trying to change things at University of Edinburgh probably over ten years and we've been trying to pull strings from different parts of the university community, the board people different, you know, from different parts of the university working along with it. And we didn't get too far. You know, I can see who to go to next! automatically, you know, linking language and culture, they have been kept separate. So when you learn a language, at school when you learn the language, the third language, you don't get culture at the same time. And this is what the second topic comes in: You raised the bar for interpreters. Now if you wanted to become an interpreter It seems to be pointless. Almost. To work [on such] issues of people's lives. Just translating. Without knowing-

DEBORA KAYEMBE

No, you need to know the cultural differences. Absolutely.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So how do we make that work, because, you know. Did you come, for example, did you come, Because I imagine you got where you are because you you had that in you as well. And then you saw the need and you had the urge to--.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Can that be trained? Can you treat people...?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

I think it's your personal development. It goes down to your personality. My experience with the eighth language, I'm learning languages, Turkish. That's my eighth language learning. Now, I remember the first time I was invited

to Turkey was to visit a kind of woman, Syrian woman, Iraqi woman fleeing domestic violence inside Turkey. So I went to the centre to visit them and I saw what I saw was unacceptable and I have to very quickly intervene and help in the women's there. But after that, the first my first trip, I had interpreters around me. But I didn't like them because I only translated the words but not translated. The culture that came from this Syrian. Woman was telling a story or this Iraqi woman was telling their stories. So what I say to myself now I'm going to learn Turkish.

What did I do? I go to this TV. TV series. You know, this TV series, the Turkish has, I get one of them. Translated in English. So the story. That tells. The language and the subtitle in English. For three years. Actually watching them following the story. They all said, even though they don't expect people in Turkish in terms of movie, they stop the ..., "Pah!" Another one comes in, another, ... But again, I know I. Follow this way, and I learn about the way the step-mother, respect the other step-mother, the way they call each other. If you look, I'll call you "my Lew", I never call you "Lew". This is the Turkish, you know, if you Sophia, I'll call you "my Sophia." I'll never say Sophia. "My Sophia," this is Turkish. So I've learned from it, from the way of talking.

And this gave me the opportunity to understand the culture. I was fascinated throughout that, that journey, of know-, knowing Turkey. The, the Ottoman Empire. The sultan who- Hm. My. You know? And the women, they had to several women, They had-, the way they behave. I learnt to admire. Sultan Ahmed, the one who built Blue Mosque, who stopped killing the killing his own brothers, so he could survive the to stop the ... in the family. I've learnt so much from them. That gave me the understanding of this language. Now I can watch the TV series without translation.

And so it's a personal development. First, when you are interpreter and translator, your first gift is your skill and this the language, you know. But you have to feed the language. To culture, to understanding, to your learn personal learning. You watch the movie. You watch the TV series. You go to the community. You eat the food and you dance. Don't forget to dance because your brain, when you speak, goes with the move and vibe that you're doing, and goes into your brain. This brain is so rich on keeping things and adjusting them. Every time you collect information, you collect data and give you the platform you need. Okay. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm definitely not a student. So my question's probably going to seem quite basic compared to we have so far. And the first question we had was about unique words and phrases in certain languages. And in Scotland we obviously have mostly slang words that are quite are unique to Scotland and Edinburgh. I was wondering if you have any particular favourite words or phrases.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

You have in Gaelic? You have in Gaelic, don't you? You don't have a word in Gaelic?

LAUREN HALL-LEW

Oh favourite?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yeah.

LAUREN HALL-LEW

There's phrases, yeah I don't know.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

I have I don't know if Scots as a Caledonia. Caledonia is the song that we celebrate. Scotland with drink, Burns Supper? That is my favourite song. {singing} Let me tell you where I'm going and I think about you all the time. Caledonia when I go home, yes. {laugh}

Next one? Please. Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm not a student either. But I wonder whether I could kind of come to something else from the beginning. Because one thing that, you know, we spoke about is, it's a European cultural setting, the language power. To use their own language being the highest of English is up there and then maybe French and German and Dutch and

so on and then other languages being considered kind of inferior, yeah. But my point is also, I would say a kind of mirror image of that. In countries in Africa and Asia and so on Where people have quite low. View of their own languages.

I'm thinking particularly of a situation where I was in Cambridge before. I was trying to found and manage a kind of international poetry club where we were kind of exchanging poetry from other countries and it was most difficult. To find people from Africa because many said, "Oh, well, you know, I don't really know the African languages. I grew up speaking English because I come from a good family. I went to private school." So people are proud not to speak their own language.

And I remember I spoke about this with the late Edward Said while he was in Cambridge, And he said he. Remembered just shortly before, he visited the library [in] one of the Arabic countries and was shown. All the books they had in English. And he said. "Okay, where is your section on Arabic?" And they said, "No, no, it's a new, it's a modern library."

DEBORA KAYEMBE

What a shame

AUDIENCE MEMBER

So I wonder, how can we tackle this problem? Because in a way...

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yeah. Yeah. What you're saying is absolutely true. Yes. You still have you still find people being less considerate of their own languages. But I wonder if these people face racism, how they feel about that. You know, that's that's true measure of this. I- I- I think many people think that they can use the other language because they are the language of trade. They are the language of science because people have more consideration of you if you speak their language. But I do also think that people need to learn to identify, to say, because language before anything else is identity. How can I deny my own, my, my own identity? And saying that the language of the others is better than my own identity, denying myself. You know, it's denying myself.

You have people suffering from a complex of inferiority. That exists in every society. But I think our role as a linguist is to present the positive, because I don't see any negative way of multilingualism. It's positive, it's prosperous, it's good all over the world. When you go in a country where you got this. forms of ... you have to translate, If you know the language, you're not going to bothered the translating the app and then trying to set that up to talk, when you know the language already you pass through, And you don't have a problem. Not even when you struggle with immigration, you get that the immigration, the immigration officer asking in the language you to answer them, you go and try to find somebody that you pay for. So life is cheaper, easier when you speak several languages.

It's difficult when you only speak one language and you are mighty, mighty, mighty in Britain and in America. But in Puerto Rico. We see! So that's that's the reality. I mean, they are people suffer from that. But I do believe many people favour it, International language, because of the influence and the science and finance and the trade, but it's the wrong way of seeing it. Because for me my language, it's my, my identity and I can't share that with anybody because that is me and that's.

LAUREN HALL-LEW

We have time for one more question.

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Yes, please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Hello, I'm Rayya, I'm from the Institute for Academic Development. And I want to, first of all, thank you so much for your generosity. Um, I did some research a couple of years ago with students around microaggressions. And I interviewed some students who kind of who identified as having different colours from white, One of the most consistent things they talked about was feeling insulted when they were. Complimented on their language, English language use. Many of them were native English speakers. They spoke with African or accents accents

from the Asian subcontinent And I'm very interested in why that happens. Because we recognise American English, we recognize Australian English, for some reason when an African speaks English, and even though it may have been their first language, the domestic population don't recognise that the same thing. So I guess it's a form of non-native speakerism. But I wondered if you had any...

DEBORA KAYEMBE

I have to thank you very much for bringing this forward because like in the Congo, like in the in the in the horn of Africa, we have Swahili and we have four variant. Of Swahili. Spoken in Kenya. In Tanzania, in West Congo, in South Congo. Four variants. But when these people speak those languages, it allows me to identify which part of Africa they come from. So that is again for me in my work as a linguist, even in and directing with people, if I hear this person. Together, this one is from Tanzania, this one is from Kenya, this one is from the Congo. And that gives me the strength. Even when I was working before this company in America, they wanted me because they knew I was comfortable with any sort of Swahili.

So. I think this is the work we need to do. And that work. Goes to respect. Respect, nothing less. Why will you feel that the one who speaking the English with the African accent is inferior to one speaking the English for. America. That's imperialism. Stop. Racism. Stop. These are the things, us in a society, we can no longer tolerate. Not in this 21st century. We need to be tolerant of the way people were brought up in their country and the way they express themselves.

If they have a word that you don't understand, you should ask the person. I don't understand this. Can you tell me the meaning of it? Because maybe the accent is difficult. But believe me, I will never. Feel uncomfortable to hear someone speaking the. American English. The Australian English. The English from here. How many English we have in Britain? The Lancashire-- "Hiya!" That's Lancashire You know? "Hiya" I remember the first time I came here, as an asylum seeker. There was a man who's supposed to help asylum seeker. He saw me come to help me and say, "Hiya!" "Debora, hiya!" And I said, What is "hiya"? It meant "Hi, Debora." And for me, it was new because I never knew an English people can say "Hiya!" Yeah, but he was from Lancashire. It was from Lancashire. And that's--

There was one who came two days ago at my house to put the blind? La la la la la. Not English. I never heard that one. And I ask him, "Where are you from?" "I am from the town of William Wallace." "Eh?!" "The town of William Wallace" You know? Yeah, slow, slow, slow. I can't understand you slow, slow. You know, it's it's it's it-- It identify people, it identify the upbringing. And for that, there's nothing less than respect for that. And it's the work. That we need to do. All of us in this. Was in France, for example, le francais du Midi Je vais respecter? respecter? That's how it goes for you. Diminish this people? It's against human rights. Simple as that.

Any question. Oh, yeah. Two more. Yes, go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yeah, my name's Xiaoyu, I'm from the Masters in Applied Linguistics, And I listen to, well I talk? I, I guess ... so educational for me and also very, very enlightening. Yeah, well, my question is nothing to do with linguistics, but I would like to know after you've been working as an interpreter, hearing so much sad stories of refugees, how do you deal with-- I know you probably don't engage in the sad story, you would be suffering depression, or so frustrated about this thing. So how do you deal with that, is there I mean, official support for this?

DEBORA KAYEMBE

Okay. For this. The most difficult one was my years. At the years. I spent next to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court collecting story of victims of war. Dark stories. And I have to say that counselling helped me. I privilege my mental health throughout this process. More than anything, I remember having counselling every two weeks. For eight years. Every two weeks I have to go to counselling to talk about the things I saw the picture of, examine the wounds of the people I examined the rape, the woman rapes and all this. It's, it's, it can it can bring you to put in question the nature of human nature itself. You know what us human beings are capable to do? We are capable of the best and we are capable of the worse. And these things that I went through, I could not survive them without mental health support. Just the way I treat my body. You go and see the doctor. That's the way I went to the psych to get myself strong enough to continue.

But the good thing about this, I use the same atrocity to continue on my political activism to change the world. What put me in this university is to work on my political activism. That break ceiling of the glass is where nobody has been. But bringing strong evidence to say we need to change. Now. So for that, you have to trust yourself when you saw these things. You have to put the. Good and the bad. And use the bad for change and create the good in the society. So you cannot leave these things again. I know for sure the generation to come. We're going to go through this process. We see less atrocity because I've been there and advocate for change. That's is my consolation.

Okay. Thank you. Sophia.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

And I just wanted to say quickly two things um There's still a problem with I won't call it even racism. I'm just going to call it the xenophobia. Because, after all, examples of Italian families who were treated with

<recording cuts off>