

JEUNES REPORTERS MIGRANTS

Raising Issues with Participation

100 young people from Italy, France, Senegal and Burkina Faso were the protagonists in the Jeunes Reporter Migrants (JRM) experience: an educational project which aims to give back a voice to people who do not have any other ways of sharing their stories and views in the mainstream media. These young people have been selected from schools or from the most disadvantaged suburbs. In Italy and France some of them have experienced migration at first-hand.



The topic of the entire project is "Citizen journalism," a new form of citizen media, where individuals can write and/or comment on issues they feel have been left-out or that tend to be covered only superficially by the mainstream media. In this case, the main issue was "migration."

The young people involved in this workshop met for six months in small newsrooms with the goal of producing reports on migrants and their concerns about living in Europe and in developing countries. In September 2010 they met in four different international exchanges programmes and they worked together to write news articles and reports which can be viewed on the website: jeunesrms.org

Living the news as leading actors

Catalina, a young woman from Romania, is 27 and has been living in Turin for one year with her family. She has written about her experience in Paris during the International Exchange along with four other young people from Italy. The highlight of the week was a visit to Créteil, Bobigny and Saint Denis, four banlieue cities and a journey around the intercultural suburbs of Belleville and Goutte d'Or, with a guide from the French association "Ça se visite."

Migrant Paris Through The Lens Of A Jeune Reporter Migrant

by Catalina Salgau



Taking part in the JRM project gave me the opportunity to take a look at the wonderful “migrant Paris.” We all know the touristic Paris, it is so clichéd that we can’t even imagine that at the heart of this city are the popular neighbourhoods (“quartiers populaires”) – where everything is so “alive” that even at 8 PM on Sunday, people are enjoying life in cafés; shops are exhibiting their stuff on the streets... a Moroccan restaurant here, a Chinese store there... Belleville will take your breath away as it did to us. But the history of migration in Paris, around 200 years, stands out: this neighbourhood looks like a cosmopolitan one and not at all like popular neighbourhoods as they are named. It is known that the elite of Paris, the “spoiled kids” move here to enjoy a bohemian life and the demographics of Belleville has varied over the years.

The immigrants integrate well, we found people whose family history in France goes back four or more generations, many of whom do not even speak the native language of their parents and believe in French values. Anywhere you go, they speak French while in Italy, for example, one can have problems communicating in Italian when visiting immigrant shops.

But Belleville is not the only popular neighbourhood. The “Ca Se Visite” association was our guide through Goutte d’Or with its Arabian part and of course Château Rouge, the African heart of Paris, where you suddenly feel like you have arrived in Africa with open markets on the streets and a lot of colours and specific costumes and foods. In the middle of this is the Social Café where old migrants find a helping hand and a kind person to talk to in hope of easing life in a foreign country.

In these parts we had the chance to see an Islamic centre, open to everyone, with a variety of activities and we discovered that the imam that preaches there has progressive views and even allowed people of different religions to take part in the final meal of Ramadan hoping for better coexistence. We also found an unexpected attitude from the Muslim community at “Salam News,” a portal that talks about and promotes Muslim culture, where we found out that secularism exists, religion and culture are separated and not only that but this community is promoting the division between the two.

A visit to the museum of emigration can be a good way to understand and learn about migration in Paris and this struggling reality. And climbing the Eiffel Tower on foot, in between two bomb alerts, is a unique experience never to be repeated. So we left Paris with the hope of one day getting married in the wonderful ceremony hall of Bobigny. A hall which evokes so well the multicultural and multiethnic character of the town, of Paris and I’d dare say of the whole world as it will become in the near future. We left with a deep desire for worldwide acceptance of people’s freedom of movement.

The following is the report of N'Fanteh Minteh from Burkina Faso. She's a young citizen reporter from Paris who has spent a week with a community radio station "Voix du Paysan" in Ouahigouya, in the north of the country.

Tuesday, September 14th. Ouahigouya

by N'Fanteh Minteh



All the participants met to share their experiences of working on migration in their native countries. Next, the Italians, the Senegalese and we, the French, summarized everything we have accomplished and the events that we attended. I found this debate on the immigration issue very interesting. Understanding the views of different countries allows for a more comprehensive approach to this worldwide phenomenon. Perceptions vary from country to country. On the European side, immigration is perceived as an invasion or an intercultural exchange; on the African side it is seen as a betrayal or a matter of survival. Particularly innovative was the speech by the Senegalese. These young people between 18 and 24 years old, who come from Louga, did not approve of the North-South migration: "Stay here and develop yourself," they declared several times.

These young people want to rebuild their country, they don't want any more people leaving. They highlight the damage this migration causes to Senegal: prostitution or sexually transmitted disease. Because these migrants, mostly men, leave their family behind for an indefinite amount of time "When they return, the woman has two children with her," explains Fatoumata, "because you can not wait 10 years." Another consequence: young people are so desperate to reach the coast that they abandon all their activities in the country while awaiting their departure. And above all they take deadly risks to reach the Eldorado. "Some go insane after several missed attempts," continues Maïmouna. These young migrant reporters are aware of the fact that, because there is a real change in mentality, one must question the current organization of the State of Senegal. "Abolish all the Ministry positions that cost us too much and redistribute these funds in education," said Ousmane. It's the first time I've heard young Africans expressing so clearly their desire to build a future on their land. And somehow it restores an image of Africa, all too often concentrated on the outside and forgetting about themselves.

On the other hand, I was amazed by the facts reported by the Italians. The situation of immigrants in Italy is very delicate. Clearly they are not very welcome. The press stigmatize them without hesitation or embarrassment. "Those stories that condemn immigrants as thieves, as criminals, we read those everyday in the newspapers," said Serena. At the administrative level, the matter becomes even more complicated. Take Amina for example. She has lived in Turin for 12 years. Each year she must renew her residence permit and each year it's the same problem. Since she has reached the age of majority she must now demonstrate that she is receiving a regular salary. "Sometimes I'm forced to make false contracts, because as a student, I can't have a regular job," Amina explains. To hear her speak, it seems that acquiring Italian nationality is an

impossible goal. From the French perspective, Fatou and I face even more complexities. We are daughters of immigrants. And we were immediately asked this question: do you feel more French or more African? The answer, at least from my point of view, is very clear: I feel first of all French. I was born in France, I've lived there all my life, and accustomed myself to the laws, the culture and the way of life. But on the other hand, my African culture is not unknown to me nor am I indifferent to its influence. I already have some typical African behaviours, because of my upbringing. Sometimes, you feel in the middle of the two, but I could not choose. It's complex but rewarding. I don't know if others understand this continuous re-examination of our self-identities...

It is thanks to exchanges as intense as those experienced by N'Fanteh that CISV, along with VPS, the Paralleli Institute in Torino, Altermondes in Paris, Fesfop in Louga (Senegal) and the community radio "La Voix du Paysan" in Burkina Faso all agreed to promote the JRM project. And the original goals have been successfully achieved: the stimulation of the participants' reflections about the phenomenon of international migration, and the removal of those prejudices and stereotypes which usually accompany discussions on migration. The works produced by the young reporters have been collected in a special issue of "Volontari per lo Sviluppo", which is available to those who want to learn about the complex story of migration, experienced at first hand by these young people in recent months, who have become "journalists" to tell and spread their stories.

Jeunes Reporters Migrants (JRM) editorial staff. The project JRM was promoted by CISV, an NGO in Turin (www.cisvto.org), in collaboration with the magazine Volontari per lo Sviluppo ("Volunteers for Development" www.volontariperlosviluppo.it), and in partnership with Fesfop (Festival de Folklore et Percussion, Louga - Senegal), the community radio station La Voix du Paysan (Ouahigouya - Burkina Faso), the Magazine Altermondes (Paris - France), the Euro-Mediterranean Institute of North West Paralleli, the City of Turin and the Coordinamento Comuni per la Pace of the Provincia of Turin. The project was funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Youth in Action Programme.

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