

Transcript of the video Mama – Africanos em São Paulo

Mama Diop: Good morning, how are you? My name is Mama; I'm African, from Senegal. I arrived here in Brazil in 2006. This outfit is from my homeland, in Senegal. This outfit is called a Mambui; "Mambui" is a word in the Wolof language. In Portuguese, it's called "grandmother's outfit" or "great-grandmother's outfit." But now we've modified these outfits and are making them again. You've probably even seen them on TV, in soap operas—you've seen queens wearing these outfits.

Rafael: So they're queen's outfits?

Mama Diop: Yes, for queens. I can't say that Africa is poor, but I was born into a poor family. My dream was to be a fashion designer, and my mother didn't have the money to pay for my schooling.

Rafael: Have you always wanted to work in fashion?

Mama Diop: In fashion, yes. Now everything has worked out here.

Rafael: Black Brazilians suffer a lot from this issue of erasure. Erasure in the sense of not knowing their history well, not knowing... Look, he's giving you a blessing over there.

Mama Diop: Are you okay, son? My stall used to be right here. It wasn't really a stall—we were selling out in the open. I'd stand right here. This is where I'd spread out the tarp, and the merchandise would be laid out underneath to sell. And sell. And people would come and do this. We'd name the price like this (laughs). Then I'd come here; after leaving there, I'd come here. Here I sold from a table. I didn't have a table, and city hall told me to buy one so I could sell. Then city hall told me to leave here and

sent me over there. When I arrived in Brazil, I said, “I don’t want to go back; I really like Brazil; I want to stay.” The Africans helped me a lot, too. They would buy things and tell me, “Mama, you have to sell these.” That’s how it started—I was all alone here.

Rafael: Were you the first vendor on this street? An African woman?

Mama Diop: Yes, dear.

Mama Diop: Hi, sweetie. How are you?

Woman: Mama, good morning!

Mama Diop: Africa isn’t a single country; Africa has 54 countries. There are 54 countries that don’t speak the same language, don’t share the same culture, and aren’t alike in any way. Each country has its own president, its own language, and its own culture. I’m sorry, but I experienced racism here. It was here that I experienced racism. It was here that I experienced racism.

Back home, I didn't know what it was. I'd just hear people talking about racism, and I'd say, "What is racism?" But I experienced it here, in Brazil. One day, I went to D. Pedro Park with my husband; he was wearing white clothes. I was wearing different clothes that covered my face. And there were people shouting, "Terrorist, terrorist." They were saying terrible things about us, but that's in the past now.

Fashion show host: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome fashion designer Mama. A round of applause for Mama.