

THE PORTRAYAL OF SENEGALESE MIGRATION IN POPULAR SONGS

by

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A THESIS


Presented to the Department of Journalism and Communication
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Science

June 2014

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Hassatou Jallow for the degree of Bachelor of Science
in the Department of Journalism to be taken June 2014

Title: The Portrayal of Senegalese Migration in Popular Songs

Approved: 

Professor Peter D. Laufer

While perhaps moving toward different end goals, all of the artists portray the issue of migration in their songs. In doing so, they have raised awareness to the dangers involved in illegal migration to Europe, and the plight of Senegalese in the West. Some of the artists use their songs to encourage the migrants, and praise them for their strength and hard work.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professors Peter Laufer, Barbara Altmann, and Vera Keller for helping me to fully examine the specific topic and consider the various perspectives and contexts related to this subject matter.

I am grateful to Professor Laufer for all of the help he gave me during the writing process and for restoring my confidence whenever I thought I could not do it. Thank you Professor Altmann for having been an amazing friend and mentor, I appreciate all you have done for me. You are one of the reasons why I found college exciting. Thank you for your encouragements over the years, you have truly made a difference in me. I would like to also thank Professor Keller for her support.

I would like to thank Paula Braswell for encouraging me to keep going. Thank you to the Robert D. Clark Honors College for giving me the opportunity I needed to realize my potential. A big thank you to Miranda Atkinson for helping me plan my four-year education at the University of Oregon. Thank you to my family and friends for their love and support. All thanks and praise be to God, Who have shown me mercy and gave me the patience and strength to bear. Thank you to Him for opening doors and my eyes to opportunities I never thought existed.

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I. Background:

A. Brief History

Senegal, the first multiparty democracy in Africa, is situated in West Africa's Atlantic coast. Its capital, Dakar, is where the government, as well as important businesses, are located. Since its independence from France in 1960, it has remained relatively stable having never experienced a coup d'état. The population is 94 percent Muslim, and indigenous leaders are socially and economically influential. As with most African countries, Senegal has diverse ethnic groups, such as the Wolof, Fula and Jola tribes. The country has a population of 14.1 million people in an area that is slightly smaller than North Dakota.

B. Education

Over the years, the Senegalese government has worked to reform its educational system, creating a state-funded program to build primary schools and provide free universal access to schooling. This has led to an increase in the number of children, especially girls attending school. Despite the government's efforts, many children are not benefiting from the increased schools and from the free education. As of 2009, "only three-quarters of children were enrolled at primary school."¹ The Senegalese who live in rural areas are the least likely to be educated. According to UNESCO, 94 percent of those between the ages 15-24-year olds have less than a lower secondary education, compared to 79% of the urban poorest, and 59% of the urban richest.²

C. Development challenges

¹ "A Lucky Few Complete School Education," *Our Africa*, <http://www.our-africa.org/senegal/education-jobs>, (accessed January 15, 2014).

² "66% of Senegalese Youth Aged 15-24 Do Not Complete Primary School and Find Themselves without Qualification," UNESCO Office in Dakar, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/singleview/news/new_report_66_of_senegalese_youth_aged_15_24_do_not_completing_primary_school_and_find_themselves_without_qualification/, (Accessed April 16, 2014).

Senegal is primarily an agrarian country with little natural resources and finite farmable lands. Most Senegalese earn money from exporting resources, such as fish, peanuts and phosphates, most of which the country has comparative advantage in. The country also benefits from tourism and remittances sent to Senegal by Senegalese who live and work abroad. Socioeconomic conditions remain poor; Senegal ranks 154 out of 186 countries on the 2012 United Nation's Human Development Index. The country goes through chronic food shortages and relies heavily on imports for 70% of its food supply, which is the highest rate in Sub-Saharan Africa.³

Youth unemployment, which refers to the lack of work opportunities for those starting to enter the workforce, is a big problem in Senegal. The extension on the retirement age along with "a public sector hiring freeze has made it even more difficult" for the young people to find work.⁴ The government has been working to reduce unemployment in urban areas, developing local employment and slowing rural migration, and creating employment opportunities for a labor force that is rapidly changing; however, efforts put forward by the Senegalese government to improve the economy and reduce youth unemployment have been slow to catch on.⁵ This is because "responsibilities for youth employment policies are split between too many government

³ Alexis Arieff, "CRS Report for Congress Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress Senegal: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41369.pdf>, (Accessed March 16, 2014), 7.

⁴ Mbaye Diene, "Senegal: Strategies to Integrate Youth into the Labor Market," *The Brookings Institution and Africa Growth Initiative*, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2012/1/priorities foresight africa/01_snapshot_senegal_diene.pdf, (Accessed January 16, 2014), 29.

⁵ "Policies to Promote Growth and Reduce Poverty," *Senegal Embassy*, <http://www.embsenindia.org/policies.asp>, (Accessed April 16, 2014).

actors with insufficient co-ordination among” the different players involved.⁶ Other reasons cited for the challenges to achieve success in the endeavors include lack of data and misunderstanding of the challenges that young people face, especially for those working in the informal sectors, or jobs that have low skill requirements. The characteristics of an informal sector include; “low productivity due to low levels of skills, irregular earnings and lack of access to financial assets, information, markets and technology.”⁷

Also, the absence of evidence on what is successful in decreasing unemployment has led to the creation of programs that are poorly designed and funded. The programs are partially measured, meaning they do not meet the full requirements needed for them to be effective, and are not sufficiently comprehensive to address all the major problems gripping young people trying to find work. According to The World Bank, ineffective governance have failed to pull a majority of Senegalese from poverty. As a result, 47.6 percent of Senegalese live in poverty, and 15 percent of the population is extremely poor.⁸

II. Migration from Senegal:

Migration in Senegalese began around the 1970s as a result of numerous factors, including reasons having to do with employment opportunities in other countries. For example, the first person from Senegal to reach Europe did so by joining the French

⁶ "Government Action Promoting Youth Employment has A Poor Track Record," *African Economy Outlook*, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/in-depth/youth_employment/government-action-promoting-youth-employment-has-a-poor-track-record/, (Accessed March 16, 2014).

⁷ Sigrid Granström, "The Informal Sector and Formal Competitiveness in Senegal," <https://liveatlund.lu.se/intranets/LUSEM/NEK/mfs/MFS/194.pdf>, (Accessed March 16, 2014), 10.

⁸ "Republic of Senegal," *The World Bank*, http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/01/29/000356161_20130129173312/Rendered/PDF/NonAsciiFileName0.pdf, (Accessed February, 1 2014), 2.

colonial army. In the beginning of migration in Senegal, Senegalese traveled to neighboring countries, such as Mauritania, Mali, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

A. *The Reasons for Migration*

Though Senegal is one of the most stable countries in Africa, it remains the poorest in the Sub-Saharan region. Being an agrarian society, some Senegalese make a living by farming; however, the Senegal River Basin, located in the Sahel region of West Africa, which is strongly relied on by farmers to water their farms is continually “undergoing fundamental environmental, hydrologic and socio-economic transitions.”⁹ These changes to the climate in Senegal and the deterioration of the environment, such as heavy rainfall and desertification of farmlands, have caused a decrease in the agricultural yield. This reduction means that farmers make less profit because they harvest fewer products at the end of the farming season. As a result of the increase in desertification, the United Nations has introduced an initiative called the “Great Green Wall” to help reduce “erosion, enhance biodiversity and improve” Senegal’s vulnerability to climate change.¹⁰ During a United Nations’ summit in Copenhagen, the former Senegalese president, Abdoulaye Wade, “stressed the importance of planting the Great Green Wall, a 15-kilometer-wide barrier of trees that would cross 11 countries and halt the spread of the Sahara.”¹¹

⁹ Henry Venema et al., "Climate Change in the Senegal River Basin," <http://thizy.pagesperso-orange.fr/publicn/prsm9755.pdf>, (Accessed January 16, 2014), 43.

¹⁰ "African Nations Strive to Stem Desertification with a 'Great Green Wall'," *United Nations*, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/html/story.asp?NewsID=44671&Cr=desertification&Cr1=>, (Accessed December 16, 2014).

¹¹ Anne Look, "Senegalese Children Combat Desertification," *Voice of America*, <http://www.voanews.com/content/senegalese-children-combat-desertification-89683697/>, (accessed April 16, 2014).

Furthermore, the conflict in Casamance, the southern part of the country, has impeded the economic growth of Senegal. The war has displaced thousands of people, destroying hundreds of villages and rendered thousands of hectares of arable land, suitable for producing rice, vegetables and fruit unusable due to unexploded ammunition and landmines.¹² The war has been ongoing since 1982 and although the fighting is infrequent, random acts of violence against villagers unable to protect themselves has affected people's livelihoods, employment, and trade.¹³ This is because the conflict has made it difficult to transport agriculture from Casamance and processed foods and manufactured goods into Casamance.¹⁴

A number of people from the rural areas have been migrating to the urban centers to seek employment. Many of those leaving to go to the urban cities are the youth, a group likely to move to the West in the future. The increase in the migration trend from the rural areas to cities has deepened regional disparities because the new arrivals added to the number of people unable to find employment.¹⁵ Moreover, rural to city migration compounds difficulties and cost of city management and development, especially in the case of Dakar, additionally this pattern counters the goals of social and economic development plans.¹⁶

¹² David Lewis, "Casamance Conflict is Unhealed Sore for Senegal," *Reuter*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/25/us-senegal-casamance-idUSTRE81O09C20120225>, (accessed December 18, 2012).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ "SENEGAL: Fresh Violence in Casamance," *IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/84832/senegal-fresh-violence-in-casamance> (accessed December 17, 2013).

¹⁵ "Senegal," *Focus Migration*, <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Senegal.2636.0.html?&L=1>, (Accessed November 07, 2013).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Those already in Dakar are struggling to find work, and are often educated Senegalese. For example, Fatim Diop, a 25-year-old woman who has a Master's degree in banking and insurance at the Bourguiba University in Dakar, Senegal, had searched for an internship and paid work while she was still going to school. She had found a one-month internship performing tasks done by regular paid employees; however, she was never compensated for her time, or transportation to and from work. What made the experience difficult for Diop was the fact that the company never offered her a job at the end of the internship. According to Diop, people "always hope they [the companies] will recruit you but it doesn't happen and they forget about you."¹⁷ The lack of employment opportunities for educated Senegalese, such as Diop, encourage migration to other countries.

The inability for some Senegalese males to find work to provide for their extended families result in frustration and humiliation because of the cultural expectation placed on men as the providers for their families. This is evident in what Mohammed Umbang, a young Senegalese, said about the expectation, "you can't have more intense pressure than reaching the age of 28, when you're meant to be helping your parents and providing for the family. But it's your parents supporting you, because you don't have a job."¹⁸ As a result, not being able to support one's family when the need arises has played a significant role in the decision to migrate to Europe.

¹⁷ "A Young Graduate in Senegal: My Struggle to Find a Job," *UNESCO Office in Dakar*, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/single-view/news/a_young_graduate_in_senegal_my_battle_to_find_a_job/, (Accessed January 17, 2014).

¹⁸ Ofeibea Arcton, "Senegalese Make Dangerous Journey for Jobs," *National Public Radio*, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5632669> (accessed January 1, 2014).

III. Three Popular European Destinations for Senegalese Migrants

The three popular European destinations attracting Senegalese migrants are France, Italy and Spain. Senegalese choose to migrate to France because of jobs, school, and also due to past colonial ties; but, both Spain and Italy have seen an increase in the number of Senegalese residing in them because they are closer to the routes used to get to Europe, and the belief that there are jobs in these countries as well.

A. France

France is one of the most developed modern countries in the world. It is also a leader among European nations. It plays a major global role as a fixed member of the United Nations Security Council, NATO, the G-8, the G-20, the EU, and other multilateral organizations. Since 1958, it has created a hybrid presidential-parliamentary governing system resistant to the instabilities experienced in earlier, more purely parliamentary administrations.

The French economy is one of the most advanced economies in Europe and its economic freedom score is 64.1, making its economy the 62nd freest in the 2013 Index.¹⁹ France is the world's fifth largest economy with a GDP of 2.7 trillion dollars and it has substantial agricultural resources, a large industrial base, and a highly skilled work force.²⁰ Despite its economy strength, France has recently faced difficulties in terms of maintaining its superior economic growth. In 2006, its 2% increased economic

¹⁹ "2014 Index of Economic Freedom," *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/france>, (Accessed January 6, 2014).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

growth was one of the worst in Europe.²¹ Still, the economic freedom France enjoys serves to attract migrants to the country.

Since the Second World War, French immigration policies have centered around two broad principles. First, the immigration laws delegate the same rights to all, without distinctions on the basis of nationality, religion, racial or cultural background. The second is integration, which makes sure migrants are in the condition to fully integrate, both socially, and legally, in the mainstream French society. Unfortunately, integration has been very difficult to achieve for some migrants, and as a result, the issue has created a rift between the French who want migrants to integrate, and the migrants who feel that the law has kept them from integrating properly. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the candidate of the extreme-right French political party, Front National, made headlines with his anti-immigration stances. As a result of his campaign against immigration, the elections “spurred a debate that resonated with the ‘theme of insecurity’ about the threat posed by immigration to the French nation.”²²

Even though Senegal is a former colony of France, Senegalese find it hard to move to France. In 2006, Senegal’s former President Abdoulaye Wade accused the French government of selecting specific people, such as skilled workers, from Senegal to migrate to France. The so-called “Chosen Immigration” policy threatened to destroy the once special friendship enjoyed by the two nations.

²¹ "France: key Facts and Figures," *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6547841.stm>, (accessed February 17, 2014).

²² Dodgen Justine, " Immigration and Identity Politics: The Senegalese in France," Claremont McKenna College, http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1245&context=cmc_theses, (. Accessed March 01, 2014).

B. Spain

Spain is a constitutional monarchy, with a hereditary monarch and a bicameral parliament. The country has high living standards with the tenth-highest quality of life index rating in the world as of 2005. It is a member of the United Nations, NATO, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Trade Organization, thus making it a very appealing nation for Senegalese migrants.

As of 2013, the Spanish economy is ranked 68th, which makes its economy the 46th freest, refers to the ease of entry into the market, in the 2013 Index.²³ Spain's economy was amongst those affected the greatest during the 2008 financial crisis. Repeated efforts in 2009 have been made by the government to revive the economy by attempting to reduce the unemployment rate; however, a continual recession has affected the country. Moody's, one of the oldest rating agencies, found that "real improvement in the economy and government finances" has been achieved in Spain.²⁴

Spain's experience with immigration caught the attention of the international community in recent years. As the number of migrants in the country grew, so did Spain's anti-immigration sentiments and restrictive policies. Despite the anti-immigration sentiments, Spain's wave of immigration has not caused public and political backlash that has been the characteristic of other immigrant-receiving countries

²³ "2014 Index of Economic Freedom," *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/spain>, (Accessed January 6, 2014).

²⁴ "Spain's Economic Outlook improving, says Mood'ys Ratings Agency," *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-25226669>, (accessed December 17, 2013).

in Europe.²⁵ This might be due to the fact that the people are focused on the creation of jobs to improve the economy.

C. Italy

Italy is the fourth largest economy in the European Union, third in the Euro zone and ninth in the world. Italy is a member of the European Union and is considered a major Regional Power with membership in prominent institutions such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Trade Organization, the G7, G8, G20, NATO, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Italy currently maintains the world's tenth largest nominal defense budget and is a participant in the NATO nuclear sharing policy. With around 60 million inhabitants, it is the fifth most populous country in Europe. Italy continues to struggle economically with its economic freedom score being around 61, making its economy the 83rd freest in the 2013 Index.²⁶ Hence, Italy seems like a good place for migrants looking for economic opportunities they cannot find in Senegal.

The topic of immigration became front-page news in Italian society and a political weapon for those hoping to win elections. Lampedusa, a tiny Italian island on the south of Sicily, is another point of focus for the media in the country because it is the main landing place for boats carrying migrants coming into Europe. For some Senegalese, Italy is a good replacement for France, especially for the Wolof tribe, who

²⁵ J. Arango, "Past and Future Challenges of a Southern European Migration Regime: The Spanish Case," *Universidad Complutense and Instituto Universitario Ortega y Gasset*, http://www.idea6fp.uw.edu.pl/pliki/WP8_Spain.pdf (Accessed April 07, 2014).

²⁶ "2014 Index of Economic Freedom," *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/italy>, (Accessed January 6, 2014).

were excluded from the possibility to move to France unlike the Pulaar tribe.²⁷ Thus, the ease of getting into Italy has encouraged migrants to travel to the country.

IV. Experiences of Migration

The more fortunate Senegalese migrants move to Europe legally with valid visas they obtain from embassies. Still, those who wish to travel, but are unable to do so through legal means, travel illegally using boats. The entry for these boats are primarily in Spain, Italy and Greece. Recently, the deaths of Africans at sea who were trying to get to Europe has highlighted the failure of the European Union to agree on immigration issues, and how to deal with those who make it to European shores. Countries facing an increase in boat migration, such as Italy and Spain, are asking for other European countries to “share out the burden of asylum seekers and irregular migrants who arrive there by sea, by relocating some of them at least temporarily.”²⁸ Thus far, European countries, such as Britain, have declined to take in migrants.

A. Migrant Smugglers

Most migrants who make their way to Europe in boats are smuggled by smugglers who once lived in Europe, and who have been deported for various crimes. When they are returned to their countries, smugglers attempt to make money by using their knowledge of how to get to Europe by boats for smuggling. The smuggling of migrants to Europe has now become a global concern. As a result, it is difficult to measure the size of the smuggling activity due to the underground operations that

²⁷ J. Arango, "Past and Future Challenges of a Southern European Migration Regime: The Spanish Case," http://www.idea6fp.uw.edu.pl/pliki/WP8_Spain.pdf (Accessed April 07, 2014).

²⁸ Arwa Damon and Laura Spark, "Sahara Desert Deaths: 92 Migrants Perish in Niger after Vehicle Breakdowns," *CNN News*, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/31/world/africa/niger-bodies/> (accessed April 01, 2014).

smugglers use to transport persons. For example, the smuggling routes in East, North and West Africa to Europe generate billions in revenue a year.²⁹

B. Dangers of Boat Travel

In 2006, a Senegalese boat carrying up to 150 people made its way toward European shores. The wooden boat was described as a small fishing craft that had “capsized at least twice, spilling many passengers into the sea, and then drifted for 10 days” leaving a dozen of the survivors without food or water³⁰. In 2013, a boat carrying 500 migrants heading for the Italian shore sunk. The boat was reported to be a “rickety trawler overstuffed with African migrants fleeing war and poverty.”³¹ In terms of the number of boats that arrive on European waters, the figures vary year to year.

C. Migrants’ Deaths in Pursuit of a Better Life

In the last 25 years, the number of migrants who die attempting the dangerous journey to Europe has risen to almost 20,000.³² The deaths are a result of multiple causes, such as: “overcrowding, leaking boat, suffocating containers or climbing over razor wire fences,” as well as hunger and thirst.³³ Because of this, the coasts of Spain, Greece and Italy are filled with cemeteries where migrant bodies are buried and

²⁹ “The role of Organized Crime in the Smuggling of Migrants from West Africa to the European Union,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Report_SOM_West_Africa_EU.pdf, (Accessed March 17, 2014), 13.

³⁰ “Red Cross: At least 80 African migrants dead in Senegal boat wreck.” *USA Today*, December 18, 2006. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-12-18-africans-boatwreck_x.htm (accessed May 12, 2014).

³¹ Jim Yardley, “Desperation Fuels Trips of Migrants to Spain,” *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/05/world/europe/as-desperation-mounts-more-migrants-cast-their-lot-on-a-troubled-sea.html?_r=1& (accessed December 18, 2013).

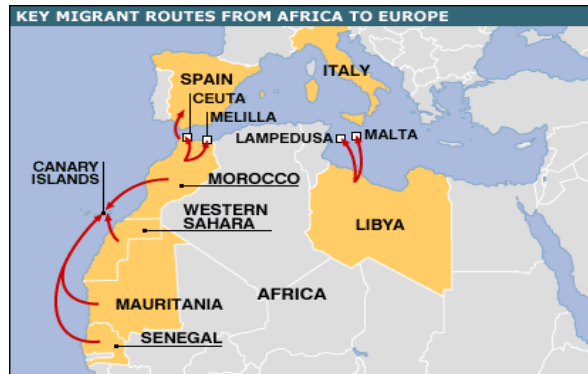
³² *Ibid.*

³³ Mona Chalabi, “World’s Deadliest Migration Routes,” *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/oct/03/migration-routes-migrants-boat-italian-lampedusa> (accessed December 17, 2013).

unmarked because they have not been identified.³⁴ The inability to know the identity of the bodies often has to do with the fact that migrants traveling illegally to Europe do not generally carry passports linking them to their native countries. The migrants employ this tactic so that if they are captured by immigration officials during the journey, they will not be returned to their respective countries.

³⁴ Ibid.

V: Routes to Europe:



Routes to Europe/google image

There are three main routes that migrants from Africa use to get to Europe: the Canary Island, Lampedusa, and Sahara Desert. Those who live further from the countries where the routes are located have to pay extra to get to themselves there. For some, the journey alone to get to these routes ends their dreams of reaching Europe.

A. Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are situated at the intersection between Europe, Africa and the Americas, which make the route appealing for migrants trying to enter these countries.³⁵ The number of migrants using the Canary Islands as a route to Europe has increased. This is demonstrated by the fact that in every 36 hours around 1,200 migrants arrive.³⁶ According to *The New York Times*, the southern part of Spain is not too far away from Morocco, hence, the Canary Islands is attractive for would-be migrants as a route to Europe.

³⁵ Valeriano Esteban and María López Sala. "Breaking down the Far Southern Border of Europe: Immigration and Politics in the Canary Islands." *Scielo*. No. 1 (2007): 87-110. http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?pid=S1665-89062007000100004&script=sci_arttext (accessed March 19, 2014).

³⁶ Hannah Godfrey "On a Voyage of Peril to the Mirage of Europe," *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/19/theobserver.worldnews> (accessed March 17, 2014).

B. Lampedusa

Some migrants go to Libya to reach Lampedusa in an effort to get to Italy. The deaths of more than 300 African migrants heading to Italy using this route brought international attention to Lampedusa in October of 2013. This event revived the call for a European-wide immigration system, and forced Italy to reconsider its laws against illegal immigration. The island is home to 6,000 people, but they are sometimes outnumbered by thousands of migrants arriving from African.³⁷ The passage to Lampedusa from Libya was created by the late Libyan president, Moammar Gadhafi. In 2013, more than 13,000 migrants made their way to Lampedusa, which is more than twice the island's native population³⁸.

C. Sahara Desert

Another route to Europe for the migrants is through the hot and humid Sahara desert. The migrant smugglers play the role of travel agencies and openly advertise services to help migrants reach Europe. This shows how manipulative the smugglers are and the dangers involved. In 2005, 12 such establishments were in existence, and had been registered with the municipal authorities in Agadez as agences de courtage, however, only 10 of these are currently active.³⁹ In October of 2013, 92 people died in the desert after their car broke down. The migrants were stranded in the unforgiving expanses of Niger's Sahara Desert after their vehicles broke down. Scores of people,

³⁷ Nate Rawlings, "Lampedusa, the Italian Island Thousands Are Dying to Reach," *Time*, <http://world.time.com/2013/10/03/lampedusa-the-italian-island-thousands-are-dying-to-reach/> (accessed March 17, 2014).

³⁸ Barnaby Phillips, "Lampedusa: Magnet for Migrants," *Aljazeera*, <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/blog/middle-east/lampedusa-magnet-migrants> (accessed March 17, 2014).

³⁹ "The role of Organized Crime in the Smuggling of Migrants from West Africa to the European Union," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Report_SOM_West_Africa_EU.pdf, (Accessed March 17, 2014), 10.

almost all of them women and children, slowly died of thirst.⁴⁰ Despite the dangers, migrants continue to use the desert to migrate to Europe.

VI. Conditions of Life in Europe

A. Life in Asylum Centers

Migrants captured after reaching Europe by sea are often sent to asylum centers, where they get the chance to make claims for a refugee status to obtain legal documents to stay in Europe. The migrants are allowed to stay in the camps temporarily until authorities are able to determine whether the new arrivals should be granted legal status.⁴¹ The process, however, is slow and migrants stay in asylum centers longer than they had expected. For example, in Italy, 15,715 new asylum seekers are yet to be granted legal status because the country is not equipped to deal with even this amount.⁴² Despite, the European Union's promise to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in 2012 in order to address the issues surrounding the gap in accessing asylum, the idea has yet to be institutionalized.⁴³ With the difficulty of life at the asylum centers, most of the refugees find themselves on the streets after a few months without citizenship.

⁴⁰ Arwa Damon and Laura Spark, "Sahara Desert Deaths: 92 Migrants Perish in Niger after Vehicle Breakdowns," *CNN News*, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/31/world/africa/niger-bodies/> (accessed April 01, 2014).

⁴¹ "How the EU Turns Its Back on Refugees." Spiegel Online, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/asylum-policy-and-treatment-of-refugees-in-the-european-union-a-926939.html> (accessed January 07, 2014).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "European Union," Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/european-union>, (Accessed December 10, 2013).

B. The Difficulty Involved in the Asylum Process

Asylum requirements differ depending on the European country the migrants are asking for permission to reside in. For example, in Denmark, “Danish law forbids asylum seekers from marrying; cuts their welfare benefits; discourages the arrival of those 60 and older; for immigrants to reunite with their families; and requires asylum seekers whose applications are rejected to leave Denmark that very day.”⁴⁴ These laws might discourage those with credible reasons from requesting asylum because of fear of being returned home if their applications are rejected without a chance to challenge the decision.

VII. Portrayal of Senegalese Migration in Music

Senegalese artists have taken an active role in the discussion about the push factors, such as the lack of jobs, which is causing people to leave Senegal, and the dangers of sea migration to Europe in their music. The international status of the musicians brings the issue to a broader and larger audience and brings more awareness of the issue to the Diaspora and the West. Migration has become problematic in Senegalese society and important enough to Western policy that these internationally renowned artists make it the focus of some of their best work.

The Artists and their songs

⁴⁴ Sarah Lyall, "When Asylum Seekers Knock, Europe Is Deaf," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/20/world/when-asylum-seekers-knock-europe-is-deaf.html> (accessed November 17, 2013).

Youssour N'dour

A popular figure in the SeneGambian music scene, Youssour N'dour was born in 1959 in Dakar. He is a percussionist, songwriter, composer, occasional actor, businessman and a politician.⁴⁵ His involvement with the Amnesty International Tour brought him well-deserved credibility, and exposure in a wider international audience. He has toured around the world, including the United States and Asia. After winning a Grammy in 2005, he became the first Senegalese artist to win such a prestigious award.



Youssour N'Dour with his award/google image

As an influential figure in Senegal, N'Dour uses his music to address the issue of migration to the West. His contributions in raising awareness about the dangers involved in sea travel have been recognized by Europe. For example, in 2007, N'Dour was recruited by the Spanish government to appear in advertisements aimed at

⁴⁵ "Yousour Ndour. *Last FM*. 2014. [http://www.last.fm/music/Youssou N'Dour](http://www.last.fm/music/Youssou+N'Dour) (accessed March 12, 2014).

discouraging would-be migrants from taking the back door to Europe. In the video, alone on a beach at night, N'Dour tells his fellow Senegalese; “don’t risk your life for nothing. You are the future of Africa.”⁴⁶ European demand for N’Dour to be involved in their efforts to stop illegal migration speaks volumes to his popularity with would-be migrants, and his role as Senegal’s cultural ambassador. One of his most popular songs in which N’Dour sings about migration is in “Immigrés,” which translates to “Immigrants.”⁴⁷ Singing in the Wolof language, N’Dour advises the migrants to return to Senegal so that they can use the skills they had acquired in Europe to contribute in the efforts to move the country ahead. Migrants in the West are seen as the ones who are capable in advancing Senegal, especially given the fact that the country’s government are not trusted to deliver on their promises. He also mentions the dangers of migration through the sea, while encouraging those pursuing this kind of travel to stay back home, and not risk their precious lives for something they are not sure they will find in the West.

While N’Dour means well by asking his fellow countrymen living in the West to go back to Senegal to help move Senegal forward, he fails to recognize the fact that migrants do not see themselves competent of doing the task. For example, some of them left Senegal because they were unable to find work in the first place. As a result, with the money they earn in the West, some of which they sent home, it is impossible for them to develop Senegal. Development requires money, thus, it is better that the

⁴⁶ Rebecca Blackwell, "Spain fights migration via Senegal ads" *USA Today*, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-09-28-1495721245_x.htm (accessed March 17, 2014).

⁴⁷ The song was access from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwtezlZbdss>. Uploaded by Aziz Fall.

migrants are in the West so that they can at least sent remittances which their families can spend to help support their economy.

N'dour's assertion that the migrants should come back to Senegal show how the country is desperately trying to deal with the issue of migration. This is exemplified in the pleas he makes in his songs asking would-be migrants to stay in Senegal, and find work rather than risk their life trying to get to Europe. Yet, there are not enough jobs for all the Senegalese he wants to keep in the country. Because people want work, which they believe can be found in Europe, would-be migrants will still continue their attempts to leave Senegal.

N'dour's international status makes him the perfect artist to address the issue of migration. He is able to encourage public conversation in Senegal. This, in turn, gives his fellow Senegalese the chance to express their views on illegal migration to Europe. Similarly, through public discourse, Senegalese can address their own government in the hope that they could inspire the leaders to improve the conditions, thus eliminating the desire to go to Europe in the first place.

Audience wise, N'dour has a global fan base in locations including Europe, America, Gambia, and in his own native country, Senegal. As a Senegalese cultural head, N'dour has performed in many venues in Senegal. He also performs for the government, and he recently performed at the inauguration held for the newly elected president, Macky Sall, in Dakar. He has established a radio station in Senegal, which has given migrants in the West the opportunity to listen live online to Senegalese music, and watch performances they would have otherwise not been able to. N'dour is also famous with migrants, and when he tours in Europe, he is watched by a large crowd of

Senegalese migrants, as well as those from other countries, including Gambians. He is also watched by Europeans, who despite not understanding what he is singing about in Wolof, enjoy the simple Senegalese rhythms and sabar dance. In all, N'dour has a broad audience to help raise awareness about the issue of migration to the Diaspora, and to the West.

Thione Seck

According to National Public Radio, Thione Seck is seen by some as one of the greatest singers from Africa. In addition to being a singer, Seck is a prolific drummer, who often takes charge of the drums when he performs, bringing excitement to the crowd.⁴⁸ His songs blend mbalax with reggae, while still maintaining the attributes of Senegalese music. Coming from a family of traditional singers, he was introduced to music at an early age. He would later go on to form a band with his brother.

As one of Africa's greatest, he is considered in Senegal to be on the same level as N'dour. Though he has not attained the same status as N'dour outside Senegal, he still contributes to the issue of migration by raising awareness to the plights of migrants in the West. This is evident in his song, "France."⁴⁹ The song tells the story of a migrant living in France. He begins the song by connecting the migrant to his Senegalese roots. In the song, he refers to the migrant as a Senegalese born and raised, who does not know anywhere but Senegal. This is despite the fact that the migrant lives and works in France. He also sings about aspects of Senegalese life that the migrant misses, which include the parents, friends, and attaya, a specific herbal tea from Senegal and Gambia.

⁴⁸ "Thione Seck." *B.B. King Blues Club and Grill*. 2014. <http://www.bbkingblues.com/bio.php?id=3880> (accessed May 12, 2014).

⁴⁹ The song was accessed from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKHb2P0ribE>. Uploaded by Ibrahim Diallo.



Thione Seck/google image

Although Seck does not compare which country is better, Senegal or France, he is disturbed by the life the migrant leads in France. For example, he tells the listener that the migrant lives in France without a place to sleep and nutritional food to eat. He does, however, recognize that the migrant cannot go home empty-handed to face his family back in Senegal.

The story Seck tells is familiar with some Senegalese migrants who arrive in Europe illegally. Because migrants use most of their savings to get them to where they want to go in Europe, they arrive with little or no money to carry them until they can figure out a way to find work. As a result, the newly arrived migrants might find themselves sharing one bed with more than six other people. There is no privacy either,

which is the same case at the asylum centers found in Lampedusa, Italy. The areas in which the migrants settle does not offer them the opportunities they thought were available in Europe. These areas can be crime ridden as well, which further exposes the migrants to dangerous situations they cannot find protection from. As a result, they are vulnerable in many ways.

Without jobs to go to, the newly arrived migrants rely on those who have jobs which do not pay them well. With no money to make calls to Senegal, some Senegalese families often go a long time before they hear from their loved ones, leading some back home to think that perhaps the migrants might have lost their lives at sea. Also, if the families had raised the money for the travel to Europe expecting remittances as soon as possible, and when this does not happen, they find themselves broke, and having to borrow to buy necessities such as food. Despite this, some in Senegal would still pay if they have the money to come to Europe. Perhaps there is nothing about Seck's songs on the plights of migrants in the West that will be enough to discourage them from doing so. Still, the migrants will appreciate his song because of the empathy Seck show toward them.

Didier Awadi

Didier Awadi is one the founding members of rap in Senegal. In the 1990s, he found international fame after forming a rap duo with a friend. Born in Dakar, Senegal in the 1960s, he found his passion for music through his father, who was a talented

musician from Benin.⁵⁰ Although Awadi is active in the Senegalese music scene, he lives and makes his music in France.



Didier Awadi /google image

Awadi has taken an active role in bringing the Senegalese migration issue in the forefront. His song “Sunugal,” which means “our boat,” received international media attention because of its candid portrayal of the Senegalese government as the reason people are leaving for Europe.⁵¹ In the song, Awadi blames the Senegalese government for being corrupt, and for failing to deliver on the promise they made when on the campaign trail. The song starts with Awadi apologizing to his parents for deciding to take a boat to Europe; still, he deems his decision to leave Senegal for Europe as necessary because he is tired of having to wait for the government to make good on the promise.

The promise made by the Senegalese government which Awadi refers to is jobs. Awadi is not the only Senegalese who feels that the government has been slow to create the jobs needed to stay in Senegal. It is safe to say that the majority of migrants who took boats to get to Europe blame the lack of jobs in Senegal for the reason they risk

⁵⁰ "Didier Awadi." *RFI Music*. 2014. http://rfimusic.com/siteen/biographie/biographie_8004.asp (accessed May 12, 2014).

⁵¹ The song was accessed from YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFdAL3f_3Ck. Uploaded by Rap JoloSN

their lives. This is especially true in the case of Senegalese males. For example, the male breadwinners put pressure on themselves to provide for their families, especially for their parents. Without jobs to make this possible in Senegal, it is not uncommon to hear stories of those who have made the dangerous journey to Europe to find work. Despite Awadi's belief in European success, as Seck's story of the Senegalese migrant in France shows, the migrants are sometimes trapped in the same conditions in Europe as the ones they were experiencing in Senegal without the jobs they had hoped for to find.

Ismael Lo

Ismael Lo is a guitarist, harmonica player, and singer who plays strong, complex, percussion-laden mbalax songs. In the beginning of 1979, he joined Super Diamono de Dakar, a popular Senegalese band.⁵² Lo quickly established himself as a key figure in the Senegalese music scene. By the mid-1980s, he began his own solo musical career, which earned him critical acclaim in Senegal, France, and elsewhere.

Like his fellow big name Senegalese artists, Lo has also made his mark on the migration issue with the song, "Baol, Baol," a Senegalese name for a migrant.⁵³ Lo takes a positive stance on the migration issue. Lo empowers the migrants in Europe, he neither asking them to return to Senegal, nor does he blame the government for the reasons why they left. This is evident in his continual use of the word, "demal," which means "keep on going." He encourages the migrants to "keep on going" with their work

⁵² "Didier Awadi." *RFI Music*. 2014. http://rfimusique.com/siteen/biographie/biographie_8004.asp (accessed May 12, 2014).

⁵³ The song was accessed from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7m12dUiTww>. Uploaded by Mouhamadou Falilou Ndiaye.

ethics regardless of the hardship they find in Europe, while praising them for their perseverance in foreign countries.



Ismael Lo/google image

In the song, it is clear that Lo views the migrants' situation in Europe as an opportunity for them to better their lives, and their families in Senegal, rather than a hardship meant to break them down. Migrants in Europe are likely to find Lo's song as a refreshing change from songs normally associated with migration. He only points out the more obvious hardships involved with working migrants, such as language barriers, while calling them a resource, and an inspiration.

As a result, Lo's assertion shows how Senegalese migrants are judged based on what they bring home with them instead of how they obtain the resources attributed to them. Whether "Baol, Baol" makes those in Senegal develop a false illusion about the real hardship migrants often face when they arrive in Europe or not, the song makes light of the actual realities in the West by viewing the difficult lives of the migrant in Europe as an opportunity. Still, the migrants can appreciate his encouraging gestures to "demel," even when things appear to fall apart like they often do.

Ousmane Diallo

In the Senegalese music industry, Ousmane Diallo is best known as Ouza, which is a shortened version of his name. He is admired for his stances on Senegalese politics and social issues. Diallo is praised for his incredible traditional mbalax songs.⁵⁴

As an outspoken artist on issues affecting Senegal, Diallo released “Modou, Modou,” which is also a name for migrants, to address the issue of migration that is causing concerns in his country.⁵⁵ Like Lo’s song, which also has the same meaning as “Modou, Modou,” Diallo expresses his warm approval of the way the migrants have shown courage in Europe. In the song, Diallo sings about the sacrifices that migrants make to support their families in Senegal. For example, he praised them for working even when the Western weather is cold, and for not refusing to do menial jobs.



Ouza Diallo/google image

Like Lo, Diallo makes heroes out of the migrants. Unlike Senegalese at home who are not willing to do unskilled work, the Senegalese migrants in Europe are hard workers, who do not look down on any kind of jobs they get offered to do. In fact,

⁵⁴ Bessem, Frank. *Musiques d' Afrique*. 2014. http://musiques-afrique.com/frames/art_ouza.html (accessed May 12, 2014).

⁵⁵ The song was accessed from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cct54vQ-Uck>. Uploaded by S. Modou Diop.

Diallo sings that the migrants never let anything, not even sickness, stop them from showing up to work, and doing the job well. The admiration Diallo shows toward the migrants reveals how the Senegalese as a society also admire them. When a migrant returns to Senegal, he is often confused with a rich person. This shows how migrants are unrealistically held at high standards. For example, it is not uncommon for migrants to receive visitors who come to claim their share of the wealth they think he has brought back home with him. As a result, by the time the migrants return to Europe, all of the money they take with them is spent long before the trip back home comes to a close

Moreover, the claim by Diallo that the migrants are willing do any jobs that are offered to them is only the case because these kinds of jobs are all they can find. Some of the migrants do certain jobs that are offered to them because of their lack of education, and not because the kind of work they do is what they always want to do. The way that the migrants are treated in Senegal make those back home want to travel so that they too can receive the status that migrants that have travelled to the West have in Senegalese society. As a result, the dangers of migration have become a real issue in Senegal.

VIII. Brief Remark on the Portrayal of Senegalese Migration in Music

Senegalese artists' portrayal of the issue of migration differ. Some, such as N'dour, are often critical of the issues of migration, while those like Lo, see the opportunities as outweighing the risks when they get to Europe. It does not matter whose approach is right as long as varying opinions are presented, and the issue of migration are made apparent to the Senegalese Diaspora, and the West. The important

thing for the artists is for the issue to be addressed publicly, not just by them, but by other citizens of Senegal and the West as well. The end result is to implement policies both in Senegal and the West which are aimed at encouraging legal means of migration to the West, and inspire those already in Europe to keep up the courage regardless of the difficulty involved in being a migrant. Encouraging legal migration will require the enactment of policies that would grant more visas to Europe.

IX: Reaction to the Music

A. Echoing Reaction:

The issue of migration is part of the daily conversation of not just Senegalese in Senegal but also for those abroad. One of the most popular news sites in the country, Seneweb, has given Senegalese everywhere the chance to voice their dissent. The themes of the public response are similar to those found in the popular songs. For example, like the songs, some blame the government as the reason people are leaving, others argue that the lawmakers are in no way responsible, but the Senegalese migrants and the smugglers are to blame for the issue of migration becoming a big problem in the country.

The people who take the time to join the discourse on migration do so by commenting on articles on Seneweb or social media networking sites, such as FaceBook. One such event occurred after Seneweb featured an article on Senegalese migrants drowning while attempting to reach Europe. Ironically, some of those responding to the article called themselves President Abdoulaye Wade, the country's former ruler, which further shows how closely Senegalese tie politics to the issue of migration. One such poster wrote in French,

“The government is enjoying billions while letting the people die... I see Wade’s son taking on the management of projects and filling his pockets while young people a thousand times more educated struggle for decent pay. It is really a shame, Wade and his gang are leading the country to ruin, they are sucking Senegal dry, young people are at the end of their rope, I'm so sick of it all...We want a sane and competent president who wants to work for his people, not a president in shambles who couldn't care less about our problems, his only problem is how he will put his son in power...So sick of this, it really is time he is voted out of office!”⁵⁶

Even though most people echo artists like Awadi, some are quick to point out that the government have actually worked to prevent migration but Western policies are to blame for the migration issue, especially those undertaken by skilled Senegalese. Regarding the Western policies on immigration, one commenter pretending to be the former Senegalese president wrote:

“What do you think of [French Interior Minister Nicolas] Sarkozy's “chosen” immigration? I am against immigration. I have always wanted to limit emigration from Senegal so Mr. Sarkozy can adopt whichever policy he wants. But it is not fair to want to take our graduates when I spend so much money to train them. I devote 40% of my budget to education and I don't want the engineers and the skilled youth to leave. Despite a high growth rate (6.3% in 2005), Senegalese continue to leave. What will it take to keep them? The growth rate of the past couple of years hasn't had an immediate impact. TV, music and those few who have succeeded abroad are attractive: people have their heroes but no jobs. But I have set up mechanisms to retain them.”⁵⁷

Though this response might not be from the Senegalese government, it is a view used to defend the country’s officials against the accusations that they are responsible for the mass migration. During an interview with Spiegel Online, an

⁵⁶ Backer, Alice. "Senegal: Conversations on Drowned Migrants." *Global Voices*, May 28, 2006. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2006/05/28/senegal-conversations-on-drowned-migrants/> (accessed May 10, 2014).

⁵⁷ Ibid

online news source, Wade told the interviewer that he spoke with the Spanish government about a collaboration that would discourage illegal migration and help Senegal retain its skilled workers. He was quoted saying:

“As soon as these migrations started happening, I opened talks with Spanish Prime Minister Rodriguez Zapatero and we reached an agreement. I told him that we did not want to lose our young people and that Senegal would do everything in its power to keep the migrants here by launching job programs. And Spain promised to provide three ships and one helicopter for surveillance and to bring people back. We promised to build landing bases to receive them. But unfortunately, the Spanish government has not respected this agreement. Senegal was attacked in the Spanish press and blamed for the agreement having failed, but it turns out -- and Zapatero admitted this when we spoke -- that the failure was the fault of Spanish bureaucracy. I am also having discussions with the French government about how to get our students to return to Senegal after their studies in France. We are in total agreement on 80 percent of the points raised. And this is what I said to Chancellor Merkel [Chancellor of Germany]. We Africans take the same stance on migration as you do in Europe.”⁵⁸

It is obvious from Wade’s interview that he is focused on preventing migration at all cost. However this does not address the issue in way that Senegalese would consider proactive. The proactive way to reduce migration would be to tackle the issues that are causing Senegalese to risk their lives for Europe, such as the creation of Jobs. Perhaps this is why some of the measures attempted to curb illegal migration, such as advertisement of the dangers involved in the journey, has not been successful in deterring Senegalese from taking the back door to Europe.

⁵⁸ McGuinness, Damien. “Interview with the President of Senegal: "I Don't Want Money. I Want Trade Agreements"." *Spiegel Online International*, September 19, 2006. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/interview-with-the-president-of-senegal-i-don-t-want-money-i-want-trade-agreements-a-437901.html> (accessed May 17, 2014).

Senegalese are also blaming the migrants and the smugglers for making the issue of migration problematic. A member of the public in his comment mention the smugglers, who are blamed for taking advantage of migrants willing to pay for the journey. The commenter wrote, "In any event those who organize the trips are getting richer on the backs of those unfortunate men looking for a better life."⁵⁹ Indeed, the smugglers are not without blame because they know the dangers involved in the journey to get to Europe but are too greedy that they would charge the migrants lots of money only to risk their lives in the sea.

B. The Lack of Differences in Tribal or Gender Responses

There is no difference in the response based on what tribe a Senegalese is. This might be because Senegalese see the issue of migration as a national problem instead of a tribal one. Also, the responses did not reflect gender differences. However, those participating in the discussion are more likely to be male, young, and educated to some degree. This demographic represent the Senegalese likely to migrate to Europe and thus are more involved in the discourse. The gender differences can also be due to Senegalese culture, which gives men an upper hand when it comes to participating in societal affairs than women, even though this is changing as more Senegalese women are being educated. Moreover, the back door migration is dominated by men than women so the topic may interest males more than females.

⁵⁹ Backer, Alice. "Senegal: Conversations on Drowned Migrants." *Global Voices*, May 28, 2006. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2006/05/28/senegal-conversations-on-drowned-migrants/> (accessed May 10, 2014).

C. Musical Diversity

Equally noteworthy is how music by these artists has shifted from songs about colonialism to migration. N'dour is one of the most vocal artists against the lasting colonial influence in Senegal. He has not only recorded music on the issue of colonization and its negative legacy in Africa, but N'dour has also produced a film, *Amazing Grace*, highlighting how Africa must resist Western influence. "Return to Goree"⁶⁰ is one of the most powerful songs discussing the legacy of slavery in Senegal. Goree was a province in Senegal where slaves were sold by Senegalese traders to Westerners. Moreover, previous songs told a narrative, which would feature less sabar drumming and more vocals. This is exemplified in some of Lo, Seck, and Diallo songs. For example, Lo's song, "Tajabone"⁶¹ celebrates the rich Senegalese culture. Another element of cultural music involves the narratives of the practices of forefathers who had formed and shaped the Senegalese societal norms.

D. A Conclusion from the Reaction

The public response to the cause of the Senegalese migration mirror those of the artists. As a result, one can conclude that the artists were influenced by what the general public were saying about the issue of migration. The artists took it upon themselves to bring the issue of migration to the international arena using

⁶⁰ The song was accessed from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcZma2qmgIk&list=PL63971FE74D824D9C> . Uploaded by Youssousn

⁶¹ The song was accessed from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI6XDIZ8YvM> . Uploaded by Seka Moke

what the Senegalese public are saying are the cause of the problem of illegal travel to Europe.

X. Conclusion

As the research shows, the issue of migration is much more complex for Senegal. Working to stop, or at least curb, the number of Senegalese migrants that leave for the West has proven difficult due to many factors. The lack of jobs or adequate salaries in Senegal have given reason to migrate to the West in search of jobs that are often not there. Also, without effective immigration policies in Europe to fully address illegal migration into the West, people will continue to use the boats. Although the Senegalese artists did not say in their music that the European government should change the strict visa requirements in place, reform of immigration laws to make it easier for would-be migrants to get to Europe legally and safely will likely be supported by these singers.

Thus, this shows how important it is that Senegalese artists are portraying the issue of migration to the West in their music. By doing so, the artists raise awareness of the issue to the international community with the hope that Western policies are capable of effectively addressing the issue. This might require Europe to work closely with the countries affected by migration as well as the Diasporas to better understand ways that aim to establish laws to change how would-be migrants travel to Europe.

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