

# The Social Telephony Files

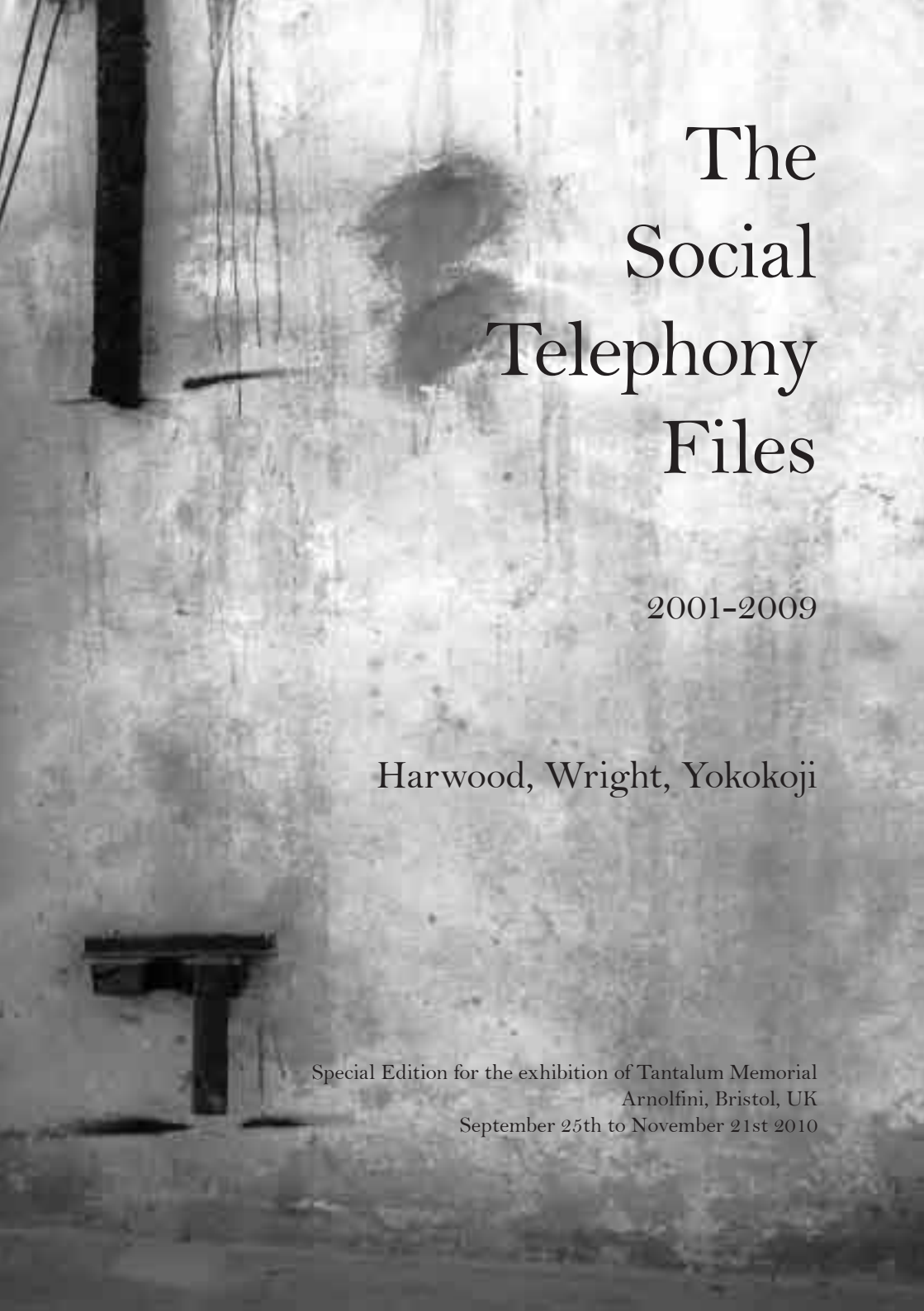


Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji









# The Social Telephony Files

2001-2009

Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji

Special Edition for the exhibition of Tantalum Memorial  
Arnolfini, Bristol, UK  
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Foreword

# The Telephone and its Keys

Matthew Fuller

The Social Telephony Book presents insights into a range of projects generated over a series of years by numerous people, using various software, and in many different kinds of contexts. The work presented here provides an overview of these projects and the way that, even in the face of rapid innovation by the telecommunications industry, the forces of experiment, social curiosity and an approach to technology derived from art methodologies have been able to produce something both absolutely concrete and functional, and unforeseeable within the norms of communications. It charts a small history of a series of inventions, ideas and hacks that chart a vigorous way of work with a technology, its history and the way it opens to potential futures and ways of circulating ideas, jokes, information.

Here, rather than recapitulate the story of these projects, what is intended is to provide a few ways of linking them together and thinking through their aesthetic, technical and social affinities. One way to start to do this is to think about a wider question of aesthetics - the construction of interplays between particular combinations of sensual perception, thought, media and experience - and about the way in which these projects are concerned with the ways in which art comes about. This current, organisational aesthetics, is characterised by attention to the way in which how a work is organised, how it comes about, is explicitly folded into its meaning.

Most art takes such aspects of the work as being implicitly related, this means that it is at once taken for granted, with no thought necessary, or seen as something distinct, irrelevant to the work. Other work can appear as the product of highly sophisticated and original organisational relations but which can nevertheless be characterised as comfortable and artless. Organisational aesthetics therefore is not to be found in the ostentatious meekness of much



social comfort art, nor in the doleful exuberance of micro-managed knees-ups rigged to flog mobiles to a spectrum-analysed demographic whose representative samples are gathered in front of landmarks to bounce light for the benefit of the cameras of public relations operatives.

Organisational aesthetics can be found where the aesthetic undertaking is partly in the development, movement and transformation of a loosely, precipitously or precisely assembled system of people, technologies, words, signals, the sense of those cohering, evaporating and reshaping over time, but also in the ethical dimensions of relations between processes, forms of access, cultures and their carriers, whether they are people, languages or technologies.<sup>1</sup> Something of this organisational aesthetic in the case of these social telephony projects is partly insensible to the human. These invisibilities are composed at the level of the cellular arrangement of phone masts and signal strengths, or the complexity of running code working in specific pieces of hardware, processing actual data, sorting, prioritizing and actuating, as a process that is more lively than the formal description of it contained in a program.

There is a particular kind of attention to timings, repeats, openings at work in such systems that is perhaps more akin to music than the expected stimuli of the visual; an aggregation of timings, synchronizations and dissonances, offbeats that cross through a project. A person crosses a square,

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1 Organisational aesthetics has primarily been a discussion carried out through projects rather than texts, examples include Kate Rich's Feral Trade, the Node London Festival, The People Speak, Mediashed, spc.org, Ice Cream for Everyone, much of the work of De Geuzen, Constant VZW and other related initiatives. Precursors would include systems such as Mail Art, the Anticopyright Network, Exploding Cinema (See Duncan Reekie's, *Subversion*, the definitive history of underground film, Wildflower Press, London 2007) and many of the projects discussed in Stefan Szczelkun's, *Collaborations*, Working Press, London, 1987. Recently, quite an amount of work in this vein has been triggered by relations between cultural work and the concerns of hacking and free software. For a more substantial elaboration of arguments around organisational aesthetics, see, Olga Goriunova's forthcoming book *Art Platforms*.

Marienhilfestrasse in Vienna<sup>2</sup>, at a certain time and pops a message into a PA for the other walkers to hear, the timing of breaks in a hospital triggers a flurry of jokes, the weekly rhythm of the radio programmes, Nostalgie Ya Mboka<sup>3</sup> and Londres Na Biso ties in with the circulation of messages in Telephone Trottoire. A particular kind of dialogue and incoherence in timings, one never quite knows when a mumbled Phone War rap is about to pop into your ear, establishes also the sense of a living process, but it is also one that is structured by systems that are highly formal: the alphabet, numbers, and telephone systems. But this is a telephone exchange turned inside out - instead of the calls coming in being re-routed, calls go out, start probing, making the telephonic object collective.

It is a formula in media theory, exemplified in Harold Innis's *Empire and Communications*,<sup>4</sup> that the form of media plays a part in shaping social and political relations. In his model for instance, religious empires tend towards emphasizing dominance over time, through long-lived monuments and ritual, secular political empires tend to emphasise space, through distributed media, such as newspapers and radio. Another relation between empire and media is that found if the raw materials for media are traced. Copper, as crucial for electronics today as it always has been, and found largely in the USA, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Chile and Peru, has its own stories to tell. Congo, bursting with good fortune, is the primary global source of another metal - Coltan, often used for high performance capacitors, used amongst other things in mobile phones. Coltan mining is particularly susceptible to extortion and systematic banditry, and, peaking in 2000 with the demand generated by the launch of the Playstation 2, has been a key source of wealth for rival factions, of militias, armies and proxy forces in the civil war in Congo.

The complications of using a technology which is at once a fundamental source of ruin for a country, while at the same time making life a little easier for the diaspora and those back home is a tense and interesting problem. This combination of feeding a technology through its problems is crucial to organisational aesthetics. Whereas currents such as institutional critique

would tend to revel in complaint about complicity, something which cannot go unacknowledged, the question is also to make something happen: don't moan, organise. To do otherwise is to negate the powers of those who are alive.

This way of working is re-articulated by the way in which problems, expertise and different kinds of intelligence, institution, technology and media are drawn into a project, often simply on the basis of curiosity as to what happens when they are brought into unforeseen relation. Building on the way in which social software<sup>5</sup> such as Mongrel's Nine(9)<sup>6</sup> a project which was built alongside TextFM, developed software on the basis of alliances of interest, desire, humour, between processes of subjectivation and social positions not traditionally brought into composition with software programming, social telephony allows new kinds of understanding of what a phone is, what a user is, what kinds of network are imaginable, what kinds of thought, passions, imagination, questions, sounds and statements traverse networks.

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2 TextFM was supported very strongly by Public Netbase in Vienna, who took it and turned it into something with their own flavour and daring, connecting the system up to, at different times, a public address system; CB radio, with sets installed in bars and cafes; community radio. As an organization, they drove the development of a revised version able to work in multiple languages using the Festival text-to-speech software and the Mbroglio database.

3 Nostalgie Ya Mboka [www.nostalgieyamboka.net](http://www.nostalgieyamboka.net),

4 Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications*, Oxford University Press 1950, see Also Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1951

5 See, Matthew Fuller, *Behind the Blip*, essays on the culture of software, Autonomedia, New York, 2003

6 [9]Nine is online at: <http://www.9.waag.org/>

Perhaps contrary to expectations given the tendency to the enhancement of 'easiness' in mobile telephony, one of the ways that social telephony has developed has been the recognition that different kinds of simple programmability can be introduced into the use of the phone. TextFM set up the selection and manipulation of voices via very simple scripts through which users could send instructions to the central server, ARoundhead, and subsequent projects worked with an expanded version of the call forwarding function in a telephone private branch exchange<sup>7</sup>, to establish its networks. Establishing more advanced forms of engagement with the ways in which messages are produced, passed and worked on invites different kinds of imagination to inhabit the technical.

Many of the projects discussed in this pamphlet perform a triangulation of sites in which the work is generated: the art gallery; the street - or other public site; the computer and phone network. This way of working tends to encourage a situation in which no one site can predominate in terms of its codes or capacities. Occasionally of course, this happens. The very tight availability of time and relatively prescribed uses of the phone system, complete with the delineations of patient, staff, and security hierarchies in the hospital setting of ARoundhead meant that it was difficult to use such an essential working system for the purposes of play. In other cases of course people simply pass projects by, vaguely rather than decisively.

But these conditions require some consideration of the developing media ecologies that these works organize themselves in. The Tantalum Memorial projects, which loop the Telephone Trottoire systems through exhibition spaces, place the Strowger switch,<sup>8</sup> core component of analogue telephone exchanges at the heart of their operations. Strowger, who lived in a small American town at the end of the nineteenth century invented the switch to ensure that the manually handled phone exchange would pass customers equitably between his business, that of an undertaker, and the town's other undertaker - whose wife happened to be the town's switchboard operator. Strowger switches are electro-mechanical devices that in this case, work to flatten a competitive market, they spring communications out of the grasp of an operator.

By the 1980s the first digital exchanges were being installed across Europe. They made connections much quicker, but, incidentally, also made it easier to intercept phone calls and subject them to computerized forms of surveillance such as word-recognition or caller-network analysis - means by which another operator, the state, asserts its grasp. Meanwhile, mobile phones set up another kind of loosening, away from tethering by wires. The mobile phone dislocates the phone spatially, with interesting effects at the scale of social units such as the family and the organisation of markets. Digitisation also introduced computing into telephony and the possibility of its connection with novel forms of logic and computation.

In the social telephony projects presented here, these factors provide certain degrees of freedom, allied with which other forms of logic and organisational imaginary are able to grow in certain ways. These freedoms are provocative enough to allow the organisation of the means for these technologies to be confronted with their material genesis: the violent forms of primitive accumulation costing the Congo's people millions of lives, simply put because a civil war is cheaper and easier to imagine for those in power. But that it would perhaps take confrontations with another technology of space and of abstraction, money, and politics, to find some means by which these problems could be contained and operated upon. Neither of these dimensions are unreachable at the scale of the phone, the carrier of much of contemporary life. That this is in some very small part articulated through the improper means of art, art that is itself improper through an over concern with technology, and again recapitulates impropriety through tangling itself with the emerging aesthetics of organisation shows the power of this current of work.

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7 PBX - the kinds of phone system you'd normally find within a company or institution. The PBX software used is Asterisk, released under the GPL, and available from <http://www.asterisk.org/>

8 The Strowger Switch is US Patent number 447918 - various resources exist online to document it, for instance <http://www.seg.co.uk/telecomm/>

# Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji

[www.mongrel.org.uk](http://www.mongrel.org.uk)

[www.mediashed.org](http://www.mediashed.org)

Graham Harwood, Richard Wright and Matsuko Yokokoji collaborated together from 2004 to 2009, firstly as part of 'Mongrel' - an internationally recognised artists collective.

Their collaborations explore the complex relationships between power, art and media in a globalized world. Using a socially active aesthetic, they connect spaces that include simultaneously the art gallery, public phone networks, the internet and the workshop. They are best known for their various projects in 'free media', 'eco-media' and 'social telephony' with their most recent collective work 'Tantalum Memorial' winning the transmediale. 09 award in Berlin.

Previous projects involving the group include the first online commission from the Tate Gallery, London, a BAFTA award nomination and work in the permanent collections of the Pompidou Centre Paris and the Centre for Media Arts in Karlsruhe (ZKM).

Mongrel (1997-2008) was founded by Richard Pierre-Davis, Graham Harwood and Matsuko Yokokoji in 1997 and joined later by Mervin Jarman and Richard Wright. Their work involved helping people to do things for themselves by creating social software and digital arts based projects that they then promoted to a state of high visibility through their international network of arts connections. The groups they worked with gained a visible voice, self reliance, self confidence and informal training allowing them to get a foot hold into mainstream education, culture and the economic life most of us take for granted.

In November 2007 the artists made a decision to stop working together as Mongrel and have since credited their group projects as Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji.

In December 2005, Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji set up the MediaShed after a visit from Sheffield based Access Space with their project Grow Your Own Media Lab. Composed of artists, filmmakers, computer geeks and audiophiles living and working in Southend, the MediaShed was the first “free-media” space in the east of England. Free-media is a means of doing art, making things or just saying what you want for little or no financial cost by using public domain and free software and recycled equipment. It was also about saying what you want “freely”, using accessible media that can be taken apart and reused without unnecessary restrictions and controls - “free as in free speech”.

“Our approach to media is to set up a series of ways that allow it to become strange to people, to allow it to become a space of fun and experimentation, of expanded thoughts and actions... It is about opening up the implicit meaning of media itself – to mediate not by controlling and ordering what can be said, shown or heard but by providing the means to unblock channels of access, release currents of energy and reveal the margins of what people can feel, sense, reason and imagine.”

Graham Harwood and Matsuko Yokokoji are now working together as Yoha: [www.yoha.co.uk](http://www.yoha.co.uk)

Richard Wright's current projects can be found at: [www.futurenatural.net](http://www.futurenatural.net)

## **Interview with Richard Wright and Graham Harwood by Yumika Tanaka**

October 25, 2007, San Jose [extract]

YT: Can you tell me more about their view of digital technologies/media?

RW: When we worked with the Congolese community on the Social Telephony project, their use of mobile phones, which is in common with many central African people, is quite different [from ours] for all sorts of reasons. Over here you have the idea that mobile communication makes you constantly accessible to information so it's a conduit, through which large and possibly inconvenient amounts of information can flow through to you and make demands on you. And modern media becomes a question of whether you're receiving too much information or whether you are too available or not, you are too accessible or too exposed. But for Congolese people, they have like 2, 3, 4 or more mobile phones each. But they don't have this large number of mobile phones because they believe that they need to have more information. It's because they have a different series of experiences in their social and political history that they've decided this is a good way for them to retain connections by having different mobile phones - have different activities and avoid official censorship or avoid the deteriorated media infrastructure in central Africa. So the terms of reference shift quite radically when you start to look at different groups of people from other countries, what direction they are coming from.

YT: So what are the strategies or best way to work with them when working with a community like this?

GH: When we work with a group of people, we are trying to understand things like that. First of all, we ask ourselves why we want to do projects and we ask them why they want to work with us to try to understand that what's going on and what's the dynamic, and they usually ask us what are the social and political dynamics of that. We try to interrogate the situation with the people



with a total curiosity, so we can understand what the media ecology is. So with the Congolese people they are doing this Pavement Radio where they're talking about all sorts of things. So the idea of mobile phones begins to fit that kind of ecology and how they are using these technologies. And then we start thinking about what if they are doing it this way and twist it, make it strange. If we can make it strange then it becomes a place for experimentation and fun. Through their media, we reveal what's interesting about that particular culture. If it's something that works there, it won't necessarily work with someone else.

YT: What is your project usually about? What are you really interested in? What are you trying to achieve/communicate through your projects?

RW: I think one question is about marginality. There's often a feeling that one of the benefits of public art for social policy makers is that it can reach marginal people that aren't quite integrated into society and absorb them into the same kinds of structures and patterns of life of the rest of us. So part of the perspective of certain official organizations towards marginality is to erase it through the arts by healing it which is quite a difficult position to put artists into. We often value that difference. So what we really would like to do is find ways for these marginal groups to connect back with other groups within more mainstream society and allow their particular perspectives to enrich the culture more generally, so they can become sort of more visible

# What is Social Telephony?

<http://www.mediashed.org/telephony>

Over the last twenty years the role of the telephone has been steadily reduced to that of an “interface” – for taking photos, bluetoothing business cards or connecting to an online service to find the nearest late night chemist. Sometimes people make phone calls. It is this rush to keep up with the latest augmentations of the mobile that has obscured the fact that the basic principle of person-to-person calling has still not reached its full potential after over 100 years. So in the first instance, social telephony is a historical project, returning to the handset, the voice, dialling and dialogue to re-imagine the phone call, to see where else it can go now that open source telephony allows us to build our own phone services.

Social telephony is thinking in terms of an “aesthetics of connectivity”, finding ways to build social networks between people that allow them to communicate in unexpected patterns and reveal different kinds of relationship. By taking advantage of the widespread use of phones we have developed arts projects that do not rely on unfamiliar computer systems and only require phone connectivity to take part. We have experimented with the use of auto-dialling to seek out potential participants, building the means of dissemination into the activity itself. We can allow people to pass content amongst themselves through their phones and across all national boundaries. By literally putting these abilities into the hands of our audience we have achieved more proactive forms of collaborative media.

This approach has also benefited from other kinds of connection. Our close collaboration with the Congolese community, especially Nostalgie Ya Mboka, has taught us that communication is not just about increasing

the amount of information communicated. Their experience of exile from authoritarian regimes replaces a desire for quantity with a desire for channels, borderlessness and autonomy. The Coltan Wars, the most devastating yet least publicised conflict in the African continent, has shown us that an ordinary device such as a mobile phone connects us not only by wireless transmissions but also through a process of globalisation that includes historical currents, technological proliferation and the traffic of refugees.

How to make these myriad relationships tractable? Not to understand them as such, that is too naïve, but how to gain a purchase on them, a way into Congolese conversations, transnational trading routes and the Victorian inventions that spawned the modern global media empires. It was with this in mind that we developed the workshops and gallery based artworks, to bring into touch communities of migrants, young mobile phone users, critics and cultural audiences in spaces designed for more open ended reflection. This later work is designed not to communicate anything as such, but to reveal the shape of communication itself and a little about our place within it, so that when we perform something as simple as making a phone call we take part in a process that is continuing to shade its own particular cultural, historical and political outlines.

# (2001) TextFM

Matthew Fuller and Graham Harwood, 2001

SMS text and audio broadcast

<http://www.scotoma.org/cgi-bin/textfm/textfm.pl>

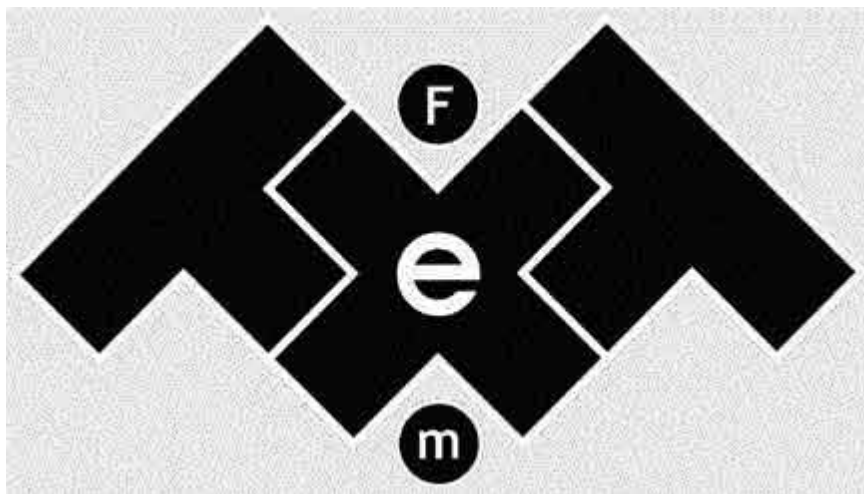
Anyone with access to a mobile phone can send a message to a specified number. A computer receives the message and reads it out using a text-to-speech program. This speech is broadcast by a radio transmitter. As part of the message, the user can also specify a language, one of ten synthetic voices, the pitch and the speed at which they want the text read. It is a way of creating a simple, lightweight, open media system.

SMS as a medium is primarily used for private, person-to-person messaging. It is a realm of seduction, slogans and rapid-fire poetry. Opening up this torrent of language arising from thousands of 'cellular-bubbles', the private space of the phone produces a mutant take on public art. The key to TextFM is in gaining a sense of the city as a multi-voiced conversation: non-stop, multiplicitous, refractory and inherently live. But it is a city with a twist. It is an open city.

- 1 *A SMS message is received by a MacPerl script via a modem.*
- 2 *The short script at the beginning of the message is checked for any language and voice parameters.*
- 3 *The message is stripped of SMS packet data and forwarded by TCP/IP to a Linux computer.*
- 4 *The file is 'read' by the Festival speech synthesiser and the audio output is saved as an mp3 file.*
- 5 *The mp3 file is sent via TCP/IP to the Mac computer and broadcast via its audio output.*

It was possible for users to simply send a text to a specified number in order to hear their message broadcast. In addition to this, it was also possible to set a particular voice, to choose (where available) a language, and to change the pitch or speed, thus allowing users to adopt a particular voice. For instance in the Vienna installations, German was set as the default language but users could specify that their text would be read as English. Users often send a string of text in various voices to try them out, search for the most suitable voice, or adopt a particular voice for a chat sequence. The voices available in English are familiar to any Mac user - they are those such as 'Bubbles' and 'Victoria High Quality' built into Simple Text. They can also clearly be heard as computer generated voices. It is perhaps their audible artificiality and, with some of the voices, straight-up silliness that makes them so attractive to mess about with.

It quickly emerged that some people were using it in a manner reminiscent of concrete or sound poetry. Such users would send repeated clusters of characters. For instance a message might comprise of: 'ugh a ugh a ugh a ugh a ugh a ugh a ugh a...' et cetera. Fed into the system, such repeated patterns



would build up a rhythm and novel eruptions of spluttering and beat into the machine.

At the outset, we were not sure how or if people would use the work in order to carry out exchanges of texts. Where exchanges can directly be said to have occurred is at moments when the project was tied into physical locations. A good example of this was on 10th May 2002 during the broadcast on Resonance FM. At the same time as the broadcast, the Exploding Cinema, something like a film cabaret run on open submission lines, fed the transmission to its audience in Hatcham, South London. People in the crowd there immediately began to use the system to address each other and to heckle the MC. The connection was quite jubilant, rude and funny, giving a great sense of the characteristics of radio being crossed with those both of the mobile phone and of a relatively raucous, tightly-packed phone-carrying crowd.

### **Graham Harwood interviewed by David Mandl (extract)**

This interview appears in The Brooklyn Rail <http://www.thebrooklynrail.org>

GH: ...one of the big problems has been getting around the airwaves problem [i.e., getting access to radio frequencies to broadcast over]; the radio thing is a complete nightmare.

DM: That's interesting, because one of the original goals of the project was opening up the airwaves. So do you now see the future being more in webcasting these messages, streaming over the net rather than continuing with the radio model?

GH: No. Generally it's a localized project. [Local administrators can send messages] off into radio, or off into a public announcement speaker system, or some other viable way for the local area. Because the laws on radio are so very different between different borders and different places, there's not a kind of one-solution-fits-all

DM: So it's completely decentralized and autonomous: "Here's your stream; do what you want with it. If you have access to some radio frequency, then broadcast it. If you want to webcast it, do that."

GH: One kind of speculative notion would be if we can set up a series of speakers aimed at a public building here, or a public monument or something, and do the same in a number of countries, and then use these different nodes to actually just send shit to these public address systems, it would be a really good method of...

DM: An audio bulletin board.

GH: Yeah. Because a lot of people in Vienna use texting as they're walking past the public-address system there to just write in their text message that just booms out in that locality. So it's almost like grafittiing as you walk past. And one of the really invigorating notions about SMS is that everyone has their own remote in their pocket, you know, as you walk past some kind of bulletin board, some kind of address system to just leave something, post something, place it there, in a mobile space.

Versions of TextFm were installed at the following events:

"City A-Live", De Balie, Amsterdam, 2001

"Interface Explorer", Public Netbase, Vienna, 2001 (Also used extensively on Radio Orange 90.4fm during same period)

Public Installation of work through Public Netbase, Marienhilfstrasse, Vienna, Jan - May, 2002  
Ferens Gallery, Hull, 2002

"Open Spot", Resonance FM, London, April 2002

(2005) Phone-Slam: Southend Soundbites

Mongrel, 2005

### Telephone network and web site

“Southend Soundbites” was a competition for young people to phone in sounds they thought best represented their local area and then get their friends to vote for and comment on them online. This could include sounds they personally associate with the area, sounds they think sum up Southend, storytelling, music or seaside message for Valentines day. People could use their mobiles to record an overheard conversation, sounds from the seashore, arcades, Saturday nights, seafront car rallies - eventually creating an online audio library of the area.





...noises, stories, jokes, messages, songs, slogans, chants...

“Southend Soundbites” was the first project to use Mongrel’s recently developed open source telephony network. The network was designed to allow people to spontaneously join in arts projects over an ordinary phone and then use the results on a web site. “Phone-Slam” took advantage of the widespread use of phones and mobiles and combined them with the flexibility of the internet. This project aimed to draw on Southend-on-Sea’s distinctive and vibrant popular culture and give it a little twist. In this way it could reach those who are not normally aware that there are accessible forms of expression outside of mainstream media.

*Welcome to Phone-Slam’s Southend Soundbites. Find a sound or story you think best represents Southend, then phone it in and you could win 250 quid. Press one to record an entry, two to playback an entry you have already recorded, three to hear more about this project or hash to hear this menu again.*

“Southend Soundbites” ran from January 15th to March 1st 2005. The competition was won jointly by Jade, 8 years old, and Stephen, 11 years old, who both submitted poems about Southend.

“Being Here” workshop leaders: Mervin Jarman and Francesca Da Rimini.

“Phone-Slam” and “Being Here” workshop Project Manager: Mary Mullen.

“Southend Soundbites” was part of “Being Here”, a not-for-profit arts initiative managed by Momentum Arts, funded by Southend Borough Council, Arts Council England and the European Social Fund.

# (2005) ARoundhead

Mongrel, 2005

Telephone network

<http://www.mongrel.org.uk/?q=aroundhead>

“The head of Oliver Cromwell is stuck in the telephone exchange of an Edinburgh psychiatric hospital” – (original idea conceived with Matthew Fuller).

From an automated telephone system installed at the Royal Edinburgh Psychiatric Hospital, phone calls from Oliver Cromwell’s severed head encouraged staff to pass around messages, songs, jokes and rude noises. A telephonic robot in the character of Cromwell rang up, asked questions and recorded responses from the various people it spoke to. The head dialled a selection of the 800 administrative staff phones at random and played them re-recorded audio scripts. After listening to the current script, the callee could decide to pass it to another extension by entering their number. The Head of Oliver Cromwell was spoken by actor Neil Conrich.

Over a number of days the strange phone calls from Oliver Cromwell’s head would hopefully build into an urban myth. The project provided the staff with a means to interact with each other using the Cromwell character as a mediator. We wanted to use the project to find out ways in which people could be motivated to communicate using this kind of system.

February 2005: a wiki (a web based collaborative writing tool) is set up for online development of the project.

# ARoundhead



## ADVANCE NOTICE!

**ARoundhead** is a live arts project  
in the telephone system of the  
Royal Edinburgh Hospital  
this May and June.

**ARoundhead** is a collaboration  
between the arts group Mangle,  
the Functions Dept and the Social Health  
Dept of the hospital.

**ARoundhead** is intended to create  
an unexpected and humorous rupture  
into selected staffs' normal telephone usage. From May 19th to June 2nd,  
Oliver Cromwell's head will be stuck in the telephone system asking for  
your help as to transfer him to someone who can.

We hope you enjoy the interversion and if Oliver Cromwell should shout to  
ring you, please spare a little time to hear him out or pass him around.

## PLEASE EXPECT A CALL!

For more details on Functionsuite projects please visit: [www.functionsuite.com](http://www.functionsuite.com)

April 13th 2005: a script workshop led by David Griffiths is held to develop narrative ideas with hospital staff.

May 2005: eighteen final scripts are divided into two groups: independent 'functional' scripts that encouraged listeners to pass them on and a sequence which built up into a narrative. Cromwell's messages ranged from trying to expel a fart, asking for help deciphering a joke he had read on the toilet walls or ejecting a bird that had been caught in the telephone exchange with him. He played love songs to listeners, extolled staff to put down their phones and take the rest of the day off or to join him in singing a rousing (and deafening) hymn of praise.

Launched: May 19th – June 7th 2005

### Sample scripts

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**CROMWELL**

*Good person, I am in need of urgent release. Centuries of bad air and rotten fumes have built up inside me! I can hold it no longer ... ah ...*

**Loud fart noise.**

**CROMWELL (continued)**

*Ah ... that is exceedingly refreshing. Perhaps you can direct me to another line so I may release more vapours? Pray enter an extension number most speedily – I feel another emission building inside me ...*

-----  
**CROMWELL**

*I have found someone in the hospital holds a secret desire for you. And has requested I play for you this love song. When it has finished you may instruct me to pass it on to one whom YOU adore from afar.*

**Sound of someone putting on a gramophone record, plays song "You Go To My Head" by Peggy Lee**

**CROMWELL (continued)**

*To pass this serenade on to someone you secretly yearn for, enter their extension number now. You may rely on my discretion in this small service.*

-----  
**CROMWELL**

*Where am I? Who is this at the end of this phone? I remember descending into darkness. Nothing but the rustling of seeds sprouting in the soil – daisies tickling my nostrils with their roots.*

*And now I find myself without a body, my head ringing with the sound of wee gossiping voices, whistling down thousands of little copper wires in this hellhole called telephony!*

*If you know of another who can explain my situation then press 'one'. If you will allow me to call upon you again then please press 'two'*

**Some reactions from the staff at Royal Edinburgh Hospital**

Keith McKenzie

Initially, I was taken by surprise. I thought it was quite interesting and amusing. I think I would have listened longer but the voice was difficult to understand. I passed the call on to one of our supervisors, who didn't say anything but I knew the call was doing the rounds.

Helen Howell

When I received the first call I just put the phone down. I thought it was a nuisance call that had somehow slipped through. We cottoned on after speaking to Teresa. Though it was a bit weird I enjoyed it and even passed it on to my supervisor who then passed it on to Mr Mackenzie. The girls had a laugh, they thought it was funny.

Dennis Cooper

I think mainly we were puzzled by it. It was confusing coming in the NHS network. I thought it was quite a clever idea and I listened to it with my jaw at

my feet. It rang up a group room when we were in a meeting so we couldn't really respond to it properly but it was very interesting.

From the ARoundhead call logs

More than one out of ten of all calls (including those calls not even answered) resulted in the listener choosing to take part and reply to Cromwell. Members of staff actively passed the head between their colleagues. Some found it “funny”, “weird”, a “shock”, “jaw dropping” or wondered whether a bizarre virus had infected the telephone exchange.

Commissioned by ARTLINK for Functionsuite.

Collaborators:

Tom Arnott, Louise Birrell and Gill Watson, facilities department, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Teresa Quinn, telephone switchboard manager, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

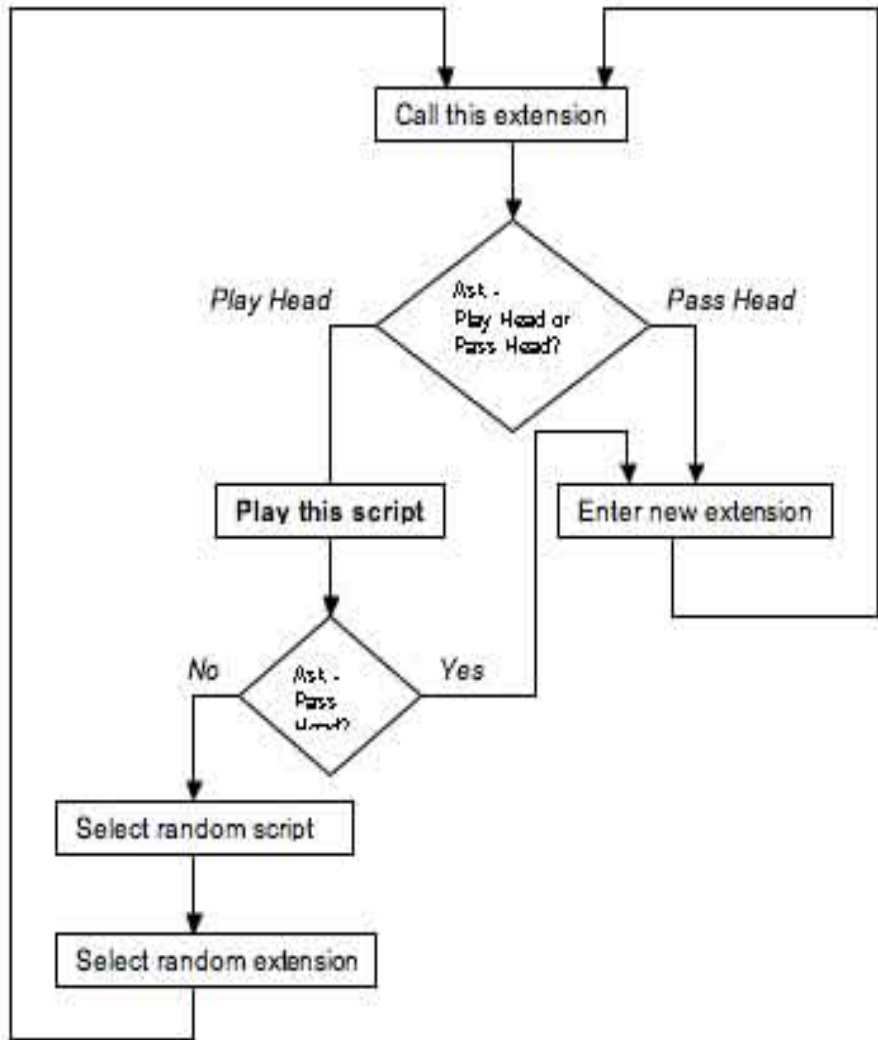
Matthew Fuller, Francesca da Rimini, script researchers

David Griffiths, script workshop leader

Neil Conrich, actor, voice of Oliver Cromwell

Mary Mullen, sound production

## ARoundhead call flow



# (2006 and 2008) Telephone Trottoire

Mongrel with Nostalgie Ya Mboka, 2006 and 2008

Telephone network

[mediashed.org/?q=trottoire](http://mediashed.org/?q=trottoire)

*Congolese people. hello to you all - you are listening to Telephone Trottoire - a project run by Londre na Biso - our congolese radio show broadcast on radio resonance fm. As you know our people back home like talking and gossiping amongst friends - that's our pavement radio. Today we have got something to share with you - After you've listened to today's message you can make a comment and also pass it on to someone else to listen and make their comment. If you'd like to listen to today's message - press 1 on your telephone keypad now.*

In Central Africa people defy media censorship using 'radio trottoire' or 'pavement radio' - the passing around of news and gossip on street corners. "Telephone Trottoire" was named after this practice and was used to encourage London's Congolese community to share and pass around news stories and discuss them over their phones. It was also the first public trial of Mongrel's "contagious" social telephony application and was developed in collaboration with the radio programme "Nostalgie Ya Mboka" ([www.nostalgieyamboka.net](http://www.nostalgieyamboka.net)). It ran for six weeks from March 27th to May 8th in 2006, initially as part of the NODE.London season of media arts (<http://www.nodel.org>).

There are currently over 35,000 Congolese people living in London alone and over 90% of them are refugees and asylum seekers who have been forced to leave the authoritarian regime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many of the issues referred to in the phone messages in Telephone Trottoire are particular to this community. For example - the financial expectations placed upon asylum seekers by their families back home or the role of religion



within communities who see themselves without hope. All allowed listeners to record their own comments and pass the call on to a friend by entering their phone number.

Through working with Nostalgie Ya Mboka we identified two very positive factors in Congolese culture that “Telephone Trottoire” would be able to build on. In common with other developing countries in similar situations,

Congolese people have become voracious users of mobile technologies, many of them owning three, four, five or more handsets each. The second factor was the development of a social networking practice outside of state control called “radio trottoire” or “pavement radio”. This is a means of avoiding state censorship by passing information directly between people meeting on street pavements, markets or other public places. Sometimes this practice is used to simply spread gossip or follow the fortunes of a town’s favourite footballer. But at other times it becomes a vigorous and effective means of passing around breaking news or “polemique” that may provide a vital lifeline for its users.

The structure of “Telephone Trottoire” is based on an application system used on earlier projects like “ARoundhead” that allows people to pass a phone message on to another person, spreading like a grapevine or “pass the parcel” model. At the core of this system is an automated telephony server that can phone people up at random from a database of phone numbers and play them any pre-recorded audio content. After being played a story, topical news item or a joke, the listener is invited to join in by recording a comment on the clip they have just heard. They can also pass the story on to a friend by entering their telephone number on the keypad (which is then added to the database). This new user will then be dialled and can also listen, leave a comment and pass it on – building up a string of users like a daisy chain. It was decided to name this system “Telephone Trottoire” after the Congolese practice of “radio trottoire”.

So popular was “Telephone Trottoire” that we decided to run a second version during 2008 in conjunction with our “Tantalum Memorial” work (described below under “Tantalum Memorial”).

Nostalgie Ya Mboka wrote twenty short monologues and recorded them in Lingala/French so that listeners would be more inclined to accept the phone calls. The clips were intended to pose questions, impart information, highlight factual events and to provoke the listener into making a comment and pass the call along to a friend.

*"When we left our country we came here to work, to make money and to help our families back home. Unfortunately whilst we are here, as we know, some of us don't like to work. There are plenty of jobs, if you really look you'll find one. But some of us just want to live on benefit, which is no good. When we were growing up the job of our fathers was to wake up in the morning, to go to work and to earn a living to provide for the family. But now we are here, some of us don't follow that example. Is that really good? And then let's also think about what would happen if we had Income Support in Kinshasa? Tell us what you think of these two questions, give us your thoughts and advice about these two questions".*

*"Today's story is a problem of Europe, specifically London, but also back home in Kinshasa. As you all know we have now got plenty of churches here in Europe. What's happening here is when you go to church with your children the priest can accuse one of your children of being possessed by an evil spirit. This often happens when one of the children living with you is not yours but the child of a member of your (extended) family. Even though this child has a British passport the priest advises that the child is sent to Africa for "cleansing" and when the child arrives back in Kinshasa s/he is disowned by the family and becomes abandoned. Ask yourself is this right? Children with UK passports are being sent back to Africa and abandoned. Give us your comments".*

*"Today I want to ask you about children's rights. As you know, here in Europe children enjoy many more privileges than back home. Here in Europe you can't discipline your child by smacking them, if you do, your child goes to school, tells the teacher, the social workers get involved and your child ends up being taken away from you. Here it seems like the child enjoys almost too much protection, like they have become untouchable, whereas back home if a child has been naughty you will discipline them, maybe even slap them so that they will learn right from wrong. Even if for example, a 13-year old child becomes pregnant, she can visit the hospital and the hospital will perform an abortion. Under UK law the parents can be denied that knowledge. Perhaps the parents suspect something is wrong and approach the hospital, but the hospital is bound by confidentiality and won't tell the parents. My friends, what do you have to say about this? Is it better the way we deal with our children back home, or is it better with the privileges enjoyed by children here?*

The response we received from the Congolese community to the 2006 first version surprised even us. Over the 6 weeks that the project ran it was only able to make an average of 120 calls per day on its single telephone line. Yet despite this limitation and the fact that those 120 calls included all those misdialled or not answered, it succeeded in eliciting a total of 448 comments.

- 65% of all users contacted chose to take part – amounting to a total of 1,550 acts of voluntary participation over the whole project.
- New users grew by about 100 per week to a total of 660, that's nearly 2 every hour.
- Listeners chose to pass on or comment on 58% of all stories they heard.

Trottoire recorded messages from locations all across the UK including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, as well as internationally from as far afield as Ireland, Canada, Belgium, France, South Africa and of course, the DRC itself. Of the hundreds of comments we received there were a great many praising the project itself. Some responded to particular aspects of the story, whereas others simply ignored the issue, preferring to praise the initiative generally and thank us for using it to bring the community together. In fact it was so successful that we were contacted by a representative of the Congolese government who offered to buy the project!

Some stories are popular choices to pass around but not to comment on – funny stories like the testicle eating were near the top of most popular to pass but at the bottom of most commented on. There seemed to be a clear preference for “serious” subject matter. One script by the comedian Ngadios brought complaints because it was considered too trivial and had to be removed. But another comedy script by Ngadios that satirised the Congolese government was one of the most popular of all. There is also a cultural factor in that some less serious comedic stories may be privately enjoyed by Congolese people but are not considered of enough moral weight to be discussed publicly.

Participant's messages and behaviour revealed several encouraging facts about this project:

- People deliberately passed on messages to those they thought should hear them – a story about Congolese diplomats working illegally was passed on to the Congolese embassy itself!
- Some topics such as children's rights that seemed specific to the UK still drew comments from other countries. This transnational perspective means that the project is more effective nationally to the extent that it operates in an international context.
- A high proportion of comments came from women despite the fact that in Congolese culture is the men who normally dominate popular discourse.
- In their comments people often expressed a desire to be able to add their own stories to the system.

Nostalgie Ya Mboka broadcasted selected clips and responses on one of their radio shows – “Londres Na Biso”. Congolese listeners were able to hear for themselves how members of their community feel.

The 2008 version of “Telephone Trottoire” ran for 4 months in summer 2008 and a further 2 months in early 2009. This time the audio content was loosely themed around the Congolese “Coltan Wars”, the conflict in the eastern region of the country that is fuelled by the international trade in coltan ore. This valuable mineral is used to derive the metal tantalum which is currently in great demand by multinational companies in the manufacture of mobile phones, laptops and other small devices. Since 1998 this conflict has resulted in the death of 4 million Congolese and has been called Africa's First World War.

This new version also allowed people to phone in and suggest their own ideas for new messages. This resulted in 30 recorded suggestions, one of which was directly added to the database for use by the system. There were 812 comments recorded and the number of users grew from 657 at the end

of the first project to a grand total of 1,833, the vast majority of these being added by users passing calls to friends or relatives.

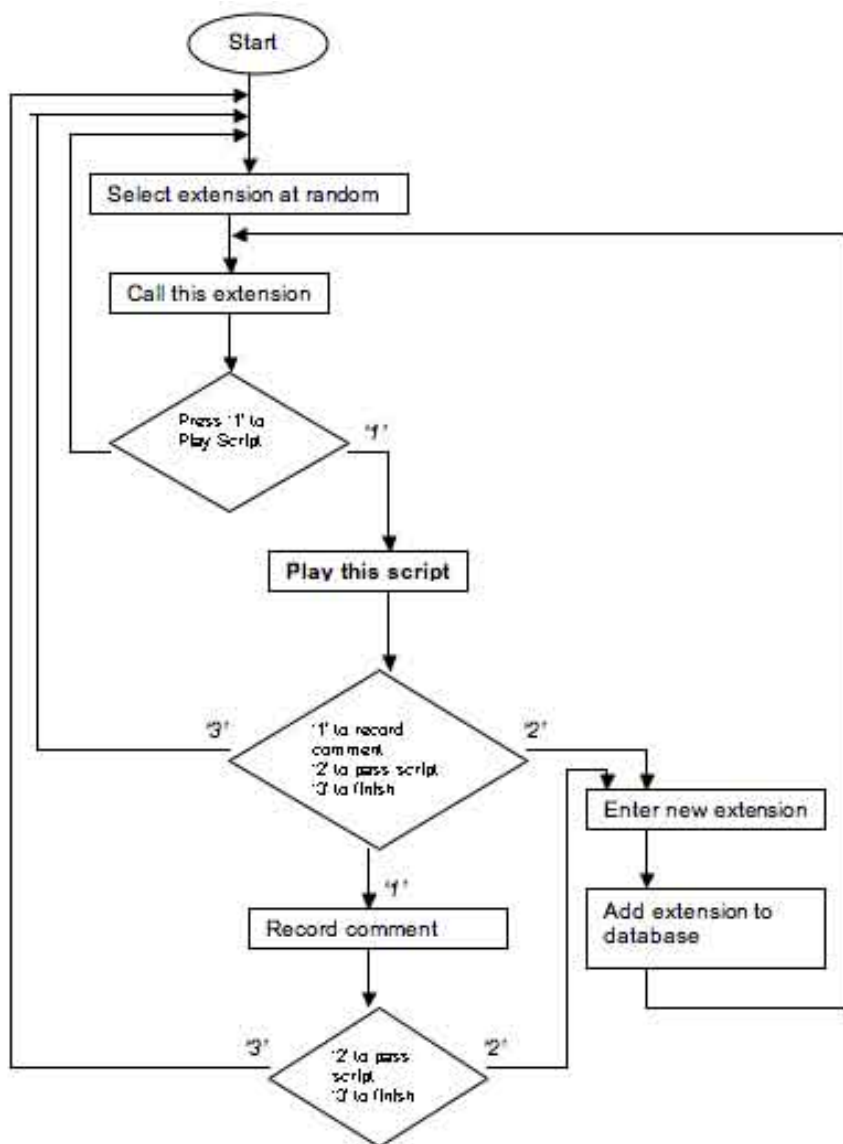
The main difference with this version was that the phone call activity was used to drive a gallery based installation built out of old electro-magnetic telephony switches – the “Tantalum Memorial” piece described in the following section. This show made Trottoire’s achievements accessible to English speakers for the first time as an example of how artistic imagination and media innovation can give a voice and visibility to previously marginal groups.

What made “Telephone Trottoire” special is that the system could be adapted to reflect and extend the values and aesthetics of everyday Congolese life, where, as described above, there has long been a culture of oppression and denial of free speech. Rather than bolting on an exotic new game playing format to a mobile phone, this project stays within the bounds of what is fast and responsive. It does not develop complicated new technologies but applies an innovative technique to what is readily available. This mechanism of passing messages is important because it is a form in which the design of the project includes the means of its own dissemination. This mechanism is also not imposed from outside but is rooted in an awareness of current cultural practices amongst marginalised groups and migrant communities that have developed a closer dependence on mobile communications patterns due to their economically and politically disadvantaged conditions. It is this aesthetic of communication and networking that the project advances and seeks to develop.

Made with the collaboration of Vince Luttman and Anaclet Koffi from Nostalgie Ya Mboka ([www.nostalgieyamboka.net](http://www.nostalgieyamboka.net)). Additional scripts from Esther Bodi, Florese and Ngadios.

ScriptName	Times Script Played	Times Script Passed	Number of Com- ments	% Times Script Passed	% Script Commented
basoldatsyamonuc Exiler en exile	217	41	35	18.89%	16.13%
(Exiled in Exile)	201	44	42	21.89%	20.89%
nzemboyaekolo	229	48	39	20.90%	17.03%
esta3	84	13	20	15.47%	23.81%
Voilpe conflict tribal	216	55	48	25.46%	22.22%
esta4	77	12	15	15.58%	19.48%
tolinganite	194	40	41	20.62%	21.13%
esta6	62	7	10	11.29%	16.13%
Visitena hopital	177	36	31	20.34%	17.51%
enchappement	176	50	37	28.25%	21.02%
Democracy	192	41	44	21.35%	22.92%
Faux interprete	201	59	34	29.35%	16.92%
pauvre_garcon	168	38	29	22.62%	17.26%
Ponaninikaka football	162	35	30	21.60%	18.52%
mbeli	170	30	34	17.65%	20%
esta5	81	18	18	22.22%	22.22%
Baparasite (Parasites) Ezalikaka coltante	235	56	35	23.83%	14.89%
(It's Not Just about Coltan)	215	53	44	24.65%	20.47%
esta1 Roleyaba musiciens	90	18	26	20%	28.89%
(The role of Musicians)	208	38	57	18.27%	27.40%
esta2 Mbembayacharite	78	16	28	20.51%	35.90%
(Charity) examens_medicaux	133	17	41	12.78%	30.83%
(Medical Examinations) Nouvelle imperialism	186	36	26	19.35%	13.98%
(The New Imperialism)	152	36	25	23.68%	16.45%
Suggestion0008	79	19	24	24.05%	30.34%
	<b>3983</b>		<b>813</b>		

# Telephone Trottoire system design





	Total Calls	Calls answered failed	Calls answered succeeded	Calls passed failed	Calls passed succeeded	Recordings	Comments
March 27th	227	23	79	18	21	26	set to 13 hour day
March 28th	74	5	17	2	7	4	set to 9 hour day
March 29th	79	6	27	1	10	10	"1 min max" added
March 30th	92	8	32	4	11	13	
March 31st	155	13	47	6	16	15	
April 1st	90	8	30	7	14	8	
April 2nd	96	8	26	5	6	10	
April 3rd	85	11	33	4	10	13	swap PBX card over*
April 4th	145	13	40	4	13	11	Lost 15 recordings**
April 5th	163	11	42	3	18	14	set to 7 hour day
April 6th							Down for 2 days
April 7th							
April 8-9th	124	12	35	2	16	12	Av - calls div by days
April 8-9th	123	12	35	1	16	11	
April 10th	121	9	46	6	15	12	
April 11th	119	9	49	2	25	17	
April 12th	128	10	25	0	11	7	
April 13-14th	118	14	36	1	17	12	
April 13-14th	118	14	36	0	17	11	
April 15-16th	123	9	37	3	15	13	
April 15-16th	122	8	36	3	15	12	
April 17th	110	20	40	1	12	8	
April 18th	121	14	32	4	12	8	
April 19th	121	13	35	2	21	6	
April 20-21st	118	11	42	4	16	11	
April 20-21st	117	10	41	4	15	10	
April 22nd	114	14	44	0	23	11	
April 23rd	121	4	48	4	23	11	
April 24-25th	115	11	43	3	19	12	
April 24-25th	115	11	42	2	19	11	
April 26-27th	121	11	36	3	18	10	
April 26-27th	121	11	36	2	17	9	
April 28th	124	10	36	2	21	9	
April 29th	117	12	48	1	22	15	
April 30th	121	12	31	1	15	9	
May 1-3rd	121	14	34	2	16	7	
May 1-3rd	121	14	33	2	16	7	
May 1-3rd	120	13	33	2	15	7	
May 4th	125	13	37	1	11	12	Lost 21 recordings**
May 5th	125	10	47	3	20	9	
May 6th	121	11	38	2	17	10	
May 7th	125	11	31	2	14	6	
May 8th	125	9	34	1	19	5	
TOTAL	4941	462	1549	120	654	434	7 2 52

\*clears Unable to request channel Zap/4/2 error.

\*\* Actual total is 412 due to mailbox overflow.

Most Commented on	Most Passed
11 children's rights 3 41%	8 charms kill 52%
19 date sisters 1 35%	13 informers 51%
10 cemetery costs 2 34%	5 minister toilets 46%
20 step daughter 2 32%	2 domestic violence 45%
18 home churches 2 32%	11 children's rights 45%
15 family demands 2 32%	14 priests power 44%
13 informers 1 31%	9 divorce eaten 43%
12 child witches 2 30%	10 cemetery costs 43%
5 minister toilets 3 29%	15 family demands 43%
2 domestic violence 1 28%	1 husband shop 41%
4 burglars 4 27%	17 Magician in-law 41%
18 home churches 27%	18 home churches & 6 illegal diplomat 40%
6 illegal diplomat 1 26%	
3 income support 2 26%	12 child witches 39%
14 priests power 2 26%	19 date sisters 39%
1 husband shop 2 26%	7 python 37%
8 charms kill 1 24%	20 step daughter 35%
7 python 1 19%	4 burglars 33%

Script	Played	Response failed	Response succeeded	Passed failed	Passed succeeded	Comments
1 husband shop	78	23	75	6	32	20
2 domestic violence	98	26	99	8	44	27
3 income support	88	29	82	10	28	23
4 burglars	30	8	30	8	10	8 Cut 4/4
5 minister toilets	113	32	114	4	53	33
6 illegal diplomat	84	26	80	9	34	22
7 python	83	21	78	3	31	16
8 charms kill	95	21	97	9	49	23
9 divorce eaten	82	18	79	10	36	15
10 cemetery costs	90	34	87	5	39	31
11 children rights	83	24	93	7	37	34
12 child witches	97	35	91	9	38	29
13 informers	89	21	96	5	45	28
14 priests power	77	20	77	6	34	20
15 family demands	72	22	73	6	31	23
16 change church						Lost
17 Magician in-law	79	27	73	5	32	21
18 home churches	84	28	83	2	34	27
19 date sisters	72	23	74	3	28	25
20 step daughter	71	25	69	5	25	23
9 divorce eaten 2 18%		3 income support 32%				

# (2008) Tantalum Memorial

Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji, 2008

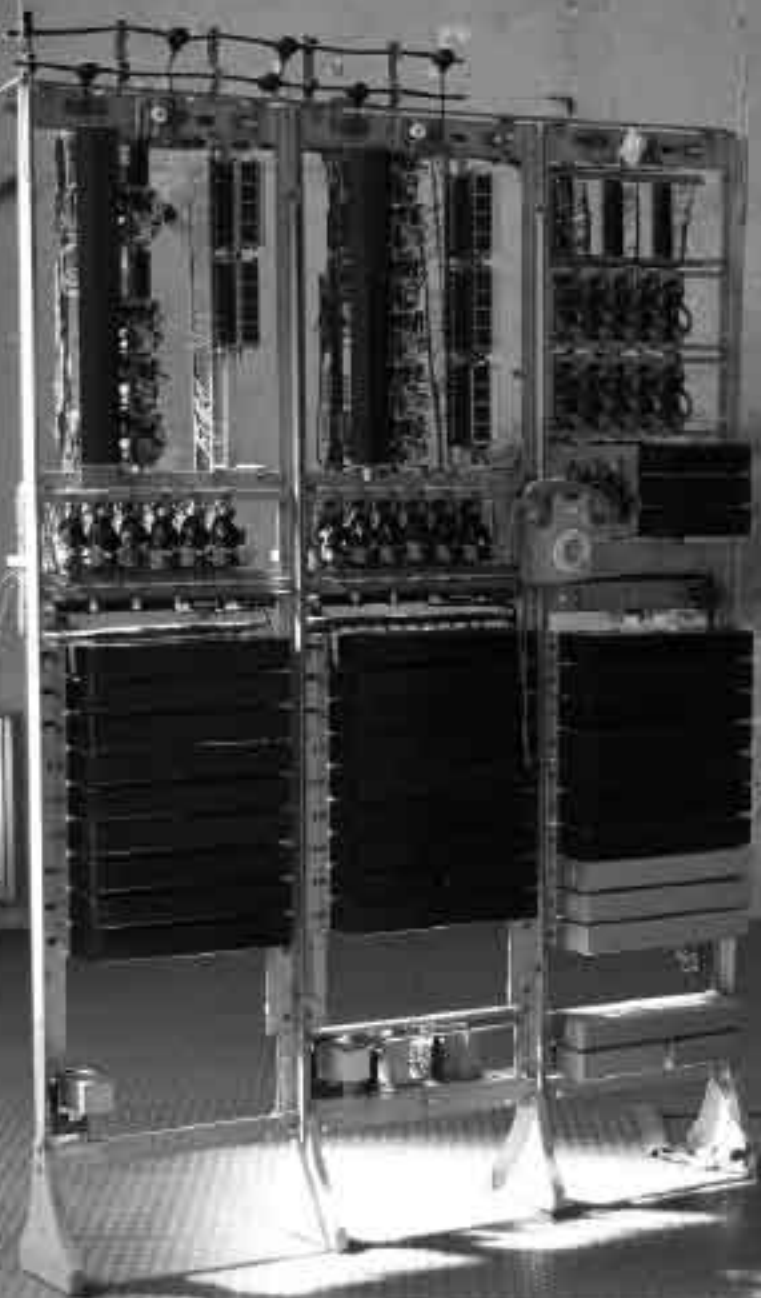
Electromagnetic telephone exchange connected to contemporary telephony network  
[www.mediashed.org/tantalummemorial](http://www.mediashed.org/tantalummemorial)

Winner: transmediale.09 award, Berlin

Tantalum Memorial is a series of telephony-based memorials to the more than 4 million people who have perished in the complex wars that have gone on in the Congo since 1998, often referred to as the 'Coltan Wars'. Coltan ore is mined for the metal tantalum, an essential component of mobile phones and similar devices.

The first thing that visitors see is a towering rack consisting of electromagnetic Strowger telephone switches. The undertaker Almon Brown Strowger patented this design in 1891, the first automated telephone system of its kind. The switches are triggered by a computer which is tracking calls from Telephone Trottoire, a 'social telephony' network designed for use by the international Congolese diaspora. The audience can see the dialling progress of the calls on a nearby monitor and can hear the messages which are being passed around through headphones (spoken in Lingala). Telephone Trottoire was designed by the artists in collaboration with the London radio programme Nostalgie Ya Mboka. The movement and sound of the switches create a concrete presence, in real time, for this intangible network of conversations, weaving together the ambiguities of globalisation, migration and our addiction to constant communication.

Telephone Trottoire calls Congolese listeners, plays them a phone message on a topical subject and invites them to record a comment and pass it on to a friend by entering their telephone number. The project builds on the



traditional Congolese practice of 'radio trottoire' or 'pavement radio', the passing around of news and gossip on street corners to avoid state censorship. 90% of Congolese people in the UK are refugees and their mistrust of official media has made them a particularly isolated community. Yet Trottoire has proved very popular. This was the second version and ran for 6 months over 2008 and early 2009. Combined with the first 2006 version has now grown to include 1,800 users and archived 1,300 comments.

So far there are two installations in this series. "Tantalum Memorial – Reconstruction" was the first version, commissioned for the Zero1 Biennial "Superlight" show at the San Jose Museum of Art, May 10th - August 31st, 2008. "Tantalum Memorial – Residue" was the second in the series, this time utilizing a 1938 telephone exchange rescued from the old Alumix factory in Bolzano, Italy. This was also the site of Manifesta 7 - the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, where it was exhibited 19th July to 2nd November, 2008.

### **Interview with Graham Harwood and Richard Wright by Yvonne Volkart**

Friday, August 15, 2008

YV: Tantalum memorial is a series of works and exhibitions. Did the machine at the Ex-Alumix inspire you also for the San José work or what exactly did inspire you for this work?

GH: From my perspective the three of us have been producing social telephony projects on and off since 2001 - starting with "TextFM" which Matt Fuller and I did in Amsterdam/Austria and then moving on to a project in South-end with young people which used passive telephony. I think then we did "ARoundhead" in which an automated telephone system was installed at the Royal Edinburgh Psychiatric Hospital and made phone calls in the person of Oliver Cromwell. The basic premise being that his head was trapped in the telephone exchange of the hospital and needed help to escape. This was

## PANEL TEXTS [displayed with the installation]

### The 'Coltan Wars'

Since August 1998 there have been 3.9 million deaths and over 361,000 refugees created by the so-called 'coltan wars' in the Congo region. Coltan ore is mined for the metal tantalum - an essential component of mobile phones and other communication devices that is now coveted by dozens of international mining companies and warring local militias. Although the conflict has continued up to the present day it remains almost entirely unknown outside of Africa.

### Almon Strowger

Almon Brown Strowger was born in Penfield near Rochester, New York. An undertaker by profession, he invented the world's first automatic telephone exchange and patented it on the 10th March 1891. His invention made it possible to call someone directly instead of going through a human operator and gave rise to the conceptualization of modern telephone networks. His switches were in service until the 1990s when they were replaced by digital technologies made from tantalum.

### 'Telephone Trottoire'

'Telephone Trottoire' is a 'social telephony' network aimed at the Congolese community in London, approximately 90% of whom are refugees or asylum seekers. In the Congo, where free speech has been censored for over forty years, people spread information while standing on street corners - by 'radio trottoire' or 'pavement radio'. Produced by the artists in collaboration with the Congolese radio programme 'Nostalgie Ya Mboka', 'Telephone Trottoire' calls people up and invites them to pass around stories or topical news items over their phones.







our first attempt at producing a system for a closed environment. Then we decided to create a project with our Congolese friends in London – “Telephone Trottoire”, first version. The projects were done for closed communities using culturally specific tools and languages that meant that we could not make the projects public without risking trusts we had built - yet Richard had developed specific devices like passing around messages between people to gather comments that I was desperate to get talked about. We were doing an exchange program with Eyebeam NY, I spoke about the first “Telephony Trottoire” project in New York at Eyebeam as an example of free-media/Mediashed initiative. After I finished Paul Vanouse came and tongue-in-cheek asked why I did not show pictures of black people on the phone - if I had I would get big grants. Pauls comments made me reflect on why I was so anti representing the Congolese. The point of this work for me was that we did not need to understand the Congolese experience in order to create a project based on their particular needs. We had reached a point in our practice where we could talk to people about the media ecology and media systems they use and understand how a particular group use those systems within the social/cultural/political formations that make them up. This is what we were so keen to show.

Once this became clear to us - we then started to look for candidates that would reveal these various levels of complication. The first “Telephone Trottoire” in 2006 - revealed the initial complication - the Congolese were both separated by tantalum and brought together. Over the next few months we started to reflect on telephony networks and discovered Almon Strowger was an undertaker and that he had created the switches a hundred years before the war which sped up their replacement. We reflected on this poetic and decided that the switches would tap out the telephone numbers as they were dialled by the server in London. We hope that by presenting these images of war, “Telephone Trottoire”, and Strowger switches people would be able to reflect on the underlying systems and media ecologies, loss, and grief and redundancy that makeup our relationships to mobile phones.

RW: It's very true that it was difficult for us to make our telephony projects accessible to people who weren't directly taking part. How could they experience it in any deeper sense beyond its documentation? This is also very closely related to a more general problem in media and "new media" arts - such projects are frequently too focused on one kind of experience, usually a "user" clicking away on a web site or "interface" or trying to grasp the conceptual implications of a software based and often only partially implemented "social network". It gets too remote, too particular and "desktop bound" without reference to other kinds of human activity or "embodiment". I would describe us as visual artists and that we felt it was time to expand our practice or find ways to link it to other forms of media, exhibition and engagement. Even if we accept the notion that digital software has become our central cultural technology (or because it has) then including things which are not software will only help to enrich our understanding of how it operates and where it comes from.

The second thing is that we avoided the need to "understand the Congolese experience" by linking elements together in what we might call a syntactical way rather than a metaphorical (or representational) way. So historically we linked our modern telephony system to the first automated telephony technology invented by Strowger. We link his profession as undertaker with our memorialisation of war victims. We link the mobile phone industry with the Coltan Wars that drives the Congolese into exile and fuels the need for these migrant communities to keep in touch which feeds the enormous growth in mobile phone usage in Africa. In the installation we physically link the clicking Strowgers with the telephone network and its display with the audio playback of the Congolese in their own language as well as various texts, allowing the visitor to work their way between the parts yet without reconciling them into a complete picture.

I'd say that an important thing for me is to use the installation to put a whole series of complicated ideas into motion, to create a "constellation" of conflicting forces and events and historical references by literally connecting

some of their concrete manifestations, processes and residues together. This helps to increase the “visibility” of our telephony projects. And when we do this we see that even though the Coltan Wars are at the root of the global telecommunications industry, the one thing that is least communicated to the wider world is the fact of the war itself, remaining relatively unreported and invisible. The flow of information can have a peculiar “blind spot”.

YV: Why is the San Jose piece coined “Reconstruction” and the Bozen piece “Residue”? And what is the difference between the two projects?

GH: Reconstruction - we rebuilt a set of telephone switches. Residue - the switches were recovered from the building. In the science museum we are hoping to reanimate the ones in the collection.

YV: In the Installation in Bolzano, there were also headphones, which told something. Can you tell me what the voice was saying? Was this the messages that the people who were called, could hear?

GH: It was the messages in Lingala that would be used by the phone server.

YV: You just wrote me, that you are content with the going on of “Telephone Trottoire”. Do the people talk about the Coltan Wars or do they talk about something else? Are the conversations similar to the one which are archive about the pilot project? (I read a few of the talks - eg. about Child’s abuse - and was struck to realize how they give the people the feeling of being able to participate. They also show, that our idea of law and right is very relative, very much bound to our society and history...). Do you have a few transcriptions of the actual conversation?

GH: This time the focus was on the war - Vincent and Koffi from NostalgieYa Mboka will decide what to transcribe into English. We realised early on that the Congolese only wanted to allow out of the community things they thought

were safe. In London we have many agents from bad political climates willing to do damage to people in the community. Also the Congolese may be doing things they do not want the authorities to know about.

YV: What kind of devices were placed besides the computer? What did they make visible to us?

GH: Modems that called the switches - they added another complication of redundancy.

#### Group Shows:

"Transmediale.09", Berlin, January 2009.

"Trapped in Amber" (cat.), UKS Gallery, Oslo (as part of "Africa in Oslo"), February 21st to March 22nd 2009.

"Tantalum Memorial & Phone Wars", TAP Gallery (CoExist Arts), Southend-on-Sea, UK, July 23rd to August 9th 2009.

"After the Net", Plymouth Arts Centre, UK, September 12th to October 23rd 2009.

"Cyberarts", OK Centre for Contemporary Arts, Linz, September 3rd to October 4th 2009.

"Pronto! On Telephony", PLUG.IN, Basel, September 3rd to November 8th 2009.

"Feedforward: the Angel of History" (cat.), LABoral Centre for Art, Gijon, Spain. October 23rd 2009 - April 5th 2010.

"Coal Fired Computer & Tantalum Memorial", Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, September 25th to November 21st 2010.

#### Credits:

Tantalum Memorial - Reconstruction May 10 - August 31, 2008 is A FUSE Commissioned Residency for the 2nd Biennial 01SJ Global Festival of Art on the Edge , ZERO1, CADRE Laboratory and the Lucas Artists Program, Montalvo Arts Center. Project Manager: Thomas Asmuth, Programming Assistant: Ethan Miller, Telephony Engineer: Phil McCarter, Construction: Sarah Lowe, Construction Consultant: Steve Bushnell, Bush Welding & Engineering, Southend-on-Sea.

Tantalum Memorial - Residue was commissioned by the Raqs Media Collective for Manifesta7 - the European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Bolzano, Italy, July 19 - November 2, 2008. Project Manager: Denis Isaia.

Additional funding from Arts Council England East.

# (2008 and 2009) Phone Wars

Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji, 2008 and 2009

Telephone network

[www.phonewars.org.uk/sciencemuseum](http://www.phonewars.org.uk/sciencemuseum)

## Phone Wars – Science Museum , 2008

*You're listening to Phone Wars by students from the John Roan School in Greenwich. Maybe you want to leave a comment about what you've heard? If so press 1 now. If you want to pass this message to a friend, press 2 now. Or press 3 to finish.*

*Phone Wars will call you once every couple of days until the project ends on 21st December. The calls are free to UK numbers.*

*If you don't want to receive any more calls from us then call 01702 680000 to unsubscribe. The unsubscription line is charged at normal rates. Please visit the project web site at [www.PhoneWars.org.uk](http://www.PhoneWars.org.uk)*

Young people are avid users of mobile phones yet have little knowledge of either the technology or the implications that their manufacture has on people on completely different continents. These workshops were designed to bring alive the connections between people, places and technologies. They are based on meeting the actual people involved in the tantalum saga, combining this with demonstrations and practical exercises culminating in the production of audio content for 'Phone Wars' phone project. Also covered was how to generally engage the public in issues through telephone media, opening up the project to other themes such as music or "gossip".

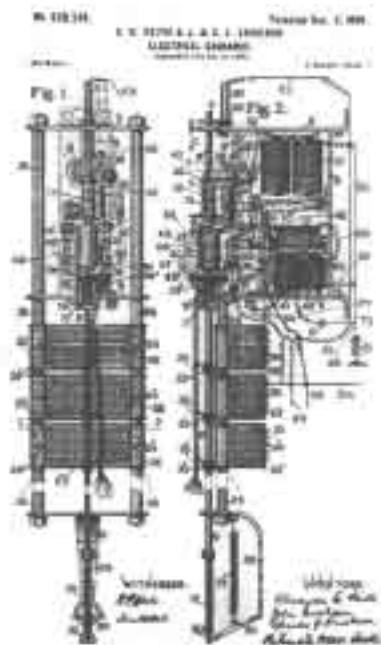
The phone system ran live during the course of the exhibition at the Science

# PHONE WARS

YOUR MOBILE PHONE HAS A HIDDEN COST...

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

A project by Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji with  
students from the John Roan School



**Subscribe 01702 680000**

Museum with results being accessible on a project web site. Each time people received a phone call from the Phone Wars network the 300 switches of the Science Museum's Strowger telephone exchange were triggered, linking together over a hundred years of telephone history and highlighting the consequences of globalisation and technological progress.

With the help of the Telecommunications Heritage Group we managed to restore the Science Museum's Strowger exchange after it had lain inactive since 2002. By including this exhibit we were able to show how artists could bring live dormant or neglected parts of the Science Museum's collection and engage young people in a complicated political topic all within a contemporary media arts project.

#### John Roan School Workshop

##### Day 1 of 4

A brief introduction was given as to what was expected of students, what social telephony was about and how it functions.

Patrick Ramazani and Koffi Anaclet introduced the situation in DRC. Various questions were approached with a focus on the Coltan Wars and why people leave Congo. They explained the politics and economics of it, i.e. the involvement of several countries in the conflict and the indirect participation of multinational companies. What they also talked about was the situation on the ground, how these political and economic affairs affect people's lives in real way. The work of children in the mines, the raping of women, the burning and looting of villages. Students were shocked to hear that metal used to make their mobile phones was connected to such atrocities. The overall point of this talk was not to make students (and the public in general) feel guilty, but rather to show several levels of complication all contained within the tiny apparatus.



**Phone Wars** is a project that allows people to discuss the 'Coltan Wars' in the Congo by passing on messages via their mobile phones. During the project the phone calls will trigger the 300 switches of the Science Museum's giant Strowger, the world's first automated telephone exchange. The exchange, invented by Almon Strowger in 1891, has been restored after years of inactivity.

At the beginning of November, twelve students from John Roan School created the **Phone Wars** network after researching the history of telephony and particularly it's more recent social, cultural and political consequences in the Congo.

Anyone can subscribe by calling **01702 680000** (the initial subscription call is charged at normal local rates) and visit **[www.phonewars.org.uk](http://www.phonewars.org.uk)**

Once you have signed up you will receive a series of phone calls, free of charge, inviting you to listen to messages recorded by the students of John Roan School. These messages will describe how mobile phones are connected to the 'Coltan Wars' and Congolese refugees in the UK. After listening you can record your own comment and forward it to a friend.

Subscribers will receive no more than one call every couple of days until the project finishes on 21 December 2008. You can unsubscribe at any time by calling the above number.

Telecommunications gallery (first floor)  
Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London, SW7 2DD

sciencemuseumartsprojects sciencemuseumartsprojects sciencemuseumartsprojects



Koffi Anaclet went on talking about the Congolese community in London, and more specifically about Telephone Trottoire, the last project which involved HWY and Resonance FM. It was noticed that the reason it worked so well was for the Lingala language in London. There was thus a binding element, which students may need to think about if they want to get their friends' attention throughout the running of the project.

At the end of the morning, we started to get students thinking about scripts they needed to write. Very quickly, students were inspired and motivated to share what they had learnt.

### **A selection from the total of six scripts written**

Abdul "In my message I was trying to inform people about the injustice being caused in the Congo for the sake of modern technology but also think about how they can help to reduce this injustice."

*Hello, my name is Abdul. I want to tell you something about your mobile phone. Did you know your mobile needs a mineral called Coltan to work? About 80% of Coltan comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo which happens to be an area of high conflict. Most modern technologies from airbags, ABS in cars to laptops, mobiles and digital cameras need Coltan to work. For a couple of years Coltan has been illegally smuggled by neighbouring countries to the West. In the process people have been enslaved, raped and murdered just to gain the Coltan. They then sell it to multinational companies to use in products that me and you use. How can you help? You can recycle your mobile phone. You can try and stick to one mobile phone for longer. And you can try not to have more mobiles than you need.*

Penny, Sammy, Sylvia "In our script we were trying to show how the life for young people in the Congo is very different in comparison to young people living in Britain."

*Hello. We are students from the John Roan School working on a project to let people know about the Congo and about their mobile phones. We live in London and we believe that £2 for bus fare is a disgrace. We think we have it bad but try living in Africa and the Congo. People the same age as us have to go places that are 2 or 3 hours walk where there are no roads. Also people in the Congo are being killed, raped or being used as slaves as they have mineral metals in their country which we use in our mobile phones. That we use today, that you are using now, so just think about that the next time you use your phone.*

Tom and Antonia “Our script focused upon the issue that through the limitations faced by people living in the Congo, there is a feeling that people are spying on each other.”

*Hey. The John Roan School would like to tell you that mobile phones are a great invention. No one goes without one. They are a means to contact and fun. We have freedom to talk and text any topic we feel inclined to. But did you know, unbeknown to many people, in order for us to enjoy our phones, Many people die and are tortured for our benefit, tortured for a material called Coltan which is used in our phones. It is illegal in the Congo for anyone to disagree with the government and to try to rebel. Imagine a version of Big Brother where people are watched and are unable to express their views and opinions, no one to trust, friends could be spies for the government trying to turn you in for a wrong you might have done or said. There is no such thing as freedom of speech. Ironically, the reason we have the ability to talk to anyone at any time is the reason they are dying. How do you feel that blood has been spilt for you to own a phone?*

The exhibition ran from 8th to 21st December in the Telecommunications Gallery, Science Museum, London ([www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk)).

Project Manager, Science Museum Arts Projects: Ruth Fenton

Workshop leader: Jean Demars

Speakers: Koffi Anacleto and Patrick Ramazani

Project Coordinators, Isabel Lilly, Stream

Head of Science Museum Arts Projects: Hannah Redlar

Thanks to John Liffen, Curator of Communications, Science Museum, John Roan School staff, and Ron Sewell & the members of the Telecommunications Heritage Group ([www.thg.org.uk](http://www.thg.org.uk)).

## Phone Wars– Southend, 2009

(Extract from Press Release, 16th July 2009)

‘Phone Wars’ comes to Southend-on-Sea, July 22nd to August 12th

International artists group Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji have been working with students from the Southend YMCA to build “Phone Wars” – an exciting experiment to launch a Congolese style “pavement radio” network in Southend-on-Sea. This is based on the traditional Congolese practice of passing messages on street corners to avoid state censorship. Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji have built a version that runs over the public telephone network and that people can use to record their opinions and pass the calls on to their friends.

From July 13th to July 18th, the artists ran workshops with eight young people at the YMCA and two Congolese refugees to write and record their own messages. After learning about the Congolese Coltan Wars and their struggle for free speech students devised a series of stories, jokes, songs and ideas to spread out over “Phone Wars”. As people pass the calls, the network grows and grows like a grapevine.

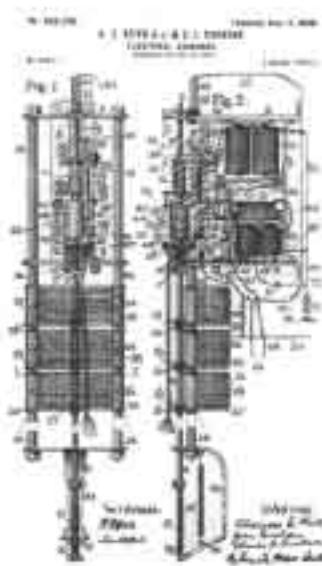
Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji say about the project, “It’s a new method for free speech, gossip, fun and social networking based on traditional Congolese culture. We would like to see if this kind of thing could take off in Southend as it has amongst the Congolese. And hopefully it will also make people more aware of how the demand for mobile phones is fuelling the Coltan Wars in the Congo”.

The artists have run a similar project for the Congolese community in London called “Telephone Trottoire” which grew from 100 to nearly 2,000 users. It resulted in the recording of 1,300 comments on stories ranging from the treatment of child witches to a man who divorced his wife for giving goats testicles to the pastor.

# PHONE WARS SOUTHEND

**YOUR MOBILE PHONE HAS A HIDDEN COST...  
JOIN PHONE WARS TODAY**

*A project by artists Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji with  
students and staff from Switch Media at the Southend YMCA*



**Subscribe 01702 680000**

The project will be launched on July 22nd at the launch of the new CoExist Arts space in Southend-on-Sea. This is part of a wider exhibition opening which includes the “Tantalum Memorial”, a memorial to the victims of the Coltan Wars built by the artists out of old C19th electro-mechanical “Strowger” telephone switches – the world’s first automated telephone technology. Every time someone on the network receives a call it activates the switches. This work has been touring international art shows and won two prizes since 2008. This will be its UK premiere.

### **A selection from the seven scripts, jokes and songs written**

#### *1. Swine Flu*

*The number of swine flu cases of people dying continues to rise in small numbers, growing higher every day. But this can be treated. In the Congo the Coltan Wars is killing millions of people over a material that is used in your phone. This does not have a treatment. Think about how much blood has been spilt for you to have the freedom of speech through your phone.*

#### *4. Southend Confession Line*

*This is the Southend confession line. Have you done something wrong you want to tell? Get it off your chest. This is your chance to tell your secret. No priest, no booth, no name. Get a confession. Get it out there.*

#### *6. Chewing Gum*

*Alright, let’s get to the sticky issue, about chewing gum on our streets. Southend council have decided to make the largest chewing gum ball in Europe. Instead of throwing yours away, why not go and stick it to the ball. Where do you think it should be placed?*

Phone Wars Southend-on-sea

Creative Director, YMCA, Southend on Sea, Nik Vaughn

Workshop leader: Jean Demars

Speakers: Koffi Anacleto and Patrick Ramazani

Participants: Students and Residents of the YMCA Southend on Sea

**Phone Wars Southend** is an exciting experiment to build a Congolese style "pavement telephony" network that allows people to pass on messages via their mobile phones.

**Phone Wars Southend** is a social network for discussion, news, gossip, jokes, songs, fun!

This summer, students from the Switch Media course at Southend YMCA researched the history of telephones and their social, cultural and political consequences in the Congo. The result is the Phone Wars network based on the traditional Congolese practice of passing news on street corners.

Anyone can subscribe by calling **01702 680000**. The initial subscription call is charged at normal local rates. The rest is free.

Once signed up you will receive a series of phone calls, free of charge, inviting you to listen to messages by YMCA students. These include stories of how mobile phones are connected to the 'Coltan Wars' in the Congo as well as jokes, songs and gossip. After listening you can record a comment and forward it to a friend. The more people pass on the calls the more the network grows!

Subscribers will receive no more than one call every few days until the project finishes on 12th August 2009. You can unsubscribe at any time by calling the above number.

EXTRA: 'Tantaleum Memorial' is showing at the new T&P gallery in Southend. Constructed out of old electro-mechanical telephone switches, the installation is a memorial to the 4 million Congolese who have died in the Coltan Wars. See the web site for details.

**[www.phonewars.org](http://www.phonewars.org)**



**YMCA**







# Telephone

## Trottoire

Following is a selection of responses relating to questions set by Nostalgie Ya Mboka. These transcripts were first broadcast in their original form (spoken Lingala) on the radio programme Londres Na Biso (ResonanceFM) between November 2008 and February 2009. No translation was provided in English, so this is the first time all appear in another language or written form.

The majority are very deliberately UK specific. However in order to give an indication as to how participants felt about the situation in Congo (around which a number of other questions focused), we decided to include one question addressing the DRC's transition toward democracy post the 2007 elections.

In relation to this question, it should be noted that at least some of the Trottoire participants would have left DR Congo/Zaire, as a result of fleeing the previous (Mobutu) dictatorship (1965-1997), whilst the rest have arrived in the UK post the installation of the current (1997+) Kabila government.

The rest of the questions detailed here ask participants to reflect upon aspects of daily life, how they feel the exiled Congolese community conducts itself and how they feel others behave toward them. These comments were not collected for the benefit of social policy researchers and planners, although they do, without doubt, provide a unique grass roots window into the feelings inherent within many refugee communities in the UK.

What you are about to read are comments delivered from the heart, real people addressing real issues. No one is right and no one is wrong. But, did Trottoire achieve its aims? On paper at least, who knows? However, if it sparked one debate or a multiplicity of conversations about the subjects raised (which it almost certainly did), then for us at least, it succeeded. The greatest and most assured change is always that achieved through natural process and for the Congolese community at least, through trottoire, we hope to have played a small part in its evocation.

Nostalgie Ya Mboka  
Spring 2009

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## Democracy

Fellow Congolese. Today we would like to get your opinion about democracy back home in Congo. As we all know democracy means freedom of speech, opinion and press etc.... So my question is simple; after the elections in our country, can you say that we are now a democratic country or we are still living under a dictatorship?

---

1      We are under the dictatorship regime; still, there is no democracy in our country. I am not a politician, but if I look at what's happening there, I can say that there is no democracy. Thank you for calling I've answered you thanks.

2      As a Congolese in blood, I can say that democracy does not exist in our country. Nobody is allowed to speak up, to say what they think without being arrested, persecuted. We are not a developed country. I can conclude that we are still under a dictatorship. We do not know when we will see a proper democracy like here in Europe. That's my comment. Thank you for your question.

3      My opinion is that there is no democracy. Our people still live under a dictatorship.

4      For me, there is no democracy in our country. No freedom of speech, no freedom of opinion. But what can

we do? The country has been destroyed there is no democracy no hope.

5      What democracy are you talking about? There is no democracy. Only God can save and help us and give us a good leader who will lead that country. Right now we are suffering. There is no democracy lets us hope that God can help us. I finish there.

6      Thank you for calling me. My name is XXXX and I live in France. After the elections, I can honestly say that there is no democracy in our country. When you are stopping people from expressing themselves, speaking up, that means there is no democracy. Here in France for instance there is freedom of speech, freedom of press so on... In our country if you go to the media to criticise the government even if it is a positive criticism, or to express your opinions about what is happening, you will be arrested and killed. There is no democracy. Thanks.

7 My name is XXX and I live in Dagenham. I've been following the debate. For me elections equal justice, but unfortunately, there was no justice in our elections, because some of the biggest opposition parties were excluded, this meant that our authorities did not follow the sun city agreement which stated that all opposition parties must be included in the election process. My party, the UDPS was excluded, so how can we say there was justice? Another candidate for the presidency has since been arrested for war crimes. The elections were fixed. As for the democracy, there is no democracy in that country. There never will be in the foreseeable future. The elected president is no even Congolese. And what has he done for that country since? Nothing. There are still no hospitals, no proper infrastructures.... My opinion is there is no democracy.

8 Thank you for giving me 2 minutes to speak. There is no democracy in our country. If you compare our country with Europe, you see a lot of differences. You, the people of power, who supported the president Kabila, I mean the musicians and pastors, he gave you money and you helped him to get elected. Can you now see the consequences? Can you see how our people are suffering? Are you happy now? We should go out on 30th June to demonstrate against our suffering that will help the people back home and help our country in the fight for freedom. We need to have a freedom of speech, a freedom of expression, like we have here in Europe. We have to be united and fight. There is no place like

home. Our country is rich. If there were a proper democracy then we wouldn't be coming here to stay, we could be coming here just for holidays, you see, we are here and we have food to eat, but we would prefer to be back home in our land. Lets concentrate on this problem and fight for our freedom.

9 In our country there is no democracy why I am saying this? We saw what happened during the elections the people voted for JP Bemba, but the international opinions were behind Kabila. There was fraud in that election. It was fixed we knew it. The international community knew it. The world knew it! If there were democracy then we would surely have freedom of speech like we see in Europe. In our country we don't even have a public transport, or decent hospitals.... How can you even dare to ask us if there is democracy?

10 I'm Congolese I'm not a Combatant. I came to Europe to get a better life. In our country there is no hope. Since the elections nothing has changed. Nothing good has happened. We are still suffering. It seems like this is the end for us. Our country is like hell. Here in Europe we are also suffering, they don't give us papers, yet we can't remain in our country. There is nowhere to live, no jobs, no hope for the future. We must do something about this. I give you my number please call me.....

11 Thank you papa of radio trottoir for contacting me. I heard the question

you've asked about democracy after the election in our country. I know that there is no democracy in DR Congo. All these people who are leading our country are not politicians they came from the forest to fight and got into power by force. They don't know anything even about the principals of democracy. We will never see democracy in that country as long as our leaders are ex rebel militia. Thank you very much.

12 There is no democracy in our country. It is just like in the Mobutu era, when you couldn't say anything about the government and if you did you were killed. This election was fixed and people were forced to vote. They couldn't make their choice freely. We are suffering. The democracy is just words. There are no actions.

13 There is no democracy. You are not free to say anything without getting yourself into trouble. Recently they've killed the comedian Mbonge because he spoke his mind. We are still living in fear.

14 My opinion is that all of these things are to do with God. We should be united. We should love each other and only then we shall see the benevolent hand of god. Only then will God intervene and help us, but only when and if there is love amongst us.

15 Lets not talk about democracy. We will be talking about democracy only when and if we will change our mental-

ity and finally realise that we are under a dictatorship, a regime. The thing is we are so scared to do something about it. Peace is something you've got to fight for. Look at the French revolution. We must demonstrate to show the government that we are against them only through fighting we can expect to see change. The election was fixed and we all know this. The day we will have a proper election is when Tshisekedi (leader of the Congolese UDPS party) will be included in the electoral process. We should fight for our freedom. Until then, lets not waste words, talking about democracy in the DR Congo.

16 It is sad to hear your question. What is happening is that we are under a dictatorship. No freedom of speech, killings, and arresting people without reason. We should get up and fight and kick this man out. I cannot even bring myself to say his name.

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## We Do Not Love Each Other

Today's message is to find out whether there is love amongst Congolese people. To us the answer is no, there is no love between us. We make false accusations against others, criticising, and jealous of each other. There are some Congolese, when you meet them in the street they pretend as if they are not Congolese. Others, when they find out there are some Congolese kids attending their child's school, they move their children to a different school because they don't want their kids to mix with other Congolese. Some of them as soon as a new Congolese family moves in to their block of flats, they will ask for a transfer. Perhaps this shows we do not love each other or perhaps it shows some of us see our community as greedy and corrupt, almost a 'sickness' and they are "afraid of 'infection'" Do they have reasons to behave in this way? What advice can you give to the people who behave in this manner?

---

17 Hello my name is XXXX XXXXXX. I heard your message - what you said about the Congolese community - It is true. So what I can add is that it's very sad because although we attend church and we pray to god, we still don't like each other. I don't know, maybe some of us have an inferiority complex in Europe, because back home we had a hard life and maybe that's why some people behave in this way? And for them, once they gain some opportunity here, then they feel they have to separate from the community. If you look at other communities here like Indians, Pakistani's, they are united, but us, we don't like each other, so to those who have a good heart, they should continue in that way

because god will bless them, and those who go to church, but do not behave in a good way, they will receive their punishment in the end. I believe that if you were born with a good heart it cannot be corrupted. That's my comment. Thank you.

18 Hello I am XXXX. I heard your message about us Congolese - asking why we don't like each other, especially here in London. I heard you mention about how some Congolese don't like to live in the same block of flats as other Congolese families. That is true, because it happened to myself. I was the first Congolese resident in a block of

flats and after a while another Congolese family moved in. I welcomed them, and after three months, while I was at work, one of the family came to my house, he started seducing my wife. This is the disease that we Congolese have. Because you meet up with a friend, you are open to them, but you have no idea really, what the other person is thinking, you are open with them, yet behind your back, they try to destroy you. Like I said, this fellow, seduced my wife. You have a nice home or family, they become jealous, and resent you for that. Some people like myself, we stay away from our community, exactly because of that kind of thing. I am working and trying to build something for me, my wife and for my family, yet, there are those who are intent only on destroying or taking what we have. They want us to fail. I give you another example, your fellow Congolese arrive here in the UK and you help them, for example, you loan them your papers, yet when you ask for them back, they refuse, they threaten to denounce you to the police, but why? Didn't we help them? And then you see, this is a disease, a sickness we Congolese have. And furthermore, this is not just a problem here, but back home too, that is why the Rwandans are running our country, because we don't like each other. Thank you.

19 My brothers what we are seeing in this country is banality. This is how we used to behave back home. If I have some thing then YOU must acquire something better. If I buy something then YOU must buy something better. If you see me registering my child to a

school, then YOU, you have to choose that same school and to push your child to do better, you always want to be on top. Like a competition, you always want to win. This is banality. This is our mentality back home and we behave this same way here in Europe. You are giving too much importance to the trivialities of life, the material things. We should love each other. Here in Europe we must recognize that all Congolese are our family. We are alone here and life is tough. We should love each other and try to help each other, not to continue these stupid competitions we know so well from back home. Thank you.

20 Hello. You know there is a saying, if you work in a hotel, then you will also dine in the hotel, and as they say, when in Rome you must behave like the Romans. The culture of this country that we are living in is based around the individual. I don't see anything wrong with anyone who wants to follow that path. We have to let them live how they wish to. The importance of this for me is that you don't hurt or offend your fellow countryman, because even the white people, they don't greet each other, when they are living in the same block of flats. So if someone wants to be separate, its not a problem, let them be separate, it's an individuals choice. Thank you.

21 OK, My opinion is that this is a complex we have, because we Congolese everywhere in the world we don't like each other. We are born with it. It's in our blood. It is very difficult for a

Congolese to change this mentality. My advice to all of us Congolese is that we should love each other like other countries. Let me give you an example, if you look at the Lebanese community here (caller is calling from Kinshasa), look at the solidarity they have amongst themselves. Someone like the Nigerians or the Senegalese, if they build a business, they will make sure they are surrounded by their fellow people and they will do their best to teach them how they might also start a successful venture. So we should love each other, that's why our country is going backward, because we don't like each other. My comment is that when there is love between us, then we can become a force, a force within the world. That is my comment.

22 OK, for me, those who are behaving in that way, they don't have a love for one another and that's not good, we should love one another.

23 Hello I am XXXX. I am happy with today's theme, that's why I have decided to participate. The source of all of our problems in our community is due to our origin, because the majority of people who really know how to think properly, who were educated properly, they are still back home in Congo, they didn't come here. This mentality is like the behavior of children, the uneducated. You know, once the Congolese who came to Europe from Congo were the students, the rich, the educated, who came to continue their education, but now that is not the case. I think many people within our community have a

poor education, and think like children, that's why there is so much bitterness. We must change our mentality in order to better both ourselves and our families back home. Really we must revise our mentality that is my point of view. Thank you.

24 My response is like this: it's very difficult for us Congolese, my advice is that this is not our country. It belongs to the Whites. This kind of attitude is - not to have the love of one another - is very sad, because God who created us gave us his love, he has allowed us to come and live in Europe so that we can help our families back home. But here, ourselves we don't like each other. My advice to all us Congolese is that we should live in the fear of God and in the love of one and other. I am really glad that you contacted me, please keep on contacting me so that we may advise each other.

25 For me, my comment is that those Congolese who are avoiding their fellow countrymen are just stupid, because even if you avoid your brothers and sisters your blood will never change so you will always remain Congolese. You'll never become an Englishman, a white man. And we will one day, all of us, go back home. So I ask them to change that mentality.

26 For me, you are right about what you say, for us Congolese there is no love. There is too much gossiping and jealousy, and going behind each other's

backs - even reporting each other to the authorities to harm your brother or sister and especially if someone is succeeding, then that's the worst time, when others are looking to destroy them. They will just try to find a reason for the success and then to harm, kill or destroy that, to follow him, to know exactly what he does, to interfere in his life in any possible way to harm him, to kill that success. But if you look at other nationalities, they seem to love each other more, and when one has success, he will try to help another, to help them succeed, whereas, we Congolese, if one of us has a job, and his fellow is crying for work, he will never help him. He will never help, he will rather help someone else than you Congolese, he will rather that you remain down, so he can laugh at you. This applies especially to those who wear all these griffe's (griff = designer label clothing)...

27 I am RXXXXXX, I am passing my comments on this problem to not love each other. We must change because this mentality is brought from home. Each Congolese who left Kinshasa via Brazzaville for instance, if you look at his mentality, you will find that the mentality is a bit different from those who came en direct from Kinshasa. The problem is that we Congolese like to show off, and to interfere in the private lives of others. We should not interfere in the lives of others and look after our own lives. A lot of people nowadays stay away from the community exactly because of those kind of attitudes, they stay away... that's the reason we have to drop this mentality, to change com-

pletely. If we change our mentality, then those who stay away will rejoin us. As I said, this is the reason some people leave. Can you imagine for instance that the worst enemy of a Congolese is a Congolese, I will underline the fact and it is fact, that we Congolese must change our way of thinking. If we do that, then our community will be stronger, maybe those outside will integrate. Then we can fight other enemies instead of fighting each other.

28 This is a big mistake we are making, someone like myself I have lived around Africa, in different countries, I have seen how our fellow Africans live and it is totally different to us. Here in Europe we are making a big mistake. You see your fellow countrymen and you don't want to acknowledge them. I don't like this type of attitude. Its bad and I am not happy. If you look at other communities here in the UK, they are well organized. Ghanaians, Nigerians, Senegalese etc, when for instance someone dies, they will contribute to help the family with the responsibilities. But with us it doesn't happen like that, that's all I have to say thanks, bye.

29 For me I think some fellows, they don't like to mix up with others because they have experienced a lot of bad things from their neighbors in the past, that's why they keep themselves to themselves. And some of us are just arrogant, because they have come to Europe they just take a different mentality because the feel they are in paradise, they are in Europe. But it is true,



us Congolese we don't like each other. It is like an infection, we don't know where it comes from, but it infects all of us. We don't like each other. Its sad really, very sad. If we caught this infection from the lives we led back home, we don't know, but it's sad. I leave it there.

30 For me, I think we should love each other, because where there is no love it is not good. We must love each other. All Congolese should love their fellow countryman. We should hold hands, all be united, then god will bless us. god says if you love me - yet you don't see me - then why do you not love your fellow man, yet you see him? For us Congolese, we should love one another, be together, that will lift up our country, thank you very much. Bye.

31 I heard your story about our fellow Congolese, I don't know, maybe I should not condemn those behaving that way. What we must ask our people is that they should change their behavior. This is not Africa, this is a different country, we shouldn't be behaving like that. Like we live back home in Kisangani, in Masina... Even when we are talking, if you listen sometimes, even small things like the way our people shout when they talk is really not good, so we should behave with some manners, I don't know, maybe its that kind of thing that leads to some people staying away from our community? We must just ask our brother and sister Congolese to change their mentality, to change their behavior. That's it. My comment ends there.

32 I am very happy about this message. For me I think we should be united, because if we are not united we cannot build, we cannot build a country or we cannot build a community. Jesus Christ wants us to be together because there is nothing better than love. If you hate your brother or your sister that you can see and you are saying that you love you, yet you do not see him, that means you are lying, you are in denial of the truth. We should first and foremost love our brothers and sisters of Congo instead of hating them and loving others. That is not feasible. If you carry on with this type of message, this may help us Congolese to change one day. I will pass this message to my brothers and sisters. They must hear it. Thank you. Thank you for your advice. Thank you....

33 Mmmm my brothers I heard what you said. I do notice that as well amongst our people. This behavior is not good and it does hurt me to see it. We should love each other otherwise we will die. We will loose our strength, as a community we'll loose our spirit. Our country is going down and down, yet we avoid each other, almost as if we are a part of the problem. I don't know what this complex is all about. We must love each other. What you say is true I have seen it myself, when I walk the streets, you see a Congolese, they pretend they are not Congolese. For me personally when I see a Congolese on the street or I hear people speaking Lingala, I get interested, I like to speak with them, to interfere, because it makes me feel I am back home. I don't know what we can do to stop all these kinds of at-

titude. We should be united and lift up our community. This can also help lift up our country. It is a shame a shame a shame the way we are behaving. If we don't change our behavior its very sad. We should realize that we have a lot of enemies and that they are the ones destroying us, stealing our riches. Now that ourselves, we don't like each other

we are selling our country to those who seek to exploit us. I don't have too much more to say, but just to advise that we should love each other, help each other, when someone odes something good, we should acknowledge that, praise him, encourage him.... That's my opinion XXXX XXXXX - Congolese musician in the UK.

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## Parasites

Today let's talk about the deportations of Congolese from the UK. Our homeland is as you know not safe, because of the war killing millions. It's said to be the biggest genocide since WW2. Yet here in the UK, The Home Office is saying we are economic migrants, arriving here pretending to be political refugees they are deporting lots of our people back home. And then as you know, here in the UK, if your application for Asylum is rejected and you choose to appeal then you are denied any State support whilst you wait for an indeterminate amount of time.

Also you are not allowed to work so you are basically abandoned to fend for yourself, but without any legal means to seek an income. In the meantime we see Eastern Europeans arriving here everyday and aren't they after all Economic migrants? Give us your views on this.

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34     Thank you for your message. The Eastern Europeans are white and we are African. White people do help each other but us Africans we are jealous of each other. As for the deportation of our people, our community leaders should fight this problem because our country is still at war. In any case our economy

is not in good shape so people do leave home for a better life elsewhere.

35     The way they are deporting our people back home is not right. It is hurtful. These people are heartless. They know very well that our country is not

safe and we have got political problems and yet, they are ignoring our situation and favouring the Eastern Europeans who haven't got any political problem. In fact, as you say, these Eastern Europeans are economic migrants. There is not much to say let's hope that God intervenes so that one say we might return home.

36 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I heard you well. It is sad, 'once a slave always a slave', black people are still the slaves of white people but we don't realise it. The Eastern Europeans are economic migrants, but they give them this favour because of the colour of their skin. That's my comment it is sad for us because we are black.

37 My opinion is that we don't like each other. We always stab each other at the back. When you apply for asylum, these Congolese interpreters employed by the Home Office will be telling the officials that your story is not a true story, that you are telling lies and because of that the Home Office thinks we are economical refugees. The problem with our people is that once they get their stay, they don't want a fellow Congolese to get it. We don't like each other, that is our problem! Apart from that, our people don't like to work anyway that's why they have to deport us, because we are not good.

38 I've followed you well, the problem is we can't be the same as Eastern

Europeans we are black and they are white. The UK is helping them more because of the colour of their skin. There is no point making this comparison that's my answer.

39 My comment is this; you should know that the number 1 enemy of black people are white people if you have a choice to make between a brother and a friend who would you choose? The choice is clear.

40 We Congolese don't like each other. We don't support each other. When for instance there are demonstrations here about our peoples suffering either back home or even here in the UK, a lot of our people don't even attend. For example, today the politician JP Bemba is in prison in the DRC for something he did in past and whereas a lot of things are happening in our country people here don't even talk about it. We are here as political refugees so, the UN should look after us. Martin Luther King said one day black people will take control of the whole world. Let's hope his words are true. Lets hope that God helps us.

41 I heard you talking about the Eastern Europeans, but you should know that these people and the UK are brothers. Let me give you one example. When Russia attacked Georgia there was meeting after meeting to resolve the conflict whereas our country, the DRC is under attack from all of our neighbours (Rwanda, Uganda, Angola etc) yet noth-

ing is done about that. White people will never like Black people. They consider us animals. That's my comment.

42 I heard your message. The issue of human rights is everywhere except in our country. White people want to destroy us completely because they know that they benefit from our resources. Nobody will give Congo justice. Only God.

43 It is sad to see that our people have are denied support from the UK government. Our country is not safe. Murder after murder takes place everywhere, even in the Capital. Let us pray to God for help.

44 I'm in the situation you describe. I have lived here for 6 years now without getting any benefits, nothing; I agree with you totally.

45 I am XXXX XXXXX. The way the Home Office is judging Congolese cases is wrong. Our country is not safe. The strange thing is that, this country (the UK) likes to show concern for human rights but they are not respecting it themselves. My point of view is that Congolese should be protected here in UK. We should demonstrate about what's happening to us.

46 Can't we demonstrate outside Parliament, so that the people here will know that we are not happy and they will

take us seriously? We should demonstrate to show our unhappiness.

47 For me, they don't have the right to deport people because our country is not safe there is still a war there.

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## Charity

Let talk today about Congolese charities in the UK and what some are doing. We know that many of them do an excellent job providing help and advice to both new arrivals and those of us already settled here. And we also know that the British government provide funds to these charities to enable them to provide their services. But we also know that are corrupt and that some are even involved in shameful acts such as illegally charging or morally corrupting our women for what should be free help with assistance and legal advice. Why are they doing that? They do not have the right to charge people. Yet some people working in these charities use their power for their own personal gain. Why such conduct? What is your opinion on this?

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48 For me, those charities, which are doing this type of thing, should be closed down, because what they are doing is damaging our reputation. Those charities must be shut down.

49 For me, I know we don't like each other and I know us Congolese like money too much and that's why they are charging people £2000. We must change our mentality we must expose them so that everybody is aware of them. That way we will not only stop them, but stop our people behaving this way, full stop.

50 Why don't you reveal the names of those charities? If we don't know who they are, then we ourselves might end up going to them. In any case we don't

need to be going to them we should be going to real charities such as those run by the Catholic Priests.

51 It is disgraceful, shocking and painful what these charities are doing. My people must change their mentality. A charity is a non-profit organisation. It is there to help. How dare they behave this way? But it is true. It is our sickness. As I said we should change our way of thinking.

52 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the people of these charities who are asking money or sexual acts from the newly arrived Congolese. They are so heartless. In any case I 'm not surprised because our people do sell our country for money or

sex. We make each other suffer wherever we are. We don't love each other. But we should take these charities to justice so that we can stop this immoral practice. This is what I had to say my name is Pablo. Thank you very much.

53 Thank you for your message. It is true, they are charging us £2000 or for women they are asking to sleep with them. I agree with you completely. These people are not Home Office but they say to newly arrived people they can get them a stay and the women believe them. As a journalist you can talk to these people because what they are doing is wrong. In 1990, when I came to the country we never had to face such things. Thank you for your information we must fight against these people. Thanks God bless.

54 Yes, Good evening, I'm happy for today's show. Those people of charities are not serious. The UK government helps them with money but they are misbehaving. The problem with our women is that where we come from, if a woman wants something and she hasn't got money then she expects the man to ask her to give her body instead. This is what's happening here. We must change our mentality and make sure we report these charities to the authorities. That's all I've to say.

55 In all what these charities are doing is not good their job is to help. We are leaving our country because of so many problems back home, we come

here and then to get treated badly by our own people is not good. These charities should be closed down.

56 I don't have much to say about those people except they are witches. When someone is newly arrived where can they get the money? That's all I can say.

57 Good Evening, My name is XXX. Today's subject is interesting. These practices are not good because the definition of charity is to help. This is not good practice at all. As you said, these charities get fund from the government, so they should stop behaving that way. But did radio trottoire investigate this? Or this is just radio trottoire as we know it.

58 My comment is that we don't like each other and your question shows our evil hearts against our own people. These charities should be banned. Look at Somali's, Arab's so on.... They succeed in everything they do, why? Because they don't have an evil heart against themselves. These charities should be banned. Ok thank you, that's my comment.

59 My comment is this; it is true what you are saying, it did happen to me. When I came to apply for asylum they asked me to pay them money. I did not have money to give them so they never helped me. As a result I had to do it myself that's why I never got status

and that's why I am in the situation I am in today. For me it shows that, we Congolese don't love each other, that's my comment.

60 My comment is that, when we look at other charities of other countries, they do help their people, so why are our charities not helping our people? I am ashamed what they are doing. These charities must be exposed. These charities must face justice. What they are doing is disgraceful.

61 Thank you for this question. Yes we know that these things exist. It is a part of our sickness. Sometimes our people behave as they behave back home. Some of us we use the misfortune of others to fill our own pockets. And we seek to prey upon others weaker than us. Some of our people cannot go to the police or the Authorities for advice. The charities who behave as you describe are run by them and wait for those less fortunate than ourselves.

62 I want to say that you should reveal the names of those charities charging people, so that everybody is aware of them and who they are, because what they are doing is not good. These charities should be closed down. That's my opinion.

63 In all what these charities are doing is not good their job is to help. We are leaving our country because of so many problems back home, we come

here and then to get treated badly by our own people is not good. These charities should be closed down.

64 These charities are not helping us if you have sex with someone who got HIV what is going to happen to you? I am happy about this message you should get hard on these charities bye

65 My name is brother XXXXXXX, I am not happy about this if you are a charity then surely you get money from the government to help people? When you are asking your own brother for money where are supposed to get it from? We must be like Indians and Asians, because they do help each other because they know that their fellow countryman will go back home to build or invest. But we Congolese, some of us are using our charities to sleep with newly arrived ladies; this is not good at all. And if the person is ill you could be affected. I am happy about your show we will be putting you in our prayers.

66 My point of view is this if you have proof that some charities are charging money and asking for sexual favours for advice then you should get the police involved so that, those bad charities cease to operate. I stop there.

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## Medical Examinations

Today we want to talk about the importance of medical check ups here in the UK. Of course we know that these services are free here and of course we know that prevention is always better than cure. When we look at the poor medical services back home its easy to see why we all too often don't think enough about our own health until its too late. For example, haven't we all known someone who has uncovered a serious illness since arriving in the UK? A heart attack or a Stroke? Diabetes? High blood pressure? So my friends, my question is simply this: we are a new community in the UK. All new communities have to fight to make themselves heard. Of course we know this, and perhaps where you live you already see health programs in place for other new communities who've used that voice? So I ask you do you think you are served well in terms of access to medical resources?

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67 My name is XXXX XXXX. my comment is that because the treatment is not good. We got insurance so we use the £25 that we pay each month to ensure we can get private treatment. English people have got a good treatment system, so we should that opportunity to make sure we get treatment if we need it, we shouldn't neglect our health. We need to look after ourselves for the future because health is very important. God bless you and thank you for what you are doing.

68 My comment is that health is very important, and without good health you can do anything. So we should take this opportunity to get treated as free

as the UK system allows, Its important always to allow time for health checks, and I say to all Congolese listening who care about or look after your families in Africa, you should be in good health yourself or you will not be able to help them. So my advice is that we have make sacrifices to ensure we are in good health ourselves for our families and dependents in Africa.

69 My comment my brother is that we should be willing to have health checks, they are very, very important and we should not neglect, we all need good health. Health is always paramount.



70 Concerning your question, this is about treatment in this country, some people don't like to go to have health checks and they could be just walking and collapse in the street. But this is also to do with the kind of treatment in this country, because sometimes you can be very unwell and you visit the GP, but they are not interested and send you away with just a paracetamol. But maybe the way you feel you really do need proper hospital treatment, but what can you do if the GP doesn't take you seriously. Whereas in other countries, like France or Germany, when you go and see the GP they will take time and give you a proper examination. But here when you complain they seem to brush you aside, without concern. If you complain about the head for instance, without any examination, they just offer Aspirin. This is the problem in this country. People are collapsing on the street because the treatment is not that good. Its like I feel my GP has no time for me. I don't know maybe its because English is not my first language? Or because I arrived here as a refugee, but sometimes I think it might be the latter. That is my comment.

71 Regular health checks are very, very important, it is necessary for everybody, like a car needs an MOT, so does the body, its normal. and because the treatment is free then really the responsibility is ours to ensure we look after ourselves, to make sure we check up, otherwise you'll end up in the hospital bed wishing you had done so.

72 I heard what you said. You cant hide a disease in the body but here when you are sick, even to get an appointment you have to wait, and if you go to the emergency, its the same thing, a long, long wait, and they will send you home and tell you to make an appointment and then you are back where you began. We are experiencing all these things here, its not as if we are refusing a check up or refusing treatment, but its more like the system has no time for us. to have a disease in the body is not good. Personally I make sure I have regular check ups. I also have to say though, that even with these check ups, I do not feel confident, I have for example experienced that the people are rushing me through and not really listening to what I have told them about my health. They seem more concerned in my as a statistic than actually helping me. Sometimes you can even tell them I have visited the hospital and they told me I am suffering from this, but the GP has refused me medication. Although Congo is a poor country, when you go to see the doctor he will spend time with you and give you a proper check up. Check your urine and blood pressure and so on. Here, you really have to force the GP to refer you to the hospital, Once, I even broke down in tears - that was the only way for me to get a referral - to be taken seriously. We are not refusing to have check ups, if anything those of us that are concerned about our health are not being listened to. Thanks very much for asking me this question.

73 Hello. i am very happy you ask this question. It is good to have these check ups, but some people are scared to have it done. Maybe they already know they are sick? but for me personally I prefer to know that I am OK - or even to know if I am not OK - Its not good to be scared. That's my point of view. Bye.

74 In answer to your question, I say that you are right, some people ignore their health to the point where they might fall over or collapse in the street, and so I think its good you ask a question like this, that gets people to consider the need for regular health check ups. After all it's free and even if some people say its not good treatment, its still free. So can we complain? Because we people should know the state of our own health. That's all I have to say. I am very happy with today's message and I will pass this on and I will also make sure I talk to other people about the need to have a regular check up. I really appreciate you taking the time to concern yourself with these things, because they are issues affecting us all, and by my listening to your question, you have made me think and consider this. Thanks a lot. XXXXXXX XXXXXX.

75 My brothers, the issue of health check ups is very, very important and we should be doing that regularly because some people are dying with high blood pressure because of the stress of life here - the pressures of life - I should say. You get pressure from work - its pressure, you get a call waking you up

at 2am from back home and the family are asking for money - its pressure, you try a venture, it doesn't work - its pressure. All of these can lead to hypertension and stroke and a regular check up will give us an early warning of any potential health problems. If we just neglect ourselves - as we do back home, then obviously its not good. A check up is very important. and also we should avoid drinking a lot of beer. Instead try to drink water. I heard that eight glasses of water a day - can help to clear the blood. OK I leave you. Goodbye.

76 For me the first problem our people face is language, our people don't understand the language very well. The second is even when we go for a check up and the GP explains about a potential problem, people don't understand because of language limitations. the third problem is that some GP don't seem interested and just tell us "take Paracetamol and go". The problem of health lies in the hands of god. We must pray he will protect us. We know that the treatment is much better than in our country, but that said, it is really not that good, as i said the whether its our fault about the language or not, often the GP really doesn't seem to have time for us. I wonder if, really we spoke good English then maybe we would get a better treatment? Because the GP would be more scared not to listen or not to give us proper time?

77 My comment is as Congolese, we are so negligent, I don't know why. Back home, people have studied, but even

with this I feel that overall our philosophy is backward. My advice is that we should be having a health TV or radio programme to educate us in things like our health. It could be mixed with some news or current affair or even entertainment show, but absolutely - for me - we need health issues to be included in a space where they can reach our people. To inform and educate us, and to give us the courage to go for check ups. Because a lot of our people are collapsing and dying and we used just to think that was due to things like witchcraft, but now we know that these experiences are really something to do with our health, like stress, stroke, high blood pressure, little sleep and long hours and so on. so if you could organize this kind of programme. That would be really helpful. It could even be a charity programme, but whatever. For me, we need this. It would help us. Also let me say more about the problems we have, I give you an example, the way we eat. Our kitchen is full of salt. We use too much salt in our food. And now we know that salt is a big killer, because I watched on TV how harmful salt is if consumed in big amounts. I am lucky, my English is strong and so I can be aware, but for me, we need that education. We need a health education programme to inform our people who don't speak good English.

78 It is important for us Congolese to have a regular check up, because from where we come from, there are all kinds of diseases, for example: typhoid. We see some people, they just suddenly collapse and die, we see even

some women are pregnant and don't go to pre natal check ups because they are scared they might have a problem. But my advice to them is that they should go, because even if they do have something, then it can be treated. Really its so important for us. When we remember back home, we know how hard it can be to get preventive treatment, but we should know that here, if you don't go to check ups, then, really you are making it hard for yourself, because it doesn't need to be like that.

79 What you are saying with this message is really good. Its important that you make us consider the need for check ups and to retain good health, or to make sure we already have it. Because we are losing a lot of people because of stupid negligence, that we could ourselves prevent. That's my comment. Thank you.

80 Good evening to you. I want to speak about health. For instance myself, when I am not well, I go to see my GP and all I get given is headache tablets. Even if like in the worst instance, you collapse and they call an ambulance, they just rush you through a quick examination and send you out with the same damn headache tablets, not proper medication or treatment. And then even if I visited the hospital, they didn't contact my GP or even if they did, he never ask me anything about the incident. That is why someone like myself, even if I am suffering I don't go to the hospital, they really do not seem

to care for me. I just get headache tablets and nothing else. I end there.

81 Yes, my comment is that I am not happy to those people who refuse or are scared to take a regular check up, as you yourself said, in this country, treatment is free, so why not take this opportunity for a regular check up? I think the problem is that those who refuse or are scared, are those who already know they have some kind of problem or disease. As we know, here, if they know you have a problem, they will be sending you letters and disturbing you and everybody will know about it, that's why these people are scared. My point of view is that you should attend regular check ups and if you are sick then they will find out and treat you. We know that some people like to know the business of others, but in the end that is not important. Not as important as your health. Don't be in fear of gossip, be in fear of your health. This is my comment for today.

82 Thanks for your call. The problem as I see it is that some people are scared because they are afraid of what a doctor might find. Some people - for example those who have misbehaved in life - think that they might have contracted HIV - and they live in fear of that. But for me, that is an excuse. Denial helps no one, and if you have something, then it's better to know, so you can be treated. That's my small comment to your question. Thanks...

83 I am very about what you are asking today, anything about health I will always support. There is one French saying: 'Someone with good health is a person who does not know they are sick. As we know, that means that you might have a problem, but because you feel ok, you think there is no problem, maybe even you show some signs but because they are small you don't notice them. But perhaps the body is crying and we don't feel the tears. For instance, something like a heart attack, how can you prevent it in the early stages if you don't have a regular examination? I would encourage my fellow Congolese to take regular check ups, to know the state of their health, as a prevention or a caution. That is my comment.

84 My advice to my people is that we should take care of our health. The problem we have, we Congolese, is that we love to talk too much. Already we face many problems, but also we take on the concerns of others, this can also harm us. My advice is simple, when you are not feeling well you should go and see the doctor and not to be like others, for example, those sitting at home with headaches, who do nothing about it. That headache could be the complications of our lives, but it could also be other deeper problems, we all have a headache sometimes, but if that headache happens everyday, then maybe there is a deeper problem and one day that could be really, really serious. Don't ignore any signs. Know what your body is telling you. Regular check ups can help you with this. That's all I have to say.

85 for me, my suggestion is this: when we come here, we don't know if we brought something from home, and here we have the opportunity to visit our local GP. Like myself, personally, I have had a headache since yesterday, I went to see my GP and I was just prescribed Paracetamol and told to drink a lot of water. But that headache could have been the result of high blood pressure, and he didn't try to find out if it was, he didn't care. He didn't even examine me to see if there were any other signs. He didn't ask anything about my diet or my life and now my headache continues. What can I do? Now, they are aware here that our people are dying and visiting the GP with problems like headaches, so I am asking, what are they doing really to save us? For me, they don't seem to be helping us. They are not doing their job as they should. If someone comes to you as a GP, then in their trusting you, then surely you should at least offer an examination? Let's give the example of a tailor - if you visit a tailor, before then will make you a suit, they will measure you. How can a suit fit if you are not measured? So I ask you, how can a doctor diagnose treatment if they do not look for a problem? That GP of mine should have at least checked me. But he did nothing. He just proscribed me paracetamol and waved me away. Now we are suffering at home and we do - as you say - we visit the GP, but it is them who are not doing their jobs they are supposed to. So we see out brothers dying.

our people is really excellent and my advice to my people is even if you think, or you feel in good health, going to see the GP is very important. But what is even more important is to pray to god, because the lord god is also a GP - he is the one who gives us good health. That said, we also need regular check ups because what we eat can be a problem for us. It is too oily and too salty, and this can damage the body. We need to make sure that our bodies are OK. Remember the bible says to us also that god helps those who help themselves, and so taking check ups can help us stop a problem before it needs urgent attention.

86 What you are doing is very, very good. That you are doing this to educate

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## The Musicians Role

Child of Congo today we want to talk to you about the music embargo that has been imposed by the combatant resistance of the UK. As you know they have banned all Congo based musicians from coming here to perform or record in the UK. Their argument is that even through metaphor the musicians used to educate and speak for the population through their music and that today their songs and dances portray only immorality. They say the musicians today are doing nothing about what's happening back home and that through their music they only distract us away from the real issues with their 'meaningless' songs. So as far as the combatants are concerned it is time for us – the UK Congolese - to concentrate fully on the crisis back home. What do you think about the Combatants Resistance decision? Is it good or bad? Young people, can you tell us the title of one recent song that expresses the hardship and indignity our people face back home? Or perhaps you do not think the musicians have a responsibility to educate or represent the people? Give us your views...

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87 Hello. I want to say this. What you say is not wrong. They are corrupting the people with their songs, but you should know that this country (Great Britain) is full of stress. We are surrounded by ocean and if we are not enjoying ourselves it is not good because the local musician like Biku (London based Congolese musician) - what kind of noise does he make? What kind of music is that? You should allow at least one or two musicians from home to come here to play, we know that what they did to sing praise for Kabila was wrong, and we too think Kabila is bad, but we should

enjoy ourselves a little to release this stress a little by enjoying one or two live shows from our musicians from back home, because here, if you go out to the clubs, you are considered a prostitute, please take this argument to the combatants.

88 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, the decision taken by the combatants is not bad, it is good. But it is bad because that is stopping those musicians coming here to make their money. It is good though because

their music teaches nothing for the virtues of morality and its destroying the younger generation by corrupting them, but this is something to be discussed by speaking with the musicians tell them to make music with virtue and morality - that would be good - thank you.

89 OK what I would say concerning the combattants and resistance of UK placing the embargo upon our music is not bad, because the music is full of immorality, and instead of playing songs to assist or help the people they just songs with no scruples. It should not be ignored. Personally I am against them and in favor of the embargo because the musicians should be there to help, educate and inform for all of us to have a better life. That is my position. Bye.

90 Yes, for the embargo of the musicians, my point of view is that today's generation has been destroyed because of the musicians, like for instance one father back home gave such a powerful message in his song, that we all felt we should leave for Europe. The embargo is not bad but before its introduction they ought to have sat down and warned the musicians first - that if they didn't change their direction that they would suffer the consequence. We do agree with the principal of the embargo we just wish it had been done properly - and the combattants should perhaps still consider talking with the musicians and asking them to reconsider their path. And you know even with this embargo - something which I personally support - we should still consider the

musicians, because after all like all of us, they go to work and earn their living, and by stopping their shows, we are denying them the chance to make their living? And also it prevents our music from advancing and that can only be bad for us all in the end. That's my point of view.

91 Thanks for offering me this story. I heard everything you said about the decision of the combattants, but if you look at it its not really normal because the music is nothing to do with politics, what the musician is doing also makes the country proud, it shows all Africans the strength of Congolese music. And then when the musicians come here to play their music they do help people, because some of our people carry heavy burdens in life and the music can help them. to survive in the UK is not always easy, - we know that. And you know - lets face it - I don't think that the music is the main reason the country is down. The reason the country is down is because of the politics brought in by foreigners. That is - for me - the cause of the disorder, not the musician. That is my answer for the question you ask.

92 Yes Hello. I always like to follow these messages, what you touch today is very important. The combattants introduced this embargo upon our music, but its not just the musicians, its also our pasteurs because they said that both musicians and pasteurs should be independent from the purse of the government and the politicians, but they are becoming now like politicians, like

before the election Papa Wemba went on TV to declare officially that he was the supporter of Joseph Kabila, and do you know how many people choose to vote for Kabilla as a result of Wemba's declaration? What Papa Wemba did was not good, so that's why the combatants took these steps. And you know it wasn't just Wemba don't you? He is just one example of the corrupt musician. The musicians who have used their positions amongst their fan base to affect politics would not play here - that is my point of view. And lastly if our people in France or Belgium or Germany did the same thing - introduce an embargo - I think we would soon see a change in the behavior of our musicians and pasteurs - and most important that change would echo back to Congo, where it too would change for the better.

93 For me, the embargo is a good thing, it should be supported by all Congolese in the UK. Let them (the musicians) stay in Congo. If they are prepared to support Kabila, then they should remain with him.

94 Their decision is not right. They should leave our musicians in peace. Leave them alone. I am not happy.

95 For me I am for the embargo. I want the embargo to remain for good, because I think this music is doing nothing for our people. This music is a distraction away from the real issues and the problems faced by our country. The musicians say nothing. And since

they are not coming here, we have not seen any change anyway, so the should just remain there. That was me XXXXX XXXXX a child of Congo.

96 For me I say yes - the combatants are right. In the past our musicians were educating the population but now their music is full of immoralities. The people are suffering but as long as the musicians reap their financial rewards, then they don't care. The musicians should sing of the suffering of the people but they are not doing it - they just sing names to take money or how much money they have in their hands. The combattants are really fighting for Congo. The musicians should remain in Congo and we should just enjoy other musical styles, we used to enjoy Michael Jackson, we can carry on with that, for me, I am for the combattants, I support them !

97 Thank you for contacting me. About the embargo, our population is lost. We are not integrated into the UK. As far as enjoying ourselves or listening to the music, we don't have anywhere to go anymore, so I am against the combattants decision. They should let the musicians come and play here. They should let people enjoy themselves. Musicians are not politicians. Bye.

98 My comment is this. I am not against this decision, because I feel it will awaken our community about what's happening back home, because our music is coming to distract the pop-



ulation away from the real issues for which we should be fighting. for me the decision is good because it also makes the musician aware that in their hands they also hold power and they can - if they desire - use that same power for the benefit and education of the people rather than just as a profit making distraction.

99 I am very happy to receive this call. The embargo is not bad. But we should also look at other issues surrounding the combattants, or people acting under the auspice of being supposed combattants, you know who I mean, those people making problems, setting light to peoples cars, threatening families, these kind of things. As I said I am happy with an embargo on music - that's for the benefit of the community - but the lawlessness I described brings disrepute to something that is good. We have to stop people behaving this way. Thanks for your call. God bless you. Bye.

100 I can say that their embargo is one hundred per cent positive, because the musicians are thinking only of themselves and their financial gain. They are not thinking about the future of our children and one day through that music we will have no country to call home like the Palestine and other countries we know through history.

101 Yes, the idea is not bad its good. For me it is not bad at all the embargo is good.

102 Hello, you are asking about the decision of the combattants - it is not bad at all - it is good. What these musicians are doing is not educating our children. If anything what they are doing is destroying our children completely. As for the country, the musicians are like the double bladed knife, they will come here to us in Europe and collect money from us, clothes from us, and then they go back to Kinshasa, parading as big men - seducing our sisters who we left back home. Let me tell you. You can give musicians money in Europe and they will gladly accept it. But if you meet them on the streets of Kinshasa, they will ignore you. It will be beneath them to even say hello, unless you are also some big name. The Combattants decision is good, I am for it, because it shows the musicians - who play the music for us - that we don't want it any more and their success is going down, and that is the way we are educating them. For me they can remain there them and the religious musicians as well - just stay with our sisters in Congo.

103 Hello I am very happy for your call. Thank you. My opinion is this, you are right in the sense that our music is not educative anymore and I agree with you on that, but to punish them this way - it is both good and bad because the musician lives by performing and selling their music - if they can't do that - what can they do? I agree that the music is no longer educative and that is the job of the Congolese governments Censorships department isn't it? They should do their job and take action or punish a

musician when a song is bad, but to stop them from playing like it is now, I don't have an opinion on that. For me, the musicians should work hard on the music, it seems to me to be full of just noise and immorality. They need to learn how to do a good job, then everybody will be happy. Bye.

104 I want to say that the Combatants are right the musicians are not educating the population but instead they distracting them, like in Kinshasa, young ladies would give up everything and become groupies of musicians, some youngsters will follow the fash-

ions and styles, disobey their parents, make problems at home, all because of how these musicians behave. These musicians are not educating the masses. The decision of the Combattants is good and I really support them, today's songs seem full of rubbish and immorality. During Mobutu's reign - if the musician behaved that way, they would be arrested, that that musicians can behave this way, says to me the mess that our country is in. That the musician can do this is because he is important to the politician - because he gives him the voice that buys him votes. Let the musicians stay there. That is my comment.

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## Exiled In Exile

Today we would like to discuss with you about the terrible things happening to our young people here in the UK. Almost everyday we hear of children killing each other with knives and being involved in gang wars. But did you consider how many of the victims are Congolese? For example at least two of the murdered boys in Edmonton this year were Congolese and also the poor boys murdered by street gangs in both West London and Sheffield were Congolese. So I think there is something we need to consider here, because in each of these cases a Congolese has been the victim and not the perpetrator. I do not say this because our boys are not involved in gangs, or do not fight and make problems, of course some do.

But what I am asking is that it seems strange that a number of Congolese children have been the victims of these gangs, and is it that perhaps our boys are singled out because they are not part of these gangs?

Don't you think that perhaps because our boys tend to stay within our community, that is exactly why they are being victimised?

We know ourselves that we stay within our community and through our

extended family networks often we encourage our young people to do the same? Friends I have no answer to you for this question, but I am interested to know your thoughts. Our community leaders and our Pastor's may well advise our young people to avoid confrontation, but for me that is only half the story, because the UK media makes no mention of the deaths within our community and importantly these are deaths caused by others. I believe we need to speak up about this. Should we speak up for ourselves? And how can we achieve this? Perhaps our community leaders need to consider this?

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105      The problem is that our children who came from Congo, once they are here, then they start to copy the mentality or behavior of others, like Jamaican children. I would prefer our children to follow even the way of Indian children's mentality or behavior than that of the Jamaican children. Because Indians children, you'll see them going to school, being respectful to their parents and they don't get involved in all the silliness, and they are not killing each other. Our children follow the example of the Jamaican children. They have a bad education. They come from islands where they think us Africans, we sold them into slavery all those years ago. If our kids follow the Jamaican children, they will suffer, they can imitate, but they will never be accepted as equals.

106      What's happening in our community is really hurtful, painful, is bad. Our children are mixing up with the wrong people, it's up to us parents to be very vigilant to make sure that our

children mix with the right youngsters, because it's very, very sad that we come from chaos for a better life, yet here our children suffer. To be losing our children is really sad. As parents we must know who our children mix with, what time they go to bed, what time they wake up, and what they do out there on the street. OK Thank you very much. That's my message. We must make an effort as parents.

107      I am Congolese. I love here in the UK. Me, my children don't mix up even with Congolese children, their friends are white boys and I think the problem here is the education that our children receive at home. Myself I am separated from my wife and after separation she held sole custody of my children, and it's only now, after nine years that I am seeing my children again and playing a part in their lives, so to answer you; I am Congolese my kids should just continue with their white friends, and other nationalities they are happy with,

because most of the Congolese children who have been damaged, are those that remain insular, only having Congolese friends. All these children who died in Edmonton, Enfield, I was there I saw what happened. I want to tell you more about this...

108 Hello, I listened to your message about our kids facing all these problems here in the UK. We have our own culture - we brought from back home - it doesn't mean to say that because we are here we have to just copy every culture around us. We must teach our children how to behave amongst us and other family members.

When they are mixing with other children you will find that those kids recently murdered, maybe they were fighting over problem of a girl or that kind of thing.

Some of those children are really involved in bad groups, gangs, some of whom carry knives and guns, so all this is really hurting us, why are our children doing these things? I think we must sit down with our children, talk with them properly and give them good advice. Those parents, who lost their children here, how can they relate their stories to their families when you return home? We went to the UK, There we lost our children... It is sad! Another thing is that sometimes because of our colour our language, our culture, people over here just think ah - that African has just come here to enjoy our wealth, and they can do something bad to you because of that. If we were back home, I don't think these kind of things would happen, I really think it is a sickness of

the British or European culture. That's my comment. My advice to my people is we have our culture, our way of life. We must be proud. We must not forget it. Thank you.

109 For me, I think the problem is that we come to a foreign country and we are absorbing their mentality. For example, you will see a woman. She will forget her duty and responsibilities as a housewife, as a woman. She will start going out, shopping, more interested in money and she will neglect her duties, her family. Now children are like fish, they shouldn't enter all types of water, freshwater fish are not for the sea, and because the woman neglects her duties, the children are left to do whatever they want. For me I think we Congolese are not united anymore, those groups who once united us are now dividing us. Those groups should be the ones to unite us - but they divide us, you will see people who were once on good terms. But they are now divided by those groups....

110 I am a Congolese woman - I want to say this, Our children are getting involved in bad things. Its like a child at home, if you don't show them a bad thing, they will not touch it. But if you do, then they will touch it. Kids, when they go out they touch everything, they encounter and are drawn into other cultures, and instead of taking the good things, they take only the bad, That's why they are killing each other. So my advice is they should stop this, stop mixing with all these boys from other

cultures, that's what's making them get involved in all these killings. As we know there are not only Congolese boys getting killed but other nationalities, like me i am in Walthamstow, we got news that a Jamaican boy was just murdered, these things are all around us. And its gang wars, if your friend got hurt then you your gang will fight back. Its gang culture! We must advise our children not to become involved. They have to stay away, stay outside of this. I end there, may god bless you.

111 For me, my idea is that whenever you go to a foreign country, you should first observe how the people behave. So for our Congolese kids, they should not mix with all those other kids, but should stick together with Congolese kids. When we came here the police used to advise us not to mix with Jamaicans for instance, they told us to find people who spoke our language to mix with. So I think that if Congolese children go about with Congolese children, then i don't think we'll have these kinds of problems, or if there are, then they will be minimal, because someone who knows you cannot harm you like someone who doesn't know you. Because what is happening to our children is really hurting all of us, but the parents of the children killed, hurt the most. That's my advice. Thank you.

112 Hello, my point of view is that Congolese children are getting involved, mixing up with all different nationalities, and that is bringing this problem. Some of them are involved with people

who take drugs, and in the end they fight each other, some of them carry knives and guns. The second point is that we don't know exactly why our children are getting killed like this, whether its the children suffer for the parents, for example, because we are Congolese, we are not accepted. We may be black but other blacks in the UK do not see us in that way, they see us as new arrivals, as parasites, and our children suffer for that. Only god knows the real truth. My advice is that we must pray to god and put our children's lives in his hands, because he is the true protector. It is really painful to see our children dying like that for no apparent reason, so very sad. We can only trust in god and ask him to protect us in this foreign country. That is my viewpoint.

113 i will say that if our children are getting killed, then its because they are mixing up with the wrong people. We are from African. Our culture is Bantu. We should raise our children our way. What is happening is that our children absorb the culture of the young from this country. That is why they are using knives and killing each other. If we educate our children to follow our own - Congolese - culture, then our children will never kill each other, that's my opinion.

114 It is sad what you just said, our kids are getting mixed up with all these bad children and thats why they start killing each other. so our kids are becoming bad as well now. They mix with bad people at school and its really awful

this problem. This problem of killing each other, we are aware of our kids dying, but other children are also dying in just the same way, so our children are becoming bad children as well.

115        Its our fault because we are not educating our children and we don't follow our culture. So our kids know anything about our culture and follow the culture here, getting involved in all these bad things.

116        Me, I'll say that it is how we educate our children, it's a lack of home education, the separation of the family, not just divorce but the husband and wife leading separate lives. The child on its own will become disorderly, without discipline. Also the women are divorcing us because of money, they think that if themselves and the children are alone, they will receive more money, and they do, but what often happens is that the money is not enough, the children lack parental guidance and go into the streets and get involved in crime and disorder, these are the consequences.

117        My comment is that those kids who are getting involved in these activities, some of them were born here, some of them came when they were very young and so as far as they are concerned they are doing the things they see mirrored in life - they don't even consider their origin or their families culture. They are in these gangs surrounded by crime and are involved in it - that's their life - their culture. so I think what's hap-

pening is they fight sometimes because of women, or sometimes for status, just to show who is the better gang. Sometimes its the parents fault, for not educating the children properly, and saying its just the age that the children are at, but that's wrong. Instead of educating the children in a godly way, they just say let them enjoy their age, but I ask you, when we were in Kinshasa, is that the way we used to educate our kids? So really, for me it is the parent's fault for not educating their children as they should, and the kids fault for getting involved in those bad groups. For me all these things will pass. There is a time for everything and his will end one day, it is not going to continue forever.





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