

Role model portrait

Doudou Diouf “You must be a work beast”

Who I am



My name is Doudou Diouf and I come from Senegal, Western Africa. I arrived in Italy ten years ago. My native language is Wolof but I studied French in school. I can speak a little English and some other Western African dialects. I am a musician and a teacher of African traditional dance and music

by using the djembe percussions. Two years ago, I opened a restaurant which offers Western African food.

My goal and the barriers and obstacles I faced

My constant thoughts are focused on how I can promote the African culture through what I can do: eating, singing and dancing. But there are many barriers and obstacles among people: administration, law, finance, social life. I went through hard times when I arrived in Italy but I overcame them. Many people believed in me. When I opened my restaurant, no bank would finance my idea. So, I got money from my friends and my people who believe in my culture and ideas. I had to remove the labels that society would attach to me by changing those labels using my culture and my mind set. As a human being I created my problems so I have to find the answers to solve them!

My community

The Senegalese community did not help me closely, let's say from distance. But when I sing and dance African themes, my community follows me. Music gave me fame and I am renowned for that. Doudou=music in Palermo!



Am I happy about my achievements?

I am happy about what I achieved so far but I am not satisfied yet. I have dreams that I take out the drawer little by little. It is important to keep the “cult of work” alive as in Africa we don’t have that. Here in Europe the cult of work, the work mentality is important to achieve your goals, to save your life. If I am sixteen today, I would like to go back to my country and deepen the knowledge of my culture to bring it back here. I left many things there because my culture has been falsified by the French colonisation which only taught us French history. I would like to research my real identity without the French influence. It is important to be creative and don’t follow the crowd. I must be creative to succeed and transfer my culture from my point of view without clashing with other cultures.

My future plans

What I would like to do in the future is to open a bigger space where I can do all the things that I am doing now. My restaurant is only a base, a starting point for what I have in mind. I would like to have a space where I can offer together all the things I work on: dance, music, food, theatre. Success is when I am able to make my people happy.

What you need to succeed

You must be a CIWARA (the name of my restaurant): a work beast! Catering is not an African concept, so if I want to be a successful restaurant owner, I must be a hard worker and a beast. The word CIWARA in Bambara (my dialect) means “the place where you work and the beast”, the force and the tenacity in your work. This is what you need to succeed in your professional life.