TRANSCRIPT
Into Africa
“How to Speak About Africa”

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FEATURING
Roger Muntu
International Broadcast Journalist at Voice of America

CSIS EXPERTS
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Welcome to Into Africa. My name is Mvemba Phezo Dizolele. I’m a senior fellow and the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This is a podcast where we talk everything, Africa, politics, economics, security, and culture. Welcome.

Africa is a big place. As you look at on the map, it's much bigger than Greenland than actually the Eurocentric map than to show. Africa is a big place with 1.2 billion people, which means that it's still growing. Particularly that’s very important for us to realize that the median age, they, as they were saying in statistics, is 19 years. So a lot of countries in Africa actually have a much younger population that. To put this in context, Germany’s median age is 49 years old, and Germany’s kind of representative of Europe, which means Europe is aging, and in Africa, the median age is 19, just a gap there that is worth us noting. In China, median age is about 39. Median age in the United States is 38, 39. So whether you compare it to Europe, to the United States or to China, Africa is at least 20 years younger than the rest of the world.

That means all the issues that we are facing in the world, security, population rate, green energy, environment, the solutions go through Africa. There’s no way the world can ignore Africa and expect to find solutions to the challenges that we are facing today. Africa is also a wide space that is very open for business and open for all kind of opportunities, one of it being telephony, where now we have Africa has a high rate of cell phone penetration. One of these opportunities is the entire media space, digital information space. We’re talking about TikTok. We’re talking about Spotify for music. We’re talking about Facebook and all these other emerging and nascent digital platforms that the youth will use. They use them for mobilization politically. They use them for cultural mobilization. They also use them for entrepreneurship. So we know Africa has been at the forefront of even mobile money, countries like Kenya with M-PESA. And so Africa is in full transition, always dynamic, always moving forward, facing a lot of challenges.

We also live in an age of disinformation, misinformation. So how do we in the greater north here, for instance, engage with Africa in a way that does not always cast that continent as the dark continent? You know, we remember the satire by the late Binyavanga Wainaina “How to Write about Africa”, where you read pieces, articles about Africa written by people you know to be good people, who mean well, but still always revert to that dark continent model. In the end, it’s about corrupt officials, naked kids, the malnourished, and so on. How do we strike that fair balance so that when Africa reads what we write, when they listen to programs like this and other worldwide programs, they actually identify with the program and not to wonder who are they talking about? Are they talking about us? We see this in, uh, ads,
UNICEF ads. Trevor Noah makes fun of some of those ads where the poor kids are always portrayed shirtless, distended belly, flies coming out of their mouth and so on. Poverty doesn’t have to be dehumanizing. So today I would like to discuss some of those issues with somebody who’s very well-acquainted with the challenges of covering Africa and engaging with African audiences, particularly this young audience that I talked about, median age 19 years old. I cannot stress that enough.

Roger Muntu is his name. He hosts a weekly television show called Vous et Nous, which focuses on the positive and creative aspects of life in Africa and the United States, including pop culture, education, health, technology, music and fashion. Vous et Nous is a 30-minute program featuring young leaders making a difference in their communities. Additionally, he hosts a daily interactive one-hour radio TV show, the Roger Muntu Show, in French and in English, where he programs music and videos ranging from Afropop to American R&B. Furthermore, he hosts another show called Le Monde Aujourd’hui, where he talks about various developments on, on the continent, ranging from everything from literature to theater to photography and cinema. Roger, I would like to welcome you on Into Africa today. Thank you for being available to discuss this heavy topic. Welcome to Into Africa.

Roger Muntu: Thank you very much, Mvemba. Thank you so much. It’s an honor and it’s, uh, actually a privilege to be featured in this program that I do like and I do follow and I do listen some of the great topics and the guests that you do have Into, uh, Africa.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: You have been doing this for a while now. You actually took, uh, an interesting road to getting w- to where you are. Like all of us, of course, it’s much more interesting when we take the scenic route, I call it, the panoramic route to our professions. You originally were installing and maintaining computer networks in school systems in Fairfax County in Virginia, and then you taught computer science, French and Latin in high school, in public school specifically, before you kind of transitioned to this space. So tell us, from where you stand, how do you approach this information highway, as I call it, engaging with this multidimensional, multicultural African audience?

Roger Muntu: That’s a really, really good question. This is a really not only good question, but it’s a subject that’s really dear to me, because we need to remember that the information highway represent the digital landscape and technological advancement in Africa today. The impact today of the internet accessibility on education, it’s big right now in Africa, as we know. You travel a lot. I travel a lot. We’ve seen it improving in Africa and so many countries, whether it’s in education, as I was mentioning, or on communication. And also it does create today, as we know, a lot of economic opportunities, right? I was returning
from Kenya from Zanzibar. Before then I was in the DRC, in Kinshasa. I was really impressed to see how the younger generation, the youth that you are mentioning, are being creative today in those countries. Those youth, those young people that you’re mentioning are changing the landscape of the information highway today. They are being more creative.

They... I saw Uber-like, uh, style of, uh, African version of Uber or, uh, Pizza Hut delivery, food delivery in those countries. And when I tried to understand more who’s doing that, I found out that most of those people were really young, the younger generation. They were really into it. And most of them were coming from America, from the US, and they were going to implement those businesses in their own countries. I thought this is a revolution going on in Africa. So it’s really big today, I can say, Mvemba.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: It is really big today. What is the it? Is it the technology? Is it the opportunity? Is it the drive?

Roger Muntu: Very, very good question. I think I should say it’s everything, all the above, everything that you just said. Definitely the technology. It’s the drive. It’s the opportunities. And those, those younger generation, they see it there. I mean, they see how Facebook is getting big. They see how Amazon is getting big. And as we say, you don’t reinvent the wheel really. You don’t reinvent the wheel. There’s nothing wrong on seeing what Mvemba’s is doing right now. Mvemba’s doing Into Africa. If Roger wants to do a show like Mvemba’s, I just need to see how Mvemba’s doing it. Maybe I’ll bring my own little, you know, touch into it. But you don’t reinvent the wheel. You take from what other people did and you learn from it, and you’re trying to make your own. So I see a lot of opportunities. Technology, as you know, as we know, as a tech major myself that you were mentioning at the beginning, I always tell my students to be very careful when they get into technology, because it’s a highway. It’s a superhighway. It’s fast. Once you get into it, everybody’s speeding. It’s going fast. Everybody’s going 60. You don’t drive 20 miles per hour. You go 60 with everybody else.

So meaning things are changing every day. What Uber’s today, that’s not what Uber’s gonna be tomorrow. Who knows? Maybe Uber might go away next year and somebody else might come up with some drone, flying to take you from one point A to point B. So it’s all those opportunity that those young, those African youth is actually seizing that opportunity to create and create jobs, create, add more opportunities in the countries.
Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: We don’t reinvent the wheel, but Africa is a conglomorate of 54 countries culturally, physically, climatically, all kind of diversity, diverse, right? So it’s really a diverse place. I think that diversity creates a level of dynamism that you just described in so many ways. Sitting in DC where you are anchored, how do you engage? How do you engage the Africans? Do you engage them from the various platforms you are on, the Vous et Nous, Roger Muntu Show, Le Monde Aujourd’hui? Those are themselves very multifaceted and different shows. Yet you are also catering to, you talked about the speed of movement. Africa is also moving fast, even though it doesn’t always feel that way from Washington DC. But on the ground, every time you go back, you see that things are moving, things have changed. What did you target? What are some of the objective you set for yourself when you engage with Africans? And what type of responses you get?

Roger Muntu: Mm-hmm. So as you’re mentioning, when you mentioned the shows, the Roger Muntu show primarily focuses on amplifying the voices and stories of Africans, both in the continent, but also in the diaspora where we are, right? So we cover a range of topics from current affairs and cultural discussion, always strive to provide, if I should say, a diverse and inclusive kind of perspective from the diaspora, but also from the people in our continent at home. We connect of course during my shows, and, and me being here as we’re, we’re far away from the motherland, we connect with our audience by actively engaging on social media platforms... And it can be Facebook. It can be Instagram. It can be WhatsApp, any of those things... understanding of course the pearls of, uh, the community and also inviting the audience to participate, because the, it’s, uh, these are really interactive and engaging shows.

So it’s crucial for us to be a reflection of our audience experience and to create content that resonates to them. Let me just tell you a quick story before I get into that. This was maybe six months ago. We were having, uh, debates, and I was more speaking to entrepreneur, those young people who want to start a business. And we were telling them how, in French we say “Il n’y a pas de sots métiers, il n’y a que de sottes gens” there’s no stupid jobs, if I should say it that way. So we were talking, and we had a expert. We were telling the people that you should not just sit there and wait to become a minister, a deputy, a politician or whatever. There are some other businesses. There are some kind of creativity. You can be more creative in order to create business. We see it in this country where we are in the US. Americans don’t wait for what Biden is gonna say or what, what the senator. They create the business and they move on with their lives, and they become millionaire, right?
So we were having a debate in that sense. And there was a young man, Mabiala, who's in Kinshasa. Mabiala was in Matadi, uh, in the DRC. He moved to Kinshasa after he heard that show for the whole week, as we debate one subject throughout the whole week. He moved to Kinshasa, the capital of DRC. He went and started his own business. He was good on cutting hair and salon. He opened his own salon in, in Kinshasa, and he named it the RM Show, the Roger Muntu Show. Okay? I’m telling you, Mvemba, that made me cry. I’m gonna tell you. That made me cry. And then we called him in the show. We’re like, "Dude, why did you do this? I mean, we’re happy you created your business, but why you call it the RM Show?" He said, "Because you don’t have any idea how I didn’t know what to do with my life until I heard that subject. And I was like, you know what? I’m moving to Kinshasa, and I’m starting my own business. And I’m making money out of this business thanks to you guys, thanks to that debate that you guys were." So to me, these is, uh, real success stories, is how we can share this information through social media and for this younger generation to take it to another level.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: So have you met Mabiala?

Roger Muntu: Oh my God, yes. I went to Kinshasa last time. I met Mabiala. Thank you. Good question. I went to the salon. We took pictures. I interviewed him again live as we were in Kinshasa. He came to my hotel. We sat down. We had breakfast. We had dinner. We had lunch. The whole day I stayed with Mabiala. I was impressed. This is a success story. There’s no price for this. This is priceless.


Roger Muntu: Mm, mm, mm.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: So that’s the creative side. The creative side is entrepreneurial, it, artistic as well. You host a spectrum of guests, politicians, musicians and entrepreneurs and other types of actors, society people, and influencers. What is the common thread? Is there a common thread between those people, the politicians, the artists? In Africa people talk a lot about the politics that have failed, whereas people like Mabiala trying to eke out the living and working hard... It’s true that they, in the United States people don’t wait for President Biden to make a decision, but there are also institutions and settings and the rule of law and all kind of things that make it possible for those who work hard to emerge. It’s not always easy, but the system is there, not to punish you, but to help you move forward. What is the trend there? Do you see that there’s a disconnect between politicians and the Mabiala’s of the world?
Or do you see that they’re all trying to do the same thing? It’s a big place, as I said at the outset, but you’ve also been at it for a number of years now. You can see trends. You can see areas that maybe the rest of us don’t see, just truly seeing it.

Roger Muntu:

What I like about the shows that I have here at Voice of America and the opportunity that I have to meet and exchange with all these people that you’re mentioning, whether they’re politician, whether they’re artist, musician, actors and things like that. What I love about my job is that I’m able to sit down with all of them at their level, whatever level they are, and put them together and make them accountable to each other. You see what I’m saying? And the interactivity part of it is what I like, because when I bring the politician and they have to get questions from the people of the countries about certain area, whether it’s the economy, whether it’s entrepreneurship, whatever, some of them, they get to feel the reality. And that opportunity of having a channel, like at Voice of America where I am, to give those voiceless people a voice to speak to the people. Maybe they never get a chance to meet in the countries. They never get a chance to see them on the street. They don’t even get closer to the office. But to be able to participate thanks to the RM Show here at Voice of America, to participate and ask the politician, the people in the governments questions, it’s priceless.

Yes, there is a disconnection sometimes. You feel it. You feel like some the, some people live in the, their own la la land, as we said. But when they have those people asking them questions, asking them to explain how certain things don’t work in the countries, you feel like even those people are like, wow. I had people... I had politician who came to the show where, I forgot what the debate was, but the politician who was my guest say, "Roger, I’m just coming from a country, but I did not know this was going on. I did not know what this guy is telling me." So definitely there’s a disconnection sometimes. And thank God for this kind of show, this kind of debate. You get people to understand more, just as, again, as Into Africa does. Those people who watch Into Africa, they really understand like questions that you ask sometimes. And they’ll watch you, and they’ll listen to you so many times, Mvemba. You ask sometimes the questions that the people will ask on the ground, but they don’t get a chance to sit with those guys that you get the opportunity to meet in media shows.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele:

It's always a challenge because people don't always have access to their own leaders, not here, not in Africa. And I think platforms like yours provide that. You see this also when African politicians, especially the president, come to Washington, to New York, you see a lot of people who live in these countries, African countries, who also travels, especially businessmen, people who can afford it. And you see them in
the halls of these hotels, and you ask you why they're here. And they say they came to meet the president because we never can see him when we're home, so therefore, they're waiting in the hallways literally trying to see if they can get a few minutes with the president because they feel like here they have more access than they do at home. And what you just described where, because this is in a way of course digital, people can call and then ask their questions directly, it has tremendous value in that sense. What about the artists, the cast of artists that you've interacted with? You've hosted the, the likes of Innoss'B, the Fally Ipupa. The list goes on. I don't know if you've hosted Burna Boy and Davido and others. What do you take from these young talent and old talent?

Roger Muntu:

As you mentioned about these artists, let's remember that African creativity spans from various forms, all those that you're mentioning, you know, all those artists, including of course, the art, the music. African creatives on the global stage, uh, it's huge. It's big, right? There's a big impact on the creativity and, and expression today. And, uh, and all these people, we welcome them here. We see them here. I might not have the opportunity to have, uh, Burna Boy, but some of my colleagues here at VOA did, and sometimes we do share, um, those interviews and those discussions that they had with those. But what we see with those artists and those, all those people in art and literature and, and whatever, all these innovation, creativity that they have, we feel, at least I feel... And, again, going back to superhighway and technology... had brought that African creativity in the open where it wasn't that big, where African culture and music and art and literature and all that was not... Many, many years ago when I was here, I came in this country as a teenager, it was not as big as it is today. So thanks to that technology again.

And those artists do mention that a lot, uh, when they come to my show and I ask them those questions, how they got this big? And of course they mention things like YouTube, Facebook. "I just posted one song on YouTube, and it went viral. Then Kanye West contacted me. Then JLo asked me to go play in his back yard where I met Mvemba Phezo Dizolele at the same place (laughs). So all of this, when you think about it, is about technology. If JLo can go on YouTube and see Innoss'B or Diamond Platnumz, this is huge. So they have been thankful to those technology, and they have been using it tremendously and a lot, although they still also mention how challenging it is in the countries as far as opportunities for artists to make it big, but really the technology part of it, the information highway had helped them tremendously to push their artistic work, again, whether it's music, whether it's literature, whether it's art, whatever.
Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: In this world of misinformation, disinformation of people not feeling that their views are being represented properly or their own conditions are not being represented properly, how do you build the trust with your audience, or your audiences, because you’re actually dealing with the entire continent here?

Roger Muntu: The entire continent. Exactly. It’s a big thing today. You’re right. That’s one of the negative parts of the internet, or the superhighway today, right? Misinformation and, and disinformation, as you’re mentioning, they both pose challenges to inform decision-making nowadays, today. So in African context, uh, itself, then d- in my shows, to create the trust... Because here it is, Mvemba. Those people who listen, who watches or listen to... I’m gonna go to Into Africa... I’m telling you they can tell by looking at you. You have to make them trust you, Mvemba, what you’re saying, the questions that you’re asking. So by me looking and listening to Into Africa, I know, I can tell if, uh, what is Mvemba’s telling me, this is not a reliable source. S- He’s not even showing what information he’s giving. He didn’t do his research right. See, and that’s what I keep telling people. Even when I do travel to different countries in Africa, I do have meetings and, uh, speaking in front of university journalism students, uh, communication student. I tell them, "Guys, you have to be careful when you go live online, on YouTube or whatever, because everything we do say, somebody’s watching us, and that somebody can tell if you’re lying, if you’re telling the truth, if you are misinforming them, if you’re changing the information that you have in front of you. They can tell. So be very careful."

And then because w- at that point is you’re gonna be losing, uh, credibility, and which can affect you. I don’t know where you wanna take this. If you just wanna be some kind of comedian to be up there and do things, fine. But if you wanna be respected and take this another level for what you’re trying to do, then do the things right, meaning to come to the question that you asked me, how do I do? Well, I just don’t go talking to my audiences about things that I don’t know. Of course I don’t know everything. I take my time to research the minimum that I can get. Now, even if I do research, I still know everything. So it’s important for me to bring sources, right? And if I do bring sources, it’s important for me to bring a different side of the story, right? If I do call Mvemba, who has a situation, a guest, Jean Joubert, for instance, and Jean Joubert also has to bring his side of the story and let the people judge. So the sources and everything to be there so there’s no bias. And whatever you’re trying to inform, whatever that is, whether it’s in culture, whether it’s in politics, whether it’s in art, whatever information you’re giving is balanced. That’s really important because at that moment that makes your audience, or my audience, trust me. I’ve been very, very lucky and blessed to have an audience that really
trusts me, and that's because I did not try to change how I am. That's because I'm not trying to become somebody that I'm not. Coming as I am with all my imperfection, you know, with all my mistake, acknowledging that I'm a human being, but I try to do the best that I can do.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: You talked to journalism students, you said, entire spectrum of various professionals and aspiring professionals. When you talk to American analysts or Western analysts... They don't have to be Americans. You've traveled to Europe, to Africa and other corners of the world... what do you tell them in terms of covering Africa? How can they be most helpful in telling the stories that need to be told about Africa?

Roger Muntu: That's a very good question. And you're right. And I've met so many of them. Some of them are my friends. What I tell them is that they cannot cover or say stories about Africa, say things about Africa if they don't have a clue about what African culture is. They cannot just tell story superficially, right? And that's another thing about, about what we do in our business, even as journalists. You know, n- that's why we kinda... We are educators in a way, you know, because, again, we need to get prepared on those kind of things. So you cannot be an analyst in the Western world and talk about Africa with, really without understanding the culture. And as you know, Africa is so rich culturally, so whatever is happening in Kenya, it’s not exactly what’s happening in Somalia. That culture's different than what's happening in South Africa. That's different than what's happening in Morroco. So you cannot talk about Africa as a country. Uh, totally not. Even in Europe we see that. You know, you've traveled in Eastern Europe so many times. I'm sure what you saw in Kazakhstan is different than what you see in Paris. I'm sure what you, when you, when you go to Dubai, it's different also what you see in Egypt, for instance.

So, cultures in different places are different. So what I tell them, because I've seen some friends of mine or some colleagues of mine in the Western world where they're covering superficially a story without really understanding the core of the problem, where the problem specifically originated, came from, in order to be able to analyze things you don’t understand, because you will go completely on the far right or on the far left and you're out of the target, or you’re out of the main point. And that can make you, again, as an expert, as an analyst look really bad and look not prepared at all.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: It makes you look bad not prepared, but it also has ramification, may have negative consequences for the people that you're covering, believing that you're doing well, but you may be entrenching a negative image or detrimental image to them.
At the highest scale. Yeah, you’re right.

Because as a reporter, as a journalist, you may have access to policy-makers who trust you as the expert, but when you’re not really, you don’t have any mastery of the situation, so to speak, at least in understanding it, then it cause- it can cause added damages. What has been the most challenging situation you’ve found yourself in, whether on the ground in country X or from Washington DC covering a story?

Roger Muntu: (Laughs) Wow, that’s... The most challenging one? My God. Wow, there’s been challenging stories totally, that’s right. I’ve been to countries where there’s some political instability to cover stories, whether it’s also there’s political instability or there’s a communication problem or things like that. I’m gonna give a few examples. I’ve been to countries where I was followed the entire day without knowing that somebody was following me, and just because I’m a journalist and I was there to cover a story. I was followed all day, and I then I didn’t even know that I was followed. But then when I came back to my hotel and I was sitting in the lobby and I was having a drink in the lobby to just take a break before going back to my room, four people came dressed up in suit, and they came to me. They introduced themselves. They’re like, "Are you Mr. Muntu?" I’m like, "Yes, I am." And then they told me, they’re like, "Oh, well, we just wanna let you know that we are the security here." I was like, "Okay, great." But I was so blind. I didn’t understand what they were trying to say.

When they told me they were the security, I thought in my head, I was thinking America, I’m thinking they’re talking about they’re security guards. That’s exactly what I had in my head. I’m like, "Oh, well, nice to meet you guys. How’s the family? How’s everything going? Everything’s good?" I was talking to them like this. And then they’re like, "Yeah, we’re good. We just wanna let you know we’re the security." I’m like, "Ok- Oh, that’s great. Nice to meet you guys. Let me know if you need coffee or anything, you know." (Laughs) And then they’re like, "Okay, great." And they left. So I went to the, uh, concierge. I was like, "Oh, these guys are nice, the security guys. So they watch outside and everything?" They’re like, "No, sir. You don’t have a clue. They’re watching you." I’m like, "What do you mean?" They’re like, "They came to tell you that they’re watching you. That’s the information they’re trying to give you. They’re not a security guard of the hotel. They’re the security of the government."
Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: So they want to tell you, "We're watching you. Be careful. Don't do any stupid things." And they did it so nicely that you didn't even feel threatened.

Roger Muntu: I didn’t even feel threatened. And, uh, I started asking them about their family and the kids and, and the chicken and the goat and (laughs)-

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Well, I'm glad you turned out all right. This speaks to the challenge, or some of the challenges, that the media, journalists, reporters and others face in a lot of these countries that you cover.

Roger Muntu: It shows a lot of those challenges in, uh, different places. I landed in, uh, Ouagadougou many years ago in Burkina Faso to also cover some stories there. As we landed in Air France, we landed in, at the airport, the pilot asked us not to leave the plane because throughout the whole city they were bombed everywhere. There were terrorists bombing the whole city. So, he asked us to stay in, uh, in, in the plane. We stayed in the plane for three hours. We had to stay inside the plane for three hours until the police say, "Okay, it's okay to let them out, and th-everything's quiet now." But there were checkpoints everywhere. So, I'm telling you, when I was embarking into this career, I could never imagine that I would come across something where you see your life going back and forth in a certain way. And as you mentioned, as journalists, as we love our job, we're the communicators, we love what we do, that of course and it comes with a price. And as we know, so many of our colleagues have died, been killed all over the world, uh, as we know. And we don't stop talking about that and praying that things, uh, can get better.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: As an analyst, as a journalist, you obviously love your job, and not everybody loves you.

Roger Muntu: That’s right. Exactly. Of course not everybody will love us because we're putting out there things certain people don’t wanna hear, what is the truth. You know what that saying is something like the truth hurts, but the truth shall be told, right? The truth hurt, but it has to be told in that sense. But that’s all we do. So you have somebody sitting in the house, in the village, in the hut, in the mansion, uh, listening to you on the radio, on TV, online, on social media, and not agreeing with what, not even your opinion, not just agreeing with the subject that you're debating, not agreeing with the guests that you're having or the point of view of those guests or analysts are putting out there, and they wait for you to come to where they are, and they're gonna get you. They're gonna try to find, get you to shut you down or to keep your mouth shut pretty much.
Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Have you been denied entry into any country based on what your shows are about or guests you have had that countries did not approve of?

Roger Muntu: Well, not directly, I should say. I've been denied in a really smooth way of coming with excuses that didn’t make any sense at all, where I had to go cover a political event somewhere, and they asked me to request for a visa, and I did my request and all the paperwork, but they keep on finding excuses, excuses, excuses, sometimes not responding on time until that event passed. (Laughs)

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: So what we call passive aggressiveness (laughs)-

Roger Muntu: (Laughs)

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Where (laughs) just like that, the security guys, your minders, who followed you, who nicely introduced themselves as-

Roger Muntu: Like you don’t even know. You don't even have anything to say. You just say, well, it passed because, well, oh, they approve you after that event is already done (laughs).

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Exactly (laughs).

Roger Muntu: Like, "Come next year. Let’s do, try this again. Make sure... We're going to host you next year. Please start early. Yeah, so sorry that you got your visa... Uh, yeah, start early. Here’s my number. Call me. I’ll be... Call me or email me and make sure"... And, and they even turn around, said, tell the deputy, "Make sure next time he get the visa, okay?" (Laughs)

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: It's a challenging world obviously. What keeps you going? Why do you want to continue doing this when you're covering a landscape that’s like Africa, very good potential, positive stuff, but also challenging the way you just described?

Roger Muntu: Mvemba, something you and I have in common is that we love our continent. We love Africa. We love Africa to death, right? And what keeps me, and I'm sure you too, going is that love that we have for our people, our continent. Me having the job that I have, working for the continent that I love, being away from the motherland and being able to give back, being able to change people lives, being able to be the voice of the voiceless, right? Because of the opportunities that we have to meet those people that maybe you and I would never had an opportunity to meet if we're not doing this kind of job, right? That's
what keeps me going. We don't have to be rich. When I give an example of Mabiala, for me that's better than a Grammy award.

When we debate a subject of celebrity or cleaning our cities, how to keep our neighborhood clean and things like that, when we debate a subject like that, in Bamako the next day people took all their trash to the city hall, took their trash and dumped it right in front of the city hall and said, "We did this because we heard that, uh, the, uh, Roger Muntu Show yesterday." (Laughs) I said, "Guys, I never asked you to do that." But it's a movement that they started, and now the neighborhoods are being kept clean, because they're sitting down with the governor, with the mayor and come up with the decision how we can keep our... That's priceless. That's amazing. That to me is like wow.

When I have Guillaume Soro from Ivory Coast in my show and at the end of the show I said, "Mr. Guillaume Soro, you're gonna have to sing a song for us because I heard that you were a singer when you were younger. Why don't you sing a song for us?", and he did, and the very next day in Abidjan, newspaper posting coming out say, "Roger Muntu from VOA made our Guillaume Soro sing live on Voice of America," something that I could never imagine, that could never picture, right, for those big guys in the countries. You're changing the whole perspective there. You're making people think that, wow, this is doable. Even Guillaume Soro himself at the end of the show say, "Roger, I've participated in so many shows. I didn't know that this show was this crazy." I'm like, "Sir, thank you." (Laughs)

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Guillaume Soro of course if the former president of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, who is now in exile. Fantastic. On that hopeful and great note, Roger Muntu, we’d like to thank you once again for joining us on Into Africa. Thank you.

Roger Muntu: Thank you so much, Mvemba, and, uh, with your entire team as well. It was, again, an opportunity and really means a lot to me, uh, and I'm glad you've given me more audience to listen to my spiel. (Laughs)

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Pleasure.

Roger Muntu: Thank you.

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele: Thank you for listening. We want to have more conversations about Africa. Tell your friends. Subscribe to our podcast at Apple Podcasts. You can also read our analyses and reports at csis.org/africa. So long.

(END.)