



## Celebrating Ibrahima Kalil Gueye

### *Speakers*

- Gaina Davila, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Guinea
- Ibrahima Kalil Gueye, 2018 Fellowship Alumnus, Guinea, 2020 Leadership Impact Award Winner

### Session Transcript

**Gaina Davila:** Alright, well thank you all very much for joining us today. I want to especially thank Kalil here with us. It is my pleasure and honor to be presenting you with this award, so thank you for being with us.

Wonderful well without further ado, the Mandela Washington Fellowship annually recognizes an outstanding member of the Alumni Network through the Leadership Impact Award. Alright now we are excited to be joined - of course as I said earlier - by 2020 Leadership Impact Award winner and good governance advocate Ibrahima Kalil Gueye, who we call Kalil.

Kalil is a 2018 Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumnus from Guinea. He attended a Leadership in Civic Engagement Institute at The Presidential Precinct. Ibrahima Kalil is the Chair of the and Co-Founder of the NGO organization For Positive Change, which promotes access to public information in the fight against corruption which we know is so important and so essential to ensuring good governance throughout. From 2016 to 2018, he was the first coordinator of YALI Guinea, a program funded by the U.S. Embassy in Conakry that trained about 50 graduate students, organized about 41 community activities, and assisted 21 participants in finding jobs and internships - very important and necessary. In 2019, with funding provided by the U.S. Department of State's Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, Kalil collaborated with other Fellowship and RLC Alumni and traveled for 43 consecutive days. How was that? 43 consecutive days?

**Ibrahima Kalil Gueye:** Very challenging.

**Gaina:** 43 consecutive days covering 5,500 kilometers of rural Ruinea to disseminate information on citizen rights and legal options - as we know, important and essential aspects of a strong democracy. He also received the International Anti-Corruption Champion Award not too long ago. Our Chargé d'Affaires awarded that to you. So that was a wonderful moment for us and you. I have to say, Kalil, he is a trailblazer. He is in fact a guiding light for so many here in Guinea. We're so very proud to have the opportunity to support you and just run behind you in your race, so it's really wonderful.

Kalil, it is our greatest honor to present you with this 2020 Leadership Impact Award plaque. I almost don't even want to touch it, looks so beautiful, but we're going to have to touch it here. So I'm going to go ahead and present this to you. Thank you so very much, Kalil. During a year that has tested truly



all of us, a year of a pandemic, you have managed to pass all the tests you've overcome, all the challenges and you've brought people alongside you. Thank you for your leadership in the space. Thank you for standing strong and for continuing the good work. With that, we are so proud to have you as an Alumnus and congratulations, Kalil.

**Ibrahima:** Thank you so much. I'm so grateful. Thank you. Thank you the cultural office of the U.S. Embassy. I would like to start by thanking all the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Department of State and the IREX program. I am so grateful. This award means a lot for me since it's a kind of recognition of the work that many, many people are doing with me and yeah of course the Mandela Washington Fellowship is a program that helped me to achieve all these things and having this Leadership Impact Award from the same program is a kind of - like I have lost my words and yeah I would like to say that the biggest achievement that I was able to achieve came from the Mandala Washington Fellowship.

I was inspired by my program that I attended at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary and during the Summit, I realized that talking, having public discussions with people is one of the best way to improve the the governance system, to talk about policy issues and system reviews. So I decided to bring people together and with many journalists, many civil society activists, many young students, we and public officials decided to talk about governance on education issues, sanitation issues, and corruption issue and then after this forum, we realized that it was necessary to extend this initiative to the countryside.

Thanks to the U.S. Department of State and the Embassy, we had the grant that helped us to realize the National Governance Marathon. So this one thing is among many many others.

So I'm not going to take a long time, I just wanted to thank you all. Thank you so much but one more thing please. I would like to advise my fellow colleagues to as I always say to take the first step. We have many barriers. We have many challenges but it is very important to take the first step and the success will come later. Thank you so much.