



**EMWOSE**  
Women from ethnic minorities in social enterprise

Interview form

# Overview

Name: Janet Revocatus Bhanza

Company:

Cooperativa Animazione Valdocco

Women Africa Subsaharia and 2nd  
Generation

Website:

<http://www.cav.lavaldoeco.it/>

<http://donneafrika.org/>



In my country I worked in the social sector, I graduated in educational science and was an educator. But when I arrived, I was nothing. Until the municipality called me to help out at a kindergarten.

There was alarmism from the parents because a black person was coming to the school, "the children will be traumatized, we must look for a psychologist for the children"...ok.... they could have required a psychologist for the children, it was nothing, but for me the psychologist was needed by the parents. The children are innocent.

I went there, very happy, I dived among the children, the children asked me questions, I answered... they asked me why my hands were dirty. I showed them... we went to the bathroom, we washed our hands together, they saw I wasn't dirty... I explained that I have black hands and they have white hands. I gave the children freedom to find out who I am. In 2005, I didn't want to do that job anymore, to stay in that place, I decided to go back to Africa,

But I told him I wasn't crazy, I had to go home because nothing belonged to me here. I found everything crazy, everything difficult as a woman first and then as an African.

So, we were in Africa from 2005 until 2012 when we discovered my husband's illness and I decided to bring him back home. So, I asked myself a question, am I going to leave this sick person alone? Or should I look for new possibilities? Stay or not stay? I had no choice.

# Interview transcript

## Keywords:

Educator, school, african, illness, Swahili, association, prejudice, fear, presumptions

Luckily for me, I met a woman, a friend of my family, who introduced me to the Almaterra association, an association of women only. The purpose of this association is to help other women. That's when my real life started. That's when Janet's climb started. I was a woman. An African woman. A career woman.

When I arrived here, I did not arrive illiterate. I was a graduate, I was a worker, I had a prestigious position where I came from but when I arrived here, I had to reset everything about myself to start over.

I was called to the University of Turin to teach oriental languages, specifically Swahili, which is my mother tongue, because in my country we speak Swahili.

The first day, I went to the secretary's office to ask for the room's key, someone told me that I was wrong and that the Swahili professor wasn't there. They almost kicked me out, quietly said I was the professor.

Before I finish introducing myself, you already have the answers.

This also happens in the work we do now, we work in the asylum seekers reception center, sometimes we have to take women to the local health authorities, hospitals, registry office, wherever they need to go.

When, for example, I take a girl to the doctor, I go there, the girl doesn't understand Italian, I can understand her mother tongue and translate...

we also act as translators... ...but the doctor says he speaks English and won't let me in.



Okay, but he doesn't know if the girl speaks English. Okay, so you guys speak English I'll be outside, you can call me if you need me. Usually 5 minutes later they ask to come in to help. I do my job quietly and then we leave.

Can you see the difficulty? Our white colleagues, men and women, they have access everywhere. I accept everything now, I have a battle to win, it is to see a black woman have a career in this country. The time has come for Italy to accept that we are here too. Even with a brain, we can do great things, even more than white women.

Together with other African women I founded an association called Women Africa Subsaharia and 2nd Generation. I am the president of this association,

Our battle is to help the women who are coming, or who have just arrived, who must acquire their freedom, their autonomy, in this country where they are welcomed as I have been welcomed. Thank you.

Full video [here](#)

