

The Mic Drop, Season Three, Episode Five: Many Hands One Heart

Larry Hi there. My name's Larry Achiampong. And welcome to The Mic Drop. The Mic Drop is a collaborative podcast with the sole purpose of creating a space for migrants by migrants exercising agency in exchange for a shared space of collective thinking, storytelling and debate. It is created for a long term collaboration between members of many hands, one heart and myself, supported by Heart Of Glass.

Mo Hi, everyone. This is another session of The Mic Drop. Today we're going to talk about the the legacy of the many hands, what heart. And my name is Mohammed Taher Mo Taher. I work for Merseycare at the time that we started the project, you know, developing this many hands, one heart with Sahir House and Merseycare Armistead and a few other partners. I think Queer Notion was another one. And I'm just not going to introduce to people around the table here. I just let them introduce themselves and tell us about where, what they were doing, what position they had in the job that they were doing, and how they come across. As for the need for this project. As I said myself, you know, I work for them and Merseycare and I think start in 2011 or 2010. And my job was to work with the people seeking asylum, refugees who have had the trauma and just try to help them to access the services and really the face to three years. I never actually saw anyone that was from the LGBTQ+ community and I knew that there were some there. And but obviously the issue was that why they're not coming out when they're not telling us the problem? And I remember the first time I met someone who was from Iran and he was a gay man from Iran. It took him about five, 10 minutes to actually tell me that he was gay and he was in tears. And and I sort of realised that, you know, obviously there's cultural issues there, but also there's much more isolated and the much more scared. And the cases was a lot more difficult to prove. And after that, I thought, this is something that we should sort of like get involved more. And there was a seminar that I did in 2013, and with the Merseycare, the breakthrough, the theme was am a male sexual assault, which was people seeking asylum and asylum who are male and have been sexually assaulted. Again, that was based on a couple of other cases that I had that have happened to them. And one of my colleagues came to me and said, what about actually talk about their, you know, LGBT people who are seeking asylum, you know, and the issues and what were the problems around the world. And that's how I think this both start rolling. But before I carry on talking, because it's not just about me, I just basically go around the table and ask everyone around the table to introduce themselves and just tell us a little bit about what they were doing at that time and how they got involved with this project. Start with you Steve I'm the oldest?

Steve Oh, yes, I am the oldest. Officially at home. My name's Steve Allen, the services manager at Sahir House. So I've been working here since 1992 as a volunteer in 1995, in a paid capacity my role was on is to coordinate all the support services that we offer to people living with HIV in particular, but as HIV affects everybody. There were also other diverse groups that were using Sahir House services, and as our asylum work started to escalate, it became very clear that we were also working with people from the LGBTQ community. And I think there was potentially sometimes a resistance for people to be able to tell their own stories through fear, I suppose, of either how the Home Office made jokes to them, people around them and in their communities made jokes to them. And I think it was something around give him permission to people to be true to themselves and to importantly get the correct information as part of their asylum claim. And so that was how the group developed.

Mo Can you just tell us, if you recall, it's actually the first time you actually saw a person seeking asylum from LGBT community, if you could remember.

Steve And I can't remember the exact time, but I think it became evident that at Sahir House is a very inclusive, open place the people felt able to disclose in a safe place. So I think we were having those conversations, I think within an informal area, maybe in the drop in, I think people who were seeking asylum became aware of other LGBT people around them who were from Liverpool or wherever in the UK. And as there was an amount of freedom to to talk openly, I think that helped to encourage people to be able to tell their story. And I still think there was a reluctance because it's stepping outside of your safety, and particularly if you've lived somewhere where it was best not to talk about who you were and what and who you wanted to be.

Mo But I think it was a lot of people that I met at the beginning. And I think there's been times to the. Say how many hands, what half people are a lot more open talking about their sexualities and you know, but at that time, I just remember that if someone came, for example, from Iran, I hate his sexuality for all his life. It was not easy for them to actually come and say to someone, I am, you know, this is what I do, my sexual life. And I would say anyway and when I started, you know, with this project, the person that I thought that he was just the most enthusiastic and most energetic at that time was Mimi Gashi. And Mimi, I just want to pass it to you to just tell us a little bit about your experience and what you were thinking at the time.

Mimi Yeah, thank you. I'm probably going to echo quite a lot of things that you said, Steve, as well. So my name is Mimi Gashi. I was the HIV and asylum support worker at the time, so I started in Sahir House in 2009 and left in 2016. And when I started, it was kind of like the beginning of the asylum sort of department, if you like, in a way within Sahir House. And obviously we were specifically working with individuals who were either HIV positive or affected, and my goal was to specifically work with those that were going through the asylum process. And I think whilst I was in see hear house, like Steve says, we had a very positive reputation to sort of of working with a very diverse group of individuals. We were very welcoming. It was an open door service to everyone and anyone really. And I think as that sort of developed, the message kind of got out there around the passionate work that we were doing really, and the kind of the acceptance of the organisation and you know, the kind of inclusion that we had as, as well. And I think, you know some people may disagree when I say this, I may sound a bit controversial, but I think we were very confident in challenging certain sort of services. So certain statutory services, if you like, in terms of sort of decision making and policies and so on. And I think it became more and more apparent with the cases that we were working that there was a real, real issue around sort of set and decision makers following set and policies as well and using correct terminologies as well. But there was a big massive controversy around how extensive interviews were being conducted as well. And obviously sort of the not being sort of specialist professionals who could actually support and help within the LGBTQ+ sort of issue, if you like, or system particularly obviously around the asylum system. And I know that there was a big massive sort of feedback from some of the cases that we worked on that there was really never or they didn't feel that there was a safe space where individuals could come together and just be who they were, who they are, and be able to identify with their peers without having the fear of being judged or disowned or frowned upon or anything like that. But it was also about that shared experience.

Steve I think. I think in a way, although it's not the same, there is a parallel that we were working with people with HIV, whoever they may be, and people with HIV felt and

sometimes still feel that they can't disclose their HIV status for fear of being judged. And in a way, some people felt that their sexuality couldn't be part of who they were or the story they need to tell because of that judgement by society.

Mo Not sorry Steve, I don't think you were talking about society. I'd be talking about the Home Office, but also I wanted to see your views about other supported agencies. You know, without naming anyone, I felt that a lot of times, you know, the services they were providing, it was they were helping them, but it was not really tailored to.

Mimi It wasn't addressing their sort of needs, really.

Steve So I think well, I think I think it's something, isn't it? If you want to support someone, you need to know as much as that person wants to tell you about themselves so you can look at all the different options of support that might be available. And if you work for an organisation that doesn't go down that route and ask questions or make it safe to disclose or to talk about issues, you're only going to get half a story and potentially something as serious as an asylum claim. If you're not able to tell the whole story or the picture that you want to say, then maybe the the claim, you know, won't be won't be valid because because the person is shut down and can't and can't give all that information. Because all those. Extras help all the all the professionals around. So a solicitor needs all that information so that they can they can look at the legal routes that they might need to go down.

Mo What about.

Mimi Yeah, I think just going back to what you were saying, Steve, about the parallels between those that, you know, diagnosed with HIV and the shame and the stigma that HIV unfortunately, still kind of carries the that the individuals that we were supporting who identified within that sort of group, they had sort of multiple layers of trauma that they had to go through and kind of multiple layers of different journeys of exploring themselves. So it was kind of like, yes, it was their diagnosis, but then it was also this kind of, you know, who am I? How do I identify who is going to accept me? But also, you know, where, where can I say this? Where can I tell this? And I think just going back to what you're saying about the services memo, I think there was, you know, some services that that kind of accepted that maybe they needed to improve slightly and be a bit more approachable and a bit more accepting. But I think there was a bit of sort of a combination of fear and reluctance to fully sort of commit to that particular group of people because of the fear of maybe getting it wrong. It didn't kind of fit within the aims and the ethos of that kind of organisation.

Mo Yeah. And some of the individual like religious know so group and again people would even think it was there was for them to go and tell them about sexuality or just we're going to have just going back and go. First of all, I wanted to introduce as well Shereen. Shereen just tell us what you do because you weren't there at the beginning.

Shereen But yeah, I came I came a little bit after I started working at Sahir House in 2016, I think the same year Mimi left and my role was HIV support worker and that kind of grew into asylum and advocacy caseworker And now I also facilitate Many Hands, One Heart as well. And I think another element of what we were discussing as well for the members is the Home Office rhetoric. hmmm Okay, so you say that you're gay and prove it or you're LGBT was worth it. And I think because there was a lack of services available for the LGBT community that people seeking asylum were refugees at the time, that they weren't

kind of able to provide any evidence of of their sexuality and a lot of the time. So there was a big need from that.

Mo Sahir House did that, you know, and that really helped because I read somewhere I'm not saying that this is because of, Sahir House or because of what we did. But before when I read somewhere that it was 90%, 88% of the LGBT plus people seeking asylum were rejected to face interview. And when we started with the Many Hands, One Heart I don't know what is the figure you can tell us, you know. But it was just quite a high portion of the people who were members of the Many Hands One Heart. They were getting accepted just because we were supporting the case. You know, or Sahir House was and we're just going to go back to the start actually maturing they just going now how we where we were and I'm sort of like you know what we were doing at the time it's is also very appropriate to mention and Jennifer Jennifer Neo as and and who's not unfortunate she's not here hopefully she's going to add to this later on I just maybe you or both of you want to talk about head roll and what was she was doing. You know she did.

Mimi Jennifer News just absolutely amazing. She was so proactive in her research and what she did. And I think there's a lot of this group that we do owe to Jennifer, because bearing in mind the group was kind of done in a sort of voluntary basis in a way, the way that it was set up. So I had my pay job, Steve, at his pay job, and then Jennifer kind of took the lead to the idea of it, didn't she, Steve? And she sort of did the whole kind of organisational aspect of, you know, getting the group together and booking rooms and theming the group sessions in she and staff. And so Jennifer, if I remember correctly, she might yeah, she might maybe disagree with part of how I remember that she's fit to be of the story. But she came on a placement in in Sahir House and obviously we took her on. And I think. Steve, were you supervising I.

Steve Mean, you know, I think I think I think I think the organisation and I think probably of the people who were involved in place and coordination but but she came and we've all we've always taken students on placements for specific tasks. So this was very individual in that she was doing her degree and identified a piece of work to write her thesis on. And I think it all sort of came about at the right time because, you know, we were identifying people who. Who recognised themselves as LGBTQ. And then the way that was stalking it was about moving that on so that we as an organisation could offer the relevant sorts of support and peer support that then aided the the application for asylum. And in a way it was sort of going a bit beyond of what we were supposed to do because primarily what an HIV organisation, but it supposed to helped us on our path to look at diversifying the support we give to broader groups of people because of our expertise in in supporting people who were marginalised.

Mimi It was about moving with time and with the issue of time, wasn't it? Because when we you know, when I did my first transgender case with Zahir House and I mean, that in itself was a journey for me, a professional journey for me, because I'd never worked on a transgender case before. And it was actually that sort of case as well that really influenced us and pushed us even more to then sort of a streamline, a fine line kind of Jennifer's research, because her research a thing was predominantly focussing around sort of the general asylum system, if you like, in that kind of journey and the decision making. But then when the transgender case came along, we thought, well, actually, we can make it specific to the LGBTQ community who was seeking asylum. Although the Q Plus at the time wasn't.

Mo It.

Mimi Wasn't it was just.

Steve It was a shorter alphabet. But at.

Mimi It was definitely shorter.

Mo Not going to forgive me for that. You know, it's just it is very important to say how important Jennifer was. You know, she was, you know, organising meetings, taking minutes. And I remember, I think probably the first time, one of the first times I matter, we went to Manchester together to this conference. You know, it was specifically about the people seeking asylum from the LGBT community. And, you know, we both sort of thought, you know, we were actually talking about it like we have to do something similar here, you know, and we asked the organisers of that conference and I might get my name wrong, I think Lesbian Immigration Support Group, whatever to come down to Liverpool when we start this project and I want to just come out to the date that we actually sort of unless you want to say something else in regard to what happened in between. But the date actually we started to meet and you know, people from Manchester, I think there were a couple of people seeking asylum came down as well. And then we met actually the first members of the Many Hands One Heart. I just I don't know if you want to talk about.

Mimi But I think what I would what I'd say about Jennifer is that she she definitely became the kind of the voice and she kind of gave the platform or a platform to to the community and to the group. I think if it wasn't for Jennifer's kind of sort of passion and her drive and her research, and because she she was so passionate about it, wasn't she? And she was she was always, always there. I'm not quite sure how far maybe the group could have gone. I remember the first day being in the room, in the library and thinking.

Mo It was.

Mimi In the library. In the museum.

Mo It was it.

Mimi Was a museum, sorry, museum. And I remember sitting at the desk and thinking, Oh my God, is anyone going to walk in? That's what I mean. Anyone. And we kept we kept we kept going outside. So I'm moving now because I'm getting really passionate about it. So I remember Kori. I remember getting off my chair and going to the door and having a look and see. And then I'm going to walk in and Jennifer and I kind of pacing across the room and we had flip charts and patterns and questions and like four questions that we were going to ask and we just thought, No one's going to come.

Mo No one's going. He was, he was I remember exactly same thing. I so, you know, like we obviously invited these people coming here saying there is an issue here and we just think, you know, and he was like, I think the meeting was supposed to start at 10:00 and about probably half past ten. We saw someone just opened the door, I just said had to peek and we were like more like excited to see the basically I can't remember who was.

Steve Instigating them about it.

Mo You know, I think it was them anyway and not mentioning names. Well, she came in and we were like that excited. And within like couple of minutes another person came and

then another person, there was four of them there. And one of them said that again, shows the problem that they were facing, that they he was walking around the museum to check that, you know, no one from his country was no one he knew was well, you know, was around. So he was obviously showed how nervous they were and. But in the same time, you know, once we start talking, those four, three.

Mimi Four members and I saw both Jennifer and I was so happy and so pleased and we just thought, right, we've got something here or let's hope we've got something here. And I remember the most like, endearing question being asked to us and saying sort of, what? What do you want from us? Like the four members? And we were like, No, no, no, no. It's not what we want from you. It's what you want from us. Here's the flip chart. Here's the pens. I think we have four questions. I've got four in my head and might not be able to. Yeah, just as a kind of a bit of a starting point. And they just rolled with it. And I think I get back to Sahir House I was so pleased as I was. It was I was very excited.

Steve So because I've forgotten. So if that was the origins were for people where we're of to now and Shereen how many people.

Shereen There's about 103 were just members. Wow. Yeah. Yeah. It's likely that all ten of us we have. Yeah.

Mo So yeah. I actually come back to you if you don't mind talking about some of the activities that you're doing with them. I notice a lot of different things you were telling them. But one of the things is, is just like, you know, obviously it was pretty exciting. And then people came here and they chose the name. I don't remember exactly what was the reason they chose that name, but you know.

Mimi How we did and we went through a whole load of workshop picking. Picking the name. Definitely. There is the.

Mo Logo.

Mimi Yeah, the logo. The name. There was a lot of suggestions and feedback and discussions, but it was totally owned by the members. Like, you know, Jen and I were just there to sort of guide and offer a bit of extra support if needed. But it was very much about giving them the platform of total ownership, of total kind of, you know, decision making and putting their own stamp on it and their own literally like their own identity to empower their own sort of meaning and what they wanted it to sort of be. And then, yeah, they have the heart and their symbol is.

Mo Also, you know, I like to actually say that, you know, Armi stead had a, you know, role in the beginning as well because they provided a venue and they did, you know, to support as well, you know, and they did that for a long, long time. You know, they did that. You know, obviously, we had some of the meetings inside Sahir House. But if I remember, I.

Mimi Think they supported a couple of our members as far more like individually on a 1 to 1 as.

Mo Well.

Steve So I think I think we had a discussion around where the group should meet. And although, you know, say a Sahir House was maybe the lead partner and not settle, we felt

it was important that they met within the gay space, within the gay community, because we felt they needed to have those connexions in a broader world about Liverpool and where places they could go. So I think you know that we would have some bigger meetings over in our building but but I think from those early days we felt it was important. So it's a place.

Mo And another person, And I was going to, if you don't mind to mention, is Marakusa was my manager at the time. And I you know, she actually met a couple of weeks ago and he was talking about this and she said, actually, merseycare is, you know, financially supported. Absolutely did at the beginning. But also another thing was is she actually gave me total freedom. Yeah. To and that was really you know like.

Mimi She was a great source of.

Mo She really understood the situation. She was really sort of supportive, you know. All right. Well, we're going to go now is talking a little bit about maybe some of the difficulties we have because we talk about we're excited and sort out. But it wasn't always easy, right, as well. You know, and I just wanted to say a little bit talk about some of the members, the dynamics and what was going on in the meeting hall. What are the issues that we had at the beginning?

Mimi And I think the start of it was sort of to try and kind of steam the meetings or slash the workshops depending on what were the issues that we were seeing in the beginning. So there was a lot of obviously sessions that we put on around sort of mental health and the police came out and did talks. We had solicitors and immigration advisors sort of come out and speak to to the group as well. We did have to tread very carefully around things like doing support letters and what we'd, you know, whether we would do them and if we did, what kind of structure and systems and processes we would put in place. So there was this whole idea that, you know, members were expected to be part of the group for a certain period of time. So we could build the relationship, the trust, you could understand the cases, you know, and then see what type of support that we we could give. But I think what the really great thing that came out of it was that actually individuals will go into each other's hearings in Manchester to support their own peers who are going through the same process, the same difficulties as they were. And for some of those individuals, we never paid for the travel ticket. It came out as their own. No, no, no. There was some we didn't. Some of them paid out of their own pocket or, you know, through other means that they may have had. But yeah, there was people who actually organised themselves, took themselves to support individuals during the cases and stuff like that. And that was that was brilliant. It's what we wanted. You know, one of the things we wanted out of there.

Mo If you just have something in my memory and one of the things was I just, you know, there was always there was a bit of a banter and the meetings was always like, you know, a bit of a fun and the seriousness as well. I was sometimes used to get a little bit not disheartened, but once they get this status, lots of them at the beginning know they were that they weren't coming back to the meetings. I think that sort of I don't think that's the situation now. Is it is it because we've got members that they've got the status but just too.

Mo You know yeah we've got we've got longstanding members and I think that's helped a lot. Friendships in the group. And the group is kind of becoming more peer led. And membership is.

Mo What I feel.

Mo Empowered. And it's great to see because for somebody new coming into the group, to have somebody, you know, that's been there for a long time, sandbags. I'm Paul showing them what they can potentially be or guiding them in a different way at it. It's just.

Mo You know, just actually it would be a good idea. Just tell us a little bit more some of the activities they do. And as you said, I know actually many few members of the group that they are actually actively organising things and, you know, sort of you know, obviously, we kind of talk about the IDAHOBIT as well. But I just want you to tell us a little about the some of the activities you do.

Mo Yeah, we do. We're doing quite a lot at the moment. And so we kind of we're still doing the the advice side of things. So solicitors still deliver in legal workshops around the asylum process. Was again as an LGBT person knowing your housing rights. We're still doing things with the police and having reported hate crime and we're still doing the fashion information sessions drop in sessions, but we're also doing lots of physical activity. We've kind of expanded as well. So we're doing and we do tennis, swimming, we did martial arts, we doing yoga with the group. And then we're also there's a companion element of the group as well. So we, we campaign around, for instance, recently there's the nationality borders Bill and also at the government's talk of deport people to Rwanda. So the group themselves felt like they needed to do something and have a response to that. So we met quite recently to talk about how we're going to lead a march to the Home Office. And this is, you know, I'm kind of guiding, but this is the group we do. Yeah. And that's the aim of the group and.

Mo Just shows how much we've come to remember. So, Amy, I know you want to add I remember that you had to explain to them what is pride to remember. Yeah, it's a pride, even pride. And what is pride so. Well, you know, the celebration of the, you know, being. Well, we would just like to know. Oh, so do you want.

Mimi To, you know, that's what I was just going to kind of touch on what we were saying around the group being sort of peer led because that's that was the exactly sort of the outcome that we wanted out of the group. We wanted the group to totally lead themselves, to be absolutely empowered to sort of, you know, take the kind of only group in a way as well, but be able to sort of do it, you know, professionally and sensibly and, you know, kind of be considerate and so on. And it's great to hear that. You know, it started off with four members, now it's 100 plus and they're leading it with, you know, themselves in terms of what they want to do, the direction that they want to take and everything. And it's interesting that you mentioned you mentioned the immigration border bill because that was my thing that I was going to ask about how the group are sort of campaign in that and more of being their sort of response into it as well, because I know that that's going to bring so many issues in terms of access to proper immigration, advice to to the decision making as well, and to actually individuals being comfortable and confident enough to be themselves. And they're actually coming to the border because of how that system is going to completely change and be set up as well because of that three tier layered sort of system. And it's great to hear about that sort of the march and for them to sort of still have their voices heard really and push for that.

Mo Yeah. I mean, as an example, we actually have one of the members are actually fleeing from Rwanda as a lesbian. So just the thought of this being said. Yeah, it's just just that scary.

Mo Sorry Shereen I just want to see if you just.

Steve Yeah. Just, you know. Well, we'll look at the origins and the current sense about the group. I suppose it's about recognising the journey the group's been on and basically the difficulties. So at Sahir House as a charity? You know, we always have to look for funding in particular. And although Many Hands One Heart is a part of, Sahir house, it's sort of been on the sidelines and hasn't been funded. So it's about sort of paying tribute to Shereen's Co-Runs I'm passed workers dedication to to keep in this group. Having them making it work on the screen is very good. So looking out there for pots of money to keep things going. So obviously partnerships with Heart of Glass, Liverpool City Council. You know, for all the sporting events, which is something quite weird because I know at one point you were telling me in lockdown image of martial arts online and I was trying to picture how that was happening. But well, you know, it's like creativity, the laptop, you know, so.

Mimi We're going to be in safe hands with, you Shereen, with this, I knew it.

Steve I don't think either Sahir House is what we want to do in the future is the and we see the diversity with Many Hands and all the groups that we that we sort of run as being a bigger part of who we want to be in the future. So, yes, will always work with people with HIV, but it's more about the inclusivity of all those marginalised groups that rock the boat, you know, the things we've been able to do. It's been by the money that Syrians brought in in recent years.

Mo Yeah. Thank you. And you know, we really need to pay tribute as well to it to Heart Of Glass. And their input as well is been absolutely instrumental, especially if you're running.

Mo With it now. Yeah.

Mo Yeah.

Mo It's just I, I don't know again if you Mimi or Steve when you were there, but then all of the sudden obviously, you know, loads of other people got involved but then they, I think was 70 is the 17th of May or 15th of May is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia for.

Mo Of media.

Mo And then we were invited by and I think again, Merseycare had some sort of a fight. I helped financially at the event, but it was the event in the Atlanti Tower for that which was organised by the UNISON police, someone called Adam Hudson, you know, I never had met him until then. They said, this is important, can you come down? And we went, you know, about six or seven members of the and we sat there and he just it was really lovely that, you know, there was ice through the coffee and all that really well. We felt like the old sides is, you know, like we just didn't think this is all is supposed to be about us or about the group. But there was like, yeah, given that you've had the quiz and the queens, the questions was there is no way anyone who was not living here all his life could answer it. But again, you know, that's something that, you know, we thought you can actually develop, you know, and luckily the year after that, you know, Adam from police came in and he said, there is some money and you want they want us to sort of do it, you know, and I thought that was a really important turning point that as well, because as you just said, Steve, there was like some financial problems, you know, and there was money was not going to be there as much. And also, we were thinking that if they don't meet us off

from because I don't think that the Sahir House used to provide was travel expenses, which was a big, big thing for the members to actually far all around. Not Liverpool, sometimes from other places. Coming down to the meetings we were just sort of thinking where we can have meetings we used to have twice a month, but we couldn't have it twice a month. We had to be once a month, once a month. Then the members were to see each other and sometimes they actually didn't even remember each other's names, you know. So that was really good. I like to mention it at that time. There's a few people that, you know, came in, new members came in. One of them actually is here. It's just sitting over there. You know, they they are sitting over there. And at the time, we knew we knew a person as Adrian, we find out later it's not their name, you know. And basically they took all that whole organising this, the IDAHOBITs and, you know, the character and the character of all this brought this group so much together. It was just that I honestly thought. But it really surprised me how they stood together on how they help each other, emotional and everything else, and that actually carried on. Since then we've had several even, you know, we had one last last year that it was with the lockdown and stuff last year. So maybe you wanted to comment to that.

Mimi Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because otherwise I'll forget my getting too old. Yeah. I think what you're saying about that kind of togetherness and unity and solidarity, I think without getting too political, obviously, I think that's going to be needed more so now than it actually did back that back then. And I know that sounds again a bit maybe controversial, but I think with what is happening currently politically and with changes to certain legislations and policies and so on, there is going to be a massive, massive challenge. So that kind of unity and solidarity is going to really be needed. And, you know, it's great to hear that the group have got that, and I hope that they continue to be like that as well, because. I think they will within themselves have their own challenges and difficulties that they're going to face, that others may not necessarily face the same as them. Because, again, we're talking about multiple layers of issues that are going to come through with that, because it's not just about the sort of the journey that they're going to that they take or the experience. And God knows what they experience in that journey. We don't usually sometimes find out until like maybe two or three years down the asylum process, but then it's also about the experience in the country and that whole kind of process of, you know, accepting yourself and actually, you know, sort of.

Mo Yeah. It's it's just and it is definitely important that to realise that, you know, so it is the time to take. No, the aim is more important than ever to get to together. And I obviously we just rounded up now and I just wanted to say that, you know, I'm no longer working magic and I don't work with the people seeking asylum refugees. But I would say that 11 years that I was working, that that was if I you said, you know, what is the best or proudest thing you've done? It was my involvement with the Many Hands One Hands . And I actually seriously not only proud of still like, you know, feel a lot of affinity. I've not feeling full loads of members, older members, younger members, new members. It's just like, you know, something that I'm I just that is what I wanted to finish, you know, how you felt or now today after like so many years, looking back at those years.

Mimi I'll let Steve go first. I might stop crying. Okay? I need to control my emotions.

Steve I, I think that we should be on the members of the group should be immensely proud of their journey and where they are now. I think what you said before, Mimi, you're right that I think we're heading into difficult times politically. I think, you know, the current regime is keen to please the voters and will bring in quite extreme methods to to win votes in some cases. And I think if you look then the we all seem to be making footsteps or

paces forward and then sometimes you hit the wall and you go backwards a bit. And in recent years there's been an escalation in hate crime and all the things. But I think the grief will become stronger and stronger. I think our willingness to Sahir House, but also of the group's willingness, they want it to succeed. So I sort of see a positive future for the group and hopefully you know that. But in adverse times when all the things in the world aren't going to well, but I think there's a strong future for the group. I think everyone involved has got a willingness to see succeed.

Mimi Yeah, and I think for me personally, obviously, you know, I worked with Jennifer a lot on on the group and the research and we travelled up and down and spoke to so many different people. And I think, you know, I had a bit of a slight kind of anxiety when I did leave the house because I did think, Oh God, you know, what is going to happen to the group and how is it going to carry on and who's going to keep the momentum and everything. And I know obviously Shereen, Shereen came longer, but the perfect, perfect time as well. As I said before, I left it in very capable and safe hands. But I think for me, you know, I am very grateful and thankful that I was in a professional position to have a manager that was incredibly supportive, to allow me to have the freedom to kind of do what I wanted to do within my role, but also with the group as well. And very grateful to the rest of the Sahir House sort of staff and volunteers who massively supported us with the group as as well. And then the kind of external support and the professionals that we had in order to sort of keep the group going with, you know, solidarity and finance and space and, you know, all that kind of stuff as well. But we wouldn't be here and I know I certainly still wouldn't be doing the job that I do now if it wasn't for those incredibly four brave members who walked in that day and sat down with us and trusted us, have confidence in us, and became incredibly open and actually were the ones who were the initially initiators, sorry, in directing the group and how the group sort of developed and the directions that it took. So for me, a big, massive hand. APPLAUSE to everyone. Everyone. Absolutely. And I am incredibly proud and incredibly privileged to be sitting here and doing this podcast and be invited. To it and to be associated to it and to have my name attached to it. And, you know, I forever will love you and respect you and, you know, will stand with you in solidarity as well. And obviously a big, massive thank you to Shereen for being an amazing supporter of the group and coordinating the group and the casework that you do and everything else. And obviously, you know the other colleagues that are still involved in the group as well. So I'm going to stop there because I'm going to make you want to say.

Shereen Anything, I guess. Yeah. Just you know, it's been a pleasure to work with the group and pick it off. I've learnt so much. Personally, I'm professionally working with the group and continue to learn from the members. You know, every day is, you know, a learning experience working with the group and and I guess there's lots with kind of with the way that the path has kind of been set. But I would say that there's still a lot more to do and and a lot more. And, you know, and it's great that we days such as IDAHOBIT to spread awareness and campaign in. But, you know, the fight isn't far. And, you know, I guess it's just the beginning always.

Mo Thanks, everybody. Thank you. Just we did one take. That's really good.

Larry My name is Larry Achiampong, and thank you for listening to The Mic Drop. If you'd like to listen to previous episodes of the series or to tune in for more episodes coming forward, please check out HeartofGlass.org.uk Additionally, The Mic Drop can also be found at anchor.fm