

The Mic Drop - Season One, Episode Eight: Margarita

Mo [00:00:00] Good morning, another session of the Mic Drop podcast. This is Mo, I work with the people seeking asylum and refugees. And I've been working with the Many Hands One Heart, it's a supporting group for the LGBT+ people seeking asylum, refugees since its start. And today, we've got another member of the Many Hands One Heart - Margarita, who is gonna talk a little about herself and her life you know. As a matter of fact, I don't really know much about Margarita because she's pretty new to the group, when did you join the group Margarita?

Margarita [00:00:36] Last year in September.

Mo [00:00:40] Oh in September? So have you been coming to all the meeting?

Margarita [00:00:44] Yeah.

Mo [00:00:44] Sorry, maybe my memory's collapsing. OK, just tell us a little about yourself. How old are you and where you come from?

Margarita [00:00:55] My name is Margarita. I'm 44 years old. I'm from Namibia.

Mo [00:01:02] Namibia, oh. Tell us a little about your country, Namibia, I'll be honest, I know very little about it. Where is it and you know what, you know what sort of country is it, population, what religion they've got...

Margarita [00:01:17] They've got two thousand population.

Mo [00:01:20] Is it in Africa?

Margarita [00:01:23] Yeah it's in Africa. West Africa.

Mo [00:01:28] And is it Christian? Are the Christians?

Margarita [00:01:32] Yes, it's a Christian country.

Mo [00:01:35] Obviously, you're a member of the Many Hands One Heart, so I can assume that you're a member of the LGBT+ community is that right? Are you lesbian?

Margarita [00:01:46] Yes, I am lesbian yeah.

Mo [00:01:48] And what is, what's it like to be a lesbian back home in your country?

Margarita [00:01:54] We are not allowed to, we are not allowed in Namibia, even especially in my culture. I mean, Herero, but...

Mo [00:02:06] Is your life in danger...?

Margarita [00:02:09] It's in danger. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Mo [00:02:10] So this is not you know, I as a lesbian, you cannot live as a lesbian back home?

Margarita [00:02:15] No, no.

Mo [00:02:16] Just a little bit about your childhood, you know, obviously people sort of like around 13, 14, they find out about their sexuality, just wanted to know, when did you realise that you were lesbian?

Margarita [00:02:30] When I realised I was lesbian I was 13.

Mo [00:02:33] 13?

Margarita [00:02:34] Yeah, I was in a boarding school.

Mo [00:02:36] How did you, what happened?

Margarita [00:02:39] When I was going out with my friend, after that my...dad find out I'm a lesbian. He was not happy though. And he told my uncle, and my uncle...and my uncle say is that the case. They have to make me as a woman. Give me a way to a son, this is my cousin.

Mo [00:03:20] So you were forced to marry?

Margarita [00:03:22] Yeah, forced yeah. Because I'm a lesbian, I have to be...

Mo [00:03:28] Was it a happy marriage?

Margarita [00:03:31] No, they did, no, we didn't go with the marriage, though.

Mo [00:03:37] Oh you didn't marry?

Margarita [00:03:38] Yeah, we didn't go, they just forced me.

Mo [00:03:43] I don't, I just, just need to clarify that again, so did you get married or you didn't?

Margarita [00:03:48] No, I didn't get married.

Mo [00:03:49] But they wanted you to get married to your cousin?

Margarita [00:03:50] Yeah they wanted me to get married to him

Mo [00:03:52] So what happened after that? You know, because you refused to marry your cousin. What happened after that?

Margarita [00:03:57] Then they slapped me and doing everything to me and my uncle told his son, to rape me.

[00:04:06] I'm sorry about that. And by the way, if anything, I ask you, if you don't feel comfortable to answer know, it's totally understandable, OK? And, so how long did you live you know, when did you come here? You know...

Margarita [00:04:23] I've been here 16 years.

Mo [00:04:24] 16 years?

Margarita [00:04:25] Yeah.

Mo [00:04:25] So what, before coming here, you know, where did you live? What did you do, were you your country, you lived in your country before that, yeah?

Margarita [00:04:33] Yeah.

Mo [00:04:35] Did you carry on living as a lesbian, did you have any relationship?

Margarita [00:04:40] Yeah, I did have a relationships

Mo [00:04:47] And so he came here 15 years ago and did you seek asylum straight away?

Margarita [00:04:52] No, no, no. I didn't though, because I applied for a visa in Namibia to, for a working holiday here. And I work here and apply for study, I was studying IT in Manchester. Then my visa expired and I tried to renew it.

Mo [00:05:13] And you couldn't do it?

Margarita [00:05:15] I did for three years, I renewed for three years and the last time I went to renew it the Home Office said my statement was less than 28 days. Then they refused my visa.

Mo [00:05:35] And that's when you applied for asylum?

Margarita [00:05:39] Yeah, they...

Mo [00:05:40] On sexuality, on homosexuality?

Margarita [00:05:42] Yeah. They said I have to go to report it in Liverpool though. When I go to report they detained me.

Mo [00:05:51] They detained you?

Margarita [00:05:52] Yeah, they detained me.

Mo [00:05:54] So you were in a detention centre?

Margarita [00:05:55] Yeah they sent me to Manchester after that to....

Mo [00:06:00] Can you just tell us a little bit about, if you don't mind, tell us a bit a little about your what happened in the detention centre where you... What was it like?

Margarita [00:06:10] They sent me to Manchester and I was there for three days and they transferred me to Scotland. I was in Scotland for maybe three weeks.

Mo [00:06:26] And then you came to Liverpool?

Margarita [00:06:28] Oh, no, no, no, no - then I applied for asylum, I seek asylum when I was in detention centre. Yeah. So they keep me for three weeks and they said I have to look for someone to..... to take me out there and get someone to...

Mo [00:06:56] You know when you came to the U.K. with the visa and obviously you didn't apply for asylum straight away during that time..

Margarita [00:07:04] Because I..

Mo [00:07:06] I'm sorry?

Margarita [00:07:07] Because I didn't know!

Mo [00:07:10] You didn't know, I know that because another thing is a lot of people they don't know, they can claim asylum on homosexuality and they just don't know because in their country is illegal, they think is that's something that they cannot actually apply here or anywhere else. But what I wanted to know is in regard to your life, personal life, did you have a relationship? Did you have any girlfriends or....

Margarita [00:07:31] Yeah, I did have a girlfriend before, but..

Mo [00:07:34] In England?

Margarita [00:07:35] In England.

Mo [00:07:36] What happened to her? Is she still with you? Do you still see her?

Margarita [00:07:41] No, we separated because of the distance you can..

Mo [00:07:43] Because they put you in different places? You have no choice, you know, when the Home Office say to you you've got to go to Scotland, you have to go to Scotland. So basically your relationship as a result of that finishes. Is that right?

Margarita [00:07:58] Yeah.

Mo [00:07:59] So just tell us a little bit since you basically seek asylum and what has happened, I mean, were you interviewed by Home Office about your case?

Margarita [00:08:13] Yeah I interviewed in Liverpool. They did an interview.

Mo [00:08:17] How long was your interview? I've heard some stories of nine hours, ten hours.

Margarita [00:08:24] Ah no no, maybe it was two hours?

Mo [00:08:29] But you were refused?

Margarita [00:08:30] Yeah they refused me because I didn't have a lawyer.

Mo [00:08:34] Ah you didn't have a solicitor? Is it difficult to find solicitors?

Margarita [00:08:40] Yeah, because I had a solicitor in Scotland and they say I moved to England, so they can't work with me anymore and I have to look for a solicitor in England. And I went to Liverpool to...what do you call that? They said it was, they don't take any more people.

Mo [00:09:05] Yeah, so the problem is that there's only a few legal aid solicitors dealing with immigration and they are overworked and lots of times they choose who they want to present. I don't know if there is racism, but it seems to me that a lot of time people from Africa they're less likely to have a solicitor, do you think that's it? What do you think as well? Because I've come across a lot of like you know, if you're from Iran, like I'm from Iran, they're more like it's more likely to have a solicitor, but then I see a lot of people from African countries and they have difficulties to have a legal aid solicitor, obviously if got the money, then, you know, you'll be alright. OK, so just tell us a little about you, where are you based now?

Margarita [00:09:55] I'm based in Southport now.

Mo [00:09:56] And what's it like there? Is it OK?

Margarita [00:10:00] Yeah it's ok because..

Mo [00:10:01] Do you have a lot of friends?

Margarita [00:10:02] Yeah, I got lots of friends.

Mo [00:10:04] But is there a gay community there or is it, and people seeking asylum?

Margarita [00:10:09] No. There's no gay community.

Mo [00:10:11] Are there lots of Black people there in Southport?

Margarita [00:10:15] Yeah yeah yeah.

Mo [00:10:15] There are, I didn't know that. Usually is when I go there all I see is very old people, a lot of old people...

Margarita [00:10:23] Yeah, there's a of old people. Yeah.

Mo [00:10:26] And where do you see yourself in five years time? Where do you think you're got to be in five years time? If you get status, what do you want to do with your life?

Margarita [00:10:36] I want to do nursing.

Mo [00:10:38] Oh you want to do nursing as well like Ariane? That's good, do you want to add anything else, do you want to say anything else? No? Ok, thanks very much Margarita.