

UNESCO RILA: The sounds of integration Episode 49: Voices for Change (14/06/2023)

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Dr Gameli Tordzro

Welcome to the podcast series of the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts. We bring you sounds to engage with you and invite you to think with us.

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Dr Sadie Ryan

Migration is discussed a lot in the mainstream media, but the news reports that we see are often missing the voices of migrants themselves. The organisation Migrant Voice aims to change that by supporting migrants to tell their stories, engage with the media and make their own media content. Last month Migrant Voice Glasgow Network led by Marzanna Antoniak teamed up with Beth Pearson, John McDiarmid, Sean Guthrie, Emma Padner and me Sadie Ryan to run a two-day intensive media lab where a group of people with migration experience hone their media making skills and work together to create two collaborative publications, a magazine and a podcast episode. This is the podcast episode that we made together. We've called it Voices for Change.

Over the next 50 minutes, you'll hear the voices of the six people who took part in the podcasting strand of the Media Lab, taking turns to introduce and interview each other: Ibrahim, Fatma, Juliette, Ahmad, Annamaria and Grace. At the end, you'll also hear Annamaria interview two of her colleagues at JustRight Scotland: Andy and Maisie.

Ahmad

Imagine yourself suddenly losing everything: Your profession, your followers. This is what happened with Ibrahim, as he was a famous entertainment organizer and suddenly everything changed.

Ibrahim

When I started entertainment in my country, you know, coming from a Muslim background, my family didn't like it. Choosing to be in the media or being an entertainer, organizing entertainment programs, people will just look at you like you're not choosing a brighter future. So it was all difficult, especially when I start organizing my programs as first, there was no support from people, people frown at me, you know, no encouragement and it's very difficult. But there was a time when I started volunteering at Galaxy Radio and I did a lot of training with the BBC, I started my own programs on radio, the things started changing.

People look at me one kind of way like, "Oh." Like he's working on himself, he's developing and he's learning new skills and they give me that kind of respect, you know, especially when I do host my own programs on the radio.

Ahmad

Have you done any training here in Scotland and how?

Ibrahim

Well, I've done a lot of training, the first one was with Greater Govanhill and Radio Buena Vida and I did another training on storytelling with Refugee Council, with Poverty Alliance, and I was the co-host on radio for the Refugee Festival last year, which a lot of people listened back on, and I got a lot of calls from them. And presently, I'm doing a video making with Greater Govanhill Community and I'm doing another podcast training too with Refugee Council so like I have a lot of opportunities here and I'm doing a lot of training in the media, because I really really want to improve on my skills and grab the opportunities.

Ahmad

In general how do you see the media and what you love here in the field of radio?

Ibrahim

Well there are a lot of opportunities in the UK, especially Scotland, in the media because most of the time when I explain to people my story back home about being in the media they will try and encourage me and give me the opportunities like being back in the media because it's all different here, you know? And, you know, the media in the UK is more equipped with more opportunities and it's very advanced and given people the opportunities to be part of the media, which is very good for me.

Ahmad

As an asylum seeker, what are your future expectations and aspirations?

Ibrahim

Well, I'm looking forward like going back to university, study, media studies, and I would like to work in a radio station, design my own radio show, have my own listeners and give back to the society because there is a saying here "people make Glasgow" and I want to contribute to that.

Ahmad

Do you have any message for authority or some organization or decision maker, any message in your mind?

Ibrahim

Yes, because it's like some of us coming from Africa or around the world, we have the talent, we have the skills, we just need to improve on ourselves and we are asking for more opportunities to give us the support that we need so that we can contribute in the society.

Grace

How would you feel if you had an established career in your home country before having to totally rebuild that foundation in a new one? With us is Fatma who will share her experience.

Fatma

It was hard, you know, looking for a job in a new country, you're not quite sure what they're looking for. You had to find out the hard way to be honest. You think it's like, okay, now I'm just going to apply for this job, fill out the application, you know, upload that CV, that covering letter and I've got the qualification, I've got the prior experience, but and that's it, but it's not.

Grace

So you talked about experience. How much experience did you have?

Fatma

I had altogether, in total, seven years of teaching experience in higher education. So I was teaching at the university before I came here. It wasn't something that I've never done before. So obviously there are some skills that can be transferred.

Grace

And do you feel like you were able to transfer those skills?

Fatma

Yeah, I felt yeah, I felt like, you know, for example, when you're teaching, you're teaching, it doesn't matter who you're... If you're teaching, for example, children in the Middle East, then it's kind of the same thing when you're trying to make that connection between you and the students. But what the approach is, the pedagogy, how you teach, that was different here in the UK. So you didn't have that experience of teaching here in the UK, which is really important.

Grace

So what you're saying is that you couldn't carry over that experience that you had in Libya, was it accepted?

Fatma

To be honest, I think one of the problems of not, or not being able to get a job here was that you had to prove that you know or you have that teaching qualification that will help you to teach in the UK. So you had to have a teaching qualification from the UK.

Grace

Okay.

Fatma

You had to have some training because obviously you come from totally different educational backgrounds. The focus is not the same. And if you didn't have that training you wouldn't be able to get a job. If you're looking for a job that, for example, as a lecturer, then it's teaching and research, then you should show some sort of like teaching qualification. They don't tell you that but you find out the hard way to be honest.

Grace

And you said you find... did you find out the hard way?

Fatma

Yeah, because after getting those applications, after not getting jobs, for applying for jobs a few times, you start to understand like, I need to go and do something extra, but I kind of figured it out myself.

Grace

And how long were you searching for a job?

Fatma

So I started in 2018, but then I was kind of focusing on, like I said, you know, getting those teaching qualifications. At the same time, I was doing some voluntary work. I was teaching in a community center. I was teaching refugees and migrants and women for a year, and I was doing that. And as I was doing that, I was also kind of looking, I was applying for jobs and doing a bit of, you know, training. So I when I got to the part where I actually got the training, I was like, okay, there was some hope, you know, I got that first opportunity as, sorry, as a bank staff in one of the universities. But they told me like, you know, we just need you to know as a bank staff, we might not contact you because we will only contact you if we have shortage. And that was in 2018 and I have never been contacted. So and I didn't to be honest, I didn't even wait for them. The moment they said this is like, okay, I need to go. But at least it was good for my kind of psychological state. It gave me a push. It's like, okay, there is hope. But the funny thing is that I only got this when I did that teaching qualification. So I actually went and I had to look for it. I needed to get another qualification that's specifically focused on kind of higher education.

Grace

And was there like at the end of the tunnel?

Fatma

Yeah, I would. Yeah, I mean, obviously now as because I'm now working within academia. So there is hope, but it's just being kind of, it's about how you approach it. Finding, like I said, not relying on your educational background, not relying on your previous experience, but doing something new here in the UK. The thing is that in order for any higher education institution to actually consider you, they need that prior experience of working in the UK. And my first opportunity, when I got training in English for academic purposes, when I did that immediately, two months later, I got my first job, it was like five weeks at the language centre at the University of Glasgow. The funny thing is that I applied for that maybe four or five times before and I didn't get it. But the moment I got this, it's like, okay, so now come on.

Grace

So you're like, no fun if...

Fatma

Yeah, I've got, I have two teaching qualifications from here, I've got the degree, I've got... what else do you need? You needed those skills and I'm happy, I'm happy that I got to do all of that because it developed me as an academic, as a teacher every single way. So it helped me a lot. And the moment I got that first job, which was for five weeks, then it was really

easy to get. It was like from then on, it was kind of accelerated and I got my second job and so on.

Grace

Congratulations.

Fatma

Thank you very much.

Grace

So what you're saying is that it's more about what they want to see from you rather than your experience.

Fatma

Yes, it's what you can give in addition to your experience. It's what you can show them experience here in the UK. There is hope, just try to find the right direction and do whatever, you know, all that you can do in your power to develop yourself as a person and as a teacher as well.

Grace

Persevere.

Fatma

Yep, yep. Don't let it put you down.

Annamaria

After fleeing war and persecution, asylum seekers and refugees in Malawi, specifically in the camp, are treated like prisoners. We are talking about this horrible situation with Juliette today. I am Annamaria and this is Juliette.

Juliette

You know the life in a camp is completely different from the people living outside of the camp. For example, when you wake up morning, you think, "when am I going to have breakfast? What am I going to have? And what is the plan for a day?" For people living in camp, it's not the same, because they don't have enough provision, they can't decide whether to have breakfast or not, and they have one meal a day and not enough. Sometimes they can have not even enough for a meal, because imagine you are getting one teaspoon of salt for a month, one kilo of maize flour or maize for a month. You are getting like no like beans or no other things. So it's really a... life is difficult in a camp and children no education no access to education women no access to clothes material they are living in isolation they are like in a prison they can't go out of the camp because if they have to go out of the camp they have to ask permission and pay money to go outside to camp. Imagine you have to pay 100 dollars to go outside of the camp. And where does money come from when they don't have money? So that is critical situation of living in a camp in Malawi.

I'm concerned because this news is nowhere to be found in media and have been contacted with people who are living in a camp in Manawi. Right now the situation is critical because

they have been arrested by the police stopping them to go out to get some help and extra food because they want them to remain in a camp and the camp is like prison. Whatever they had was taken away from them and the media is not highlighted and these have been organized by Malawi government because it is like military involvement in this military and police hunting any refugee and the Salaam Sika and actually I heard also foreigner who are living in the Malawi also was put in a whatever in in prison where they are selected people to put in a camp. So they approached me and they asked me to appeal to people, especially to United High Commission for Refugee, to protect them.

Annamaria

So in this case, how we can help them? So we are appealing to the UN for this. So what can you say to them specifically? What they can do to help people?

Juliette

Please United National High Commission for Refugee. I beg you to protect the right of refugee in Malawi, because as asylum seeker and the refugee, mean the people who have leave to remain, they are treated the same. And the one have right to remain have no right to go outside of the camp and have the life and do what they want. Asylum seekers also are staying in camp, have no right to say anything or to request something. So it's a crucial that their rights are exercised fully. They are protected as other refugees in worldwide are protected.

Annamaria

And us, like us community in Scotland and the citizens in the UK, what can we do to help these refugees and these people living in these horrible conditions in this camp in Malawi?

Juliette

I'm appealing to Scottish people, people living in the UK, to support a refugee in Malawi. You know what I mean, when you are a woman, you wanted to see your children going in school, having education, children laughing, playing, you know, do everything a child can do. But in Malawi, it's not the case. The children have no access to education. They don't have material. They don't have clothes. So I'm appealing to everyone and the NGO to speak on behalf of those refugees and to God does something to send it to them because it will be helpful.

Annamaria

Thank you so much. Thanks for letting us know these stories, for sharing this information. Hopefully everyone who is listening to the podcast can help and support people that are in this very, very constrained circumstances. You also said to me that they are mistreated and their rights are not exercised. So what we can do to all together and everyone together is to highlight the fact that everyone has rights and human rights belong to everyone, right?

Juliette

That is true. I'm appealing to everybody to call out for government of Malawi to give all asylum seekers and refugees in Malawi the right to decide what they wanted to do, not to put them in prison.

Ibrahim

As raising children in the UK is challenging, here is Ahmad, a single dad with disabilities which makes it more difficult for him. Ahmad, how does it look like a day in your life?

Ahmad

Well, it is really hard, because I have to prepare my children to school. I have to prepare the food for them before they wake up. I have a lot to do. I have to drop them to school because I have a daughter, 13 years, secondary school, and boy, 11 years, primary school. I have to drop him to school, but before that, I have to prepare the food and wake him up to do everything for them. Even I'm a disabled person. I have my disability and struggling a lot of things. For this, I feel really hard because after to drop them to school, I have to prepare the house, to tidy up the house, to clean the dish, to do everything in the house. This is my daily life.

Ibrahim

Talking about you being a disabled person and a single dad in the UK, a refugee. Are you getting any support?

Ahmad

To be honest, not really. I tried a lot with asking many organization for support, but everyone they sent me to other, the other sent me to other. I didn't get the real support for my daily life was my children and my disability. When I look for a single mum, I found a lot of organization, they supporting single mum. I'm happy for that and the women, she needs support, she need help every time, but always we need to look for a single dad who need help, especially if he is disabled or having disability. That is very important for the family to build the family in a good environment.

Ibrahim

So normally, how do you really feel taking care of two children, a boy, and especially a girl who is 13 years, and you have to deal with your disability issues every day?

Ahmad

Again, I feel really hard. I'm struggling sometimes in many ways, but I must do my best to let my children happy and don't feel anything missing for them. It is really hard for single that to look after two children and with his disability. Yeah, we need somebody or some organization or I don't know the decision maker to look deeply for a single dad with disability with two children because there is a lot of people they are suffering silent. They doesn't know how to express themselves or to reach the right way.

Ibrahim

So there is and we did all the things that you explain affects your mental health.

Ahmad

Yes of course that is really affect my mental health when I'm alone at home after my children at school. I do, I must prepare the house, do everything, prepare the food for dinner, do shopping, go to find the right food, the right thing for them, the clothes, a lot of things they need. For this I do everything in myself especially I am disabled and I have many

appointments with the hospital that really affect my mental health. But as I told you I'm really suffering silent. I try my best to let my children happy, to continue our life.

Ibrahim

So what is the connection between you and your children being a single parents taking care of them you know preparing the food what's the bond between you and them?

Ahmad

I think sometimes there is a benefit of that to be as a dad more close with the children. We talk about everything we share everything and to get your daughter 13 told you about everything happened with her in the school, about her feeling, about my son, playing together, going together, eating together. That really amazing feeling from the children and our life.

Juliette

Today we are going to talk about Illegal Immigration Bill which may become registration soon in United Kingdom. I'm Juliette and I'm going to discuss this topic with Annamaria from Just Right Scotland.

Annamaria

So first of all imagine a person that who is being wore on persecution is in country. He is fleeing. There is only different ways to get there are there is only one way to get here is for example crossing desert, getting to a small boat and arrive here, because there are no other safe legal routes for them to arrive in UK. So they have passed through all of that, they have survived all these perils, they have endured difficult, difficult situation and constraints, they arrive in UK and we tell them, instead of giving them protection, that's their right, let's just say it's their right, instead of giving them the protection then what we do is we decide to detain them. That's what essentially this new so-called Illegal Immigration Bill is doing and is proposing to do. It's a ban on asylum seekers and people who actually need to claim asylum and can claim asylum.

Juliette

That is so disturbing. What can we do to stop this bill?

Annamaria

This bill at the moment is essentially being discussed in the House of Lords, it's been going through the parliamentary phase as they call it. So as organizations across the UK, so there are thousands of organizations across the UK, they've been campaigning to stop the bill, so they have sent a briefing statement, press release, even information about the impact of this bill specifically on children and survivors of human trafficking and they are leading the way to stop this bill. As people that we are living in our society in UK and Scotland, what we can do is helping these people to achieve more. How do we do that? We can write to our MP, we can send them letters asking them to stop this bill, asking them to be active, asking them to raise their voices about it. We can use our social media platform to ask specifically to stop this bill, which essentially as human consequence is devastating for a marginalized group of people, they're already suffering went through hell to get here. So that's what we can do. So

the appeal is for people to use their voices, their platforms, their personal platforms to share this message that this bill needs to be stopped.

Juliette

So this is all this is for saving human life?

Annamaria

Yes, yes, essentially it's to clarifying that no one is illegal. Everyone has the right to seek protection and to seek refuge is a human rights belongs to everyone everyone can seek protection and for survivors who have been too well to get here we need to protect them and we need to help them we don't need to detain them.

Juliette

Yeah thank you I think if you can stop it this will make UK or Scotland a better place to live.

Annamaria

Yes, that's the hope. Scotland is completely different in the sense that it has a different legislative system. So what we hope to with other organizations across Scotland in the campaigns, for example what they have planned, is to stop this bill but also to look at ways to build a better future for people across Scotland. That it's inclusive, that it's progressive and it's looking ahead for everyone.

Fatma

The city of Glasgow is host to a large population of migrants. Having come from different countries with different backgrounds, many can find it challenging to deal with identity issues. With us today is Grace, whose parents are migrants themselves. She will talk to us a little bit about how she came to understand her identity over the years.

Grace

A funny story I remember was back when I was in primary school and we were taking school pictures and of course as a little girl I wanted to look good. The thing is all of my friends didn't look like me. They all had straight hair and mine is very kinky and puffy. So I decided that I wanted to straighten my hair for my school photos. The thing is, I didn't have enough time in the morning, so I only managed to straighten half of my hair and the rest was puffy, as in my natural texture. I went into school like that anyway, I don't know why nobody stopped me, um, and I took the pictures and I looked extremely silly and I know that this is a trivial story but it's very symbolic to me. I basically damaged my hair in order to look like my friends and I sort of relate that to me damaging myself in order to be part of a group and that is sort of a theme that has that followed me around until I decided to address it.

Fatma

So when you say you decided to address it how did you exactly do that?

Grace

I think I had to reach a point where I realized that I had to accept myself instead of looking for the acceptance of anyone outside of me and that was when I kept getting into the same

situations over and over again and I just finally decided that I had I had enough of going through those cycles.

Fatma

So can I ask you, when exactly did you reach that point where you got into that kind of or you had that kind of epiphany or understanding, new profound understanding of who you are?

Grace

So it was when I actually went to university. I went to a university outside of the city that I was born in and that university had quite a large international student population and a lot of them were Nigerians which is what I am ethnically. So when I went there I was excited because I felt like I was going to finally be around my people and it didn't go exactly how I thought it would go.

Fatma

So what exactly happened?

Grace

So I just felt like I had to change myself in order to fit in with the group. The experience growing up here is much different from the experience growing up in Africa and you could see that just by the way we acted differently from each other and our different thought processes and that sort of affected the way that I was treated and the way that I was seen by my Nigerian friends. And I just realized that I didn't want to keep trying to change myself in order to fit in with a group that just wouldn't accept me. So I decided to look into myself and actually find out who I am and accept that and that's what that's what got me to where I am today with just accepting myself fully for who I am and not trying to reject any part and not try to add anything on to me just knowing that who I am is okay and I'm a whole person.

Fatma

Can I just ask you something because raising kids who are kind of or who have both kind of identities as well. I'm wondering because for example with my kids they don't they consider themselves Libyan but they don't know the language so they understand but they can't speak the language. So I'm wondering like is there is this something that you have as well and how did that kind affect your the way you communicated with those Nigerian friends or the way you kind of linked related with them?

Grace

So I can't see my language either by the way but that was okay because most people in Nigeria speak English anyway but I can imagine that if that wasn't the case I probably wouldn't be able to communicate as effectively as I was able to. I was lucky in that aspect and but I do feel like that would have been an issue if I hadn't been able to. Or if English wasn't the second language. It's actually the first language so there are many languages in Nigeria and that one unifying language is English.

Fatma

So Grace can I ask you, have you ever been to Nigeria?

Grace

No I haven't.

Fatma

You haven't been to Nigeria before would you like to maybe visit Nigeria?

Grace

Yes, definitely.

Fatma

And do you think that if you visit Nigeria, do you think that somehow it's gonna kind of affect your identity or how you identify?

Grace

Mm-hmm. I think it is something that will affect my identity in a big way. I feel like just stepping foot in the country would just... I think I would be able to connect with a part of myself that I probably haven't connected to before ever. And I feel like it will be more of an opportunity to explore myself as well. Which I am very interested in. Which is what I am very excited about when I do end up going there. And I'm also excited about the food as well. There's a lot of exotic fruits there. I am excited about going into my back garden and being able to just have access to all of that and not have to go to the shop and stuff like that. So yeah I'm very excited to go to Nigeria.

Fatma

So my last question is what would you like to tell other people who are going through the same experience? What would you like to tell a young girl who just kind of started relating with your story, the story that you told us earlier, what would you like to tell her?

Grace

Just be yourself, like it's very cliché but it is such an important piece of advice. You're going to meet a lot of different people and everyone is different. You don't have to fit in with anyone. You don't have to change yourself to fit in with the crowd, just stay true to yourself and the right people will come along and the right people will love you and accept you.

Annamaria

Access to higher education for migrant students in Scotland is now a reality. I'm Annamaria, Senior Communication Officer at Just Write Scotland and we're here today with Andy Sirel, legal director of Just Write Scotland, and Maisie Wilson, legal case worker at JustRight Scotland, to talk about this topic. So Andy, the first question is for you. Can you tell us a little bit about the case, how it started and what it was about essentially?

Andy Sirel

Yeah, so this case is about a young woman called Ola who was born in Iraq and moved here with her family when she was about 10 or 11 years old. She lived here ever since with her family. They work, you know, they have visas, they work, they, you know, live normal lives here. And she... when she came here, she went to high school and she was a first class

student. Really, really clever, top grades. And when she came to her final year of school, she decided that she wanted to be a doctor. She wanted to be a doctor, I think it was a surgeon, she wants to be in the National Health Service. So you know when you get into your final year of school, you're applying for university and college and things like that, so alongside all our friends she applies for medicine at Dundee University and at that point in time she is told that she is actually an international student and she would not be entitled to any access to tuition support or living costs that all other children and young people who are British or settled in the UK are entitled to. And, you know, she's shocked quite frankly at this. This is a game changer for her because it means that going to university is effectively unaffordable and she can't go. So Dundee University look at her situation and they say okay well we understand that you've lived here for a very long time and you're not really an international student so they say well we'll charge you home fees tuition. So she doesn't need to pay 20,000 a year she needs to pay 2,000 a year. But the rules in Scotland that allow for funding still don't let her get access to funding and so she tries to go and she does go to Dundee University but it creates an enormous financial strain on her family, you know, loans, working multiple jobs, going into a lot of debt, it affects her life in all sorts of different ways. Whether she, you know, where she lives, whether she can socialise with her friends, it affects her socially, it affects her mental health, it damages her grades. You know, she's an extremely determined and capable young woman and she was doing her very best. But when she moved into second year, you know, medicine is a really difficult degree and it was getting harder and harder and harder. So when she was in second year, she applied for funding again. And the reason why she was refused in the first place is because the Scottish rules say that if you are a migrant young person on a visa you need to have lived in the UK either for seven years if you were under 18 on the first day of your course or for half your life if you were over 18. Now when Ola applied to, when Ola entered first year university she was 17 and she had lived in the UK for six years, ten months. She was about 58 days short and she said to the Student Awards Agency of Scotland, SAS, she said "well I'm only 58 days short, can you just you know cut me a break?" and they said "no". So in her second year she applies again because she's lived here for over seven years and she says "now I'm eligible" and they say "no no you're 18 years old now, you need to have lived in the UK for nine years". And so this, the goalposts keep changing and it was going to be until she was in her early 20s before she ever qualified. So really putting a pause on her life. And all the while this was causing financial strain on her family. So she goes to her MSP who refers her to us. And we look at this and it's an issue we've been looking at for a long time and trying to work with migrant young people in Scotland about. And we think actually this is the perfect case to try and challenge these rules under human rights legislation.

We had a separate case as well at the same time for a young person who grew up in the care system here, lived in the UK for 10 years. He applied to study an engineering degree because he wanted to join the Royal Air Force, and he was about 60 days short. So he was in a very similar situation. And you've got these two kids, you've got these two young people who call Scotland their home. They've lived here for a long time. They want to contribute in the most amazing ways to our society and we're telling them no. So when we received these referrals, we thought this was the perfect case. And so we raised what's called a judicial review, which is a special type of court action which challenges certain laws in Scotland. And we were basing this case on the European Convention on Human Rights. We all benefit from all the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights through the Human Rights Act, 1998.

And we all have a right to education. You have it, Maisie has it, I have it. So does Ola, and so does the other young person we worked with. And we were saying to the Court, these rules that require you to have lived in the UK for seven years if you're under 18 or the day you turn 18 you need to have lived in the UK for nine years. These rules are not fair. First of all they're measuring how integrated somebody is to Scotland and whether they can access fees purely on how long you've lived here, not on your grades, not on your family history, not on your own merit or your own circumstances, purely on how long you've lived here. Secondly, they create this cliff edge, right? Ola, when she was 17, needed seven years, and then she turns a day older and she suddenly needs nine? That doesn't make any sense. So the rules were problematic for all sorts of different reasons.

So we brought our case to the court in Edinburgh. We argued that it was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, we argued there was a violation of her right to education and that it discriminated against her on the basis of her immigration status. The Scottish government defended it, they defended themselves until the end on this case but ultimately we won and so that you know that means that the court found that this law was a violation of human rights and the government needed to do something about it and they needed to change the law.

Annamaria

Thank you, Andy. That was very clear. I think we also understand the importance of access to education essentially for everyone as a right that belongs to everyone. Maisie, I'm going to ask you a little bit about essentially what happened after the case and what actually is going to happen next.

Maisie Wilson

Yeah, well the case kind of unlocked a series of events after that, a kind of a sequence. So the opinion, which is the decision by the judge, Lord Sanderson, came out in September. And then after that, kind of figure out what this meant, because the decision meant that the legislation in place was unlawful, so it couldn't be used anymore. But there's young people applying for SAS funding all the time. And so it kind of, they had to put something in quite fast. And it was really quite, from our point of view I think quite a series of fast changing events. The government came out with a consultation and they also asked us to answer the consultation because they knew that we were such a key player in the role. So we had consultation drafts and also at the same time we did, myself and other caseworkers did some outreach sessions on access to education and trying to explain how the law might change. So this seemed quite fast but looking back it's been over the course of about six or six to nine months that this has been happening and we finally submitted the consultation which closed on the 31st of March and then it was kind of a bit of a waiting game to see what the government would come back with. But it's come back and it scrapped the seven-year rule and put it to a three-year rule. And they're also making it so children of asylum seekers and also unaccompanied children seeking asylum can also get SAS funding now. So there has been a big improvement. There's also the Year 1 rule, which is when if you apply for SAS funding, if you don't meet the eligibility criteria in the first year, that's you for the full course, unless you drop out and reapply, which is quite a mind-boggling rule, but they're not proposing to change that at the moment. So we'll have to see what they do with that.

Annamaria

Fantastic. Thank you so much, Maisie. Thanks. Andy, last question is for you. It's about essentially what you think and what you can tell us about the future of human rights law in Scotland after this case, essentially.

Andy Sirel

Yeah, I think this case is a good news story. When you see human rights spoken about in the news and the media, I always get so frustrated because it tends to be viewed in a negative way, particularly through the the government's lens, the UK government's lens just now. But this is a good news story. This is recognizing that there's a right there that we all have and it was used to sort of advance and improve the lives of hundreds and hundreds of young people who call Scotland their home, who've grown up here, who are our friends and our family and our colleagues and gives them the chance to get the same level of education as you and I and to grow up and fundamentally live their best life. It's a good example of the Human Rights Act being used in practice in our courts. The Human Rights Act is designed to protect people who live in this country and protect their rights. It's an example where we use that particular piece of of legislation and its sister act, the Scotland Act, we used it to improve the lives of hundreds of people. And that happens actually more often than you think, more often than gets reported. The Human Rights Act is under threat from the British government. They want to repeal it. And my message is that we cannot let that happen. Because if we do, then cases like this will never come to court. And the rights that are advanced for individuals like Ola and the communities we serve will not be advanced. And so we need to jealously guard it and stop it from being scrapped. And this is, I suppose, a good platform to start that campaign.

Dr Sadie Ryan

This episode was made by six participants in Migrant Voices' intensive 2-day media lab: Ibrahim, Fatma, Juliette, Ahmad, Annamaria and Grace, with training and support from John McDiarmid from Tilt Media and me, Sadie Ryan from the UNESCO RILA team at the University of Glasgow. This podcast episode fits into a larger research project, Migrants in the Media, Participation and Policy, developed by Beth Pearson from the University of Glasgow, working in partnership with Marzanna Antoniak from the Migrant Voice Glasgow Network, along with myself, funded by a British Academy early career researcher network grant and supported by UNESCO RILA and the Glasgow Media Group. Thanks to the staff at the University of Glasgow's Adam Smith building who took excellent care of us during the Media Lab sessions and to the Soul Food Sisters who kept us filled with excellent food.

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Dr Gameli Tordzro

Thank you for listening to the podcast of the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and Arts. A podcast series to make you think. More information about our work can be found on the website of the University of Glasgow www.gla.ac.uk. Thank you very much.

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