Individual Interview 6 – Indira

(Full time: 44:32)

Int: Hello.

Indira: Hi.

Int: Welcome, how are you?

Indira: I’m good thanks, and you?

Int: I’m good, Okay, just to confirm, you’ve read and understood the informed consent form?

Indira: Yes, I have.

Int: Okay cool. I just need to have that for ethics. Just an idea of what we are going to get into today, we’re going to be looking at the concept of belonging, specifically the emotional side of belonging, and then we’re going to look at the sense of safety, and then being a South African women; and we’re just going to tie it up at the end. That’s basically it.

Indira: Okay.

Int: Sound good?

Indira: Yeah.

Int: So, we’re going to start of with the notion of belonging. So, I don’t know if you know a lot about belonging or not really?

Indira: I think maybe a little bit.

Int: Okay cool. So, there is basically two sides to it, we have the emotional side, and then we have the like political side. And I’m looking at the emotional side.

Indira: Okay.

Int: So, we’re looking at this feeling of belonging. So, if I ask you like, what does it feel like to belong somewhere?

Indira: I would say like it’s the people that make you feel like you belong somewhere. People you are close to, and you feel most at home with, sort of and stuff. Yeah, I feel like that gives you a sense of belonging and where you are from. Ya, your upbringing.

Int: Okay coo. So, is it the sense of community you have with people or is it the familiarity you have with people?

Indira: I would say it’s more the familiarity you have with them, ya.

Int: And the relationship to space? So, you’ve said it’s purely humans – is it purely humans or does place play a role in your understanding of belonging?

Indira: I think for a long time I would have said place also played a role in it, um but now, I think having moved – I’ve moved a lot in the past three or four years, and now I realise that no matter where you are I feel like place doesn’t play such a big role anymore, but more the people you are surrounded with; having those same people around, ya.

Int: So, you’ve said that you’ve moved around a lot, what caused this move?

Indira: My mom got remarried, so we moved to completely different province, being here in Gauteng.

Int: Damn, where’d you move from?

Indira: North West, from Lichtenberg, a very small town.

Int: Oh, that’s very far! \*Laughs.

Indira: Ya. \*Laughs. So, it was a huge change for me also. Obviously, my sense of what belonging is changed for me because I loved – I only ever grew up in one home there, and then my sense of belonging completely changed because I moved now, and home wasn’t home anymore, and I realised it was the people that make it, so, um, where you feel like you belong and so yeah.

Int: With the move from North West, how old were you when his moved happened?

Indira: I was sixteen.

Int: Okay so, it was fairly recent, not-

Indira: Ya, ya.

Int: that long ago. Um, you spent your entire life up until sixteen in North West.

Indira: Yes.

Int: Like you said-

Indira: Same place.

Int: Same place, same house.

Indira: Ya, same house everything.

Int: Same five K radius.

Indira: Literally.

Int: Gee, and like you say it’s a small town and then you moved to Pretoria.

Indira: It’s very small.

Int: Was it like a cultural shock or?

Indira: I feel like it opened my mind to a lot of things, especially things like, um – because we’re such a small town you don’t know much about like different people and also about, like how crazy it can be out there. Yeah, so it was very cool to move, ya, it opened my mind a lot.

Int: What was that moment where you were like – if you have this moment – when you moved and you were like ‘okay I’m not where I was, I’m in a completely different place’?

Indira: I think it was when I started my new school back in high school. So, I started in grade eleven in a new school and it was so different because it was an all girls school, firstly. So, that played a huge role because I was in a Co-ed, and then I moved to like an all girls, so it was completely different. But ya, it was like, I met so many different people, more cultures, more diversity, and I was like ‘wow, I am not in the same place’.

Int: Like a completely different area.

Indira: And it wasn’t a negative thing for me though. Like the people were so much more open minded and ya, for me that was a huge thing.

Int: Um, just going back with the people. So, you grew up – what was the name of this town?

Indira: Lichtenburg. \*Laughs.

Int: Lichtenburg.

Indira: Afrikaans town. \*Laughs.

Int: Great, you must have fitted in so well.

Indira: And I literally, I went to an Afrikaans school my whole life so.

Int: I would never have been able to. My Afrikaans is terrible, and they all think I can speak Afrikaans because my surname is Wiele.

Indira: Oh yeah.

Int: Um, no. It’s terrible. Um, so just talking about the people, you said the people here in Pretoria are a lot more open minded, is there anything else that is the difference between ‘Pretorians’ and ‘Lichtenburgians’, or whatever you call them?

Indira: Um, I’d say… there like a different focus on what’s important to people., I’ve noticed. Like in Lichtenburg, I don’t know if it was like not much spoken about, but like the people didn’t speak much about like futuristic stuff or what things are going to be like for them in a few years or what they intend on doing other than like-

Int: The present?

Indira: I don’t know, just – a lot of them were super, um, into like sport. That’s just how Afrikaner people tend to be okay, and ya, I mean it’s not a bad thing.

Int: No, its just different.

Indira: We all want different things out of life. But here, it opened my mind to, ‘oh, there are so many more careers’, or ‘there are so many more – much more to like life’. And I’ve like seen many more places, outside of like shops there and so ya, a very big change.

Int: What was it like to go to Menlyn for the first time?

Indira: Oh no, so we used to come to Johannesburg a lot.

Int: Oh okay.

Indira: We have our whole family here. So, for me it wasn’t so bad. We loved coming to Joburg all the time, like every second weekend we’d be here.

Int: Oh, oh okay.

Indira: Ya, like we’d come often, but it wasn’t the same as living here. Living here was so different, like when I moved here permanently it was like ‘okay I have to deal with traffic every day, and I have to deal with many more people every day’.

Int: Ya.

Indira: Like in high school, my classes were bigger and there were more people, and stuff like that, so ya, very different.

Int: I’m glad, are you feeling settled here or?

Indira: Ya, definitely.

Int: Did that take a lot of time to feel settled or was it kind of ‘one or two days, found a rhythm and went with it’?

Indira: I feel like it took me quite a while. I’d say it took me a whole year.

Int: Oh whoa.

Indira: Because, so, I moved in grade eleven-

Int: Mmm, it’s a tough year.

Indira: Everyone has their clicks and everyone’s quite settled in where they are, and I was just like ‘I don’t know what’s going on, I have like no sense of – like sort of like belonging’. I didn’t have like friends here.

Int: Sorry.

Indira: Ya, eventually I settled down.

Int: When you started settling, was this when you got a friend group going or was it something else that happened – did you get involved in sport or like an after-school activity or something like that?

Indira: Ya, I feel like so I made really, really nice friends and fell into a friend group, but also I think before that I was the sport thing. So, I run a lot, so I started doing Cross-country at school, so that was pretty cool. So, I made lots of nice friends, so that was cool ya.

Int: My personal belief is that crazy people run. \*Laughs.

Indira: \*Laughs.

Int: Like nothing chasing you, why?

Indira: \*Laughs. So, you don’t choose to run.

Int: \*Laughs. No, I don’t run, like my sister will say this often, like I’m built like giraffe, I can run I just shouldn’t.

Indira: Ya.

Int: But ya, it’s a whole thing. So, we’re going to move on a little bit.

Indira: Okay.

Int: So, this feeling of belonging, do you have a sense of belonging to South Africa? Do you feel South African?

Indira: I definitely do, ya.

Int: Are there specific moments where you feel South African more so than others?

Indira: I would think so, yes. I think like sometimes like, when there’s certain stuff we do, or thing you like speak about, like ‘oh my gosh, I’m South African’.

Int: Like shocking. I did research last year on what does it mean to be a South African, and one of the things that came out was a Cooler-box.

Indira: Oooh.

Int: Apparently, we are the nation of Cooler-boxes. We take Cooler-boxes everywhere.

Indira: Oh my soul, literally we do though.

Int: I know. I love a Cooler-box with ice. So, this sense of belonging has it stayed the same throughout your life or has it changed?

Indira: Um, I feel like when I was younger it was a bit different, like my sense of belonging, but also as I grew up and become more mature, emotionally as well, that changed what a sense of belonging meant to me; like now, it’s more focused on the connections I make with people and my family, and, um ya, maybe before it was more focused on ‘Oh this is my home, this is where I belong’, like more place and now it is more people.

Int: That’s actually very interesting, we’re going to go back to that in a moment. So, how would you describe your life as a South African woman living in South Africa?

Indira: I’d say it’s been pretty tough. There have been times for me where I’ve felt like very scared or, um… ya, I felt like it was constantly having to worry about like my belongings and my phone or my handbag or even just myself. Like when I was younger my mom would always tell us like, “Don’t ever go to the bathroom alone.”   
Type of thing. Because that is just how we have to live in like this constant fear around us, ya.

Int: Well, that basically answers the next question which is ‘do you feel safe in South Africa?’.

Indira: Ya, probably not hey.

Int: Probably not. And you say that your mom basically taught you guys – I don’t know if you have siblings?

Indira: I have an older sister that’s all.

Int: Just an older sister, much older or?

Indira: She’s two years ten months older than me.

Int: Two years ten months. \*Laughs.

Indira: \*Laughs. So, exactly, but ya.

Int: So, I take it you guys worked as a team? Because like, I’ve got a little sister we work as a team – my mom always sent us to the bathroom together, like ‘that’s how you work’. Um, when you moved out of home, because you’re studying now, did you feel that shift, like you no longer have your teammate or did someone else replace that role?

Indira: When I moved here to Gauteng, was the year my sister moved to Cape Town.

Int: Oh damn! I’m sorry.

Indira: So, that year for me was very hard.

Int: Ya.

Indira: So, I did feel very like alone and not like safe anymore, because she’s my older sister like we would do everything together. If I need to go somewhere, she’d go with me or ya. So, it didn’t easily get replaced. I feel like I grew closer to my mom, naturally, um, but no. I feel like till now, no one’s been there to replace that, like I do a lot of the stuff on my own, now.

Int: Oh shame.

Indira: Ya. I think its like – I’ve gotten more like brave, like ‘okay I can go alone now and I’ll be fine to go on my own’.

Int: ‘I can do this’.

Indira: Ya, like taking risks. But it is quite unsafe I would say.

Int: So, with this, like you said, you live in this constant awareness of your unsafety when we talk about you have to constantly worry about your belongings, you body as well, like it’s not a safe place. Have you ever had an experience like that, where you were like ‘okay cool, this is a very bad place for me’?

Indira: Um, I wouldn’t say it’s the worst of situations – but sure, it’s pretty bad, for example, the once, I can’t remember when it was, it was quite a while ago. I went out somewhere and I was leaving at like the end of the night or whatever, and this dude was like randomly following me. Um, and like I felt very unsafe and stuff, so obviously in situations like that, it’s like what do I do? Do I run or do I like confront the situation, like what do I do? But recently, nothing bad has happened, but when you hear about other people’s situations as well, it makes you even more freaked out and panicked, like ‘could this happen to me?’.

Int: What did you do in that situation?

Indira: Well, I mean, luckily, so my phone rang at that moment and I was like ‘should I even answer the phone, is this man going to like run up to me and grab me or something’. Like I didn’t know what to do. And out of nowhere there was this like group of people, and then he – I think he realised, ‘oh this is not going to work’. And I answered my phone and was like: “Oh um, I’m meeting some people now.”  
And I just like faked a whole conversation. Like why should I have to do that, you know?

Int: Ya, why should you have to do that, exactly. Why must you fake a call just to protect yourself. Um, I do think that’s basically the general question is ‘why had it become a woman’s responsibility to keep herself safe?’; why are we making victims responsible for their own crimes?

Indira: Exactly.

Int: Do you want to comment on that?

Indira: Um… I feel like no one has in all these years, I supposed especially here in South Africa, no one has tried to fix that or change that, like there are no policies in place or any repercussions for these kinds of actions. Like most of the time you can’t even go to the police station if something happens, and you’ll literally get no help at all. Whether it is something that happened to you personally or whether something of yours was stolen, it’s small stuff like that, that causes bigger things to take place, bigger crimes, bigger issues to take place.

Int: I agree with you a thousand percent. Have you ever had to interact with the South African police force?

Indira: Ya, um, it was something silly. My phone got stole and, um, the tracking of my phone was on, like ‘Find my Iphone’. And I’m like: “I can see where this guy is.”  
And I’m showing it to the police, and they’re like: “Well, there is nothing we can do about it.”  
And I’m like: “But it’s literally like five kilometres away, can you like take me there?”

Int: Ya.

Indira: And they were like: “No, sorry. There’s nothing we can do about it.”  
And I was like, I’m not going to go there alone.

Int: No!

Indira: I don’t know these people, um, a whole like gang of people or whatever, but like they were just not willing.

Int: So, what was that moment like when you realised that your phone was stolen?

Indira: Um… I was like ‘Oh my god’. Like I panicked at first. It was like a whole like panic for like ten minutes. Like, ‘Oh shit, what am I going to do?’. But then afterwards, I was sort of like, ‘Well, it’s one of those things’, and that’s because we are used to knowing that ‘You know what at some point something is going to happen to me’ or because South Africa is so unsafe we naturally expect this.

Int: Yeah, we expect this.

Indira: We shouldn’t have to expect it, like it shouldn’t be something like ‘Oh well, this is probably going to happen to me at some point’.

Int: Exactly. Um, so you go to the cops, which I honestly can’t believe – this is ridiculous, because you’re at the cops like ‘Here’s proof, here’s where the criminals are with my things, can you take me there’, like ‘No’. what was your emotional – like what were your feelings at that point?

Indira: To be honest, I can’t say I was like… I was surprised.

Int: Oh okay.

Indira: Okay, because I mean like I have heard things like that have happened in the past with other people, but I was like ‘Well, this is the reality of it, I might as well just accept it’. But emotionally, obviously in the back of my mind, I was like ‘Oh my god, I can’t believe these people’.

Int: Yes.

Indira: I was quite… sort of disappointed. Ya, I don’t know how I felt.

Int: Like expected disappointed.

Indira: Ya.

Int: I’m sorry. Like its terrible that you have to go through that. Is that your only experience with the South African police force?

Indira: I think so, yes.

Int: Okay, great. Any other crimes that you have experienced living in South Africa?

Indira: No, I don’t think so.

Int: You don’t think so? \*Laughs.

Indira: Um, so I had a small accident the one time, and okay ya, I had to go to the police. But it wasn’t so bad, I wouldn’t say that was crime.

Int: Was it like a hit and run?

Indira: No.

Int: Someone like just reversed into you or?

Indira: Ya, this guy literally just drove into me from the back. He said he couldn’t stop in time, because we were going down a hill and there was a robot-

Int: Oh.

Indira: and the robot turned red, and he was like: “Well, his truck couldn’t stop in time.”   
Because he didn’t realise, he had such a heavy load and he went right into me.

Int: A truck nogal, like. \*Laughs.

Indira: A huge ass truck. A double trailer truck.

Int: And you were okay?

Indira: I mean I was not okay.

Int: \*Laughs. Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry.

Indira: That was really bad. That was recently actually.

Int: Oh good – I’m so sorry. Physically you’re alright now?

Indira: Ya, ya, ya , I’m alright.

Int: No broken bone, just a broken car?

Indira: Oh, I actually got stuck in a cash in transit heist on the highway.

Int: What? \*Laughs.

Indira: That was something ‘whoa’ for me like, ‘wow, oh my soul’, like you hear-

Int: How did it happen?

Indira: all of this stuff on the news and you’re like ‘oh well, that happened’.

Int: Yeah.

Indira: Like sure, but like people were like reversing and turning around in the middle of the highway! And there were like gunshots flying on the highway.

Int: Geez.

Indira: It was super intense.

Int: Were you on your own or were you with your mom?

Indira: No, I was with my mom.

Int: Oh my soul. And your mom just like threw into reverse and got you guys out of there?

Indira: Ya, we were like trying to reverse, and luckily there was this truck in front of us, also trying to make this huge U-turn. So, that sort of blocked all-

Int: Ya, like protected you guys.

Indira: Ya, but it was so intense.

Int: That is very intense.

Indira: Chaos on the highway. Never seen something like that ever.

Int: On Christmas, like two, three years ago, we were having Christmas at my uncles house, we’re chilling there we’re having a lovely thing. We have do this thing where we go looking for Santa Claus before we have presents. And there was a cash in transit heist right then and there on the highway, they blew up the truck and everything. And like our general response was like ‘lets go have a look’. So, towards gunfire and everything we’re all like poking our heads out of the bushes.

Indira: Oh my soul.

Int: It was so dumb, like it was so dumb. Ya, like geez, that sounds like horrendous. Joh, and your mom, was she freaking out or just?

Indira: No, oh my gosh we were quite freaked out. We also wanted to get out there like immediately.

Int: Yes.

Indira: We were like, ‘we need to get out of here now’. So, ya.

Int: Well, you got out, you’re safe now.

Indira: Ya.

Int: Wow, you’ve been through it child.

Indira: \*Laughs. Ya.

Int: Have you ever left South Africa?

Indira: No, I have not.

Int: So, you have never travelled anywhere internationally?

Indira: No.

Int: Would you like to go international?

Indira: I definitely would. Also like, when I’m done studying I would move overseas. Mostly because of the crime in this country, it’s not something that I would someday want my family grow up in, like it’s so unsafe and things just keep on getting worse.

Int: That’s the thing – that’s actually one of the questions, ‘do you see a future for yourself in South African currently?’.

Indira: Definitely not.

Int: Definitely not.

Indira: Like for the past few years I’ve been like, ‘I definitely do not see myself living here’, which is also one of the reasons why I chose a career in nursing, because it’s something I can definitely fulfil overseas and I can further my studies overseas as well, and it’s also something that’s like quite needed overseas.

Int: Yeah, they’re taking South African nurses very quickly.

Indira: Ya.

Int: Very, very quickly. I ask all the female participants this, so one of the aspects to this – like you said, for your family, you don’t know if this is going to be a good place for a family. Having kids is that something that influences your decision of leaving or not really?

Indira: Definitely, like I obviously do want to have kids one day, obviously not soon but eventually.

Int: \*Laughs.

Indira: \*Laughs. Eventually. And ya, when I think about that, I’m like ‘no way, my kids can’t grow up in this environment, it’s so crazy like’. I think about like just general stuff like we’ve seen or been through in life, like I can’t really pinpoint things but just like in general – in my like twenty years of my life, I’ve definitely been through stuff that I’ve been ‘mm, I don’t want to be here anymore’, and all my life it’s been just females. Like my mom, my sister, and my granny. So, for me it’s like I know what it’s like to grow up with like only females and have no male around, and like in South Africa that’s like a weird thing, like I don’t know why but you just like feel super unsafe, which shouldn’t be the case, like you should be able to be a single female and not feel unsafe in South Africa, but I think that’s just very hard.

Int: Ya, that’s not the case. So, this feeling of safety, have you always felt unsafe or is this something you grew up and realised?

Indira: I think it’s something I grew up and realised, like obviously when I was younger we were very protected, and being in like a small town.

Int: Ya, that does influence it.

Indira: It does influence that, not much – I didn’t see much, like sure there were break-ins or random stuff, but so intense like coming here and hearing more stuff about like women getting raped or getting assaulted and harassed, and stuff like that. So, ya as I grew up I think I realised, you know what-

Int: This is not a safe place.

Indira: This is not a safe place at all.

Int: Can you pinpoint that moment where you were like ‘okay, this is not a safe place’, or was it just something you realised slowly but surely?

Indira: I think overtime just with like small things, I think I just realised it, ya.

Int: Just the other question is, do you feel as though you are free in South Africa?

Indira: I do have a sense of freedom somewhat. Like you know what they say, ‘the grass isn’t always greener on the other side’, like if you’re moving overseas you can’t think ‘Oh my god, everything is going to be much better’. I do have some sense of freedom, ya. Um, because I’ve lived here and grown up here all my life, and have had lots of opportunities; I mean, I went to good schools, I could play sport, there’s lots of recreational things to do. So, ya, but in a sense sometimes you don’t have that freedom because you’re like, ‘oh shit, like it’s late at night and I can’t go somewhere on my own, because I am alone’, because its unsafe in South Africa. That’s the part of it that makes me feel a bit like not so free, so to say. Like I feel a bit like, ‘mmm I can’t really do this, it’s not safe’, or ‘I can’t really go here alone’, ya.

Int: Does that effect your sense of belonging or not?

Indira: Um, I think it kind of does, like… mmm, I’m trying to think.

Int: No worries, you can take your time.

Indira: Ya, I feel like, like being completely free would make me feel, ‘Okay, you know what, this is definitely where I want to be and whatever, I feel like I belong in South Africa, and I belong with these people in this place’, but then when you feel so unsafe, and you feel like you don’t have all that freedom, you’re like, ‘Well, do I really belong here?’, I don’t know, ya.

Int: I just want to take it back for a moment, could we say that if you feel safe in a place, and you feel like you belong, it would be a place where you could stay? So, it would be a more permanent sense of belonging than this temporary sense ‘belonging with people’?

Indira: Somewhat yes, I think so, because I feel like – for me being safe and feeling that sense of ‘Okay, I can do whatever I need to do and not feel threatened or harmed or whatever’, that’s important, like that would make me feel like, ‘Okay this is permanent, I’d like to stay here’, because I feel safe, I feel free to do whatever I want to whenever I want to like without worrying about, you know-

Int: Whatever.

Indira: people, ya.

Int: People. Um… sorry, I just lost my place… we’re going to move onto another question and maybe I’ll remember it. Um, so we live in a very specific way in South Africa, our houses are very fortified. So, I’m just very interested, what are the safety precautions that surround your house that you currently live in?

Indira: Okay so, we have like fencing and like electric fencing as well, like around our gates and stuff. And our gate has like sensors so in case we forget to close it or something, it automatically like sort of closes, stuff like that. We have an alarm in the house, and things like that. Um, and like the community or area that live in used to be like super safe, but now around Christmas time it’s so crazy how the crime rate just shoots up, like our community chat has been – we’ve had maybe like five break-ins in the past two weeks, it’s crazy. Um, so, at least our community has a lot of security that like drive around and make sure, they surveil the area and stuff, but still, ya.

Int: When you guys moved, you said your mom remarried, did you guys go into a new house, or did you move into a house that was already being lived in?

Indira: So, we moved into a new house and stuff, and it was so weird right, because in Lichtenburg it’s a small place and I wouldn’t say – okay four years ago, I would say it was much safer than what it is now over there. And we didn’t have any fencing, like most of the houses didn’t have any of that. Like the area we lived in-

Int: That’s very weird.

Indira: Like seriously, like there was never like gates around your house or motor gates and stuff like that. So, it was much safer, like you could go to the shops and leave your house unlocked by just closing the door and leaving, like it wasn’t such a big deal. So, when I moved here and I was like, ‘oh wait, you can’t do that’, like ‘no’. My granny was still staying there in Lichtenburg, and she moved to Joburg with us this year, and so… she’s obviously old and she’s used to not locking the house and leaving the gate open, and I’m just like, ‘you can’t do that, like you can’t do that here’. Like we have to keep reminding her, like, ‘hey, you need to lock your gate’, like-

Int: ‘No, granny’.

Indira: Ya, you can’t do that. So, it just makes me realise that ‘wow, it’s quite unsafe’. So, ya.

Int: When – I don’t know if you were involved in the process of looking for the new home, um, but how high did safety rank on the things that you wanted? So, like ‘I want a pool, I want a garden, and I want to be in a safe area’.

Indira: Oh, it was very important for us.

Int: Oh okay.

Indira: Ya, it was quite important for us because, um, we didn’t want to – so, there were lots of nice places we found, but we were like ‘oh but this area is dingy’, or ‘this area is not safe’, or ‘this place doesn’t have enough gates or security’, so it was a very big thing for us, especially because during the day my dad works and my mom is alone at home, and obviously I was going to school and stuff, so for us it was like, ‘okay we need to be somewhere safe’ and ya. So, it was a very big thing, especially because we know that living here is not quite safe, as a South African woman especially it’s not one hundred percent just live anywhere.

Int: Exactly ya. So, you said when you were growing up, you lived in a house full of women, it was you, your mom, your gran, and your older sister. And now you move into a house with – it’s your moms new husband?

Indira: Ya, ya. My stepdad.

Int: Was it weird having a guy in the house? \*Laughs.

Indira: Very weird! Like we were like – like my mom had to speak to us before the time about- \*Laughs.

Int: We are now living with a man.

Indira: It was so weird! Like, you know, you actually have to make sure that like you have to be decent all the time and stuff. \*Laughs. Cause like, not like we were not decent all the time, but we were just girls in the house, like.

Int: Exactly.

Indira: Ya, it was very different. It was so weird, but I feel like I got used to it eventually, didn’t take me too long. My stepdad is also a very nice guy, very kind, very open minded-

Int: Which helps.

Indira: And has been very good to us. Ya, and he’s a funny guy also, which makes things nice, ya. It’s very different.

Int: Did you feel like he was an aspect of safety, having a man live with you or because you lived with just women it didn’t even cross your mind?

Indira: I wouldn’t say I felt unsafe because we were always only females before, like we had our family next door and stuff. But it definitely made a difference, like it felt a bit more save having a male in the house now and stuff. Like it did play a role in making me feel more safe and more comfortable, ya.

Int: So, when you go out – I take it you go out, you’re a student.

Indira: Ya, definitely.

Int: Do you always go out with a big group of friends, or do you sometimes venture out on your own or not at all?

Indira: I definitely do venture out on my own sometimes.

Int: Oo, power.

Indira: Ya. \*Laughs. So, ya, I definitely do. More than like – when I’m here in Pretoria where I’m studying and stuff, I go out more on my own than with a group of people, but in Johannesburg I tend to go out with a big group of people.

Int: Is it different going out in Pretoria versus Joburg?

Indira: I would say it’s more or less the same.

Int: About the same type of vibe?

Indira: Definitely.

Int: I must say the Joburg clubs are something else. I’ve been to them like twice and they’re very big. Oh that’s the other thing I wanted to ask you, so, when we look at belonging one of the aspects is safety and this sense of safety, having this feeling of home. The other way of looking at this, if we want to remove safety out of the equation, is whether you feel like you have a voice in a place or within a community. Do you feel like you have a voice in South Africa as a woman?

Indira: Not totally. I feel like women are not heard, in a lot of aspects of things. But ya, I don’t know.

Int: Not too sure?

Indira: Not completely. Like I feel like we could have more of a say, and if we did, things wouldn’t be this way, like there wouldn’t be such a high crime rate for women especially. There’s lots of crimes, and assaults and harassment. And just theft happens with them. Like I feel like if we had more of a voice things would be different. So, no we don’t completely have,

Int: A voice.

Indira: Yeah.

Int: Are there any daily safety precautions that you take?

Indira: Yes, I would say so, like when I get into my car I make sure I lock my car and my handbag is never like…

Int: Visible, yeah.

Indira: Visible, ya. Stuff like that um… my apartment building is very safe, but I did have an incident once.

Int: Oof.

Indira: This is like weird for me, cause I still don’t know what happened that time. I just moved into this building and it’s super safe, it has like scanning with our fingerprints and, um.

Int: Oh it’s Studios?

Indira: No, at Urban Quarters.

Int: Oh I know exactly where they are, ya.

Indira: So, it was a Sunday morning and some Sundays – like some weekends, us nurses, we work at the hospital if we need to catch up and stuff. And I would think that students don’t wake up so early on a Sunday morning, like I am about to wake up at like half past five to work a full twelve-hour shift, from seven to seven. And some random guy knocks at my door at six am. And I’m buys getting done to get to work, and I found it so random, that like someone would knock at my door so early or just in general. I don’t know anyone in my building really, so that was weird for me. I open the door and I’m like, “Hi, what do you want?”  
And this dude is like well dressed. He’s like fully dressed, he doesn’t smell like he’s been drinking, he doesn’t look drunk or high or anything. And he tells me, ‘oh, he’s lost whatever’. So, I’m like, in the back of my mind I’m like, ‘okay, if you’re lost, how do you live here, because no one has access to out building unless you live there, unless your friend let you in, but then you wouldn’t be alone’.

Int: Exactly, ya.

Indira: So, I decided to play along. I pretended I was dumb – I always tend to like…

Int: Downplay?

Indira: Ya. Anyway, he tells me his battery is dying and he needs to borrow my phone to call someone.

Int: Ya.

Indira: So, I was like ‘okay, sure’. He takes out his phone and I happen to notice that his phone is on 54 percent. Okay. So, now I’m like ‘okay’, I just ignored it, ‘here’s my phone’, like I’m holding my phone while he is dialling this number, but he doesn’t dial anymore he just dials some random shit while looking at his phone for a number.

Int: Yeah, yeah.

Indira: And I was like, ‘okay?’. And then I freaked out, because I got scared.

Int: Of course.

Indira: Like, ‘what the hell is this guy going to do?’, like I’m standing next to him, but I don’t know him and I don’t know what he’s about to do with me. Like my door is open to my apartment, like I don’t know. So, I was like, “Here’s my phone, while you’re calling, I just want to get my laptop.”  
Because I was getting late, and I needed to leave for campus. So, I leave my phone with him at the door. I close my door. \*Laughs. I get all my stuff and I come back out. I lock my door, and I’m like, “Oh, are you done? Where’s my phone?”  
 So, he hands me his phone, and he’s like, “Oh, I’m done, thank you.”  
And then I was like, “That’s not my phone.”  
And I noticed his phone in the corner of his back pocket. So, I was quite pissed off and scared at this point.

Int: Of course, yes.

Indira: So, I just walked past him and grabbed my phone from his back pocket and I just walked.

Int: What a girl boss.

Indira: And I was just like so scared, and then I got to my – I didn’t even take the lift because I was so sacred. I took the stairs.

Int: Did you like run down the stairs or did you just like walk?

Indira: No, I just walked. And he didn’t even follow me, so I was like, ‘okay, well’, and then I sat in my car for a bit to see where he’d go and stuff, because you can see from the top of my building whatever, and this guy – I don’t know where he was going. And till today, I don’t know who he is, what he was doing, where he was going, but I felt so unsafe that, that entire week I didn’t stay at my apartment.

Int: Geez, it has such a big effect?

Indira: Ya, because I didn’t like know if this guy was going to come back or what he wanted. Like was he watching me the whole time? Like I don’t know, it was super scary.

Int: Did you feel a sense of like being violated or was it more like ‘this is really scary’?

Indira: I though that it was really scary, like at first I was like, ‘okay that’s something very weird to happen to someone’, I never thought something like that would ever happen, but I don’t know. I think in a sense I felt my… not my space was violated, but somewhat I felt like, that’s just so crazy. Like what even gave this guy the…

Int: The audacity.

Indira: Ya, what was he thinking, or what – till today, I don’t know what he wanted.

Int: And that’s a scary thought as well.

Indira: Like the number he dialled on my phone did not make sense. It was like random digits, like 999 at the end, like random shit, and I’m like, ‘okay well, what did you really want?’.

Int: Yeah, exactly. No, it’s scary to think about, like if this what you’re here for, firstly you’re very well-dressed, seeming unconspic – inconspicuous, sorry English. And it’s not your own home, basically.

Indira: Ya, ya, ya.

Int: And has the audacity to pull these things. I’m very sorry you had to go through that, that’s not a fun thing. And then you couldn’t stay there for a week.

Indira: Yeah, I just felt super scared. In the beginning, cause we have camaras and stuff in like the passage of the building, but… I don’t know, I just was so freaked out and I wasn’t even staying there the whole week, that I completely just forgot to go and ask the security to be like, ‘can you go back on the camara and see what happened’, cause I was just so freaked out, jus…

Int: That’s very scary, I’m so sorry. That very scary to go through. Are there places in South Africa where you feel you just can’t go as a woman?

Indira: So, I don’t know if this is like a thing, but like in every city or whatever, it has town or a CBD.

Int: Yes.

Indira: This like ya. Um, I feel like that’s the most unsafe place to be.

Int: Pretoria CBD, ya.

Indira: Whether it’s Pretoria or Joburg or wherever you are-

Int: Okay, like we like have Pretoria CBD and then there’s Hillbrow.

Indira: Okay, ya, I just like – I don’t know what it is about that, but I just feel so unsafe that I don’t go there. Like when I just started travelling to Pretoria, I never used to stay here, and I had to drive through town to get to campus. And I was jus like, ‘this is so dodge’. So, those are the kind of places you try to avoid. So, ya I’d say those are very unsafe.

Int: CBD is somewhere you wouldn’t go.

Indira: No, not easily.

Int: You’d go if you had to.

Indira: Ya.

Int: Okay so, let’s say that we have a bunch of international students coming over to South Africa, and they want to go on a night out, and I come to like, “Hey, listen, these kids are going out on a night out, we need to give them like a survival guide, of like what to do and what not to do.”  
What would you tell them?

Indira: I would definitely tell them to, firstly, phones are important to watch out for, because I feel like it’s the most common thing that gets stolen on a night out, like more than wallets I’d say. I feel like phones get stolen like way more often. And um, just like if you are a female, then always be with another friend, like don’t be along especially if you are like drunk or something, because I feel like guys take advantage of that sometimes, so ya. Definitely that, and just like your personal belongings and stuff, um. If you’re with your own car just make sure it’s locked, because that is something that people tend to do, like with remote jamming and stuff. Ya.

Int: Um, so, I asked you earlier, are there specific moments where you feel South Africa, but I’m going to change it now. Are there specific moments or specific places where you feel ‘at home’, where you feel like you belong?

Indira: Um.

Int: It can be home.

Indira: Ya. I feel like… I would say so, yes. So, I think um, not specifically in my home, but I feel like when I’m with my granny for some odd reason that feels like I belong, somehow. Very close to her, grew up with her most of the time, so that would be like a major sense of belonging for me. And ya, also my friends, we ‘re very close and ya.

Int: One of the last few questions. So, what is your biggest fear living in South Africa?

Indira: Well, lately I think my biggest fear has been like getting assaulted or something like that. Um, ya I think that’s a big thing for me

Int: You’re going to be a nurse one day. The aspect of one day preforming a rape kit, is that something that scares you, is that something you’re apprehensive about, or do you think you’ll be able to handle it with the training that you will receive.

Indira: I think it’s something that I’d be able to handle, but I feel like it would also be something very emotional for me to go through. Ya, whether it’s someone I don’t know, or myself, or anyone, I think it would stull be emotional, like you somehow feel for that other person, because it’s so – it’s something so serious, and ya, I don’t know. But I think I would be able to deal with it.

Int: In South Africa we, like we just spoke about the safety precautions that you take and then there are also our house being built like fortresses. So, we create this sense of safety, this manufactured sense of safety, is this safety real or is it a façade that we created?

Indira: I feel like somewhat it can be safe, um, but at the same time, no matter how safe you make things or how well reinforced your house is with security measures, or how much you make sure your bag is next you and your phone’s in your pocket put away all the time, no matter how many of these safety precautions you put into place, you are still open to being a victim or like being, like having your things stolen or having something happen to you. So, I feel like, ya it could just be a whole façade of, ya, I don’t know.

Int: So, ya, we’re just going to go a little bit back with a little bit more questions about South Africa, and then we’re going to be done for today. So, being a South African, you said you’ve never exited the country, do you have any – how would you describe South Africans?

Indira: I would say that we are very diverse, especially in terms of culture and stuff. And… mostly friendly.

Int: Mostly friendly. \*Laughs.

Indira: \*Laughs. I think like some places, some cities, some areas are friendlier than others, some would say, I don’t know. Um, ya. But South Africans are very unique in their thinking I would say, um ya. Some racial groups or some cultural groups obviously being more open minded or more culturally aware than others, but other than that, ya.

Int: Well, talking about this, the different cultures of South Africa, it’s been said that South Africa has a culture of violence. Would you say that’s true, that South Africans are violent people?

Indira: I think so, um in a sense they definitely can be. Ya, I don’t know why, but it’s like a vicious cycle where one like crime – there just like crime on top of crime and it just continues. And, I feel like criminals – and then say you have kids and stuff like that, or even people living in poverty, instead of finding a way of doing things, obviously I can’t put myself in that situation, I can’t know what they are going through, but I do feel like there are other ways of sort getting the things other than hurting others to gain something. But ya, I think that, ya it just like carries on from each generation, so ya.

Int: So, there’s a theorist that I use quite often throughout my research and she basically, she a South African woman. She wrote this book its called, ‘Rape: A South African nightmare’, it’s a fantastic book, but she says in it, we’re coming to a point where – South African women are being hunted, like there’s no other way to put it. And how do we stop this? well, one option is women saying ‘I’ve had enough’, and they start fighting back, but the problem is that if we fight violence with violence it’s going to end up with more violence. Is that something you agree with, or is that something you think we should do, is fight back?

Indira: I definitely agree. I feel like if you’re fighting something with violence or if you act out in a violent way about something, it just leads to more chaos and violence. I don’t think that’s actually a fix or solution to it. Um, but there needs to be some involvement of people higher up in the country, who are willing to make the change and put their foot down and say, “You know what, we are going to stand up for South African women, and we’re changing policies, and we’re putting penalties into place that actually they take seriously. Where you can’t pay your way out of it or you cant just, ya you can’t just talk your way out of it.”   
So, ya, I think that would a major change which hasn’t been taking place.

Int: Ya, I agree with you one hundred percent. Ya, that basically all the questions that I have. If you have any questions or concerns, deep-seated worries, you can ask them now.

Indira: All good.

Int: You also have my email address, so if you do have any questions or concerns or you see anything that might be applicable in this situation, you are more than welcome to send me an email. And then ya, we’ll deal with it then.

Indira: Thank you that perfect.

Int: Ya, no, thanks for your time and thank you for your honesty and your answers, like I know it’s not always an easy conversation to have.

Indira: No.

Int: But thank you so much for doing all of this.

Indira: No problem, thank you.

Int: Awesome.