Individual Interview 18 – Charlotte

(Full time: 54:06)

Int: Hi \*Charlotte.

Charlotte: Hi.

Int: How you?

Charlotte: How’s it going? I’m fantastic, thank you. \*Laughs.

Int: I’m glad. What’s it – it’s like half-past five that side now, quarter to six?

Charlotte: Mm, it is. In the afternoon.

Int: Well, how was your day?

Charlotte: It was really good, we just went sight-seeing. Was a tourist today so that was a lot of fun.

Int: Rather. How’s the future looking for me?

Charlotte: Fantastic.

Int: I’m glad.

Charlotte: \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs. Um, so just really quickly – you have read and understand the informed consent form?

Charlotte: \*Nods. Mm, I have.

Int: Great. If you have any questions or concerns you would like to ask, you can ask them now before we get started.

Charlotte: Okay, I think I’m okay.

Int: Great. Ya, just a quick overview of what we’re going to do today. We’re just going to talk about the concept of belonging but more the emotional side of belonging. So, we’re not going to be talking about the groups which you belong to, but more about what those groups make you feel and how they make you feel. Um, then we’re going to be talking about safety, your perception of safety in South Africa. And then also how it has changed now that you have gone to Australia. And then we’re going to bring it together and look at how those two work together. Sound good?

Charlotte: All good, I’m ready.

Int: Great. So before we get into it, I just want to get a general view you are as a person. So, how old are you, are you studying, are you working, where did you grow up, did you move around a lot as a kid. And ya.

Charlotte: Okay, so, I just turned 24.

Int: \*Claps.

Charlotte: Thank you, thank you. I live – well I live in Pretoria, but I’m in Australia now studying. In Australia I’m currently studying my Masters in education. It’s a year and a half, I’m about a year through it. But ya, I’m probably panning on moving to Australia. But ya, I grew up in Pretoria, in the beautiful area of Cornwall and I’ve stayed there basically my whole life. I did live in Midstream for a bit, but it was basically Cornwall the entire time. But ya, Pretoria is beautiful. Beautiful Jacarandas. I was really happy growing up there.

Int: So, you grew up in Pretoria – like in one house or did you move around a bit in your childhood or not?

Charlotte: Ah no, I didn’t move around a lot. I think I moved three times. So, I was born in the house and then stayed there for a few years. And then I moved to… ah, Midstream and then went to Midstream, the school Midstream. And then I… in grade 1, I moved to Cornwall Hill, the house there, and then I basically stayed there for most of my life. So, ya three houses – easy, not too much moving.

Int: And out of those three house, which one would you say was home for you.

Charlotte: For sure Cornwall, I loved Cornwall especially with the estate, ya. Because you know all my – because obviously a lot of the Cornwall peoples went to and lived in Cornwall estate, so I got to see my friends, walk to my friends. Beautiful community. So, I was really lucky for that.

Int: So, you didn’t move around a lot as a kid but you did move, and that can be very stressful as a kid, especially as a kid.

Charlotte: \*Nods. Mm.

Int: Do you remember any of those moves?

Charlotte: Yes, I remember when I went from Midstream to Cornwall. You know, I think I had one friend in Cornwall. You know, you’re very scared making friends, you know, ‘Am I going to fit in? What happens if I don’t make any friends?’. You know, all those feelings that you normally feel. And I think I did struggle to fit in a little bit. It took me a bit of time, I think it took me a good few years to finally find my people and ya. But I eventually got there after a few years.

Int: And that’s when it started feeling like home, or did it start feeling like home before that?

Charlotte: It definitely felt like home before that because I had my family. You know, I was very luck to have a beautiful family. But I’m not going to lie it did help having a few, like having a few community of friends who you are really close to and that did add to the feeling of belonging.

Int: So, this feeling of belonging. How would you describe that?

Charlotte: Um… I think it’s a feeling of comfort, comfort. You know, you feel comfortable around people and in your environment. You just feel like you can be yourself.

Int: And now that you have well moved to Australia, you’ve been there for what – a year maybe?

Charlotte: Mm, ya a year.

Int: And it feels like home or are you still trying to find your feet?

Charlotte: You know, it’s a – it’s ups and down, ups and downs, ups and downs, for sure. It doesn’t quite feel like home yet, you know South Africa will always be my home and I don’t think I will ever get rid of that feeling. I think it will always be there especially because I have family there. But ya, it’s a journey. Like my uncle said to me, “You know it’s highs and lows, but it will start to even out through the years.” My aunt said that she took five years to get used to Australia, you know, because you’ve got to find your people and people are in their little bubble and their not really looking to make new friends, and you know, really put themselves out there. Ya so, um ya, not feeling like I quite belong yet, but I think it will take a good few years before I feel like it’s home. But nothing will ever replace South Africa, where I was born.

Int: Why do you think that is?

Charlotte: I think – you know what, I think it’s the people, for sure. You know, people in South Africa are different to people in Australia, um, it’s difficult dealing with people you’re not used to. Like in South Africa we’re so friendly, loving, you know, we’re a community. But here, there’s a whole bunch of different people and you just have to get used to that. but it definitely does – you struggle a little bit with that feeling because you’re so used to being comfortable with being around your people feeling like you belong in your area and then you go to a new area where there are people you don’t know, and you have to get to know, and an environment that you don’t know. So, definitely it takes time, for sure.

Int: And the move, I take it has been a bit though, it has been a bit dreading. What ahs that whole experience been like?

Charlotte: Um, you know, it’s been… you know, it’s actually been better than I thought. I think I have acclimatised and got used to everything quite quickly, but ya it’s definitely been a lot of – you know, there a re a lot of things that you don’t expect um, with like the people and the surroundings. Getting used to the new house – I’m lucky that I’ve got my family here. I’m staying with my aunt and uncle and they definitely help me meet people and find – go to new places – or teach me how to go on the train for the first time because these are all things out of my comfort zone that I have never done. So, these little things are – you know, I’ve always said that you’ve just got to, um, celebrate the little things, like getting on the train for the first time. So, it’s been quite difficult but I’m doing better with my family for sure.

Int: So, you’ve said that you’ve missed the South Africans. South Africa is a country notorious for having a lot of issues.

Charlotte: Ah yes.

Int: What are the things - \*Laughs.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. Sorry, what are the things?

Int: That you don’t miss?

Charlotte: Ah, the safety thing – like feeling I’m constantly under threat, and have to look out for myself. And obviously racism, obviously was a big thing as well. So, I’m not int hat environment here which has been quite refreshing. Like the loadshedding even – oh my goodness, I forgot about that. There’s no loadshedding here. I remember the one evening the tree fell on to the lines and the electricity went off at like ten o’clock at night, and my aunt and uncle – the panicked, like calling all these people like ‘What’s happening, what’s happening?’, and I’m just like, ‘Chill’. You know, I’m like ‘No electricity, no problem – it’s fine’. But then –

Int: \*Laughs.

Charlotte: Literally, I was laughing at them. I was like, ‘Come one guys, this is nothing’. And they don’t have any torches or candles or anything because they’re not prepared for any of this. But um, ya. But then I went back not in December for holiday, and going back to five hours of loadshedding, I definitely have not missed that. That has been crazy, I couldn’t believe that situation that we’re in.

Int: Ya, the amount of jealously I have for you not having this is actually ridiculous. Loadshedding is just-

Charlotte: It’s so nice – because your whole life revolves around it, literally. You have to plan everything around it.

Int: Exactly.

Charlotte: And then also, even if you do have inverters or a generator, the signal isn’t good. It effects the signal, so.

Int: Oh ya.

Charlotte: You can’t really escape it at all.

Int: Nah, it’s mad. Honestly it’s mad. But like you just said you came back now in December – what was that trip like?

Charlotte: Oof, you know when it’s… it’s quite eye opening, I think it helped me realise that I want to be here. Like you have like little Australian googles on, you know you see everything through a different lens. But like the first thing that happened was um… as soon as I landed, I waited so long to get my bag and it was after like a fifteen-hour flight so I was exhausted. And then my bag comes off the trolley or whatever and it’s open. It broke – nothing was stolen luckily, quite shocked. But ya, my bag was open, it was broken, obviously it was thrown. So then I went to the baggage people and they said, “Aha, you’ve over packed it we can’t help you.” And they didn’t even try to help me, because they didn’t even – because the one guy wanted to weigh my bag and was like, “Okay, lets figure this out.” But then the manager or whoever, said “No, you can’t do it.” And then, um, I was with \*Gabrielle, and my mom, and then it got a little bit heated because they wouldn’t even allow me to um… they wouldn’t even allow me to check it out, they just said ‘No’ without even a second thought. So that definitely, I was like, “Is this what I’m coming back for?” I have even been ten minutes and I’m fighting, you know. There’s no acceptance, there’s no understanding or sincerity in the situation. And they also don’t go about it nicely. I felt attacked, you know. And I’m very nice, so that was a bit difficult. But then… ah I forgot, you know you become quite complacent with being um safe here, you know I didn’t have to worry about my bag or anything. My bags, you know my handbags, or my cell phones, so I forgot how difficult it is to always be on the look out and make sure I’m safe, to make sure my cell phone is not going to be stolen. So, that was very difficult and I definitely forgot about that. It was mixed feelings coming back, mixed emotions, because you know I’m so happy to see my family but there’s a whole – loadshedding, and safety problems, and you just feel like you can’t escape it. You know, you don’t know what to do to get out of that. Defiantly conflicting, quite difficult to get used to.

Int: Except for friends and family, what was that thing when you got back to South Africa that you were like ‘Ah I’m back here’. Like what made you happy to come back, except for family and friends.

Charlotte: Um… that’s a really good question… um, I think – I don’t know, I think it honestly just was driving the roads and you know um, it was just beautiful just seeing my area and my trees, and all the beautiful nature and all the – so, the one thing that I definitely felt that I was back home, was when I went to a restaurant, we sat down and we got doo service. Over here you have to – most of the restaurants you have to go to a table like a reception area pay there, sometimes there aren’t waitresses who come and serve you – it’s very weird.

Int: It is weird.

Charlotte: So, when I went to restaurants – it is very weird, and I’m like, ‘How do I do this’. So um, ya definitely going the restaurants and then sitting and getting good service and then, you know, for sure, I think it would be that.

Int: I have a friend of mine, he did a gap year in Australia and the weirdest thing for him is that you pour your own petrol. There aren’t petrol attendants.

Charlotte: \*Gasps. Yes! That for sure, I hated that – I hate that I have to get out to pour my own petrol, it’s so stressful. So, yes when I got back and got to do that, yes, I think that is a good example, ah thank goodness, I could just sit in my car and be like, ‘Thank you so much’. That is amazing.

Int: So, we’re just going to speak a bit about the safety thing. Do you feel safe in South Africa?

Charlotte: Um… mm, not, not really. I feel like I constantly-

Int: Does that-

Charlotte: Sorry. I feel like I constantly have to be on guard, I have to constantly check what I am doing and where I am, so yes.

Int: Is that something you have felt throughout your life, or is that something that has changed?

Charlotte: No, something that I have definitely felt throughout my life. And you know, especially being a girl as well which makes it a lot worse, my parent and especially my mom, always taught me to be on guard and to check, and just always make sure you are safe. You know, when I go out at night I send her my location, when I’m Ubering I send her my live location so that she knows where I am. So, my family has always been safety orientated from when I was little, because I think – ya, especially being a girl, it is a responsibility that we have to look after ourselves. And we can only do that, so my parents were like, ‘You have to know, this is important, and it’s something that you have to do for the rest of your life’. So, ya it was from when I was little.

Int: And so, you have spoken a lot about this consciousness of your safety. And I think that is something that a lot of South Africans feel, like you are always on guard-

Charlotte: \*Nods. Mm.

Int: You always on the edge, like ‘Where is my phone, where is my handbag’, like always checking if you are safe. Did that carry with you to Australia?

Charlotte: Definitely. I remember, it was my first week there and my aunt and uncle, they live in a really nice area. They have a gate and you use your remote to open the gate, and my cousin sent me a message, ‘Hey listen \*Charlotte, please open the gate for me.” So, I said, “Sure thing.” So I went to sit outside on the stoop and I opened the gate and I sat there and waited for my cousin to come, because I’m not going to sit here with this open gate, where whoever could walk in.

Int: No, exactly.

Charlotte: Exactly, that’s the way I think. So, my cousin comes back and he’s like, “Why are you sitting here, what it going on?” And I said, “I’m just making sure it’s safe and that no one comes in and steals anything,a dn that no strangers walk into our garden.”

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: And he was like, “Charlotte, this is Australia, you don’t need to do this.”

Int: So, like how long were you sitting out there by the gate, literally just sitting there waiting for your cousin to come.

Charlotte: Ya. I waited like twenty minutes, like a good twenty minutes.

Int: Geez.

Charlotte: I really waited, and I was like, ‘Where’s this man, is he coming?; come one Kev’. So, ya my family laugh at that because it’s just, you know, a South African thing of just being aware all the time.

Int: Yes, and do you still feel that thing where you have to like be on guard or has that kind of left a bit?

Charlotte: No, I will always be on guard and I don’t think that will ever leave me. And I feel that even though I feel that South Africa isn’t safe, as soon as you become complacent that’s when bad things start to happen. Like my one friend, she lives in the Netherlands, the safest place ever and she left her bike outside without a lock, no actually it did have a lock. She quickly went to a restaurant, came back, and her bike was stolen. So, where you got there’s theft and there’s a fear, you can’t just be complacent because you just – even though South Africa is not that safe, it does happen in other places, just in South Africa it’s just a little bit higher than other places.

Int: So, we just spoke about the gate now and South Africans build their houses in a very specific way. I mean we build fortresses, its not really a house, it’s insane what our houses look like.

Charlotte: \*Laughs.

Int: So, the house you have back in South Africa, what does it look like in terms of safety.

Charlotte: So, we actually, we – can’t remember when we got this house, but we sort of renovated it a bit, but we kept the old windows and we changed the doors and stuff, but the windows stayed the same and it was something we were going to change maybe later on. But, um, our house – and that was – so, I actually live downstairs. We have a double story house, and it’s obviously brick so it’s quite secure and everything. And um, I woke – my dog was sleeping with me – and I woke up to this weird sound. So, the way that my room is situated is that I have a ‘study room’ and then my room, so the study leads into my room. I woke up, my dog woke me up. She’s a boxer named Daisy.

Int: Ah, I love a boxer.

Charlotte: And she was sitting up on my bed – most beautiful dogs ever, I love Daisy.

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: So she was sitting up alert – she had been alerted to something. And then I walked out and I don’t sleep with my windows open because I’m down stairs, and I walk into my study and I see that my window is completely off its hinges. You know the ones you have to lock closed.

Int: Ya, ya, it’s like a latch.

Charlotte: It’s completely open to the back of the window; completely pulled out, and I was standing there, and my dog just started growing and it was terrifying. So, I ran up stairs and got my dad, and then we let my dog out and she went absolutely ballistic. She went crazy. So, someone was there trying to break-in. And then my dad then obviously checked the house and made sure everything was fine, and then said, “You’re sleeping with us tonight.” So, I went up stairs and stayed in their room. And the next morning I – my dad came and woke me up and he said, “I just want to quickly show you something.” So then we went outside and there had been screwdriver marks that were put into my window. Um, so there had been people attempting to break-in and my laptop was on the table in the room, but they just didn’t get that far. But I was extremely lucky that my dog woke me up, because I could have woken up to them in my room, in my study room right next to me. And then I don’t know what would have happened. So, definitely my guardian angels were looking after me or my dog was my guardian angel. And um, ya then we got aluminium windows, the ones where you don’t latch them in, you just close them and then lock it in – you know when you just close it and then there just that hook.

Int: Ya, ya.

Charlotte: We did that. So our house is definitely now – we have aluminium doors, we have aluminium windows. So, definitely safety was a big issue, so we built our house to be safe. I was wooden frames and that’s how they got in.

Int: And that’s like so annoying because old – I take it that you guys took an old house and renovated it a bit.

Charlotte: \*Nods.

Int: And those old – I’m an old soul, I love old windows-

Charlotte: Yes! They have character you know.

Int: Ya, it’s got character, exactly. It’s not like everything out there. Um, do you mind if we talk about this experience for a bit?

Charlotte: Yes, we can.

Int: Great. Um, thank God you had your dog there who woke you up. This OG boxer, we love a boxer.

Charlotte: \*Laughs.

Int: So, you wake up – what are the emotions going on in this situation when you realise the window’s gone, the dog is freaking out, ‘I have to go get my dad’.

Charlotte: I think the first feeling I felt was confusion, because I was like, ‘I don’t leave the windows open, what’s going on? I wouldn’t do something like that’. But as soon as I saw how far the window was pushed open, I think it’s like a feeling of terror. You know when you are like frozen in fear and you’re tyring to figure out what to do, because I’m trying to figure out, if I go up stairs I’m leaving this – I don’t want to touch the window. I’m not going to touch it because they could be standing right there and I’m thinking do I leave this open where they could quickly run in, you know, and steal our stuff; do I close this window and potentially, you know, put myself in harm’s way; do I quickly run up stairs to my dad, how do I explain it to my dad. So, it’s like confusion and terror and you just don’t know what to do. So, ya it’s not a great feeling but I definitely remember feeling extremely scared and confused.

Int: I mean it must be terrible, it’s your own house, and you’re really scared and confused.

Charlotte: Ya.

Int: Did you feel violated in any way or not really?

Charlotte: Ya of course because you don’t really – home is your safe space, it’s the place where you think you can be yourself and you can relax and not have to be on guard all the time. So, I felt like my personal space had been invaded. I felt like I had been violated. You know, and then it’s my whole family that’s scared. It’s just quite sad that people have to go through that, and I’m luck with my experience that it wasn’t so bad. There people that have been through a lot worse. And I live in a relatively – a very safe estate, one of the best estates, so for that to happen, you know where there are guards and stuff, and you wonder how did they get in, what did they do. Its scary, because now you know you’re going to have to be in – for the rest of the time you’re living there you’re going to have to be worrying about your safety constantly in a place that is yours, the one place that is yours is not like yours anymore.

Int: Ya, no, like you say it could have been worse but the simple fact of the matter is that it happened. And it’s a terrible thing, and I’m so sorry that you had to go through that.

Charlotte: Thank you.

Int: This feeling that it you feel violated – that I’m scared – how long did that take to leave and things to go back to normal?

Charlotte: Oh, it took quite a while because, you know, my family was quite scared after that as well; very conscious of everything that was going on as well. So, I don’t know if that feeling ever truly leaves. I think you will always carry a little bit of that feeling, a little bit of that worry. Because not you’re going to be constantly worried wherever you go, like even here when I hear something in the night I’m like, ‘Oh what was that’, you know. So, I don’t think it truly leaves – I’ve gotten over it, and made my peace with that and whatever, but I think it does stay with you a little bit.

Int: I’m sorry that it has stuck with you like this. And I think that is a normal thing – we live our lives thinking that it happens to other people or it happens in other areas.

Charlotte: Mm.

Int: And then it happens to you.

Charlotte: Exactly. Ya, because it dictates your actions, you know. What you do, it dictates everything.

Int: So, now you’re living in Australia – do you feel safe living in Australia?

Charlotte: Um… I’m starting to feel safe, that’s what I can say because I’m still – still getting used to how I can at a café leave my laptop on the table and um, you know, it’s not a big issue if you don’t lock your doors and stuff. I’m starting to get used to that, but I’m definitely – I would say I feel relatively safe and it’s quite a nice feeling not to constantly have to be on guard, but I do still always – I do still worry a little. so, I do feel some times – I do feel safe, but I do some times worry about safety.

Int: Which is normal. You grow – you spend your entire life, I mean you were here for like 23 years or 22 years. That’s like 22 years of experiences of being conscious of your safety, so it’s a long time that you’ve learnt to be this way.

Charlotte: \*Nods. Exactly.

Int: And then you move to a country and you’re suddenly just expected to accept the fact that you don’t have to lock your doors at night – that blows my mind. I could never sleep with my doors unlocked.

Charlotte: I know, I don’t know how they do it. It’s so weird. When people tell me this, I’m like ‘Oh my goodness’, and then they just say, “Ag \*Charlotte, you’re just South African. That how you can tell you’re South African.”

Int: Ya. Is that literally what they say? ‘Ah it’s because you’re South African, that’s why you feel this way’.

Charlotte: \*Nods, Ya, that’s what they say because there quite a big community of South Africans here, so a lot of people feel the way that I do.

Int: I don’t blame them. But even as we’re talking now, there’s a window behind you and there no burglar bars on that thing! It’s blowing my mind for a second, like geez.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. I know. It’s weird hey. You have no burglar bars, you have no nothing, you don’t stress. It’s all good. Weird.

Int: No alarm system or anything like that?

Charlotte: So, this isn’t actually my house, but at my house that I stay at – is there an alarm system, that’s a good question. I don’t even know. I don’t think so, I really don’t think so because you just lock the doors and then go to bed. We have a gate, and then we lock the doors and go to bed. But a lot of the times, because obviously we’re a bit older, we come home a bit later than the time that my aunt and uncle go to bed. So, we – they leave the back door open for us, so that’s.

Int: Just open?

Charlotte: Just open, no worries. We just come through, lock the gate and ya.

Int: I never – like I know people who live in like Silver Lakes estate who won’t even leave their doors unlocked.

Charlotte: Exactly.

Int: And that’s the safest.

Charlotte: I was about to say, and that a very very nice, safe estate.

Int: Um, so – I’m sorry, the dog is just busy have a bit of a freak out.

Charlotte: No worries.

Int: So, there are daily safety precautions that we take as South Africans just to make sure we’re safe. Um, what are some of the safety precautions that you took during your time here in South Africa.

Charlotte: The one is that I always have my phone and that its fully charged, in case of an emergency. That is really something I really live by. And the other one is that someone – my mom, usually my mom – but someone always knew where I was going. And um, I always knew the area I was going to, I always knew where was going to park and how that situation was. Always when I drove somewhere at night, um, my bag – or even during the day – my bag was never seen; it was never on the chair next to me, it was always hidden. My cell phone was also quite hidden so that no one could ever see it. The one thing that my mom always taught me was – because that had started doing this to people – when you’re driving at night and like somebody is sitting next to you in the car. So, you’re driving and there’s a passenger and they’re on their phone, you can’t do that because that light of the cell phone alerts other people that you have a cell phone in your hand and they try to take it from you. So, that’s what happened in I think Nellmapius they started doing that to people, because of the light they broke the window and stole the phone. Those are some of the few things that I did just to make sure that I’m aware and as safe as I can be, you know just be as safe as you can be that’s the main thing I try to do because it’s not as stressful. You know, prepare before you actually are in the situation.

Int: I think that is a very good way to put it, just be as safe as you can be; just always be as safe as you can and regardless if something happens, you did your best.

Charlotte: Ya, because sometimes it’s out of our hands, sometimes you can’t help it if someone comes and breaks your window at a stop – at a red robot – what can you do, you know.

Int: Exactly.

Charlotte: So, just try as much as you can do and try your best – that’s it just try your best.

Int: And in Australia, are there any type of safety precautions you take on the daily basis?

Charlotte: One that I still do take. Like I mean to be honest – ag, it’s actually quite bad, but I mean – I put my handbag on the chair next to me, which is a no-no I’ll never do that in South Africa. But – so, I feel like I can do that, but I always… um, my bag and my cell phone, I never put my cell phone in my back pocket, I always have it in my bag and my bag is always closed, and zipped closed. So, that’s one thing that I always do. And a lot of my friends, actually the other day, um, my one friend \*Rachel, she was standing – we were in a line to get a drink and she had her bag in front of her but it was completely open. I said, “\*Rachel, close your bag. Someone is going to take something out of it.” She’s like, “No, I always have it like this. I’m not worried, no one’s going to try take something from me.” I was like, “I can’t do that.”

Int: No, no. Same.

Charlotte: I can’t just have my bag open – that is crazy, that is so unsafe. Um, so yes my bag is always closed and my cell phone is always in my bag and never in my back pocket.

Int: So, you just said that you’ve gone out for drinks there in Australia, I take it – you know what, you’re young, you’ve gone out to the clubs here in South Africa.

Charlotte: Mm, I have.

Int: Type of safety things that you take with you to the club?

Charlotte: \*Sighs. I don’t – when I went to the club, I didn’t like take anything with me. One thing that I always did was that I always just in the Uber there and the Uber back, send location to someone to make sure that I’m getting there safe. Um, my handbag would be in my hand while I’m dancing even though it could strap around because I’m not going to let my phone be stolen, my bag be stolen. My drinks always hold the drinks over like this as well because that’s also an issue of being like, you know, date-raped or drugged or whatever.

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: So, ya I always did that. I always made sure I was with more than two people. Just those little things, nothing major, but just those little things

Int: And looks, spiking. Were you ever worried about being spiked?

Charlotte: Yes, because a lot of my friends have actually been spiked. I’ve been lucky that I haven’t, touch wood. But ya, a lot of my friends, it’s quite scary how we’re fine one minute, you know one or two drinks, and then all of a sudden, we’re not. And they were just so lucky that they were around good friends who could make sure that they were safe and got the home safe. So, ya that was a little bit of a worry and it did stress me out for sure because it is quite a common thing to happen.

Int: And in Australia, is that something you’re worried about as well or not really?

Charlotte: You know, I’m not too sure about the situation about being spiked here, but I’m always stressed about it because all it takes is just one bad person to do it. I mean going to like a fancier restaurant you don’t stress that much, but I definitely stress about that here for sure. And I really try – like I still always hold my drink like this and I check for foam in my drink.

Int: So, like ging out – I’m sure you’ve been hit on here and you’ve been hit on in Australia. Is there any difference between getting hit on in South Africa and getting hit on in Australia?

Charlotte: Um… I think so. I – well, my experiences is… I think here they are very conscious about women and um… about women’s rights and stuff. So, guys are actually quite scared to approach women, they’re quite scared because they can quite easily get into trouble. But I feel like in South Africa it is still a lot more forceful, you know, come and grab you and, you know, it’s not that pleasant. I think it is a little bit more straightforward in South Africa compared to here in Australia because they’re really strict here and the clubs are also really strict here and the bouncers. Like if you’re intoxicated they won’t allow you into the clubs. If you kiss someone in the club they’ll kick you out, if you vape in the club they’ll kick you out. So they are very strict. If a bouncer sees that a guy is being aggressive or, you know, forceful towards a girl, out he goes. So, I think it’s definitely a lot different. A lot more straightforward in South Africa.

Int: I mean that’s like insane – no vaping?

Charlotte: I know.

Int: That blows my mind, like that is.

Charlotte: I know. And if you kiss someone they just say ‘Get out, get out right now’.

Int: Really?

Charlotte: Mm, ya. My first week here I was – I had one drink and they denied me entry into a club because they said I looked intoxicated. I was like, ‘Okay, I’m not’.

Int: Ya, like ‘I’m from South Africa, we pregame guys’.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. Exactly. So it was quite a weird experience, I have never in my life been denied entry into the club.

Int: Ya, like same. Like I have seen people walk sideways into a club before. No, there you can’t pregame.

Charlotte: Especially being a girl. Girls can easily get into clubs, but now nope. It’s insane.

Int: I am going to start up another meeting – sorry. I am going to start up another meeting because we’re going to be kicked out in two minutes.

Charlotte: Fantastic okay.

Int: Okay, so welcome back. So, we were talking about South African clubs and you said that ya it is definitely a bit different in Australia, and then you were about to say something and then I had to start a new meeting.

Charlotte: Ah, yes, yes – what was I, I don’t think I was going to say anything more. I was just sort of just building on what I had said. So, ya they are just really strict here in Australia, that’s basically – well, they are very strict here compared to South Africa. So, that has been a bit of an adjustment because the barmen aren’t even allowed to um… they are not allowed to keep giving you alcohol if you are intoxicated.

Int: Oh, that’s strange.

Charlotte: Ya, that can get into big trouble. They can get into big trouble. So, if you’re intoxicated they won’t give you more alcohol.

Int: That to me – I think that’s the most insane thing you have said yet.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. Ya, because can you imagine. That’s not the case in South Africa.

Int: No, in South Africa the bartender never would be like,’ Nah I’m not going to till you’re drunk’.

Charlotte: Ya. They would never, never be like that.

Int: Does those rule irritate you in anyway or are you glad that they are there?

Charlotte: That’s a very good question, because I think that the rules – I think that they are so important and I think it keeps people well behaved and I think they keep everything safe. So, I think they are very important. They serve a purpose. But because I’m from South Africa where a lot of the rules don’t apply and it’s a lot more laid back, I get a little bit irritated but I try rationalise it to myself, say like, ‘The rules are important, they are there for a reason and they’re keeping us safe’. So, I’m just not fully used to it. Even like the little things like going over the speed limit here. If you go like two kilometres over the speed limit, you’re going to get a ticket. Whereas in South Africa you kind of just go your own speed. \*Laughs.

Int: Ya, it’s like a suggestion.

Charlotte: A suggestion. So, it’s a little bit irritating but I just need on telling myself that they are there for a reason. So, I know they’re good. I know they’re good.

Int: So, how would you describe your life as a South African woman living in South Africa?

Charlotte: Um… I find that – you know what, I love South Africa and it’s always my home, but it is sometimes… it’s very um… I don’t know how to word it. It’s just – it can be quite tiring just always being on guard and always stressing and always having to look out for your safety, and always having to put these precautions in place and being a woman as well – it’s exhausting, that’s the word. It’s so exhausting and it’s hard. So, the way I would describe it, is exhausting. But also in the same breathe, I love South Africa and it will always be my home. It is such a beautiful country with such vibrant people and cultures and, you know, the places we can go like the Kruger Park and the most pristine beaches. We’re very lucky for that. So, in that way I love South Africa, but it is tiring.

Int: I don’t blame you. Like you say, you’re always on guard, you’re always looking around, especially with the phone.

Charlotte: Mm.

Int: I find that I am always checking for my phone, that I am always making sure that it’s right there.

Charlotte: Ya.

Int: I have never had an experience where y phone was stolen or anything like that. Have you had any experience with crime in South Africa or not?

Charlotte: Um… ya so my dad, he – sorry, he um, his business – so he owns a business, and he sort of just um, sells canopy’s and sells car parts and stuff. And his business was broken into and they stole like five cars.

Int: Geez.

Charlotte: Ya. So, ya so that took – my dad took a big knock from that financially and emotionally because now you’re constantly – my dad was, he struggles to sleep and this definitely adds to it. So, he is constantly stressing about work and stuff so. That was the crime that we encountered and impacted out live tremendously, and um, I don’t think my dad has recovered just yet. But um, also us because, you know its my dad’s business, you know, it’s scary that that can happen to the thing that is your livelihood, the thing that keeps your future afloat, that it could be broken into and cars can be stolen. And like I think they were found… one at one of the boarders, the boarders.

Int: Oh no way.

Charlotte: So they were tyring to get the cars across the border. Ya, but you know five cars is a lot of money, s

Int: Yeah!

Charlotte: And then it’s like in water. So, ya that was the crime that I encountered but then also our house being broken into, and I have also – close friends of mine, she – I can’t remember what estate it was. I can’t remember, but she was going home to her estate and she um… what they have been doing is, the criminals, have been checking what rings women have been wearing. They check her ring and they target her for her ring. And they stopped her outside of her estate, took her ring, and shot her in the leg. So, and she moved to, I think, England because she – and she got herself a bodyguard – because she could not, she had PTSD. She could not recover from that, and I don’t think she’s ever been the same and lived a comfortable life. So, that’s my experience, or people who are close to me – oh, and my one friend, she had been, it was in Nellmapius, they broke her windshield and took her bag. That’s quite scary.

Int: Her windshield?

Charlotte: Mm.

Int: Do you know how – that’s insane. A window is mad, but a windshield!

Charlotte: A windshield. Ya so, and she was also quite traumatised after that. Apparently, she was – she was okay, just her things that were stole, but you know it’s quite, ya it’s scary. So, I have had a few encounters with crime.

Int: This thing with your um, friend of yours that got shot in the leg, that must be extremely jarring because, it’s one thing to have your things stolen it’s a completely another thing to be shot.

Charlotte: Shot, ya. It’s so sad because she – you’re not the same after that.

Int: No.

Charlotte: She was – think she was very fit and she was a mom of two as well. But she was very fit. I think she used to do races or something, I’m not too sure, but with that it’s the rehabilitation, then it’s the medical bills, then it’s the emotional trauma that you suffer. So, it’s so devastating.

Int: It is. I mean my mom works at a very prestigious primary school here in Pretoria. And um, right outside the school’s gates – and here are rich parents there – this mother literally got her rings stolen off her hands and everything and they targeted her, like you said for her rings. They watched her and stopped her right outside the school gate, where there is proper security.

Charlotte: Yep.

Int: This is – kids have bodyguards, like there ae bodyguards parked outside. And they still targeted her.

Charlotte: You’re never really safe, hey.

Int: That’s the other thing. It’s like we have all these safety mechanisms – I mean your house was broken into, you lived in Cornwall estate I take it.

Charlotte: Yes.

Int: It is a very, very safe estate, and still your house was broken into.

Charlotte: It’s, it’s just so sad, and you know the things that people go through its – and you know, it’s hard.

Int: And I think it’s everyone, like you said it was your dad business, you took a knock.

Charlotte: Everyone.

Int: Ya, everyone took such a big knock. And it’s not just because it’s your dad, but also because it’s part of your livelihood, and circle of people.

Charlotte: Everybody that I – think everybody has had an experience.

Int: Yes, I agree.

Charlotte: Like every single person has had an experience.

Int: Or know of someone that has had an experience and by that – it all just gets knocked on. So, with you dad’s business that got broken into. You say that was very tough to deal with as a family.

Charlotte: Mm.

Int: How were the cops in your experience with that.

Charlotte: I was quite young, so I didn’t-

Int: Okay.

Charlotte: I was… high school, but I didn’t – I also think that my dad didn’t really want to talk to us about it a lot. I think he wanted to keep that there, so I didn’t get too much of how the cops were in that situation so I can’t really say too much about that.

Int: And have you had to interact with the South African Police Force or not?

Charlotte: I had to and – I got pulled over because, I was on my way back from university and um… it was like changing from like a hundred area, a hundred-kilometre area, to an eighty-kilometre per hour area. And I didn’t see the change, so I was going too fast. And then the policeman pulled me over and was like, “You’re going too fast, this is how fast your were going”. Ya. And I was like, “Okay cool, that’s fine. How much do I owe?” You know.

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: For the fine. And he goes, “No, but you could buy me lunch.” And I just said, “No thank you. I will pay the fine.” It’s typical. Always a bribe. It’s always a bribe. And um, so then I said, “No, I don’t want to pay the bribe, I will pay the fine thank you very much.” And he said, “No, it’s fine you can be let off with a warning.”

Int: I mean like, ‘I was in the wrong. I’ll pay the fine, I know I’m in the wrong’, and the brukie is like, ‘Nah it’s fine, you can go’.

Charlotte: That’s so sad because you feel so unsafe and now you feel like the people who are meant to protect you are trying to get money so it’s – how are you meant to deal with that? What do you do? So, it’s helpless. It feels helpless.

Int: So, you’ve now moved, you’ve said that you’re probably going to immigrate. Do you think you’ll ever come back to South Africa and live here, or are you done with South Africa and you’re moving on?

Charlotte: \*Sighs. You know what South Africa will always be my home, and even now when people talk about South Africa and they try trash talk South Africa and say how unsafe it is, and all these horrible things about my country. I get extremely defensive, because you know it’s my home and I feel like no one has the right to talk it, other than me. I can complain about my country because it’s my country, and I love it and I think it’s beautiful and I like I said I think it’s diverse and gorgeous, and you know the animal – the wildlife is so beautiful, and we are so luck to have it on our doorstep. But, I feel that it is such a shame almost that I feel that I have to move because I feel like there is no future for me; I feel like it is not safe for me, I feel like job opportunities aren’t the same, and unfortunately I just feel that my future is important and I can’t live like that constantly worrying, and worrying if I will get a job, and loadshedding and all those negative things. So, it always will be my home, but it’s time to move one. And it absolutely breaks my heart to say that, and it’s hard because it’s so unfair because its my country which I was born into, but I feel like I’m forced to leave.

Int: Ya, and I’m sorry. I think that is what a lot of South Africans feel too is like, ‘I want to stay here, I do, I really do but it’s just’.

Charlotte: Mm, I would love to.

Int: ‘It’s just not a place for a future for me’. And it’s terrible.

Charlotte: And it’s so beautiful.

Int: It is, it’s a stunning country it really is, like my cousins come here from Germany and they’re just like-

Charlotte: They love it.

Int: They love it. They’re like, “You’re so lucky, you’ve got so many hills and mountains.” And I’m like, “What are you talking about?” like it’s Pretoria.

Charlotte: It’s so beautiful.

Int: Ya, it is.

Charlotte: And the people are friendly. And they’re inviting. I feel like we’re all just, you know, we’re just so open and we’re, you know, just beautiful people who just want to share our lives, that basically it. And that’s why it’s been difficult here. It’s been difficult here, because it’s different people. Challenging which is better, but ya it’s time to-

Int: Move on.

Charlotte: Ya, to move on.

Int: Um, so what was your biggest fear whilst living here in South Africa?

Charlotte: You know what… when my sister was with me, because she is now in America studying. But when \*Lily was with me, my sister, and \*Lola she’s now thirteen, I – my safety is important but I would constantly stress from my sisters and worrying if they are okay. It’s my biggest fear to have something happen to them, I am so stressed about that because I love them so much and I’m just so stressed for my family. So, I think that was my biggest fear, my family and their safety. So, that is very stressful.

Int: Are you an older sister, younger, or are you middle?

Charlotte: I am the oldest sister. I am. So, there’s \*Lola, she’s thirteen.

Int: Which is a lovely name by the way, \*Lola, what a lovely name.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. She’s beautiful, but a ten-year gap between us.

Int: Oh.

Charlotte: And then \*Lily there a – there’s another one, there is a two-year gap between us.

Int: You say you worry about them constantly. Is that something you have worried about throughout your life or is that something you’ve started worrying about?

Charlotte: I think as soon as I was old enough to realise, maybe like high school I started realising – you know, being the oldest you always feel like there’s that responsibility.

Int: Oh ya.

Charlotte: When I started realising the responsibility that we have especially being women – we’re all girls – being women in South Africa is a big responsibility and I just realised that, you know, it’s something that we’ve got to try teach my little sisters, you know.

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: Especially, the youngest one you know, she doesn’t know any better and it’s something you’ve got to teach them. Ya, as soon as I was old enough to um, realise my surrounding and the situation I am in then I was worrying for them.

Int: I mean young, little, \*Lola will be going out the club soon.

Charlotte: Ahh, no.

Int: \*Laughs.

Charlotte: Don’t say that. \*Laughs.

Int: My bad. Anything you would tell her like, ‘Hey listen sweetie don’t go to Latinos’, or be like, ‘You can go there, there’s just certain things to know and do’.

Charlotte: Ya, no you know what, I feel like holding her back and preventing her from doing something sort of almost makes people want to do it more. So, I’ll just give her the knowledge that I have: Be safe, always be aware, don’t drink too much. Just basically what I did when I went out, that’s what I would say that she should do as well, because ya you still have to live your life at the end of the day, you know. You can’t staying at home, scared to go out and live your life, because then what’s the point of life.

Int: I agree with you. So, your sister \*Lily is living in America or studying in America, do you ever worry about her because I mean America and the guns and it’s just.

Charlotte: Yes. You know what, I definitely do stress about it. I do… I do – it does make me feel better that she’s in Kentucky.

Int: Yeah where the fried chicken is.

Charlotte: \*Laughs. Kentucky fried chicken. Not that it’s more safe there, but it is a small area so I somehow take a bit of peace in that. But I do constantly worry. And I even called her the other day and I was just like, “Listen \*Lily, are you being safe because I’m hearing all these stories – you’re being safe when you’re going out, you’re around reliable people, because like I have heard of these terrible rape stories.” Where a girl was raped by a friend of hers – this girl was raped by one of her best friends who she thought she could trust. I just said, “Are you being safe? Please be safe with everything that you do, don’t ever become complacent. Please don’t.” So, ya I do think that I constantly worry.

Int: Yeah, I think that is a normal factor of being South African. I think it is a normal fact – like you say, you grow up here you kind of just get on with it, you know what you do – you have to be conscious.

Charlotte: Ya.

Int: And you say that safety consciousness followed you to Australia, and you still are aware and watching things and everything.

Charlotte: Yes.

Int: Has it lessened in any sense of has it stayed very much the same?

Charlotte: Um, I think it has stayed the same, maybe like a little bit – its dissipated a bit, but overall I think its stayed the same. Its going to take a long time before it goes away.

Int: Ya, ya, I understand that as well. There’s been people who have moved over for ten years who are like, “I still like to look over my bag. I always check at the robot, I don’t want to be parked in at a robot.” There things that you just do – I mean other people will probably think […]. But like you say, you’ve just got to be safe you just have to keep your guard up.

Charlotte: Mm. And It’s a habit as well.

Int: Ya.

Charlotte: I think it’s a habit as well, all these things – holding onto my bag and everything and making sure my phone is there, its habit

Int: Yeah, I agree with you. Well, thank you. That’s all the questions that I have for you today. If you’ve got anything that you would like to add, you are more than welcome to add it now.

Charlotte: Okay, um… I think I have said everything. All my stories.

Int: \*Laughs. Yeah, and thank you for your story, I mean this is not an easy conversation to have and I tank you so much for giving your time and your – and just your honesty and your willingness to give this story, I really, really does mean a lot to me and my research. I hope I can do it justice. But you’ve got my number, you’ve got my email.

Charlotte: Yes.

Int: So you’re welcome to send me anything that you think of any questions that you might have you are more than welcome to send them through.

Charlotte: Sure thing. Good luck! And thank you for this interview, I did really enjoy it.

Int: No really thank you so much for your time. And ya, have a great afternoon, which is every weird to say in the morning.

Charlotte: Thank you, I know! Have a good morning.