Individual Interview 12 – Elizabeth

(Full time: 44:38)

Int: Hello, how are you?

Elizabeth: Good thanks, and you?

Int: Good. You have read and understood the informed consent form?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Cool. I just have to make sure about that. So, basically what we’re going to be taking about today is the relationship between safety and belonging. First, we’re going to have a look at the notion of belonging, specifically at the emotional side of belonging rather than the political side of belonging. Then we’re going to have a look at what it means to be a woman in South Africa and how that relates to safety. And then we’re going to bring that together and look at both of them. If you’ve got any questions, concerns or deep-seated worries, you can ask them now.

Elizabeth: No, I’m good.

Int: Awesome. Ya, otherwise, we can just get into it. So, we’re going to start off with some background knowledge, just to get an idea of who you are as a person. So, how old are you, where do you stay, where do you study, are you working, did you study and now you’re working – like, what’s ging on with your life.

Elizabeth: Okay, so, I’m 23 years old. I used to stay in Irene, Pretoria, I now stay in Brooklyn. I’m studying. I’m doing my Masters in microbiology - \*Laughs.

Int: Ya, did you move around a lot as a kid?

Elizabeth: Ya, I used to. I was born in Cape Town and then my – for my dad’s work we moved to Zambia for a bit. And then came back here and then he would move around for work but I would just stay with my mom here. So, three places roughly.

Int: So, you were born in Cape Town. Lived there for how long before you moved to Zambia.

Elizabeth: I think like, two years.

Int: Two years.

Elizabeth: I was only two so I don’t remember.

Int: Don’t remember anything from that time?

Elizabeth: No, I don’t remember much from my childhood, so.

Int: And in Zambia, you were there for how long?

Elizabeth: Till like, five. So, like-

Int: Three years.

Elizabeth: Two, three years ya.

Int: Anything you remember from that – maybe the move you remember?

Elizabeth: No, not really. I just remember there were biting ants that were a bit scary.

Int: \*Laughs. Biting ants.

Elizabeth: Biting ants. And we went to like a school with like all black kids, so we dressed up in little outfits – it was cute.

Int: It’s so sweet.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: And then, after five back to South Africa for the whole of your life.

Elizabeth: Mm.

Int: And then same house, and then moved because of university, I take it you moved?

Elizabeth: Ya. So, like initially I stayed in like a flat with my mom, because like my parents got divorced and then, you know, and then we moved into Irene and stayed there whole life. And then in… second year, I went to Res for one year, and then I moved back home, and then I moved out again. So, actually a lot of moving, ya. \*Laughs.

Int: Bouncing around a bit. So, that move from Irene to Res.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Did that feel like a big move or?

Elizabeth: Um, for me like, I like being independent and doing things on my own so that was really nice for me. The fact that like my mom wasn’t doing things for me and I could kind of like do whatever I wanted. But I wasn’t nice for me because I didn’t join Res in first year.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: So, I didn’t – and I’m not very outgoing – so, I felt very left out. Like I didn’t know anyone, and – for instance, if I wanted to make food in like the communal kitchen, I would wait for everyone to leave.

Int: Oh shame.

Elizabeth: And then I would like go in, and quickly do my shit, because I felt so awkward and out of place. I didn’t actually enjoy Res in that sense, but it was nice that I was right on campus.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: And it made, ya-

Int: Commuting easier.

Elizabeth: Ya, and I didn’t have to worry about what my parents want and stuff like that, but ya.

Int: Exactly.

Elizabeth: That’s why I left.

Int: And then-

Elizabeth: Res.

Int: \*Laughs. So, when you moved into Res, you didn’t move in in first year so you felt a little out of place. Was Res ever a place of home for you, or was home still back in Irene with your mom?

Elizabeth: No, home was still definitely back in Irene. I think it was also just the sense of I didn’t have a person there. I didn’t feel comfortable there, like even in my own little flat area, I didn’t feel comfortable. Like the only place I felt comfortable was in my small, little, punie-ass room. So.

Int: That’s sad, I’m sorry.

Elizabeth: \*Laughs. Ya. So like, so no it didn’t feel like home at all. But like if I compare it now to my flat, yes that feels like home. That’s like my own space, I feel like comfortable walking, so ya.

Int: How long did it take for your flat to start feeling like home, or was it immediate when you walked into the door – not into the door, through the door, sorry.

Elizabeth: I would say, probably like two weeks.

Int: So really that quick.

Elizabeth: Yeah, it was really that quick. Because also like, I actually stayed in two flats, because last year in Honours I was in, um… there close to Med campus – what’s it called?

Int: Ya, ya Hatfield.

Elizabeth: No.

Int: Oh, Med campus, um.

Elizabeth: Prinshof. I stayed right there in a commune with my sister and stuff, so I was used to living alone, but that didn’t feel like home either. But really. But then – because it wasn’t a nice place. \*Laughs.

Int: A bit manky.

Elizabeth: But then – I think that’s why, because I wasn’t staying at home and then moving directly into the Brooklyn flat, I had had that and then there, so.

Int: Ya, so you bounced around a bit.

Elizabeth: Ya, so Brooklyn did feel like home quickly.

Int: Ya, it took two weeks for to say that was home.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Ya, so we talk a lot about this notion of home because that’s what we connect to the notion, well the feeling of belonging. So, what does it feel like to have a sense of belonging?

Elizabeth: Um-

Int: Well, firstly lets back track a bit – do you feel like you belong in South Africa?

Elizabeth: No. \*Laughs. No.

Int: Do you feel like you belong at home?

Elizabeth: Ah… no, not really anymore either.

Int: Do you feel like you belong anywhere?

Elizabeth: Um… I feel like I belong with people that are similar to me.

Int: Okay.

Elizabeth: So, when I’m surrounded by people that are like my same mindset or the same like feeling – not even just like completely similar, because obviously everyone is, everybody is different but like if most things are similar, I feel like I belong because then I feel like I’m comfortable and ya, not out of place. So, that’s why I think at home now, I haven’t been staying at home like my mom has had this house now for a while, so when I go back now it like, it just doesn’t feel that comfortable anymore and like, ya.

Int: It’s not your space anymore.

Elizabeth: It’s just different. Ya, exactly.

Int: So, when you’re saying ‘like minded people’ are we like saying people like you studied with, so-

Elizabeth: Yes, yes, definitely.

Int: When you go to university, you feel like you belong-

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: In your university space.

Elizabeth: Yes. University space, because they have similar interest as me, even similar work ethics, similar views, I don’t know, ya just.

Int: So, a sense of familiarity almost?

Elizabeth: Yes, ya. And similar ways of having fun and like, doing things.

Int: Ya, like getting along. Ya, so we connect belonging to either a place or a people, and for you would you say it’s a place or a people?

Elizabeth: No, definitely a people. Because I feel like I could change my place no mater what.

Int: As long as you have your people, you’ll be fine?

Elizabeth: Yes, yes.

Int: So, we’re going to move on a little bit to you identity as a South African basically. So, have you travelled internationally before or not?

Elizabeth: Yes, to a few place.

Int: A few places. Bounced around a lot or?

Elizabeth: Um, ya, it was just – so, it was for dancing competitions so I didn’t really get to see the places always, but I did get to experience like, I don’t know what you-

Int: Different cultures?

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: So, when you travelled internationally did you feel more South African or was that not really something that came up?

Elizabeth: No, I definitely did. Like I remember when I went to America for one competition, like, all the other people there, were American so like – and I was there like with my South African accent and I felt so like out; I felt so like excluded and I almost didn’t want to speak because like I’d be different. I don’t like standing out, I don’t like being different. So, like when the attention is on you because you’re different then I did get a bit like scared. But if it’s like – when you’re in a place where there are lots of different, people from different countries then it’s better because then everybody is out.

Int: You can hide away almost.

Elizabeth: Ya, exactly. So ya.

Int: When you came back to South Africa, was there a moment when you went ‘okay, I’m back in South Africa’.

Elizabeth: Ya, with like the fricken slowness, the disorganisation, all of that.

Int: The lack of efficacy.

Elizabeth: I never – ya. I never, because I’ve been overseas for like three weeks at a time.

Int: Oh okay.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: That’s a while.

Elizabeth: Ya, and I never missed it.

Int: Oh the country – at all. Never missed South Africa. Did you miss South Africans?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: South Africans and not the country.

Elizabeth: South Africans are so friendly compared to – I missed the people not the place, not the way it’s run, not the issues, because I feel like you go somewhere like America and everything just works and it just make you realise – like, obviously they also have their issues, but I don’t see that because I was only there for a short period of time. But it just makes you realise – and I like things that work.

Int: \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: Things that are structured and organised so it really – like I feel like I get irritated in South Africa a lot.

Int: Ya. I think a lot of people feel that sense of frustration.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Like, ‘why can this not work’.

Elizabeth: Yes, ya.

Int: Like how the rest of the world works.

Elizabeth: Exactly.

Int: Ya sorry, there was a mosquito coming to chow you for a bit. So, ya you said you’ve been out of the country for three weeks at a time. While you’re out of these, um – what’s it – out of South Africa did you feel a sense of belonging to South Africa at any point or is it still this kind of floating belonging for you?

Elizabeth: Um, I mean that’s a difficult one because I mean I went for a dancing competition where we were representing South Africa, so obviously when you do well then you’re like, “Oh ya South Africa.” But I don’t think I was ever – if that wasn’t the case I don’t think I would have felt such a sense of belonging, besides the fact of like being different, like I know that I’m different compared to the other people that are like there overseas. So, ya I don’t think I have such a sense of belonging, but also like I feel like you also need to be able to move to a place for a long enough time – months – to really be able to feel what you’re missing.

Int: Yes, ya, to feel that longing.

Elizabeth: Yes, yes.

Int: I mean it’s quite an interesting paradox that you find yourself in because you say that you don’t belong to South Africa, yet you go overseas, well, you have gone overseas quite often, to represent a country that you don’t even feel like you belong to.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Do you feel any type of anger or resentment or just like whatever?

Elizabeth: Um, I do think I feel some anger. I feel like I feel anger with the system, the unfairness, I feel like people who work hard should be rewarded so that part like irritates me and just the fact that like it feels like we’re going down a sinking ship, and like people are just not doing anything or the government is not doing anything to fix it and like, I want to be proactive, you know.

Int: Move forward.

Elizabeth: Do something if you want to move forward and – but thing is also, me on my own or even like a lot of people altogether can’t change that, like it’s ya.

Int: It’s a structural issue.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: We would have to go deep within the rotting core.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: So, you’re travelling representing South Africa – sometimes don’t feel like a South African in itself, or do you always feel like you’re a South African?

Elizabeth: Ya, I do feel like I’m a South African. I think also a lot of people overseas assume like, that you have to be black to be a South African. So, sometimes they get confused and I’m like, “Nah, I’m from South Africa.”

Int: Have you had an interaction like that, where you’re like, “I’m South African.” And they’re like, “But why you white?”

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Oh no, really?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Oh how did that go down?

Elizabeth: Um, I was just like, “You know you get a few white people in South Africa” – um, I don’t think people know about Afrikaans people, I think that’s like a very, I don’t know, they don’t know the language of Afrikaans and stuff like that, so.

Int: I feel like less than one percent of the world’s population speaks Afrikaans, which I understand.

Elizabeth: But I mean, like we’ve done quite well overseas as South Africa – like we win quite a few times. So, the other countries like know us, and it’s almost like they’re excited to see the South Africans and stuff like that; also because we’re so friendly, we make friends so often with other people. So, that almost makes me like be proud of South Africa, but that then goes back to the people not necessarily the country, ya.

Int: So, you say we do pretty well overseas.

Elizabeth: Ya, ya; well, ya I mean - you get different types of dancing in the world competitions, some of them are easier than others, but ya. So, there is like a name – ya.

Int: Like I didn’t know that. I feel like that should be something that should eb spoken about more.

Elizabeth: Ya, another thing here in South Africa they don’t like consider dancing as like a sport, it’s just like there like they don’t like – ya, like put any-

Int: That’s mad though.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: I mean like, I think that could be a way forward – I mean if we focused more on our positive aspects. Like I didn’t even know we were known - well, known by some people – for dancing. Like, and that’s pretty cool, it’s better than being known for corruption or racism.

Elizabeth: Yes, yes.

Int: Ya, that’s another aspect we can talk about when we’re looking at the sense of belonging. There is a relationship between race and place. We tend to believe that black people come from Africa.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: And white people come from Europe. That’s just like the equator and how we have turned out as human beings. Um, the fact that you are white, does that hinder your sense of belonging to South Africa at all or do you just think it’s a bit weird that outsiders think you can’t really be white and South African?

Elizabeth: I definitely think it hinders my sense of belonging because if I wasn’t white then I think I wouldn’t be disadvantaged academically with bursaries and stuff like that.

Int: Ya, BEE.

Elizabeth: Like, because like I feel like that’s really, really, affected me and I have seen first-hand how like people who do way worse and like fail, can get a bursary over.

Int: Just because of the colour of their skin.

Elizabeth: Literally, and I think it’s so backwards like then you’re making, like I don’t know… the people that, ag it’s not even – how do I say this. Like, you want to reward people that do well so that they will work harder, because if someone is getting things by not working hard, they’re never going to want to work hard or better themselves; so, you’re always going to have a mediocre population. But I don’t know.

Int: Ya, because you’re rewarding that person for being mediocre.

Elizabeth: Yes. And also, I feel also on the other hand – I don’t even know if this is related to your thing.

Int: Go for it.

Elizabeth: Then the, like BEE, the black people that do really well are not given the recognition because people just assume that they got it so easily, and that’s so unfair to them as well because there are so many super smart people that actually do get the marks to get it fairly, you know.

Int: Yes.

Elizabeth: So, ya.

Int: They’re not rewarded because they’re black.

Elizabeth: Yes, and everybody sees that ‘Oh they just got it because of this, meanwhile they could have actually gotten it because they were – ya.

Int: They work hella hard.

Elizabeth: That’s probably- ya. Where I think race makes me feel like I don’t belong here because I don’t feel like – I would really struggle to move up the ranks here.

Int: Ya, I think that’s a general feeling here.

Elizabeth: And get a job, I worry about getting a job in South Africa because of that. Ya. And also just to, because I really want to be successful one day so I want to be in a place where I have the best, most opportunities, like we don’t always have the best of resources here, the best technology so, ya, so I feel that’s difficult.

Int: I mean you are in a massive science field as well.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: And I feel like South Africa, I don’t know what the infrastructure is like in terms of that type of research, but I think it would be better overseas.

Elizabeth: Ya, no definitely, especially because I feel like South Africa is focused on, in science, the basic needs; so like, food, water, clean – ah.

Int: Water clean.

Elizabeth: Water cleansing. \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: But you know what I mean.

Int: Exactly.

Elizabeth: Whereas I’m more into animal viruses, human viruses, and they’re not focused on that at all, so they’re like no – there are a few job opportunities but like not nearly as much. There is so much for agriculture science and, you know.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: Pests that effect crops and stuff like that because that’s what we really focus on, but I think for me and what I want to do, I need to get out to get those other opportunities.

Int: Okay, we also have like, I think, the biggest HIV and Aids organisations or research organisations.

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Is that not an interest of yours or?

Elizabeth: No, it definitely is – so like, especially in Cape Town. They have a really good like, they collaborate with lots of the – so, I’ve actually been doing, um, research, like trying to apply to overseas universities and I have seen like universities like Oxford and Harvard, they actually collaborate with South Africa. But the thing is South Africa, like even though they have like really good technology there is Cape Town and stuff, it’s still not like the best-best. That’s why the collaborate with other people.

Int: Oh.

Elizabeth: So for instance they would use many samples from Cape Town, because South Africa’s got the eighty percent of the Aids cases in the world.

Int: Oh geez.

Elizabeth: So, they would collaborate with these other universities that – so, I would consider even maybe like just learning overseas, like learning at one of these-

Int: And then come back?

Elizabeth: Universities and then coming back and implement the new technology in a place. And then it would also do better for South Africa instead, because I feel like South Africa always just like provides the raw materials and then the other countries are the ones that like make something, and then they can make so much more money. Whereas if South Africa could do all of those things they could go up. Ya.

Int: Oh ya. We’re just going to move a little bit forward. So… do you feel a sense of safety in South Africa?

Elizabeth: So, I’m a very… I’m a very a – person that just believes everything will be fine usually, like I don’t usually worry about safety, but I have had an experience; um, I used to walk to gym in the morning like early in the morning at like half past four.

Int: Geez, that’s really early in the morning.

Elizabeth: So, I would like walk halfway from my Res room. So, I would like walk in the campus, but there was like a short stretch of like two hundred meters.

Int: Oh, in Hatfield – the Virgin Active in Hatfield.

Elizabeth: Ya. So, I just have to walk that like short space outside and like my mom and everybody would always be like, “No, you’re not allowed to do that, it’s so dangerous.” And I would always just be like, “If someone chases after me I’ll just run away.” Like it’s fine.

Int: ‘I’m fast’.

Elizabeth: But then one day I actually got really scared because I saw this man, he looked deranged, and he was literally running into a fence. He ran into a fence, we went back, he ran into a fence again, and again, and again, and that’s what really scared me. From then on I like stopped walking to gym because I was like, ‘that’s scary’. I think like the drug aspect scares me and I think we don’t even see that a lot.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: If I like think of my sister – my sister is like doing medicine now, and she had to, she’s working in Soweto now. She’s had to be in all these really dodgy places and the thing is she. The experiences she’s had, like leaving one of the hospitals in Mamelodi they were like throwing bombs and shooting like right by where the cars were like trying to drive away. She’s had like a person run, like with a brick, to her car to like try and smash her window like thankfully like she managed to get away, but she’s had like lots of those experiences. And she’s almost like, immune to them now. It’s almost like made her like-

Int: Desensitised.

Elizabeth: Ya, desensitised. Ya, exactly. So, that scares me, the fact that she’s had all those experiences, but like I have had very little experiences with actually safety and stuff like that. That was probably the only time that I have been like scared, but then also, I’m walking on the street and I see, I’m like alonish and there’s like a man behind me that looks a bit scraggly then I do like really worry. Like I walk a bit faster and-

Int: Check behind you.

Elizabeth: Ya, but I also think I’m quite alert to like things like – so, if there is a person there, I’m like, I know they’re there and I’ll like a bit carful. But I think like in a lot of places like for instance overseas, we would walk in Salvinia at like eleven o’clock alone, like far. Like it’s just.

Int: That’s so weird yeah.

Elizabeth: It’s just so safe like people just do that, like women on your own. Whereas here, you could never.

Int: No.

Elizabeth: You could never at all.

Int: Sun goes down, you’re inside your house.

Elizabeth: And I also think it’s bad, but like, but then if you’re with a group of males then you don’t worry because you know then its-

Int: You hope that they would protect you.

Elizabeth: Ya, exactly. And like half the time it would be fine if you are. So, it’s like they really do target the women, ya.

Int: I think it’s also, a…

Elizabeth: It’s easier.

Int: It’s easier, a little bit of a weaker sex – I mean in general, women are weaker than men, so they are easier to overpower. And then we also have the aspect of rape, I think that’s a thing that a lot of South African women fear. For you? Something you fear or something you don’t even think about?

Elizabeth: I actually don’t think about it, to be fair.

Int: It’s better to keep it out of your mind and not even think about it?

Elizabeth: I just think, I haven’t had many bad experiences ever.

Int: Alright.

Elizabeth: I’ve never even had like an attempted mugging or someone come up to me and be like.

Int: Have you ever had your phone stolen?

Elizabeth: No, never.

Int: So, you’ve never experienced crime first-hand?

Elizabeth: No, not actually.

Int: Have you ever had a house broken into? Or family that have had houses broken into?

Elizabeth: I think my grandparents house was once broken into. Where the man actually, um, came in by their one door and while they were there, and he like asked them – but it wasn’t like, like it wasn’t a scary one.

Int: He asked them? He like said, “Could I please have your Tv.”

Elizabeth: \*Laughs. I don’t think he asked them like that, but he was like, “Give me your stuff.” And I think he like – I think he had a knife but he didn’t – it wasn’t like he really was going to do something, ya.

Int: He just wanted to rob them and ‘if you comply, I’m not going to do anything’.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Ya, so, have you ever had to interact with the South African police force?

Elizabeth: Ya, when I had my car accident. So that’s the only time.

Int: And how did that experience go?

Elizabeth: Um, I mean the lady was fine, like she gave us the, um…

Int: The affidavit thing?

Elizabeth: Ya, the affidavit to write down, and like she didn’t explain what you are supposed to write down; so we start writing down and she’s just like, “No.” Like she puts her hand on the table and she’s like, “No.”  
And we’re like, “Okay what? What’s wrong?”  
And she’s like, “You’re supposed to say that.”  
And I was like, “Okay, thank you for telling us.”  
And when she gives us a new form, “You owe me R1 for a new form.”  
And I was like…

Int: “Okay sure.”

Elizabeth: I think she was joking, I think she was, um, because we didn’t give her the R1. And then I start writing again, and she’s like, “No.” \*Slams hand on the table. Again, “You’re supposed to say that.”  
And then I just asked her, so I was like, “Can you just please tell us what we are supposed to say.”

Int: Good.

Elizabeth: Because there wasn’t any like little block of saying-

Int: Say this, ya.

Elizabeth: I think sometimes they just want to make it difficult and they actually find it find when you’re like struggling and you’re like-

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: Which is bad, because like you’ve just had like a car accident and you’re like stressed and.

Int: Ya, it isn’t a pleasant experience.

Elizabeth: Exactly. So, I just think they’re difficult.

Int: Like no one goes to the police station because they’ve had a good day.

Elizabeth: Exactly. No, that’s true. Ya, I think they just try to make your live difficult because sometimes-

Int: Because they get some joy out of it or just like – like I get you would be bored.

Elizabeth: I think, ya obviously, they’re just in a bad mood, like I would probably be like that too.

Int: I think I would be in a terrible mood if I had to be a South African Police officer.

Elizabeth: Ya, I just think that they’re not really helpful.

Int: No, I don’t think so either.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Is that your general view of the South African Police Force or?

Elizabeth: I just think corrupt. The fact that every single time you make a mistake you know you’re going to be offered a bribe, like there’s no question, like at all.

Int: Have you ever been pulled over?

Elizabeth: I’ve been pulled over once, but I was just coming back from dancing so.

Int: Oh so they didn’t test you.

Elizabeth: My hair was like crazy. They just looked at my drivers licence and they were like go, I mean I dint look very Kosher, you know, so.

Int: \*Laughs. ‘Okay she looks scary’.

Elizabeth: ‘She looks like she’s been sweating, so I doubt she’s been drinking alcohol’. \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs. Okay, yea so we’re going to move on a bit. So, how would you describe your life as a South African woman living in South Africa?

Elizabeth: I think I am very privileged.

Int: Okay.

Elizabeth: So, I think I have a really good life. I think a lot of people in South Africa have a worse life, like I have been given lots of opportunities from my parents, so I’m definitely very lucky. Um, and I think I have gotten quite far like with my studies and stuff like that. So, I don’t think I have been disadvantaged. The one thing for me though, is just like with the bursaries, like I feel like I did quite well, and like this year I didn’t even get a bursary for my Masters and like I put a lot of effort into my applications and stuff like that. And then, even with, ya – it’s just that side is a bit disheartening because it’s like you tried so hard and you do the very best you can and then there’s just a different outcome. But also, life’s not fair. And, it makes you stronger so. What was the question again? \*Laughs.

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

Elizabeth: I think my life is pretty good, especially because I haven’t had like a, a safety – ya, and also because I haven’t, like all my family members like nobody has really died, nobody’s had something traumatic, so, that’s why I cant really – so, my life is good, I just think it can be better and like-

Int: It’s a bit unfair.

Elizabeth: I can see - ya. I don’t like the unfairness of it. And I think I can have a better life elsewhere, but also I don’t know what else – like, I see overseas as this like shiny object but obviously, it also has issues.

Int: I think everywhere does.

Elizabeth: Ya. And I think if I were to go, the people would be a struggle.

Int: Ya I think-

Elizabeth: I think I would feel like I’ve lost home because of the people that are so different. Because I think overseas like if you just look at the kids, like they grow up so differently. They grow up so quickly, like it’s just a different – it’s just like a different world.

Int: Ya, it is. It’s a completely different country. So, when you said you went to Salvinia like you were walking outside at night, like elven o’clock no problem. Were you aware of the like safety aspect?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Looking around your shoulder, like this constant notion of ‘I have to be safe’, did that follow you to overseas?

Elizabeth: Definitely. Like it was like an eery looking place there that we walked by. But like all the Slovenian girls they just walked, that’s why I realised like, ‘Oh this is like normal’, because – but ya, like I would still look around my shoulders, like constantly aware because like I think that’s what we’re taught here.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: So, I did still feel scared but it was the fact that like the other girls that stay there were so fine, like they do this every day like they walk to dancing – because they would end late, like twelve o’clock sometimes, and they would just walk home and.

Int: Has there been a country where you have just felt unsafe? Ag, or felt safe or unsafe?

Elizabeth: Safe…

Int: So, where you didn’t have to have this awareness with you, where you could let that go for a moment.

Elizabeth: Mmm… I feel like America, which sounds weird because of their all the shootings there.

Int: Ya, damn.

Elizabeth: But I just think – you know, what it is, I also associate like dirtiness and like cold is associated with me with like danger and scary, because it’s a scary atmosphere.

Int: Oh yes, ya, ya.

Elizabeth: And some of the places in Europe, like outside looks a bit dirty.

Int: Ya, Eastern European

Elizabeth: If you’re walking – ya. Whereas in America, everything looks like new and shiny and like-

Int: Bright and well lit?

Elizabeth: Ya, and like – yes, bright, well lit. Because I mean, I went to Miami and then New York.

Int: Oh cool.

Elizabeth: In the summertime, so ya…

Int: Everything is like bright.

Elizabeth: Yes, and like everything is clean. So, I think I associate that with like safety. And also, ya the people are quite friendly in America, so.

Int: I’ve gotten that a lot. A lot of people have said South Africans and Americans are weirdly similar in a way.

Elizabeth: Yes. I feel like Americans are like overboard friendly, like verging on fake.

Int: Oh ya.

Elizabeth: And South Africans are really friendly, but - \*Laughs.

Int: Are South African just more real Americans?

Elizabeth: Yes, ya. Yes, yes.

Int: Like if you look we are actually really similar – we drink the same kind of things and we drink the same amount.

Elizabeth: \*Laughs.

Int: Ya, music, culture wise, we are actually really similar, specifically white South Africans. Ya, so, house in South Africa are built in a very specific way. They are basically built like fortresses. We’ve got high walls, alarm systems, burglar bars, and all of that. Um, can we discuss the physical structure of your home, so the safety applications that you’ve had on your home?

Elizabeth: Ya. so, I’ll first speak about my mom’s home. So, we live in an estate so it’s like guarded off with guards and stuff and then, um… we have like an upstairs area and there’s like a…

Int: A Trellidor?

Elizabeth: Ya, but like a, it’s a metal door. One that clicks in, so you just close it and it clicks it. My mom’s like, ‘it has to be locked every night’, and then all the bedrooms are upstairs. So we always had that safety issue because like even though we lived in an estate we’ve had like – nobody’s broken in to our house, but next door they have broken in and like when we still had dogs, like long ago, our dogs were like barking because the robber had like actually run across our yard, and like.

Int: Geez.

Elizabeth: Like I don’t had electric fences and stuff like that, but there estate does, obviously. But there had been quite a few issues with break ins.

Int: That sometimes happens in an estate, because I think a lot of people when they move into an estate they kind of drop their safety.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Because they’re like, ‘well, we’ve got all the guards and everything’.

Elizabeth: Ya, and like leave the doors open and ya.

Int: Exactly. So, I think they’re easier targets per se, but.

Elizabeth: Ya, but we never did that like we would always lock – my mom’s actually very safety conscious so ya. And then, where I stay now in Brooklyn it’s also like in a complex with guards, and they’re like – I’ve actually seen, if I come home late at night, like at three o’clock, they are always like there. And like even when… I left the one morning to come outside at like two o’clock in the morning. \*Laughs.

Int: Ya, because you were wondering outside at three in the morning. \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: Because I was going somewhere with someone and it was two o’clock in the morning, and then a security guard literally walked outside the block. And I was like, “What? You’re awake?” Like they’re actually really good, like, which is so nice.

Int: Which makes you feel better I take it?

Elizabeth: Ya. And then I always have in my flat like a locked door, like bars, and then a normal door. So, I feel very safe there even if leaving and coming at night. The only thing is that there’s a lot of hobos like right next to my apartment so.

Int: That’s a little bit sketchy.

Elizabeth: I actually, I feel fine with them. They look very peaceful, so I’m actually not scared of them like, my mom in the beginning was like, “Ooh no it’s dangerous.” But I don’t feel, dangerous at all – I don’t feel scared at all. They’re actually very chilled so, ya.

Int: When you were moving, um. So like you have a ‘wish list’ when you’re moving, like ‘I want a swimming pool, I want a garden’. How high was safety on that list of wants basically for your new house?

Elizabeth: Not at all. I really don’t think about safety.

Int: Really?

Elizabeth: Well, I think I obviously – think living in a complex is nice.

Int: Ya, ya.

Elizabeth: So for me, but not necessarily, for me I wouldn’t really think of like-

Int: It needs to have this?

Elizabeth: Like a door, like a lock door – but even now, that I think about it, I probably should have thought about stuff like that.

Int: \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: But I just like – so, it was more important for me to have like, the cost firstly, for it to be like close to varsity, but also like in a nice area. I think area also makes a difference because when I stayed for one year, last year, there close to the Prinshof main campus, that wasn’t a nice area.

Int: That’s not a nice area, no.

Elizabeth: Like I didn’t feel safe there, I’m not going to lie.

Int: I think that’s like Town adjacent; just like outside of Town.

Elizabeth: Ya, that area I didn’t feel safe, ya.

Int: Did you have to drive through Pretoria CBD, Town?

Elizabeth: No, but we had to drive to get to campus, and there’s like a drug house right on the lefthand side.

Int: Wait, I think I know exactly where this is.

Elizabeth: Ya, it’s right there by the hospital Steve Biko.

Int: Ya, there’s also like a massive field there, like a sports – I think there’s a school there, ya.

Elizabeth: So, ya, there I didn’t feel so safe and like driving there, even, like now thinking about it, even when you just parked by the side like by the traffic light and there’s someone here, like I have a fricken pepper spray in my car because like my one friend Sasha got mugged.

Int: Ya, with a mug.

Elizabeth: Ya, so like I like got a pepper spray in my car, so like every single time I stop my car by Fountains.

Int: Oh.

Elizabeth: I literally put my finger on it and I’m ready.

Int: You’re ready, ya, ya.

Elizabeth: Because I know myself and in a situation like that I freeze.

Int: Ya, I scream.

Elizabeth: I would not be able to do – I would just panic. So, like I know that if somebody – and if they walk by I literally have it out. So, ya, just to be carful. And I think that’s, that’s actually a thing that I actually do subconsciously panic about it, and I want to be ready; and like even at night-time I don’t drive past there even though it’s much quicker to go home because I know.

Int: Rather be safe than sorry.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: So, ya we’ve kind of actually already touched on this, but are there any daily safety precautions that you take? So, like the pepper spray could be one.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: So, are there any daily things that you do to like keep yourself safe?

Elizabeth: … I don’t think so, hey. Besides the pepper spray, I’m trying to think now, like when I go to gym in the morning – no, I kind of just wait outside so I’m not really. But I’m always looking around me, you know, because like I’ll usually go to gym like before it opens in the morning, so it’s still dark. And then I sit there and wait, and like obviously when you see a person so early in the morning-

Int: It’s a bit weird ya.

Elizabeth: You worry a bit. But it’s not like I do anything about it. I just like watch them. And I know like if they come at me I’m just going to run away. \*Laughs.

Int: Ya. \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: Like I have faith in my running skills. I think one day that will let me down, but.

Int: Ya. Are there places in South Africa where you like just don’t go because you feel uncomfortable or unsafe or?

Elizabeth: Oh, one hundred percent, like a lot of – I actually went for one talk. So, I was giving presentations on the safety of vaccines, and the COVID vaccines, and stuff, and I was going to these dodgy places. Okay, firstly I had to give a presentation like right behind Tuks to like drug addicts.

Int: Okay.

Elizabeth: That scared me a lot, but they were actually pretty chilled. And then I needed to give another one to, it was literally there by Mamelodi in this little outside garden. And I was like very scared driving there. Like and I had this.

Int: Mams is scary, I’m not going to lie.

Elizabeth: Ya, but at least my boyfriend at the time came with me, which made it so much better. I would have been very scared on my own because it’s just a whole – the roads are different, there are people everywhere, the taxis are crazy like. But I didn’t have a bad experience there, the people were actually very nice, all of them, but initially you go there and you’re scared. Like I had to park outside in a like a field and stuff, so I was definitely scared going there, but then I like, I was almost like pleasantly surprised by the people. It’s like I almost – ya. I didn’t think they would be that, I don’t know.

Int: Nice?

Elizabeth: Nice, normal.

Int: Ya, normal people.

Elizabeth: Ya, I was a bit scared.

Int: Any other places you will just not go unless you have to?

Elizabeth: Soweto, like where my sister works.

Int: Oh ya, like you said she works in Soweto.

Elizabeth: Ya, she works, like stays just outside, but like where she works is quite bad um… all the townships.

Int: Ya, ya,, I don’t blame you.

Elizabeth: Like I would not go there, like even when I was like searching for sites where I could do these presentations, there were so many places where I was like, “No, I can’t do this because I can’t drive there and I can’t put myself at risk.”

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: And all, and basically, those were the only places where I could visit, so it was kind of like, “Oh this is shit now, I can’t do more presentations.” But it’s fine ya, but I would say all the townships – I can’t really think of… ya.

Int: One that had come up a lot in past interviews has been on the Pretoria CBD, so Town.

Elizabeth: Oh ya.

Int: Would you go to-

Elizabeth: Sunnyside.

Int: Ya, Sunnyside.

Elizabeth: No.

Int: ‘No’. \*Laughs.

Elizabeth: No, no. I have driven through there once because – once, I have done it once. And I think the State Theatre is there and sometimes we have dance shows there.

Int: Yes.

Elizabeth: No, that’s scary. That’s also where I have my pepper spray ready.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: But like, I have done it a few times, but like for instance if I’m like going somewhere and I see the GPS route wants to take me through Sunnyside like – even that Arcadia area.

Int: Ya, ya.

Elizabeth: I’m just like, ‘not really, no’. I do get scared driving there, I would never do it at night.

Int: No.

Elizabeth: I would still do it during the daytime. But I’m also still very aware.

Int: Watching around.

Elizabeth: Ya, but I forgot about that one. Also like if I go with my mom and stuff then it’s fine because she’ll be alert, she’ll-

Int: She’ll protect you.

Elizabeth: Ya, but if it’s, if I’m alone then I get like scared, ya.

Int: So, when or where do you feel like you are ‘at home’?

Elizabeth: I feel like I’m ‘at home’ in my flat. Kind of like when I’m alone and calm, you know. Or actually, also when I’m with friends and we’re having a good time, and we’re like laughing and stuff, that’s probably when I feel at home.

Int: It’s when you feel comfortable basically?

Elizabeth: Ya, exactly when I feel comfortable. And I’m trying to think now, I use – sometimes, when I’m with my mom and we’re having good chats I feel ‘at home’, but other times I don’t when she’s like attacking me. \*Laughs. So, it depends on her mood, I suppose.

Int: Ya, I get you.

Elizabeth: Ya. I mean I used to feel quite at home with my sister, but I mean she’s changed a bit since medicine so, not so much anymore. But I would say those are the three places: with friends, like when we like, I don’t know, getting along well and you can, like relating to things; also, just being alone in my flat; and then ya, also with my mom, sometimes.

Int: So, you’re a student, I take it you’ve gone out to the clubs.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Int: The infamous Strip – for all the Tuks students who have gone out to the Strip.

Elizabeth: Many a times.

Int: \*Laughs. Many a times. Going out to the Strip, like it’s not always the safest place to go.

Elizabeth: No.

Int: A lot of people get pickpocketed – like I think that’s the main crime that happens at the Strip.

Elizabeth: I’ve heard of like, didn’t someone get like stabbed in the leg?

Int: Ya, someone got stabbed. I think like at Latinos, I think they got stabbed in Latinos and left in the alleyway, but ya. When you go out to the clubs, the Strip or any other club, do you ever feel unsafe?

Elizabeth: Um, not while I’m currently there because most of the times I’m drunk, but I mean I have had for instance like my watch stolen like off my arm. Like I got home – which doesn’t really make sense.

Int: But that’s pretty scary, I mean.

Elizabeth: Ya. So, but like I didn’t notice it – it wasn’t like somebody attacked me or anything. Um… ya, I mean you do kind of feel scared, like when you’re walking outside and there’s so many – it’s also like, drunk people can also be scary because they don’t do things that they-

Int: Drunk guys to me are very scary.

Elizabeth: Ya, so that aspect of it when people start big mouth talking and you just – but in situations like that, I just leave almost.

Int: Disappear.

Elizabeth: Ya, disappear almost. So, I have not really been involved with one of those, but I have had before where this guy and I were walking back from the Strip because he lived really close. It was a stupid idea. And – I can’t remember so well, but I have gotten the story from someone else. This guy was driving by in his car and he drove back and then he tried to like steal something from us. I was just, \*Screams. And he tried to steal from the guy but he didn’t get it right somehow, I don’t know.

Int: Yeah.

Elizabeth: I don’t really know the story, but somebody tried to like pickpocket, like steal us in a car.

Int: And what did you do – did you just take off running or?

Elizabeth: Ya, apparently I just hid, you know, back away.

Int: Ya, ya.

Elizabeth: ‘You deal with this shit, bye’. Ya, literally. I don’t know why they didn’t target me. I mean maybe I did just run.

Int: Ya, that’s possible.

Elizabeth: I can’t really remember. This is a second-hand story so, ya.

Int: So, ya when you go out to the Strip, the infamous Strip, are the any like safety precautions, like extra safety precautions that you take, specifically at the Strip?

Elizabeth: Um, I would say with phones and stuff, like sometimes I leave my phone at home, sometimes – I never put it in my bag or my backpack, I will hold it in my hand literally the whole time. Um… or, this is a tough one because I don’t always do it, but maybe give it to someone that I trust, but then again if they lose it then it’s like so bad for them.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: So, something like that. And I would never take something like all my cars or all my – like I will take one card, so then you can just cancel it. No cash, like stuff like that. Um, I wouldn’t say that I take any other precautions except for like you always have to be with someone; you never go to the bathroom alone like.

Int: Yes, work as a team.

Elizabeth: Yes, exactly. Like… ya. And you really shouldn’t walk home event though-

Int: Yeah!

Elizabeth: Even if the place is close.

Int: I think if you’re like a massive group.

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Like I’ve walked-

Elizabeth: Yeah if you’re a massive group it’s fine, but even if it’s just two people – even there’s a guy I don’t think that’s – I don’t think I’ll do that again.

Int: No, I think you need like a crew to walk together.

Elizabeth: Ya, exactly. Ya, then that’s fine.

Int: Um, spiking. Have you ever been worried about spiking at the Strip?

Elizabeth: No. The thing is – ya. I’ve never – it’s never happened to me or I have also never been when its happened to one of my friends.

Int: Okay.

Elizabeth: So, no I don’t actually think about it at all. I probably should, but I don’t.

Int: \*Laughs. Probably should.

Elizabeth: Probably should.

Int: Yeah, so… what is your biggest fear living in South Africa?

Elizabeth: Mm… because I haven’t had any bad safety experiences it’s not going be surrounding that.

Int: Okay.

Elizabeth: My biggest fear is that I get stuck here and then I can’t reach my full potential.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: Because I feel like South Africa doesn’t have a lot of opportunities.

Int: Can’t get out.

Elizabeth: Ya. I really don’t want to be stuck here and then I like get a mediocre job and like, I don’t know. So, that’s – I would say that’s my biggest fear. I know there are far worse fears, but to me because I haven’t experienced some other things, ya.

Int: No, but it’s your personal fear so it’s completely dependent.

Elizabeth: And I suppose I fear for my sister because she works in such a dangerous place and a lot of things can happen, so that’s also I think one.

Int: So, do you feel like there is this like impeding doom awaiting South Africa, like we’re-

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: Like we’re going to fail like economically, politically, um, descend into a potential race war, like is that something you worry and fear about?

Elizabeth: Ya. Like I don’t want to be pessimistic, but I’m pessimistic and I think we’re just going downhill and I see no way.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: I honestly see no way this can be fixed. If we carry on with the current government with – even if we get a new government, I just feel like it’s too far gone. Like, I don’t know, I really – that’s why I so badly want to leave because I basically have no hope. Which is so sad because it’s such a beautiful country and it had, had, so much potential and like such nice people, it’s just ya.

Int: When you’ve – like, do you view South Africa as your home? So, when you’ve gone overseas and you’ve come back, are you like, ‘okay cool, I’m coming back home’, or is it more like, ‘okay cool, I’m coming back to my flat and I’m coming back to my friends and family’?

Elizabeth: Ya, I mean like I would say like I call South Africa my home, but it is more like I don’t see the whole of South Africa as my home. Like I see my flat as my home-

Int: Ya, pockets.

Elizabeth: I see my – Ya. so, I don’t actually think.

Int: The country itself-

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Is a home.

Elizabeth: But I also think like if I were to, like I said before, like leave for a while then I might have a different opinion because I haven’t actually experienced being away for long, ya.

Int: Yeah, like you never know.

Elizabeth: Ya, but currently it’s like that.

Int: Ya, so like we were talking about earlier, you are a Tuks student. Do you know of the #AmINext? movement?

Elizabeth: No.

Int: I was a movement that happened mainly because there was a UCT student, a female student that had been brutally murdered, raped, mutilated, burnt, and then-

Elizabeth: Shit.

Int: In a Post Office, by a post officer, I guess.

Elizabeth: Yoh.

Int: And this kind of just kick started this movement where I was a general question like, ‘Am I next’.

Elizabeth: Oh okay.

Int: Are there aspects that we can do to protect ourselves in South Africa. So, it was kind of a situation where you were like, ‘you can do all that you can do, but if crime wants to happen to you, it will happen to you’. Is that something you share, is that something you don’t even think about, is that something you disagree with?

Elizabeth: Um… I kind of – I mean there are things you can do to be careful, but at the end of the day if something is going to happen it’s going to happen, and I don’t think you should become paranoid, like I mean it’s a horrible situation but like, it’s not like I’m not going to go to the Post Office because of this.

Int: Yes.

Elizabeth: But you can take precautions, like taking people with you and stuff like that, but I also don’t think we should have to live in fear and we should be completely like traumatised by other people’s experiences. Like it’s good to be careful and you should be careful, and I probably should be a little bit more careful, but I don’t think we should stop that from living our lives and that we should become all, ya.

Int: What’s it, become all scared and paranoid.

Elizabeth: Yes, ya.

Int: So, um, one of the things that had been happening in the world right now is that Iran a lot of the women have protested the mandatory wearing of the Hajib. And that has caused a massive load of violent attacks and lot of protestors to be imprisoned and then also tortured and raped and then killed eventually. This is literally something that was sparked by an oppressive force on women. South African women live in a country that you can say is quite oppressive towards South African women because it isn’t really safe for us to walk around, it’s not really safe for us to do many things, but like you said, you can’t be paranoid you still have to live your life like this.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: But there is this sense, and it was mostly coming from the #AmINext? movement, where it’s bubbling, where South African women are getting to a point where enough is going to be enough.

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: Do you think that South African women would go the route of the Iranian women who are protesting in the streets and it’s continuous protesting, because the #AmINext? movement was really only protested for, I think, two, three weeks it was on people’s minds and then it kind of fell away. But these women have really been fighting in Iran. Do you think if that happened in South Africa there would be a revolt against men?

Elizabeth: I think there would be, but I don’t know how successful it would be.

Int: Ya, okay.

Elizabeth: I think – like think about our strikes in the past.

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: We strike, ‘yeah cool’, and then nothing really happens about it or like minimal things happen. I don’t know, I don’t understand, like are they protesting for the police to be like better and stuff like that?

Int: Ya.

Elizabeth: But the police already don’t give a shit, so it’s like-

Int: “Why are you doing this’, ya.

Elizabeth: I don’t understand how it would really help, but I think it could possibly happen again that they would start protesting and-

Int: But it’s not really going to amount to anything.

Elizabeth: I don’t think it will. I mean if you see the past successes of previous, um.

Int: Strikes.

Elizabeth: Strikes and protests.

Int: I mean literally the #AmINext? protests, nothing really came of it.

Elizabeth: Exactly.

Int: It was a very important thing and a lot of people spoke about, but I mean, I think we’re like two, three years after it and-

Elizabeth: Ya.

Int: There’s no actual real change.

Elizabeth: Ya. You need to change the people higher up.

Int: Yes.

Elizabeth: And I think that they feel like that they are too important to listen to-

Int: The people.

Elizabeth: And they don’t actually see the issue, because it’s mostly run by the males, I think.

Int: Yes. I mean Beke Cele has a fantastic quote where he was like, “Ya, a rape victim must consider herself lucky because she was only rapped by one man.”

Elizabeth: \*Breathes out.

Int: And I mean like, that is, that is just like-

Elizabeth: That’s messed up.

Int: That’s really a kick in the face. But ya, with the – sorry, I just lost my place. So, I take it you don’t see a foreseeable future for yourself in South Africa?

Elizabeth: No.

Int: And it’s because of the unfairness?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Int: So, there’s not really anything else that is pushing or pulling you?

Elizabeth: I just also feel like – okay, I’m speaking in general, now most of the people to me are slightly lazy.

Int: Yeah.

Elizabeth: I feel like they are quite a few – but I don’t know if it’s like different overseas, but it’s like I want to be surrounded by people that are like, you know, ‘working, working, working’.

Int: ‘Go, go, go’, ya.

Elizabeth: Because I feel like that would push me, I feel like I – even like now in my current workspace, the people are so lazy, and I don’t like people who are lazy, like; so I feel like that’s also a thing and the unfairness, and also just the fact that nothing works. \*Laughs. It’s just irritating like. \*Laughs.

Int: Nah, I don’t blame you.

Elizabeth: So, it’s those three things why I don’t see a future here, ya.

Int: Um, ya I think that’s basically everything. I just have to do a quick check here… Ya, that’s basically everything that I wanted to ask you today.

Elizabeth: Cool.

Int: Is there any questions, concerns, or deep-seated worries you would like to express right now?

Elizabeth: No, not at all.

Int: Anything you would like to add.

Elizabeth: No, I’m good. \*Laughs.

Int: Fantastic. You also have my email address and contact information, so if you find anything or if you want to ask a question or just want to into contact with me, you are more than welcome to um – if you find like a newspaper article and think it might apply here, please send it though I would be more than happy.

Elizabeth: If I think of something then.

Int: Ya. You’re more than welcome to send me an email. And ya, otherwise thank you so much for your time.

Elizabeth: Thank you.

Int: And for your answers, and your stories, I know it’s not always an easy conversation to have, but um, ya so thank you for your honesty and everything.

Elizabeth: Thank you.

Int: Ya, awesome.