

Interview: Rada

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Attendance:

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Rada

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised. Any sections that need to be checked for accuracy such as phrases in other languages or names of places I couldn't confirm the spelling of have been highlighted in red.

CH: So we're recording now ok? Oh, yeah there's your amazing photograph, you're arty photograph. It's a brilliant photograph it's beautiful.

R: Thank you.

CH: Lucia do you want to start off?

LR: Yeah, maybe we can start off just with you describing the picture and just telling us why you decided to send us this picture and what it represents for you?

R: Right I was flicking through my many many photographs because I really like photography and actually this was initially wasn't meant to be this one but then I said ok this kind of sums up how I felt that day. I think it was April? It was one of those heatwave April days where actually it's nice and warm. As you can see it's sunny outside, it was a beautiful beautiful day [*happy*] but at that time I used to work in a school so we did online lessons and my son was not in a good place so we had to stay at home anyway. We didn't go out and I was really really depressed [*sadness*]. I was really depressed so I just thought I'll just take this photos. I had no intention to share with anyone what so ever [*surprise*] and it's just one of this [*laughing*] artistic spurts and it's at home, and of course I didn't need to wear a mask at home but for me mask was like novelty and I hated it. I hated it. I still dislike masks but I'm more tolerable at the moment. That tolerance is much better but at that time I couldn't breath, it was itchy and it now represents everything that I hated at that time. Being inside locked, when it's beautiful day with mask on. So yeah, that's pretty much it.

LR: Ok, so why could you not go out? Was it lockdown or was it forbidden to go out?

R: No actually I could but there was nothing outside. At that time we were living in a small place called Boston Lincolnshire so there was not much going on and also as I said I had to do online lessons so I had to be at home working and also my boy who was 13 at that time had a really hard time. He wouldn't go out at all but I couldn't leave him alone, I mean not alone, I mean my husband was there of course but... Oh no he was working during the day, my husband worked in a care home so he wasn't at home. So [*pfft – sigh*] there was no point going out because normally I would go out to work or do something.

LR: Yes, so when you say your son was in a bad place are you ok to tell us?

R: I am very ok because I'm pretty much... at that time I was absolutely horrified but then later on and just looking at the statistic I realised this is pretty much was the average, the normal of I mean the new normality of normality. I don't know if that makes sense. Cause he just moved to secondary school, he didn't even have time to make any friends because eh.. So he started in December 19 and the first lockdown was in march 20. So he really didn't have time to settle in at all and then started this online lessons. Of course the teachers were not prepared at all so it was all over the place. He got this notification from everywhere, he couldn't cope well with the material. It was very difficult, it was private school so the expectations were extremely high. Bless him he couldn't understand anything. I was trying to go but of course how could I help? I was nervous as well because I was doing online teaching which was absolutely total crap. I'm sorry about the word [*laughing*] but it was just a mess. I was struggling with my own job and it was bad so at a certain point he just got extremely violent, depressed, suicidal, completely confused so he had online therapy which didn't work. Then he came, when the lockdown was lifted so that was good and then there was a second lockdown which was like right ok we already know what is it but it's still bad. So to cut it short we decided you know it's time to move to somewhere else and we came to Edinburgh in June this year and it was the best decision ever made [*happy*] because it was like fresh start! I know we're a bit old and it's difficult to start from scratch but it was the best thing we've ever done. [*emotional voice drops and sounds a bit broken up*]

LR: *Ohkay. So did you move specially to get your son out of that?*

R: Oh no it's a very complex reason because it's just a place where we used to live was really... How to say it without being non-offensive I don't even know how to put. Let's say a small rural area full of angry farmers and we were just out of place [*laughing*]. We spent nearly eight years [*surprise*]. We never managed to integrate, never and we are quite ok family but no. Never managed to integrate.

LR: *Could you not integrate with, I mean did you not make any friends or?*

R: Not really, it was just a really divisive community. It was a really weird place. If you google it...

LR: *I know where it is because...*

CH: *I know where it is as well.*

LR: *Boston, Lincolnshire yeah. I mean I don't know where. I think I've been there.*

R: Oh my god. Well that time for two things. First it's like lots of farms and back houses and really good vegetables I suppose. [*laughing*] High quality of agriculture and secondly it was the highest percentage of people who voted for Brexit which is self explanatory. You can understand the feeling because my family [*sigh*]. Not even maybe on purpose I'm Bulgarian so I'm eastern European which is not great trust me [*laughing*] and my husband is Italian which is slightly better because he's considered higher. My son is...

LR: *Not much, not much [laughing].*

R: [*high pitched disagreement noise*] Well, when you say Italy people go oh! Ooh see and then I goes yeah.

LR: *The British people like Italy because of the food and the art.*

R: Well I'm telling you because I'm Bulgarian and I know it goes wha... [*laughing*]. So anyway and my son he was 13 so when we moved there he was five. So for him Boston, Lincolnshire was his

hometown and homeplace. That's it so uhh... sorry I just realise that I have to click on something [laughing]. Erm, I uh lost my train of thoughts [laughing] I'm sorry.

LR: It's alright.

CH: You were talking about your son.

R: Yeah erm, no I was. Oh yeah why we didn't integrate well, because you know we. I'm Bulgarian, he's Italian my son considers himself as British so it's like uhhh.. English actually and my community. There was no Italians in Boston at all. Bulgarians there was just very, oh god, they weren't great people in the world like I can see the Bulgarians here. Lovely people but they was all was people who go to. They completely illiterate and they only think about money and how to get drunk so I couldn't even integrate with my own community so. [laughs nervously] I wasn't really welcome because at the end of the day I was married to foreigner so. I mean non-Bulgarian whatever.

CH: You said back there that Bulgarians were kind of looked down upon maybe yeah?

R: Yes, this is my personal specification that if you think about immigration it's like uh the lowest lowest lowest are say people from developing countries or refugees or whatever. They seem like really bad people you know, coming to kill terrorists or something. I'm serious, these are the most popular perceptions and I can't sugarcoat them because it's true. So this is the level one say, is eastern Europeans or Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian you know the low paid agriculture, dark subjects from Eastern European life ask post communism. No it's a very complex thing and number two is Western European immigrants so they're not ex-pats but they're somewhere in between because now maybe the jobs just slightly better or at least not in agriculture. Maybe they belong to similar society in terms of non-communist or something. I don't know to be honest and the number four it's the best immigrants. This normally would be top jobs like Doctors from India, Dentists from somewhere else [laughing]. Yeah and they, for example if you say, Boston again, if you say you're Indian it's ooh ooh because all India works in hospital and get lots of money and their children study in universities, they're cool. Which is great, but it's just very stereotypical, it goes no where. So yeah, just 8 years it was. We really really tried hard trust me, everything possible but it was just [thump sound].

CH: You said as well that in Lincoln there was the highest percentage of people voting for Brexit.

R: In Boston yeah.

CH: In Boston. Did you feel any tension after that.

R: Oh ho h oho it was bad! Especially before the referendum actually. Once the referendum was announced, people kind of slightly calmed down but before that, just before that that there was like really ferocious campaign. Very aggressive one, especially from leavers. So in order to gain more votes to push people to vote, it was very aggressive, very very aggressive and the local media got the stuff would come out from the local media which was just... You know Daily Mail was nothing. I mean I'm talking about Boston Standard, Lincolnshire Echo, this. The local journalists or whatever they are. Honestly if you have time to research this like wow! I mean still you know when you look at the way they work things even Police. No Police they regulate, they are told off from the top faces so they regulate themselves but I used to work for the council. I used to work for the social services and I used to do volunteering for a just one second (speaking language Bulgarian or Italian to someone off screen.) Sorry [laughing].

LR: Take your time.

R: Yes I did one year of volunteering in the local Police and I just realised there's nothing to expect any more because if I don't see something there. It means there's nothing. Do you get what I mean?

LR: Did you experience a kind of discriminations or at least feelings of being..

R: Yeah yeah yeah [*enthusiastic agreement*] for example all my jobs when I worked for the council it was for childrens services and then with young people. Fair enough they'll say yeah yeah we'll give you familys kids that they don't speak English as a first language which fair enough because I speak so makes sense absolutely totally. Often there will be groups like strictly for English, for local people and I said ok but I can probably do something. Nah, nah you know it's nah don't bother.

LR: They wouldn't send you to English families?

R: No no that's the thing because you know I don't mind if they send me to Bulgarian makes sense because no one else will cover that ok that's absolutely fine but if there is nothing going on and there like cases with English. I speak English. I know I have accent but I can communicate and I don't feel intimidated if I don't know something I ask them spell it out write it out. It's not that difficult they are nice actually but no I wouldn't be [*sad*] and then the last years I moved to a school secondary and there was this department it's called EAL, English as another language and it was lovely. Lovely lovely job but it was something eventually that grind out. No It's something that has a lifespan and just at a certain point, especially after Brexit there are not many people coming with English as second language or those who are here small children you know they are like sponges so they're English is actually better than the rest so I don't. We had this conversation guys you know it's a question of time. We have to sort of do something else in order to stay in the school. It was a federation actually so how about you know just upskill us and tell us to try and give me a chance to do something else but it was because I had this background originally I'm graduated languages and special needs but anyway I have some experiences with social services, as interpreter and so on and so on. So I said look I want to go in pastoral care, attendance, pastoral care, I want to work with you know a bit challenging kids cause I like it and I think I have the skills and no. No they didn't let me. No they said ok you can do for you know non-english speakers and I said yeah but how about the English speakers [*laughing*] eh and that was that it just went completely flat. No response.

CH: I'm interested as well, why you decided to volunteer for the Police. Just why did you choose that organisation as a place that you'd like to work?

R: Uh well initially I had this friend and then she offered me to help support with translations and I said ok well why not. I was juggling with part time jobs and I had plenty of time I thought you know we all have a little think about Police life, like heros. So anyway I went there and I met this lady, she was really nice. She was actually from home office and they were doing modern slavery thing so I worked quite a few bits with her and I really loved it and then they announced this PCO which is Police community support officer. It's not exactly Police Officer. It's Police Community, it's slightly different and they told me why don't you try and then they told me look if you try and you like it, there will be like jobs after that. Maybe volunteer and you can actually get job in different role. It's a way to get in there and I thought oh my god, that's good money, stability it's a good job and if I like it why not and I did try. No I liked the job but I didn't like the dynamics there. It was just I don't know. Yeah there were a few things that I...

LR: Yeah. Things didn't work out so did things work out better for your husband?

R: No. Not at all. So we just struggled for money. Maybe one of the reasons we moved here was basically money. Better jobs but there are so many things that add to this and I can't say which one is bigger or lesser. It's just... you know when we talk about problems they are never black and white.

LR: Absolutely yeah.

R: One leads to another and then like pfft.

LR: Yeah. So can I ask how did the decision come about to go to Edinburgh?

R: We came to visit friends here last year. You know there was in between two lockdowns there was the opportunity to travel and because travelling abroad was a bit of a pain we decided to do something within the country. I've never been before in Scotland and we had friends who said come! Just for a few days and that time by the way they were extremely cheap the train tickets, accommodation it was just insanely cheap because of covid and I thought why not. It was end of July/August, it's like little treat for three of us because we really had a rough time. So we came here and I thought oh my god I love this place. I love it because it's so green, it's a city and it doesn't feel like city and there is mountains, well when I say mountains you know what I mean.

LR: Hills.

R: Hills yes but it looks like it. There is sea, because my husband is Italian he loves sea so.

LR: Oh right where is he from?

R: Napoli [laughing].

LR: No way yeah he must love the sea.

R: Yes. It's looks very European like and people are very down to earth and it's small. At the end of the day it's small, it's not big city.

LR: No I know.

R: And I would say it's walkable. [laughing] Walking takes exactly the same time as travelling by bus by the way so it's bad. I don't know there was just something that I really loved and yeah.

LR: There you are. So was it August 2020 or August 2021 when you...

R: So we came 20 (2020) to see, cause you know moving to another place especially when you get certain age it's a big thing. It's not as easy yeah and 21 (2021), so this year actually we moved in.... Actually my husband moved earlier because he got a job and then my son and I we moved later when the school finished because I really wanted to finish my contract and he finishes school so.

LR: Ohkay, so yeah it sounds great. Are you happier there?

R: Absolutely. [serious – feels very strongly] Absolutely with all the, I mean there's nothing perfect, there's so many things you know problems you know name it but ach. Oh my god, it's the best thing we've ever done and even if, I don't know if there's going to be another lockdown. I hope not. I believe not.

LR: I'm a bit worried about reading yesterday about this new South African variant whatever. I can't believe it.

R: Yes. It might be. It was Delta before that from England but I [sigh] I don't know. There is a very thin delicate line between actually what media want us to believe and what actually it is because I

sometimes I feel they say this in order to put people off you know going out and celebrating and being together. Because Christmas is coming everybody will go out drinking and having fun. *[laughing]* I myself am planning to go out and they're trying you know to prevent this celebration because we've been in this limbo for so long and people are hungry to socialise.

LR: Absolutely.

R: And if they say yeah it's very dangerous, you know most of the people will choose to believe. Do you know I may not go out or I may you know do something else. I don't know but how dangerous it is I pfft.

LR: I don't think they know yet.

R: I don't think they know yet.

LR: No they don't know yet. I just hope it's not going to turn out to be anything scary because I am also hungry to go out and I mean booked to go back to Italy in a few days. I don't know, hopefully fingers crossed.

R: Yeah fingers crossed but I don't know we. I think the society needs to balance between physical health and mental health because isolating people is never going to be a good idea. I mean seriously, what is the biggest punishment for a crime? Be isolated so *[laughing]*.

LR: That's very true.

R: Like some kind of prison or I don't even know what's that. I mean *[laughing]* I appreciate the vaccination. I've had mine one, two, three, all of them. I'm just happy vaccinated, do what you want just let me you know work and... Where I work my work is direct contact with people and uh.

LR: What is your job?

R: At the moment I'm housing support officer so I work with young people.

LR: Ohkay.

R: Who have experienced homelessness or, yeah practically homelessness for various reason they're placed on this hostels and temporary accommodation and they have to get around to the next. It's a very nice job. It's demanding but its fun.

LR: Yeah, it's also front line isn't it?

R: It's very frontline because yeah the *[laughing]* there's the... The most of them I don't even go in that route asking about vaccination and stuff. I know the answer already I just use this plaster this mask and trying to keep as much as possible just inside. Just pray *[laughing]* it's a bit of a Russian roulette.

CH: Rada can I ask you going back to when you were living in Lincolnshire in the first lockdown.

R: Yeah?

CH: How was it with your.... I presume you have family in Bulgaria still?

R: Yes I have parents yes.

CH: And your husband obviously got family in Italy. So was that a challenging time or was that like?

R: Very [*intense emotion*], very very challenging. So what happened is, because my parents they in their 70's but they still you know they're good. They still can travel so they came to visit. They like coming to the UK, they really enjoy it. Especially in summer because Bulgaria is so hot so they come here and get some fresh air. [*laughing*] What happened they came 17 (2017), 18 (2018) and 19 (2019) I suppose. Yes 19 (2019) and the plan was to come in 20 (2020) as well but it didn't happen and unfortunately my mum got the virus and she got it really bad and I haven't seen them since June 2019. So we keep in touch online, it's not great. My husband actually we went to Italy, when was it I can't remember, last year. Yes because we've skipped that one because we moved from England to Scotland yes. So we went last year so it was slightly better but again we keep in touch using whatsapp and messenger and it's sad.

CH: What was particularly bad in Italy in the first lockdown, it must have been worrying for your husband.

R: [*pause then speaks in quite voice*] It was bad.

CH: Can you sort of describe that word, that it's bad. Maybe you have an Italian word for it or maybe a Bulgarian word for it or another term?

R: Describe the meaning of it was bad? [*laughing*]

CH: Yeah.

R: Urm. You can't see the tears at my eyes. I just... ok so what happened is that the word came out in March but I think the three of us we... sorry [*grabs tissues – is very upset*]. Three of us we got something really horrible in, which is funny by the way, you know that Chinese new year was in January. That time. So we went to Nottingham [*sniffing*] because there was a big Chinese community but there was nothing there and we overheard about this virus and then [*chuckles*] we got ill. Really really bad. [*voice breaking again*] Three of us [*chuckles*].

LR: All of you!

R: Yes and when I say bad I was, I felt like I am going to die. Seriously it's started in January and ended up to me it finished half term in February and it was like I literally would collapse I was bleeding from my nose, pain all over, fever. My son had it but he's been complaining for a long time "Mummy, it hurts, my knee my everything hurts my body." And I said you growing up that's why it hurts. [*laughing*] It was bad. Bad bad. And my husband he got it. He got something. We don't know and it hit him in the lungs and they said it's a lung infection and they gave him antibiotics. I'm sorry I just need to go and close that door, just one second.

[*R talking to someone in the background*]

R: Yes and then once we sort of managed to recover from this it came the news that there was a Covid so.

LR: So you've probably had it without knowing.

R: Probably had it because when I had my first vaccine I experienced very mild but very similar thing. Headaches you know, tiredness, pains and withdrawals but you know that's such a weird thing that everybody has it differently. Mine hit me in my joints same as my mum. Mum had it and she had the same thing. My husband got it in his lungs and he just was coughing and spitting for one year which is not great.

LR: Terrible, it's terrible. Can I ask when did your mum get ill in 2020?

R: Yes she had it. So my family, my immediate family, my husband and son we had something in January.

LR: Yes very early on.

R: Before it was announced but my mother I think she had it in May after and it lasted for a good while. Long time and she still goes to physiotherapy and stuff like this but in Bulgaria they're quite good actually with this. Lots of things in place and because in Bulgaria [urgh sound] it's a mess but at least they still face to face.

LR: Yes like in Italy.

R: Because they reject the idea, it's a very complicated thing. The law is vaccination population and it's just we keep reject and refuse that this exists which the good side, the silver lining of this is that my mum got proper care and she got cure. So she managed to recover because from what she... She never let me see her on recovery when she was ill. That was for a good six months and saw her after that I started crying because her fingers were like this (gestures with hands) and her face was mummy, completely all wrinkles and she had no hair, literally no hair because it fall off. I was like oh shit. [sniffing]

CH: Oh no that's terrible.

LR: How did you feel?

R: Guilty, extremely guilty. I was like...

LR: Ohkay. Ok.

R: Scared but my father, he's god bless him. He's one of these blessed people, maybe he had it, maybe he never had it. Vaccination he never felt anything. He was like okay. [laughing]

LR: Sometimes that happens. I mean I heard stories at the beginning of covid you know that it was very bad in Italy at the beginning.

R: I know.

LR: And I have a lot of friends there and one of my friends dad. So he's very old because he was in his 90s. He got it and he died of it and his mum is 90 year old, she never got anything. So you know.

R: It's one of these miraculous things that we never. I still think it's a genetical response. I think, I seriously think it's the genes that define the response of the body and of course current health situation. It's under stress, the immune system gets low and [sigh] we just messed up. Definitely my father he had, he looked after my mum and yeah. It was good so now when I see her, now she lets me see her, she's back to where she was like no sign or whatsoever that she ever had anything but again this is happy ending. Cause my best friend that died.

LR: Ok.

CH: Ok I'm sorry.

R: Pardon?

CH: I'm really sorry to hear that.

LR: Yeah and... I mean my own dad died. I mean they never called it Covid but that's what it was and he was already very frail and he never pulled through so. Yeah last December. It was about a year now and I think I can understand how you might have felt because for me it was very quick because it all happened within a few days but I was just raring to go there and it was difficult so... I did manage in the end but.

R: Yeah but it's like what's the point? What's the point it's just I'm thinking even if something had happened. I don't know it was... I don't want to talk about this sorry.

CH: Ohkay ok.

LR: It's ok it's fine. You were trusting your dad to look after her.

R: Yeah because he took the biggest. He just looks bless him, he's looking after all the. Cause where I lived it's just one of this, you know Bulgaria is a very family society. We still have the post communism. Because I lived, I was born in the town, 100 thousand but it's very like you know square and fair and everybody knows what they do and that's working class everybody equal. Bit like North Korea but [laughing]. So we live in this block of flats they're quite big and where we lived there pretty much everybody worked in the same place, everybody was the same age and we grew up everybody pretty much sense of families and houses and la all this creepy stuff. So now my home place is full of elderly people, same age and we, the children we grew up and we are all over the world.

LR: Ok. Nobody really stayed? Not very many stayed?

VR: No, and because he proved himself as invincible so far [laughing]. He's looking after most of the people because there was lots of his friends and colleagues and neighbours who got Covid and they call him because they know he's alright with this shit. [laughing] He would go you know to buy them stuff just to say hello.

CH: Ah that's so good, that's so cool.

R: Yeah but sometimes he's like [making sounds like grumbling and then laughing] I'm fed up. I will not answer the phone and then of course he was.

CH: The photograph. I kind of want to go back to the photograph for a minute. You obviously love taking photographs you said yeah?

R: Yeah and I just want to underline I don't like to take photographs of myself, it's just I didn't have any other model. [laughing] If I can explain.

CH: Yeah I mean the photograph's very powerful. It's um, for me you look really strong and kind of powerful and um it doesn't look like a sad photograph to me.

R: No it's not sad I was angry. I was angry that why you see why the seething was. Actually I was very angry because I wanted my life back. I wanted to go back to school. I will never forget that day 20th of March when we had meeting Friday and the head teacher said bla bla bla this is the thing we already know and all of a sudden he was like just muttering and by the way we don't know what's going to happen we might see each other in September and then everybody went completely silent. People started crying because like what?! And I was angry, I was angry because I wanted my son to go back to school because I see him falling apart at home.

CH: Yeah.

R: I was angry. Whatever. *[laughing]*

CH: I also love the way the light's beautiful in the photograph.

R: Oh yeah. Yeah.

CH: It's beautiful light, it's amazing. I love the way you kind of subjected the photograph where you're kind of in this dark space and there's this kind of fantastic outside world out there but you can't see it.

R: Exactly, it's my imprisonment that's why I was angry because I felt like I'm imprisoned and if you see that actually I have a sun tan means that I have spent some time outside and it was nice and hot. No longer going out and like *[angry frustrated noise]*.

CH: Even the pose makes me think of things like a superhero kind of.

R: Oh my god.

CH: Like a Marvel superhero kind of thing.

R: Uhh ok. It's open to interpretations. I don't know it just came out like this.

CH: Did you, have you got any other feelings about it like I mean I love the texture of the fabric as well and the kind of coarsy. You know how you've got this darkness behind you and this white sort of black and white thing happening.

R: Thank you. Now I start seeing things, I maybe unconsciously do them but...

CH: Yeah, yeah. No I'm just...

R: Start to like analysing and I'm like ooh..

CH: Yeah no I'm interested in like you probably subconsciously did these things without thinking about it but there's really kind of light and dark thing happening and this kind of pose is so powerful I think.

LR: Is there any particular meaning why you're looking out the window there?

R: Yes it's a window.

LR: Would you say now?

R: No there's no particular meaning. I'm aware of the light. I'm aware that the contrast is good so if I would look somewhere else it wouldn't have the same. It wouldn't look the same way I'm aware of you know how the light has this frontal and dark has this. I can't explain it but I'm unconsciously aware. Of course I look through the window and it was very bright day and it was when my eyes were really burning. That's why they were looking like squinting.

LR: Then there's another thing I wanted to ask you because you mentioned before that you really hate masks. Can you elaborate a little bit on that? Why do you hate it?

R: Well there are two things. First I feel uncomfortable because you know it covers. I feel uncomfortable. Second you know we reach each other's faces. I can't hear what people say I can't see their face, therefore it's like blocking a little bit. This is my personal, then when you look at the Asian societies, wearing mask has been there for a ages and they don't mind. They're happy with

that but to me mask is like I don't know. You know when you have really nasty dog and they put I don't know how it is in English this thing here.

LR: Yes yes.

R: Not to bite.

CH: Muzzle.

R: Like oh my god. I feel like. What's the word?

CH: A muzzle. It's called a muzzle.

R: Muzzle thank you. My situation with mask is exactly like this, even like Hannibal lecture he had something like this. Like bad thing but now I know it's not a bad thing it's just purely for protection.

CH: Why did you choose to do this portrait of yourself wearing this mask? When you didn't need to wear it?

R: I don't know. It's just I saw myself with the mask. I was actually trying different masks to see how I would look like of course I'm a woman so. *[laughing]* This particular one I can't remember the type of this one but it's kind of good and protective.

LR: Yeah.

CH: Yeah looks good quality to me.

R: It is good quality and...

LR: Yeah the N95 or the FP2 it's called.

R: Ok I'm not going to argue on this. This one it's good to wear but I just put it on my face and I thought oh my god I really look ugly now. *[laughing]* It just makes my face so weird and I thought I'll take a photograph and I stood different poses. Actually I think I have a few photographs, I think I deleted most of them but this one particular and another one when actually I'm facing the camera were really good looking because of the lighting. Yeah I think I was trying masks on which is I don't know. Probably I was bored sometimes you know when you're at home and you're in a weird place you do weird things.

CH: No it's not weird.

R: Well, trying on masks how is that not weird.

CH: I need to ask you as well. Did you apply for the European Union settlement scheme you guys?

R: Yeah.

CH: How did you feel about having to do that?

R: Well I, that was the first thing I did one day said. So I did like the first people I said let me get this out of my way. No I, I didn't feel humiliated or embarrassed or anything. It's just one of this bureaucratic stuff that I have to do. My shock was that June 2016 when the referendum came out. That was the biggest hit and now the rest I just, I knew that is going to happen. So you know it's like having an accident and then dealing with injuries. You know that you have to deal with injuries but there's nothing you can do about it but the accident itself it hurts so. If I go back to this 2016, it's something that will stay with me kind of.

LR: You said thing were really hard even before the referendum right?

R: Yeah because it was bubbling. You could see everywhere you know, unhappy people, all local people you know being angry. The thing is that the anger turns towards those who are not able to, I mean, it's not their fault at the end of the day. Just one second sorry.

[R speaking to someone in the background]

R: I'm sorry could you please excuse me just for a second?

CH: Yeah yeah sure.

[R speaking to someone in the background]

R: The joy of the family.

CH: Oh.

R: Sorry. So I was saying that before this referendum things were bubbling and we moved there 2013 for permanent but they will say 2008/9 something they were attacking Portuguese people who were the first one there and then they left the Portuguese people alone and moved to the Polish people.

LR: Oh my god.

R: In the 20 (2020) election and then the last wave of unhappiness [chuckles nervously] there was Bulgarian and Romanian people. So it would go like you know. So they still say things, however now it's more clear that actually was better. We brought more good than bad in terms of more labour, more taxes, more money, more shops, more things to do. Because now when people left we can see empty shops, empty properties and there's still problems with transport and NHS and schools. They're still there, they're always going to be.

CH: Down in England you mean? Boston yeah?

R: Yeah, absolutely because at the end of the day NHS I don't think it's overwhelmed because they're like 3,000 or 5,000 or 10,000 people coming from abroad. I don't think this is the problem. No one can convince me that.

CH: I'm interested in your transition from England to Scotland as well. You said it was kind of like relief but did you find Scotland different in terms of the different European communities in Scotland compared to England or?

R: Yeah that's a good one because at the moment you know I live in Edinburgh and it's been just for months. So Edinburgh is not Scotland, definitely. I'm aware. It's just there's so many people here. However with my type of job the beauty is that I go different communities so I am now aware (Nidre??) community, which is a lovely place I like it.

CH: (Nidre??) community, yeah ok.

R: So how you know, the local people they see un-local people going back and forth so yes.

LR: (Nidre??) what is that? I don't know about it.

CH: (Nidre??) is just a town. It's just along the coast.

LR: Oh right I see I see.

R: It's actually it's a part now of Edinburgh but.

CH: Yeah yeah.

R: Because it's phrasing it's normal like London it's just everywhere, just spreading and absorbs different communities but I live here in Newhaven.

CH: Oh you just live two minutes along the road from me.

R: [laughing] It's good!

CH: Yeah.

R: But you know in Newhaven it's one way of thinking rather than, oh now I can't pronounce their names but for example, Inve... (makes sounds of mouth clearing).

LR: Inverkeithing?

R: Ok so no, eh west side. I'm sorry I'm really rubbish at pronouncing names. So yeah it's like people of Leith are not people from elsewhere and I don't even want to go between Glasgow and Edinburgh. [laughing] There's so much love. [laughing] But if we have to, I guess it's normal. We are territory creatures so we keep what is deemed to be ours but I am placed when I'm out and about and a friend or my brother calls me I don't get the looks.

LR: Hmm.

R: I'm very happy because I was intimidated if I was speaking Bulgarian back in you know where. Scottish people, I can't say are perfect, there is racism here too oh yeah absolutely. Especially when it comes to welfare, housing, this is mine, you know go back. There is, there is but it's different. I can't even explain why it's different. Here it feels more if it's racism, it feels more real, more natural. Can I say this? I know it sounds weird while back there I would get smiles and don't worry and everything is ok, it's all good mate and then oh my god. [laughs nervously] I would get this opportunity there and there were none of this opportunities. I would get equality and diversity [emphasis on words] and there will never be equality and diversity, nothing like this.

LR: That's really interesting.

R: Though racism. I come from country, oh my god don't even get me on Eastern European and racism. I can tell you a lot. If you think Romanian and Bulgarian. Romanian and Bulgarian hate each other. Poland is all about Poland is the best in the world so [laughing] let's don't even go there. You see what's going on, you read news you know but definitely the racism exists and it will ever exist. It's not something we should be ashamed of. [laughing] It is there but it's just served differently and can hurt differently. It sounds very weird thought but it is.

CH: Can I ask you another slightly different question sorry. Is your son bilingual then?

R: Unfortunately not he's monolingual and his first and only language is English.

CH: Ohkay.

R: Unfortunately. He understands if we speak Italian he understands. He completely refused to learn any Bulgarian, it's too much.

CH/LR: ok.

R: Well I believe some people learn languages. He's really good with maths. He's really with numbers but languages, no. Whereas I'm otherwise really good with languages [chuckles] but don't ask me to give you a change if you give me 20 pounds [laughing], it will be very painful experience. [chuckles]

LR: I'm really quite fascinated by what you mentioned about different, I don't know whether you should say different kinds of racism or rather different ways of expressing racism. So have you got any idea why there might be this difference between England and Scotland or is it the difference between a small community like Boston Lincolnshire and a big city like Edinburgh?

R: Yeah you're probably right, maybe but that will maybe in a year or two I may change my mind because we came from a very small place and now we live in a very big place so that's that but when I think about the media, about how local authorities vote divide spendings made the projects, commission services and perform services. That's slightly bigger picture now I still think that yeah. Cause I'm thinking now about Lincoln. Lincoln is the capital of the county of Lincolnshire so all the big decisions were taken there and if you go there and you see the people and you listen to what they say it was pretty much... It reflects on how the county was run. Yes they would make spendings for inclusion and integration but the way they approach tackle issues to me was weird. Maybe, I never managed to make sense of that and it was more of a sticking plasters one on top of the other. Not actually, for example I'm thinking what I notice here in Edinburgh, now I don't know everybody but it's, here is patchwork so the private posh places, middle class mixed with poor if I can use this terminology I'm sorry. Like, is it correct, gentrification? So when actually deprived area you try to build in with....

LR: Become more attractive yes.

R: So it's quite a, I would say not a good mixture but no there is no south east wow and north east (makes disgusted noise). In between of course there are some areas, properties are more expensive and properties are less expensive. This unfortunately only in heavens will become equal but what I'm saying is this is patchwork whereas where we lived. Now I think about Lincoln I'm not sure about Nottingham I can't really go on that route because I've never lived there. There was very sharp division and...

LR: Curatorial as well you mean?

R: Yes and laced with landowners and old families. So if the farmer has this land they stay for ages, they start building nice stuff around it. They have the good roads around it, infrastructure. Of course the good school will be there and so on and so on and then of course the benefit people, the chavies they move there the social housing. That's it the roads there, pot holes in between and to be honest even 2021 when they made their budget decisions, pretty much the same and even if they get money, I'm not talking now foreigners or locals, I'm talking about poor people or rich people unfortunately will go that direction. Even if their foreign people, they get good job, get money they shoot straight to the good areas. They will never ever think to stay with their community, no way. So the division is both social and when the budgets are decided on what to spend they ok you know we will spend for inclusion for whatever shit they come up with and they make this completely ridiculous parade and lighting. We're talking about CCTV cameras. We're talking about putting restriction roads. We're talking about lighting, night time you know basic stuff really. They don't talk about this no. We will do a centre leisure centre. Oh really where you going to park your car at leisure centre? What's going to happen with this leisure centre. Nothing, it says they're empty. We're people from the I'm sorry, I just realise how I sound. [laughing] I told you!

LR: No no I understand.

R: It's some people from the council will be sitting there full time jobs doing nothing.

LR: ok. There's no.

R: And give permission to they cousins company and they will do this never ending consultation which is a hell of a lot of money to do what? Basic stuff. It's not rocket science. Just do the lighting, CCTV and roads. Do more things. Get the young people off the streets. Did you know they do in Boston for young people? They build up this skateboard park and it was just ridiculous because it was in a bad place bad area they knew what was going to happen. It became like drug dealing wow it was super there was no lighting and the mastermind we're going shut this and it's going to be open from 10 in the morning to 4 in the morning and then we will lock the gate and that's it and guess what they will just climb the gate and that's it. It's stupid and no normal young child will go there because they just dealing drugs. Why would they go there? Well they would skateboard probably. [laughing]

LR: Yeah. Do you have any idea maybe. Do you know what kind of council they've got in Bolton. Is it conservative, is it labour.

R: Conservative oh yeah. UKIP Conservative.

LR: UKIP?!

R: Oh yeah [laughing]. The problem is that and also there was this massive influence of this Church of England. I'm not against religion oh my god. Religion should be there because people need to believe in something but they were really dodgy about certain things. What they would do you know. You would see money going to this sinkholes and what projects I never guess because exactly Church of England it was the central church they got lots of money for homeless people because there were homeless. Actually there were homeless coming from Manchester and Liverpool and Sheffield there. I never understood what was the game there but anyway they were homeless people and nobody ever knew what happened to the money. Nobody ever knew they were just giving out food every now and then but that's it. That's that but if I look into the invoices I'm worried I'm going to find scary stuff, so yeah. I'm just moving [laughing].

LR: Quite right.

R: But there are good things as well I guess.

CH: Yeah. I mean I was interested in when you sent me an email which said Brexit and Covid turned our life in 180 degrees, consequently 360 degrees.

R: What did I mean by that?

CH: Yeah.

R: Referendum I was determined that we were leaving. We just couldn't figure out where else some other place or just a country because we were in between but then it happened that my boy got this school and you know you really have to do for their own best. So we said oh we're going to stay until he finishes you know the secondary school bla de bla de bla. Because it was, well, grammar school. It's supposed to be the good school something. So yeah we decided we will just bite our tongue and just keep plodding along because he has to have stability somehow and then with Covid [sigh], everything went completely wrong. I mean my husband lost his job. He went crazy hours and have it at all and we you know what we are leaving seriously this time. Seriously seriously. [chuckles]

CH: Yeah.

LR: Did you ever think about going back to Europe?

R: Ah we tried. Not because of the referendum, we did attempt to live in both our countries and it didn't. Look if I left my country there is a reason I left it and no I don't know part of my own community anymore because every time when I go back to Bulgaria I'm not Bulgarian anymore. I'm foreign. I don't even know what I am. I'm not seen as the local girl that was there. I'm seen like who's see. [laughing]

LR: Yeah. Is it the same in Italy when you go back?

R: No because Napoli is a lot bigger so well. It's ok but I've never fancied to live there, first of all because it's too crazy yeah [laughing] and second there are problems about employment.

LR: Oh yeah.

R: There's issues about getting a good job, very serious issues.

LR: Absolutely yeah.

R: So it's like going, also my son doesn't speak Italian. He's here.

LR: Yeah I mean he could learn. When we moved here, now my son spoke a little bit of English but not very much English and then in about I don't know a month he was ok and he's now you know he can now speak both. We moved when he was about 13.

R: Oh they no, kids learn very quickly.

LR: Yeah they are sponges like I said.

R: Yeah in fact when I listen to my son I wouldn't say that. I mean he now sounds English which means English pronunciation.

LR: He'll soon pick up the Scottish accent now.

R: Possibly I don't know or maybe he will just get stuck in between and ...

LR: Yeah something like that. Charlie you got any questions?

CH: No I've got no more questions.

LR: Yeah me either.

R: Well thank you very much.

LR: No it was thank you!

CH speaks to R about sending an amazon voucher.

R: Oh thank you that will be nice but actually I just wanted to. You know I'm very sociable person and because we don't have many friends here I'm sorry I just use the time just to chat with people.

LR: no no.

CH: Yeah no it was really good.

R: And I'm sorry probably I'm quite extreme about some opinions but because I have sort of accumulate lots of frustration and lots of anger maybe over the time I will just change my opinion about things probably I hope.

LR: Don't worry Rada don't start me on Brexit because we will be here for another three hours.

R: No I'm just aware that I live in a country which was... I think that the UK is the best country in the world. I know that sounds weird but it is. We lived in so many countries and really I feel at home because people here are nice. Genuinely nice. Even if they're nasty they're nice.

LR: You mean Scotland?

R: No I mean the UK.

LR: Ok.

R: Yes! Including England. Yes I include England because people here are concerned about the person next to you. I mean I come from a society where if you have a problem deal with it and if I actually can get you, you deal with it and if you die I'll get your things. You know that kind of mentality, it's like a bit Darwinism. The fittest survive. We're not nice to each other. We used to be but not anymore.

LR: Oh right, why's that do you think?

R: Because during the communism we were restricted to be equal and as the communist disappear we were thrown into this individualism thinking society. Every single person want to be better than the other. You know when you suppress something? That pops out like zillion times bigger. Well that's what happened because we were suppressed for so many years, half century and then we just pop out like wow we want to be I'm better than you and I wana' be better than you. I still see this for example that's why I keep away, I'm very weary when I communicate with my own community. I have just one friend here from Bulgaria. Just one single lady because she proved that she is a nice person but the rest are really... I want my phone to be better, I want better than yours, I want my house to be bigger than yours, my car to be better than, I have a better job, I want more money and I mean that's just constantly. Then I find here there's the solidarity even in English people as well. English people help if they see a person who is ill, who is sick, who has no money they will help. They will never let these people suffer and Scotland even twice bigger because I can see how much help is available and it's done purely for how to say to help. Not to get any benefit out of it and I like it. Lots of solidarity in this society, that's why I like the country.

LR: So can I ask you, another thing you said you lived in many countries can you tell us where you lived?

R: So Italy, Thailand, Singapore, Tunisia and India.

LR: Wow! That's great!

R: Bit of a national geographic. [laughing]

LR: Definitely. That's fascinating and you think the UK is the most compassionate?

R: It's the love of my life. I will never ever ever change for any country. In fact, because I had friends in Spain we went to Spain and I thought ooh I love it but no. Thankyou but no thankyou.

LR: Oh kay. Did you think people are not as compassionate in I don't know Spain or Italy or somewhere else?

R: No they're compassionate but I find here people more genuine, more... not ill intended. Even if they do stupid things, nasty things, there is no pure evil behind. It probably, I may be wrong I don't

know and also the privacy here. You know people don't like to mess around with other peoples life you know to go in the other house and disturb and constantly ask for favours and... The privacy is like but it's in a nice way. So and approachable! People here are approachable. They don't try to show off, only here I would say a person come ask from Bentley and it's just normal jeans and trainers and just normal person. Can you imagine this in my country? Oh god. [laughing] No way they will come out from Audi and BMW all with gold and wheeew.

LR: I think it's because of poverty, you know when.

R: Maybe but we are more alpha male idiots. We are. Alpha we are like oooh! [laughing] Probably because of the poverty or maybe just we are what we are. [chuckles]

LR: That's fine. It's an impression and that's fine. Oh kay I think Charlie if you've got anything.

CH: Yeah no no. It was very interesting thank you so much and don't forget to email me your address.

R: No problem at all.

CH: But I like your, how you said about Eastern Europe and Darwinism and that. I thought it was really interesting. Thank you so much.

R: Take care.

LR: You too.

End of Transcript