LGBTQIA+ refugees tell their story

Story 1:

Myriam, a lesbian woman originally from Côte d'Ivoire (→no criminalisation of homosexuality but a very different social reality as gay people are suffer stigma and discrimination, with a very real experience of rejection, particularly as local papers spread hate-speech about sexual minorities), outed at 16 years old by a neighbour in her village when found kissing her girlfriend. The two were separated and never saw each other again. She has not been supported by her family and has decided to leave. For several years, she sold fruit in markets and travelled from country to country to survive, trying to save up enough money to go to France, as the official language in Côte d'Ivoire is French.

After a journey lasting several years, mainly due to the difficulties in saving up enough money for the visa and plain ticket, she arrived in Toulouse in 2016. Her time in France got off to a terrible start as her belongings were stolen, but she met someone who pointed her in the direction of ALDA (Reception Centre for Lesbian Asylum Seekers) so she could find some help. She then made her asylum request via the OFPRA and was successful.
Today, she hopes to find accommodation, a job and someone to marry.

Story 2:

Alexi, a gay man originally from Russia (→ decriminalisation of male homosexuality in 1993 but is still seen as a mental illness, with no protection from persecution and discrimination based on SOGIESC, and Putin's Russia known for its official and unrelenting homophobia), decided to leave his country because of his sexual orientation.

He first travelled to Thailand then to Rome, looking for somewhere where he could live a normal life in peace. After arriving in Rome, he was arrested for drug possession, as he had become a drug mule and had been asked to fly from Thailand to Brazil with a stopover in Rome, where he was caught. He was eventually sentenced to 6 years in prison and after his release he decided to stay in Rome. He experienced many difficulties on his arrival, he didn't understand the language, and he was alone. He also felt discriminated against because of his sexual orientation and his ethnic origin. Today he hopes to receive a permanent visa, apply for Italian nationality, marry and adopt a child.

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Story 3:

Clara, a transgender woman originally from Honduras (a country considered as protecting LGBTQIA+ rights but with drastically different social norms and perceptions, where LGBTQIA+ individuals suffer a great deal of persecution as there are no laws against SOGIESC-based discrimination), who has identified as a woman since childhood, She is supported by her mother and sister but the situation is very poorly accepted by the men in the family who subject her to harassment (verbal and physical violence, intimidation). After several violent and vehement attacks in her country in addition to family harassment, she decided to leave her country to find a place where she can feel safe and free.

She travelled from Honduras to Panama, then to Madrid and finally Barcelona. It was a long, arduous and difficult journey that took several months, but still relatively fast, all things considered, thanks in part to the fact that she had the sufficient financial means from her university degree and two specialised diplomas. Today she hopes to find a job in order to have a regular salary and enjoy more legal and financial stability.

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