



## Jon interviews: Marwa Ali, originally from Kabul

Jon Marwa, welcome to Spotlight. Welcome to Brittany.

Marwa Thank you so much Jon. It's nice to meet you. And have talk.

Jon Okay.

Marwa With you.

Jon So you're from Afghanistan?

Marwa Right. Yeah.

Jon Whereabouts? Kabul?

Marwa Yeah. I'm from Kabul, a very nice and old city. Nowadays, the Kabul doesn't have the picture that had er in the past, because nowadays there's no girl on the streets with colourful clothes. If they are working girls, they have to be with black.

Jon They're only allowed to wear black?

Marwa Yeah, and they have to cover their face, like. The Kabul doesn't have the er beautiful image that they had in the past.

Jon So when you were a young girl, you were in Kabul, and you used to be able to wear what you wanted.

Marwa I was born in Kabul, and I grew up there, and I was like there well for 20 years, and I always had the choice to wear what I wanted. I had my scarf, my beautiful and colourful dresses, but after the Taliban, I couldn't do any more.

Jon So can you tell us about your travel? How did you end up in Brittany?

Marwa Oh, that's a long journey. After the Taliban came, I had to flee the country, and I escaped. I went to Pakistan. I waited there for three, almost three years, and um it was a long journey like I faced. I had to, you know, I had to go to Pakistan without family, and, like, all alone, and came to France and. End up with Brittany in a very beautiful and like with very kind people in in a town of countryside of France, that er sometimes I feel lonely, sometime as a young alone, like lady, it's it was a very difficult journey since I started and like I end up here. But I think I will not stop here. I will continue strongly and like to work more

Jon Ok. When you just said you had to leave Kabul. Why did you have to leave?



Marwa Er. Due to before the Taliban, I had different image. I wanted to study. I wanted to play sport, I wanted to work as much as I wanted. You know. I we had the programmes I like. I implemented a piece um building um for paintings. Like we had er paintings on the walls and the piece. And like, different er kind of image from the er close studies Islam. Without like, we are free, we could go and study and play and explore, like. But um after the Taliban, the Taliban, the treason, the problems that I faced, I had to, like, flee because I didn't have any more the image that they had. Like, I couldn't um feel that I'm a human there. I couldn't um have the control of my feelings, my emotions. Every day and night I was crying crying, because um I couldn't go to school. I I couldn't go to out of house, even I if I wanted to go. I had a to have fam... like, you know, a man fam... family member, because I didn't have father in, you know, I um I didn't have my brother and my son, like, because they were on, like, busy. So I couldn't go out of house. I had to

Jon So so, at what age did you have to leave school?

Marwa It was um, I was 20 years old. So I graduated from school when the Taliban came. I was studying in Institute computer science. But, er you know, I had. I got a scholarship. Awarded, awarded the scholarship of a full scholarship bachelor degree. And I was so happy that, you know, even I can um transfer my degrees to Europe or another country so I can, like, pursue my higher education, but um. And I was playing football and I was engaging in different activities, like, as a social activist, I, like, I went to in the demonstration for climate activists. I was so full of energy.

Jon So, so. Sorry. So what was your life like in Kabul? What were you allowed to do there before the Taliban arrived, compared to your life after the Taliban?

Marwa It was completely 100% different. Like before the Taliban, I was allowed to do most of the things that I wanted um. Girls, um generally, girls could even er engage in break dancing, events, like in singing songs, in playing sports, any kind of a sport, even in um we had some provinces that we had engaged the girls In the sports and climate activity, like we had er social activities. I personally, I could have, fortunately, I could er engage in different activities, like um I could um, as I was er, I am in the co-founder of Afghan Parcours Society.

Jon Afghan?

Marwa Parcours Society.

Jon Right. That's a French idea, I think, isn't it?

Marwa Parcours is based like established in French, founded by David. Ah, he's from France, France. Yeah.

Jon OK.



Marwa It started from France.

Jon And you played football?

Marwa Yeah, I played football. I played juggling. I can play juggling circus. So

Jon Yes

Marwa I did, like, many things. I can ride inliner skating. Skateboarding. Like I was so active, so happy and, but after the Taliban, I was in prison, I couldn't go out of house. You know, it was like not house.

Jon So what would happen? What would the Taliban do if they saw women playing football?

Marwa Er they are thinking that um a woman should be almost a robot. That they shouldn't have phone er

Jon Phone. Telephones

Marwa In their in their hands. If they see a girl in a public place that they have phone in their hands, it has it happened a lot to my friends. And like when I was er sitting on the um front seat of the car with my brother, they asked me that, "Who are you? Who is he? You have to sit in the backside. You have to cover your face. Why you're sitting in in front." And yet they are um asking you as a woman, to be just as a robot, not a human being. They are not like human, they are just thinking you taking you for the forced marriage, like as a animal. They will, like, just take you out of your house and like, as a girl that like with animal behavior. They don't think that you're human.

Jon How, from your point of view, can you recognise the Taliban. Are they all in uniform? Do they all look similar? Or are you in doubt? If if you imagine you're in Afghanistan, back in Kabul, now. Would you be able to identify who are members of the Taliban, or would it be difficult?

Marwa Sure. They are different from the the other um people who are from Afghanistan. Um. It's it's very clear that the Talibans are from not Afghanistan. They are from Pakistan. They are not Afghan people. They are Pakistani people who come and want to fake the government.

Jon But would they wear different uniform, different clothes?

Manwa They have different kind of clothes. Different. Er they have different kind of faces, long faces, long beard

Jon Beards

Manwa Beards. They are so dangerous looking.



Jon Do you want to pause for a a moment and we can

Marwa No dear, like not human being. Er when, when er you face them, they treat you like an animal.

Jon An animal.

Marwa Like.

Jon Um. Moving to a slightly happier topic now. You arrived in Brittany. How have the people here accepted you? Have they been kind or cold?

Marwa The people are um different, like. They are so kind, they are hospitable, like. Treat you like as a human being. Like whatever you want, they respect you. Like if you wear a scarf, if you don't wear a scarf, if you have hijab or not have hijab. Or whether you wear sexy clothes, or whatever the you wear, or whatever whatever they, you do, like in playing sports or like or dancing, even they value your value. They are very kind, and they treat you like you are from them. You're part of them, and they welcome you like er you are from a war zone, and you are a person that deserve more kindness so

Jon That's good to hear.

Marwa So, from since I arrived, um the people that I face, they are mostly like acting me, like, so kind, so straight forward and like, I really love them from my deep of my heart.

Jon Okay. When you first arrived in France, though you were in Paris.

Marwa Yes.

Jon So and now you're in Brittany, so was it your choice to leave Paris and come here, or were you asked to relocate?

Marwa Actually, it was not my choice. Er I asked er the government to have my um give me accommodation, so the government of the France helped me and give me accommodation to the Brittany.

Jon Okay, so when you were in Paris, or near Paris, you were in a refugee camp, maybe that wasn't particularly comfortable, that was too crowded, perhaps.

Manwar Er not in Paris, but when I went to um um Saint Breuec, or like it was before I came here, I was in refugee camp where it was like from different people, from different countries. All people came from er different countries, illegally, without any documents, I was the only one that I had documents, and like, passport and visa, and I was, like, crying all the time that why I have documents and I am the same situation that they are. And like, why um I shouldn't be in a school I want to study, I want to play sport. Why they don't let me. And then er they said that,



no, it's like temporary, I think like that. But it was not like through my time for me, I stayed there for a few days, for about 10 days, and then they moved me in here. So they they said, like, it's just for short time, like it's not for a long time. Just don't worry. It's all the same for refugees.

Jon What would your long term goal be? What do you hope to do? Would you hope would you one day to go back to Afghanistan or to stay in Europe and pursue your career here, to finish your studies here, perhaps.

Manwa Er first, I want to get my bachelor degree and master degree in here and pursue my higher education

Jon In what subject?

Manwa I really love international communications, so I hope, like one day I really love to be the ambassador of Afghanistan in France.

Jon Haha. Okay, why not?

Manwa Yeah, yeah, so,

Jon So so language is then very important for you.

Manwar Yes

Jon What languages do you speak at the moment

Manwar I speak er Dari, which is my own language, my mother tongue language. Like, oh I speak English, a little bit Pashto and French, and er a little bit Persian, which is Farsi, like Iran language, yeah, a little bit er Urdu, because I stayed in Pakistan, so I learn. Yeah.

Jon How how long were you in Pakistan?

Marwa I was er about almost two and a half year.

Jon Three, three and a half.

Marwa Yeah, two.

Jon Two and a half years. Okay.

Marwa But

Jon Were you allowed to play football?





Marwa I engage in er programmes of playing footballs. Er for there was for what for Afghan girls. So I engage with them. We were a team of Afghan girls who played and I um ran the um I implemented a hiking programme for Afghan girls

Jon Oh yes

Marwa Refugee with EPS. So at EPS we could have another Parkour programme for Afghan refugee girls in the area. So um the girls were so happy, like um giving the feedback, as with, like, so much positive energy that, oh, Marwa, like, Oh. This initiative was like um for us, was taking us from home, with we were depressed at home, and er with no clear future, because Afghan refugee, whether it's Iran or Pakistan, they don't have access to any opportunity, like educational or job opportunity, and they were so happy and said, like they appreciated the um hiking and Parkour and football programmes a lot, because they said we could have opportunity to take out of house. And we were so happy to have some gatherings and thoughts.

Jon You say there wouldn't be opportunities, though, for education, etc in Pakistan. Is that because it's a poor country or because it's very strict?

Marwa It doesn't matter which country it is, like Iran or Afghanistan or Pakistan. We Afghan girls have limited access to education. In Iran, I have like, have lots of friends Afghan girls there, and they talk with me like we cannot go to university, schools in and the same like Pakistan. They treat you whenever they understand like er you are an Afghan person, whether you are a man or woman, they will treat you differently and like you cannot go to a Pakistani school as an Afghan woman girl like to study or to play sport. If it's a little bit complicated, um different um limited access for women,

Jon It sounds complicated. It's also ironic, isn't it,

Marwa Yes

Jon In that your life was more free in Pakistan than in Afghanistan because of Pakistani Taliban.

Marwa Yeah

Jon It's been a pleasure speaking to you. Marwa. Thank you very much, and we all wish you the best.

Marwa Thank you so much for giving me the chance and talking about Afghan girls situation, because then nowadays I from my community that I'm engaging with them, like er playing Parkour online. So they are talking with me like they are saying most of the things that their family want them to marriage by force. They don't want, they want to study. They want to, they ask me, Marwa, do you know, like, if any educational opportunity in the France or any other country so we can get out of this hell. We are tired of here. They draw, cry and like every day and night



and like, they tell me that they are so motivated, but they just don't have opportunity. And if, in other countries, the women or children killed by war, but in Afghanistan, they kill mentally.

Jon That sounds a very cruel.

Marwa Yeah

Jon Society.

Marwa And it is a good opportunity to now to talk about their situation.

Jon Thank you very much.

Marwa Thank you that all the world know, and that I really want to ask and use this opportunity to inform the world. To take action, just even for a minute, take a very small action. It doesn't matter what you will do, just support a refugee or support like them for Afghan girls, there are different kind of like organisations, so you can go ahead and like support Afghan girls through any opportunity that you can, I really appreciate it. Thank you so much for all of your kindness and human being.

Jon Thank you very much.