

Clandestine Morocco

By Addison Bloom

“you see how we live” he started, “you see we don’t eat, we only eat one meal a day. We have no money but we don’t eat because we don’t have money, its because we are not hungry, we are anxious. We don’t want to be here” he pauses for a moment, “we want to be over there” he points to the lights across the water in Spain.

Introduction

I'd travelled to Morocco the year before but purely for self-interested reasons - exploring, immersing myself into the culture - that kind of thing - but never really digging any deeper. Close to the end of that first trip, I sought out some European friends in Morocco - a band of merry musicians living out in Tangier, looking to connect with the migrant community. There, I was introduced to close friends of theirs, all French speaking Senegalese with the exception of an English speaking Gambian - people migrating to Europe in hope of a better life.



As well as music and hash we also shared stories, mine being humble comedies of the road, theirs being quite the opposite. I learned about the perilous journeys undertaken by people from various countries south of the Sahara: people having to pass endless police road blocks, minefields, deserts and - of course - borders. They gave me many examples of racial discrimination and the low quality of life that people had to endure while they resided in Morocco such as lack of health care; lack of work; police brutality; and constant abuse from locals.

I also learned the means of getting across to Europe, the last hurdle before 'freedom'. Small overcrowded inflatable boats are taken out to sea, where they're paddled across to the next continent by migrants trying to avoid Spanish Guardia Civil boats and death by drowning. The gap is only fourteen kilometres at the shortest point, but crossing the Gibraltar strait has claimed many lives and is widely feared by the migrant community.

Deportation is also a regular occurrence, especially in Tangier and Nador. Police regularly grab migrants in the street or raid their houses to check their papers. People I met usually had a passport, but had overstayed their visa. Others had nothing at all and were completely clandestine.

It's known that the European Union pay out 1500 Euros to the Moroccan government for every migrant that they catch without correct papers. This large sum of money is intended to be used for that person's transport, food, accommodation and healthcare while being deported to their country of origin.

But in reality the police often just beat them before either releasing them back on to the street; taking them to a different Moroccan city; or out into the desolate desert of the neighbouring country, Algeria. During this illegal form of deportation many women have been raped and many people have died, all by the hands of the Moroccan authorities.

These were cold facts I was told about after spending almost three months in Morocco. I felt like I'd been completely sheltered from what was really happening in this country. I'd heard of stories like this happening, but now I knew it was right here, on all the borders around Europe. The extent of brutality and inhumanity towards people was shocking. Every single person I met there were covered in vicious scars and told endless stories of police beatings and torture, all of it happening on a daily basis.

But little did I know, we were barely scratching the surface of what was really happening. Those guys I met back then left me with a lasting impression, so six months later I decided to return.

Tangier

After spending two weeks hitching down from England and two weeks drinking myself stupid in Tarifa, I finally made the jump over to Africa. I hitched around to Algeciras and took the ferry across the short stretch of water to Tanger Med, forty or so kilometres out of Tangier.



Tarifa - Little chapel at the end of the beach

Remembering the delights of hitch-hiking in Morocco, I decided to hitch into town instead of getting the bus. I got picked up by the first car and even with a language barrier the driver was all smiles. He randomly gave me a carton of milk, which I showed slightly over-

eager gratitude for, and just before leaving the car he insisted on giving me a hundred Dirham note. I was kindly dropped right outside the main port in Tangier, where I made my way through the gauntlet of hash dealers and hotel hustlers towards the Medina.

As I approached the first slope upwards into the familiar old city, I was greeted with a young boy stood high above me, looking down in my direction. He wore a glazed look and held a bag to his mouth, inhaling and exhaling calmly into it. Glue, the drug of choice for young boys and other penniless street dwellers.

It was then, that I started to remember the harsh realities of life for the poor in Morocco, especially in Tangier. People reduced to extremes like degenerative drugs in the face of poverty, in a city with little mercy. With those thoughts in mind, I entered the claustrophobic streets of the Medina.



Narrow streets

Recognising many of the places that I passed, I recalled vivid memories of things that happened in them: making local friends; playing music; smoking joints; avoiding drug pushers and so on. After wandering through the confusing twists and turns of narrow side streets, I found the same hotel I had stayed in almost a year before. Surprisingly, the owner seemed to remember me and tried his best to speak to me in French.

I got the impression that the place was usually for Moroccan travellers and didn't often have foreigners to stay, but the guy emitted a welcoming presence and I proceeded to ask about a room. Usually the price would be thirty Dirhams but I had to pay double because I was on my own. We settled on fifty Dirhams and I paid for two nights with the hundred

that was given to me by the ride into town. I cleansed myself of the Spanish beach filth before heading back out into the streets.

I visited an internet cafe to see if I could find a connection to my Gambian friend, Baye, from the year before, but for all I knew he was already in Europe. Remembering an old hang-out place by a popular sandwich stand, I decided to try my luck at finding him through possible friends.

Immediately after arriving there, a Gambian man with a broad smile befriended me and welcomed me to sit with him. His name was Sunday and had no problems diving straight into his life tales, mostly about Tangier and the last couple of years here. His most enthusiastic subject, though, was his aim for Spain, his discussion of which was made more poignant by the fact that we could see it across the short strait from where we were sat. I hung out with Sunday for a while, asking general questions about his reasons for taking on this difficult journey. He mostly replied with answers of political corruption and poverty.

From what I was told, The Gambia is a beautiful country, with beautiful people and beautiful ideas - those ideas being to live an easy and tranquil life. Poverty is everywhere, but people try to see through it. Good food, friends and family are the basic desires for a tranquil life. I'm told that the first president - Sir Dawda Jawara - was 'The Peoples President'. In office for 24 years, Dawda was well respected and gave Gambia the reputation of being an incorruptible country - a rarity in Africa.

In 1994 the presidency was overthrown by the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council: a military coup led by Yahya Jammeh, giving him the presidency in 1996. Being a military man, Jammeh suspended the existing constitution; sealed the borders; and enforced a curfew. Along with Jammeh's many bizarre claims of magical powers and the harsh laws he has introduced in the Gambia, freedom of press has largely been quashed and the country's Human Rights reputation has crashed with a nosedive.

Sunday and I looked out over the port a while longer, sparking the occasional conversation. Then out of the blue, a stranger came and spoke rapidly to my new friend. A moment later, the new arrival whisked me away. I never saw Sunday again and heard some months later that he had successfully made it to Spain using a paddle boat.

After an hour's walk away from the port and feeling very lost, I arrived with the new stranger in some run-down area which I was told had a lot of 'Mafia' - a term I later found out referred to anyone who was involved in anything remotely abnormal. I was ushered up the stairs and into the house, where I was immediately told that Baye wasn't there.



The Senegalese house

Feeling a bit bemused, I had a sudden wave of anxiety caused by the thought that I had basically shown up to a place I knew nothing about, with people I didn't know at all, and not the faintest idea as to what I was going to do there. I thought I was intruding perhaps, similar to treating them like a tourist attraction.

I just stood awkwardly in the room, amongst a bunch of guys speaking a language I couldn't recognise. After asking, I was reminded that it was Wolof, one of the main native languages in Gambia and Senegal.

But as all things turn out to be, it wasn't as scary in the end as I'd thought it was when I had first arrived. The guys that were looking after me were really lovely, even with the language barrier they made a strong effort to communicate with me. They made tea, gave me bread and rolled a couple of joints, putting me at ease. I began to relax.

A while later, Baye came back, and had a German guy with him. He told me something about them having been on the other side of town and that he was sorry for not coming sooner. I assured him that it wasn't a problem and that everyone else here had taken good care of me while I'd waited.

He introduced the German guy to me as Patrick and said that he was here as an activist, collecting information and stories to take back to Europe. Patrick said he had been working closely with a theatre group that create and perform productions about the hardships of migration.

Having been here for one month, he stated that he had learned many things about the corruption within the government; migration problems; police brutality; and so on. He spoke to me like he knew far more than I did - which was true of course - but I found him a little patronizing and difficult to speak with. So I held my attention with the residents of the house instead.

Baye told me that there would be a demonstration the next day outside Ceuta. The demonstration was going to be in awareness of the 2005 incident in which many migrants had made an attempt to cross over the fences surrounding the city. Several migrants had died in that attempt, mostly from Moroccan gun fire.

I was told that the theatre group would be going and that they would be doing a production outside the fences in front of the people coming in and out of Ceuta. Baye also revealed that he and some friends from the house would also be in the production and that they had been practising for weeks. This was a nice surprise and I found myself looking forward to seeing the collaboration.

As I was staying in a hotel, I had to go back to the Medina and stay the night there, so I said my goodbyes, and that I would meet them outside the French consulate on The Boulevard and travel together with them to Ceuta. The next day, I woke early and made for the consulate right away. I made sure I was thirty minutes early just in case of changes.

When I arrived, I saw that there was no one around so I sat outside of a café and ordered a coffee. I tried to call the number I'd been given but no one picked up. I sat around for a while, always keeping an eye out for people that may have been involved. But no one came, and I was stuck with having to think about my options.

After some time I began to get worried about what was happening. I decided I would try to make my own way to Ceuta and hopefully find them there. I walked out of the city towards Tetouan, which is the city close to Tangier and Ceuta. I collected some cardboard along the way and copied the Arabic name for Ceuta that I'd spotted on a road sign.

Stood around on the road to Tetouan, I tried to flag anyone and everyone that was going by, but to my frustration, no one would stop. I tried other things, like a different sign or no sign at all, but for some reason it just wasn't working. I stood there for an hour or so until it was almost mid-day, I took it as an indication that I just wasn't going to Ceuta that day. I stupidly told myself that I would catch the next demonstration, not knowing at the time that demonstrations and protests are illegal in Morocco.

I headed back towards town and made the long walk back along the Boulevard. I came in sight of Place Al Ouman, which is a big square about half way up the Boulevard and noticed a crowd gathered in the middle. I walked closer to make out the people better and spotted Baye with some others I recognised from the Senegalese house.

I couldn't believe my luck. I'd really thought they would've been in the midst of a demo in Ceuta at that moment. When I got there, I counted maybe a hundred people. About a third were migrants and some were Moroccan too, but a depressing few.



'No more victims of the clandestine immigration, closed borders kill'

There was a long line of people facing out towards the busy main road of the Boulevard, holding a banner saying in Spanish 'NO MAS VICTIMAS DE LA IMMIGRACION CLANDESTINA, LAS FRONTERAS CERRADAS MATAN', meaning 'No more victims of the clandestine immigration, closed borders kill'. There were also people taking it in turns with a megaphone, shouting anti-border chants in Spanish over and over again.

Speaking with Baye, he told me he'd woken up late that morning, and had also had trouble finding the rest of the group. Eventually when they'd found everybody, they'd all attempted to board the bus for Ceuta, but had been stopped by police and forced to stay in Tangier for the day. It seems that the police had known about the demonstration and had decided to intervene.

I wasn't surprised though: this demonstration was in remembrance of several migrants that were shot dead by Moroccan police at the fences of Ceuta in 2005, an incident which had been well covered by the media, and had subsequently forced the Moroccan policy of using firearms at the borders to be changed.



demonstrating against the 2005 shootings

Unfortunately, everyone decided that it would be too difficult and too costly for them all to go separately to Ceuta. So they'd chosen instead to stay in Tangier and do the demonstration in a high-end part of town like the Boulevard.

The police were also hanging around, keeping a watchful eye on the situation. At some point, a journalist from a French news channel was stopped by the police from filming and asking questions. I saw this happen a few times - every time someone raised a big television camera and pointed it at migrants the police would come and say it was forbidden.

There were a lot of discussions about what people wanted to try and get away with, eventually deciding to continue with performing the theatre production, right there on the Boulevard. People began to get ready, changing into their assigned costumes and preparing to stand in the gaze of the growing audience. A couple of performers walked around and shaped the crowd into a sufficiently large circle for the act to happen. Then finally, everyone was hushed quiet for the show to begin.

I hadn't been explained the general message of the production at all and had no idea what to expect. It was just my luck that it turned out to be quite abstract, and was difficult to follow at times. It was about the beginning of civilization, how we were all equal until greed, corruption and racism came in and well... basically, there's been fighting ever since, creating borders and divides within every aspect of life.



Abstract theatre group

After the show was done, there was a lot of hand-shaking and back-patting before everyone started to leave. Baye had gotten quite excited about the whole thing and was making speeches to any person or camera that was in his close proximity. At one point he took the megaphone and started to sing anti-border songs. This went on a little longer, everyone clapping and singing along the best they could.

It was inspiring at times, to see him singing in front of these people, knowing that the police were all around and could have taken him away at any time. After it was all done and everyone had dispersed, going away in different directions, I walked up the boulevard with

Baye and a few others from the house. I asked my friend what his thoughts were of the day. He replied: “Yeah man, the police, they stop us but we do the demonstration anyway. They stop us too many times, but not every time”.

I also asked how he had felt, standing in front of all those people and making his voice heard. He replied with: “Yeah, I don’t care whether I live or die now; I stand for my people and tell them to smash the borders”.

Lastly, I was asked if I wanted to pick up my things from the Medina and take them back to the migrant’s house. I agreed, and in doing so, had inadvertently moved into the house for the next few months.

Police raids (content: murder, police corruption)

An article written for an internet [blog](#) days after arriving in Tangier:

Having your door kicked open and police officers come storming into your home early in the morning is not an uncommon thing for a migrant household in Tangier. In fact this can happen at least once every week, so much so that the residents of the house will just leave the doors open most often just so they don’t have to keep repairing them.

The reason for this is to catch out any migrant that may be in Morocco without papers. If such person were to be found then they would be detained for up to 2 days before being taken to the nearest border, which for Tangier is Oujda, the border town close to Algeria.

I’ve been staying in a migrant household on the edge of Tangier. I was mainly there to visit friends that I had made from the previous time that I was in Morocco, but this time I was also here to talk with people about their living conditions, work availability, child care and schooling, but most of all, the abuse and lack of help that they get from locals and especially from local police and other officials. When early one morning I got a little insight into how they are treated.

I was abruptly woken up by a large crashing sound and opened my eyes to find a police officer stood over me staring in bewilderment. He signalled for me to get up and to step outside. As I started to, a couple of the guys that are living there said to me that I can just stay here because “They have no problem with white man”, I said that I wanted to go through with the process to find out how it worked, but only as long as it would not cause any further problems.

So I walked out of the front door and was greeted with several officers surrounding the doorway “Passport” or “Papiers” they were shouting to each individual that was stepping out. I handed my passport and kept a close eye on it. An officer caught my attention by asking “Why are you here? Why are you with these blacks?”,



Checking documents

“These *blacks*” I started “Are people like you and me and they are my friends, mon amis”. Swiftly I was grabbed at my shoulder by one of the Senegalese guys that mimed to me that it was Ok, indicating that I should probably talk to the police as little as possible.

I walked over to the three officers that were checking each passport, where I noticed the extent of police that were around. There were several police vehicles parked around, a long row of police stood in an alleyway looking ominously like a firing squad and many other officials wandering around, some not even in uniform. In turn, every resident were being checked and asked a series of basic questions as to their intent and purpose. They went through my passport with clearly, very little concern as to my legalities.



Looking like a firing squad

As I was being handed my passport back, one of them asked in French “You are English?”, “Yes” I replied thinking about the fact that they had just been scrutinising my passport. “You are here on holiday?”

“Yes, something like that”. He continued in English now “You like it here in Morocco?” I wasn’t quite sure if he was joking or not, seen as he knew I had just witnessed the raiding

of the house I was staying in. "Yeah sure" I said hesitantly, "You are very welcome" he finished with a broad smile. I just don't understand their mentality towards the situation sometimes!

Speaking to some of the residents after the police left, I was shocked to find out how often they come and what usually happens. Fortunately, this time no one was taken away, but everyone had their own stories of past incidents where they had been taken away, even though they had papers to prove their legality. Then been detained for several hours without being questioned, fed or given water, before being released again. Or other instances, where people would be deported over the Algerian border, usually dropped off in the middle of nowhere, perhaps 15 to 20km from the nearest place without any water. Twenty to thirty migrants would then have to walk back and smuggle themselves back over the Moroccan border, before being able to get back to Tangier. This is massively understated compared to the actual realities here in.

The migrants also told me that this time, the raid had been very calm, the police were a lot more controlled than in previous times, whether this is because of my presence, I'm not sure, but I would guess so. Apparently in the past, people have been physically abused while being taken out of the house, beaten and thrown to the ground. Possessions have gone missing on a regular basis, such as mobile phones, laptops and other electrical devices. On one occasion I was told that an officer had been spotted taking a phone and upon being questioned about it, was just threatened then dismissed.

While all this goes on, the local Moroccan community are mostly in support of the police and can be heard giving comments of racial abuse, or just simply nodding and smiling in agreement of what they are seeing. Which frankly, I find sickening. Not only do the Senegalese and Gambian collective here have to avoid police discrimination on a daily basis but also try to avoid the local Arabic community too.

The Senegalese house (content: graphic violence against animals, racial abuse)

Moving into the Senegalese house was the simplest thing - I just put my bag down in a corner and parked myself on one of the big sofa cushions around the room. The place was completely spotless, as it always was. The room only consisted of some places to sit and a Mickey Mouse rug in the middle. Everyone's bags were always packed, ready to leave.

There were twelve other guys sat in the room when I was introduced, all sub Saharan migrants. Almost straight away every one of them, one after the other, asked me questions - mostly about Morocco and how I found it to be, which always made me feel a little uncom-

fortable. I knew, and I'm certain they knew too, how I was treated, compared to how differently they were treated in this country, very differently.

Before I could even return the question, they went ahead, describing darkly colourful views of the police, and the controlling powers over them. Each person in turn pointed out the places they had been beaten by police batons, depending on how recent their injuries were and how much they were affected by them. This was the most distressing yet impressionable first meeting with a group of people I had ever had, and it never lost its impact throughout the whole time I was in Morocco.

People came in and out of the room constantly. After asking, I was told that more than thirty people lived in the house at any given time. Every time someone new came wandering into the room, there would be a burst of greetings and a roar of Wolof. The newcomer would systematically go around to every person in the room and shake their hand, sometimes adding a religious gesture of touching ones forehead with the others hand, and vice versa - a way of expressing their great respect for one another which I found profoundly amazing; everyone generated welcome and warmth, such a feeling of family and solidarity.



Home life

I was guided around the other parts of the house and introduced to the rest of its inhabitants. I found that every room had a similar set up, mattresses were taking up most of the space and the rest was filled with small, packed bags, all spotlessly clean. The kitchen consisted of a gas burner on the stairs, surrounded by stacked pots and scorched walls. The bathrooms were a classic hole in the ground for the toilet and a bucket to wash with, as the shower. All very minimalist yet immaculately practical, but in a relatively small house, filled with a large occupancy, it was necessary.



Small but immaculate rooms

The largest space in the house was the roof terrace. Like all buildings in Morocco, the entire roof was flat. The first time I was guided onto the roof, I was greeted with several people leaning on the balcony. Looking beyond, I saw the twinkle of lights in the distant night, and realised they were watching Spain.

After hours of hash smoking and tea drinking, in between conversations, I came to the conclusion that people stayed awake all night. With that thought, I nestled over and fell asleep. In what seemed like a blink of an eye, I was startled awake again. Two hours had past and I was told that food was ready.

Confusion set in, the time was 4am but perhaps my clock was wrong and I'd slept through to the afternoon. Regardless, I followed to the roof terrace and found that it was still dark outside. I came to terms with the fact that it really was 4am and ventured for the food.

There were three, large, orange plastic bowls filled with mostly rice and vegetables, spaced out evenly on the ground. People swarmed around, eight or nine to a bowl, just enough space to slip your hand through the crowd. There was a complete silence while people began eating; some minutes went by before the first giggle rose from the endless sound of eating.

Soon, everyone was laughing and joking with each other, sometimes even falling over, taking others with them. Obviously, I didn't understand anything anyone was laughing about, but I just couldn't help laughing along with them anyway. Their sense of family within such a harsh environment was breathtaking. Afterwards, the atmosphere created from eating a good meal was spread throughout the house, movement and laughter in every room, and still going on, long after I fell back asleep.

The next morning, I was startled awake by the sound of Spanish trumpets right outside the house. I grappled with removing my stiff body from the stone hard bed beneath me, and headed for the window. I pulled the window shutters open and stuck my head just at the exact moment a local slit the throat of a calf.

The machete plunged deep into the defenceless animal's neck and blood sprayed out like a fountain for a second before splashing on the ground around it. The calf had been tied up by its ankles and laid on its back. With its head half off its neck like a Pez dispenser, the calf jolted with the initial shock, then convulsed repeatedly for twenty minutes before it died. Not a pleasant death.

Now I'm no expert, but I believe that hanging the calf upside down and letting gravity draw the blood from its body, is the quickest and most humane way to kill it.

None the less, everyone seemed pleased and the trumpets continued while the marriage procession ran circles around the dead calf, the blood running it's own path down the street in a long streak of red, collecting at the bottom in a large pool. Attempting not to let the image of the calf settle in my memory, I rolled back into bed and got a couple more hours sleep.

The days started to roll by, and I realised how little there was for people to do. Most people barely left the house for fear of being picked up by the police or were just simply avoiding racial confrontations. The times I walked with people from the house around town I would notice how the locals would treat them, from small gestures of ignorance, right up to full blown racial abuse.



Sometimes there very little to do

Shopkeepers would refuse to serve items or attempt to charge far too much. Passers-by would shout comments - one time I saw someone spit at the ground. Women would shield and guide their children away from the path of a migrant, and small children would throw

rocks. Even the taxi drivers were willing to lose a fare or two for their racial discriminatory views.

One night, someone found out that a club was doing a reggae night and had a DJ. They knew the owner personally and were informed that anyone, especially sub-Saharanans, were welcome. Because of passport and document issues, only about six of the guys were willing to take the risk. So there were seven of us in total, and off we went.

After a couple of hours confusingly figuring out where the club was, taking a couple of taxis and walking long distances, we finally had a good lead. We all crammed into a taxi once more and told the driver where to go.

Now the 'grand' taxis in Morocco can for some unknown reason take more people than their supposed capacity, unlike the 'petite' taxis that only take three customers at once. So it's normal for a taxi to fill up as much as humanly possible - once I even saw the driver share his seat with someone, along with 6 others squashed in, just for that little bit of extra cash.

Anyway, there we were, on our way to the club after finally nailing the location, when suddenly the conversation in the car gets a little aggravated. I couldn't understand most of it because it was in rapid Arabic and French, but it seemed the driver took a sudden dislike to his passengers. It was translated to me that the driver believed that everyone was going to try to go to Spain... right now.

How he came to this conclusion was beyond anyone's belief. If people were to go make an attempt right at that moment then they would be wearing far warmer clothes, not night club attire. And they certainly wouldn't be taking a taxi there. Regardless of these obvious discrepancies, the driver convinced himself that that was what was happening. So with a fierce debate and no hope of him backing down, the driver took it upon himself to do something about it.

As all this was going on, we noticed ourselves going past the night club we wanted, which caused a frantic uproar in the car followed by a unanimous vote to be dropped off there and then. But the driver refused. It was then that people realised what he was trying to do. He was looking for police, and soon enough, he found some in a car driving a little ahead of us.

He caught up with them and tried to flag them down with a wave of his hand, but I guess he was unsure if he'd caught their attention because he swerved in front of them instead. His dramatic move had successfully attracted the attention of the police and they pulled up

behind us as we came to a stop. We all stayed in the car while the police approached and had a look in with a torch.

Waves and smiles were our reaction to the light and the police asked us to step out of the car. There was some Arabic banter between the guys and the police, all mixed with smiles and laughter, so I knew it was all okay for now. I was mostly ignored but I took that as a good sign. Some minutes of explanations went by and then we were told to go on our way.

We tried to pile back into the taxi, but it was then that the taxi driver's bitterness for being made a fool of came out, and he told us the taxi was only allowed to have six passengers, not seven. We made a small fuss but quickly gave up and walked away.

We made it to the club and ended up having a great night. But it just goes to show that as a sub Saharan migrant you can't trust anyone and have to treat everybody as a potential informer. No-one just minds their own business - instead they go out of their way to cause problems for others.

It's not safe for people to work either. A lot of people live by working in the streets, buying and selling things. They often set up stalls in and among local markets, selling anything from vegetables; handmade crafts; cheap jewellery; to electronics. But again, the locals may not approve and inform the police, or the police may just spot them in the street and control them.

This forces people to be more hidden while working or makes them feel they just can't work at all. If caught, on top of being arrested, taken away and possibly deported to the desert, they are certain to lose all their valuables. Sometimes, they just have their merchandise taken away from them without reason. This affects the daily struggle of basic needs like buying food and paying the rent.

Caritas is an organisation that has one of its many bases in Tangier. They can help migrants with many things like medical advice, finding work and funding. Unfortunately, speaking with workers at Caritas, it's easy to see that they are hugely under-staffed and under-funded. The most obvious impact is that not everyone who needs help gets enough, and many people are overlooked or dismissed.

Migrants can sometimes show a lack of understanding of how the organisation works and can take things personally when not helped. I saw this a few times, when someone would completely refuse to go to Caritas after being rejected help or funding, even going as far as trying to discredit the whole organisation as some kind of fraud. I can also see how a mi-

grant in need might feel when they see that organisations supposedly there for migrants don't actually help.

The problem, I feel, is that Caritas gives people false hope, in the sense that they give appointments and timelines for results, but those results never come through. In the end, nobody wants to go to endless meetings for nothing. But ultimately, the things needed the most are more workers and funding.

One of the main organisers of Caritas that I spoke with gets a lot of insults from migrants; he explained that he gets abuse or the cold shoulder from many people, and people have said many harsh comments to me about him. But the other side of the story is that he is a migrant himself, so he does have a far better understanding of the position people are in than say, European volunteers. Being unsuccessful in getting to Europe, and growing tired at the increasing level of risk, he decided to stay in Morocco and try to make a difference where it's needed the most.

One of the ways he does this is through supporting The Senegalese Restaurant, an addition to an already existing café in the heart of the Medina. The café owners, with a more open and liberal view on nationality, welcome migrants and allow them to have a place they can hang out.



Solidarity in the Medina

The restaurant was a late addition and is run by migrants, for migrants. Offering cheap, wholesome food, and open every day, it allows migrants with little money to band together and share a large meal. The police mostly leave the place alone, with only some occasions where they come in and do a tour of the place to check papers.

Visiting the café, I found many migrants there but also many local Moroccans too, and it felt refreshing to see the nationalities mix. It's one of depressingly few places that act as a safe haven for the sub-Saharanans, but it's wonderful that something like this exists, where normally excluded people can drink tea and coffee, sit around talking or watch the television.

But for some people, places like these are still not an option and instead they need to be completely clandestine, hidden from all authorities, for if they were caught they would certainly be deported to the desert.

Overstayed visas, incorrect papers or perhaps no passport at all - there is a surprising amount of reasons that people need to stay hidden. Even just having a different skin colour in the centre of town can be enough to get taken in and checked. It's just too easy to get caught up in a situation that will result in detention, so a lot of people must avoid the streets completely.

Perhaps a third of the people I lived with were in this sort of situation, in which they felt that they couldn't leave the house, forcing them to spend most of the day just hanging about around inside. Endless amounts of tea, coffee and joints are consumed throughout the days and nights. Quite often, in between the greetings and handshakes, there would be very little conversation, very little *will* for conversation.

People were clearly tired - tired of their lives being wasted in a country that doesn't respect them and tired of being halted at every attempt of a better future. The days seemed almost never-ending, like it's within a different timezone, or a non-timezone perhaps. It's as though there's no morning, afternoon or evening, and there's no day or night.

People sleep when possible and are awake almost like they're asleep, in a daze. Of course, there's the communal meal early in the mornings to sort of set the clock on each day. But apart from the occasional outbreak of Moroccan politics; police hatred; dream-like contemplation of the possibilities of Europe; or reminiscences of home - the rest of the day is quiet and thoughtful.

A rare break from the slow momentum comes in the form of a boat trip, or "strike". This is an occasion where a group of people who all have the sufficient materials, money and time-frame to attempt to get to Spain. I had no involvement with this side of migrant life, the reasons being that they didn't need me and that I could cause problems for both them and myself.

All the necessary materials would be in storage for the duration of time it took to formulate the plans of a strike. Unfortunately, this had the potential to take months.

However, one night, when everything had fallen into place, they would all disappear from the house and I would wait for any of the possible outcomes; the police catches them on route or on the beach and confiscates all their materials, they get spooked by guards; the boat fails and they come home; they get out to sea but get caught and deported, they make it to Spain; or they die trying.

I've listened to so many stories of success, failure and everything in between. Unfortunately, it saddens me deeply to say that there are far, far more stories of failure than there are of success, and it's getting increasingly more difficult every day for people to successfully cross to Spain by boat.

In the time I was there, I heard about dozens of friends and friends-of-friends that had gone out to sea but never made it there or back, and of bodies washing back up on the shores of Morocco - where they're maltreated, kicked and poked by police before being taken away.

I was told of bodies even washing up on the shores of Spain - making it the only time they will have made it to Spanish shores, sadly not alive to see it - and sometimes they disappear altogether, leaving family and friends to wonder what happened to them.

For many hours I would sit on the balcony of the house, talking with individuals about either their attempts or of others they knew who had attempted. They would open up, slowly and painstakingly, re-telling me stories of heartbreak, losses in the sea and how close they had come to freedom.

I was told about the difficulties of paddling for countless hours until every muscle in their bodies was exhausted, to have passing boats spot them or a big wave come crashing and destroying their boat, taking it all away at the last moments. There were stories of Spanish authorities, knowingly handing them back over to the Moroccans illegally, after they had made it within Spanish waters.

But still, after all these disheartening stories, they almost always say that they will never stop trying. They say this because they believe it's their right to go to Europe and have a better life. And although European and Moroccan authorities will always try to stop them, they won't give up the fight and will always attempt to strike the borders.

I had one very memorable day on that balcony, the day of the sheep slaughtering. It's a Muslim tradition, and since Islam has spread to a lot of North West Africa, including Senegal, everyone in the house was also celebrating. The day started as any other, but when I took a walk into the market to grab a bite to eat, as well as all the shops being closed I was surprised to find the streets running red with blood.



The balcony

For locals, the early morning had been spent ceremoniously slaughtering the sheep ... in the streets. The sheep had their throats slit like the wedding calf and were left for dead, followed by the de-horning and skinning of their bodies. The bodies were taken away inside, presumably for preparation before eating. All that was left were horns and skins, deposited in huge piles every few meters, with blood flowing in between them.

The stench was almost unbearable as I walked down the road. I could only take it for so long before coming to terms that I wasn't going to find anything to eat and that, frankly, I was put off by that point anyway, so I turned back. Feeling slightly disturbed by the surprising sight of the massacre in the streets, I was comforted by everyone back at home.



barbecuing sheep heads

I was told that later that day, everyone in the house and many others from other houses would be having a huge festival dinner. Everyone would prepare the food together and eat together - the plan sounding so wonderful that it brought a smile to my face. Then, throughout the afternoon, people started arriving at the house.

It began with the usual residents of about thirty and grew to perhaps double that, maybe more. In the end, the roof terrace and house were completely full of people. Everyone was smiling and laughing, playing games, fixing each other's hair, and of course, smoking joints.

I got involved with the food preparations, mostly cutting vegetables. I must have chopped around two hundred cloves of garlic; I could taste the garlic in my mouth by the time I was done. The food took hours to prepare. It normally takes about four hours just for a communal meal at any given night, but today we were cooking for double or triple the amount of people and the food itself was way more elaborate than usual.

Everyone in the meantime just continued to entertain themselves. I was constantly asked to take lots of photographs of everyone - people insisted on continually making funny poses. They made videos, which ended up being really interesting. I think because everyone was in such a lively mood, they were really excited and open up to the camera. They were shouting and singing, talking about Morocco and how they wanted to get to Spain, which of course we could all still see from the balcony. They were also excited to explain what was happening that day, with all the food, all the guests and why everyone was celebrating.



"this is a day that everyone is happy"

Finally, it came time for eating. Everyone was signalled to come together onto the terrace and prepare to eat. I think I counted eight big bowls of food, all dotted about over the two roofs. People started gathering around the bowls, about eight or nine to a dish. I gazed at the gathered groups just before I started to eat; they were all so calm and content. I heard an "OK" from somewhere, followed by a "Bismela" from everyone in unison, which is a type of grace and a sign to start.

Then everyone stuck their hands in and began eating. Once again, jokes and laughter rose from the silence little by little, until whole circles of people were falling over themselves laughing. The food was so delicious too: the bowls were full of mouth-watering salad and chips. Pilled on the top was some sort of onion stew with lots of garlic and spices -the mix of different foods together was so interesting.

I always loved all the food in Morocco and especially in the Senegalese house. Afterwards, we all helped to clean up and got back to the talking and smoking joints. Speaking with a few people later that evening, I was told how this was one of the big events of the year, and is very special for people here to celebrate. In the midst of all the racial hatred that is experienced here, people still had things such as this to appreciate and take pleasure in.

Baye

Baye was the first sub-Saharan African migrant I met in Africa. Like I mentioned before, I met him through friends the previous year.

I was staying in my friends' house amongst the tangled streets of the Medina. The place was made up of a lounge, bathroom, kitchen and bedroom, spacious enough for perhaps three or four people without too many problems and conflicts. It came basically furnished and European touches were made after, such as pictures and messages on the walls and piles of mess in every corner.

The friends that organised the place were musical anarchists and were looking to express the difficulties of migrant life through music. I was told of how they'd met Baye in the street, sparking a conversation about music and the difficulties of migration. One thing led to another and he became a regular visitor at the apartment.

He introduced himself as Baye but said that everyone calls him "Gambia". The first impressions I got of him were pleasant but shy - he almost seemed uncomfortable, or perhaps intimidated by a European household, holding himself awkwardly and making small talk. I took a liking to him immediately.

Me: Would you like to tell me a little about yourself? Perhaps, where you come from and your life there.

Baye: Yeah... I'm from The Gambia. I'm living in Morocco, in Tangier today. I'm travelling from The Gambia, to Morocco... to get to Europe. But... I come to Morocco and I starve for four years now... Still struggling to be in Europe... to make my life better. But I have my people back home, that's why I leave my country, to make life better...

Me: And what can you tell me about Gambia? What's happening there?

Baye: Yeah, because of the dictating government and... Gambia been dictated for like... 20 years now, since '94, until 2014. The same government, no changes. And it's like... a lot of people are exiling out of the country. Because there is no opposition that can stand against

the government so... the life is hard, you know... in Gambia. And the whole world knows what is happening in Gambia, but... no-one to give us help, they don't even talk about it. But you know, the government is a big dictating government right now... yeah.

Me: Yeah, and what kind of problems and control on the people do you find in Gambia?

Baye: Yeah, the kinds of control they have on the people is like... you cannot complain and you cannot talk about the president like, the government is not doing right. So you have to obey everything like... even if it is hard, you have to say... you have to... take it like its OK. And people are afraid to speak, if you go to Gambia today, no-one would like... talk to you about the government.

Me: And the discrimination against the people?

Baye: Yeah?

Me: Well, say for example, I heard that the tourists that come to Gambia are "protected" from the locals. And the locals are treated as lesser people.

Baye: Yeah, away from the tourists, the local people are put away from the tourists. And they put soldiers on the seaside... to guide the tourists. And you know... (laughs) the locals can't go there. Because if you guide the tourists, then they get the soldiers to torture your own people. Because of talking to the tourists or trying to make friends with them, you know, it's crazy.

Me: Like segregation?

Baye: Yeah, segregation. Or maybe they don't want the people to give the tourists the information, so that's why they... you know, have segregation. Yeah, to keep them quiet. You know, you could be a political strategist but a lot of people would discover. You know, there should be no reason for the separation of the people, because the tourist went there to meet the local people. Talking to them and seeing how they are living in Gambia. Those things, so it's hard yeah. The only place you can maybe meet tourists is the club.

Me: OK, so for you personally, what were your reasons for leaving? What was the final thing that made you decide that you wanted to leave Gambia?

Baye: I.. I leave Gambia a long time you know, 1994, the time my brother was working in the government... he was a spokesman, and... at the end of the day, he don't want to work for the government because they are a dictating government and they are killing a lot of

people everyday, many people. You know. Every time, people are dying. Soldiers, between them want to control but when it fail, they lock some people up and some they kill them.

And my brother, he don't want to work in that kind of government. I was living with him before and he told me everything, he was going to leave and in the end he left, so I was there and I used to meet his colleagues and they used to always ask me "where is your brother?", and they used to point me out and say "this is the brother of... this captain".

So at the end of the day, I said to myself 'I have to leave this country'. Because maybe one day they could put me in trouble, and I don't want to be in trouble. This is the way you know, I exile, I try to exile from Gambia.

And one day I meet some friends, some African Americans, people travelling to trace the journey of the slave trade. Going through Senegal and Goree Island. From there we go to Mali and from there we go to Ivory Coast, Grand Bassam. Meeting Alpha Blondy... and have some conversation with him.

Me: Sorry, who's that?

Baye: Alpha Blondy, he's a musician in Ivory Coast and... he talk about many political problem in Africa. Yeah, he have a hotel in Grand Bassam, so it's where we meet him. And from there we went to Ghana, and in Ghana we visit... this place called... Accra, it's the capital of Ghana.

After Accra we went to Cape Coast. In Cape Coast there is a castle, the biggest castle in West Africa. Anywhere they catch an African, in those days, in the slave trade, they would take them from Gambia and those neighbouring countries, take them to Cape Coast Castle. And its where... they make the... big market.

Me: To make the trade...

Baye: Yeah.

Me:...And from there, they go to the Americas or...

Baye: Yeah, yeah other places.... so from Ghana, we travel around Ghana, we went Togo... Benin, and then to Nigeria. And from Nigeria, we went to... to South Africa.

And in South Africa we went to Cape Town and visit Robben Island, where the prison is, and where Nelson Mandela was staying. We stay on Robben Island for... three days and

then we see the closing ceremony. And afterwards we spread, and that's how I ended up staying in South Africa... for six years.

Me: Six years? Wow, so how did you survive in South Africa for six years?

Baye: Yeeeah, the life was tough, because there's no work in South Africa and... you have to try to run the street you know, make the small business in the street, sometimes maybe a friend have some money and they buy some watch... to sell on the street.

That's the way how we were surviving on the street. You know sometimes we sleep on the street, because I sleep in the street in Victoria for like three months. I was homeless, I was on the street, but at the end of the day, things change you know.

Me: Like everything.

Baye: Yeah, like everything. Yeah so from there, I flew to Thailand, to Bangkok. Because at that time, I was thinking we should go through Asia you know, China, Russia.

Me: So you were trying to get to Europe through that way, through Russia?

Baye: Yeah, yeah.

Me: Russia's not an easy place. It's a difficult place.

Baye: Yeah it's a difficult place. I didn't even reach this place, Russia. I got caught in China and I stay in.. I stay in the detention house for... for like one year, three months.

Me: Really?

Baye: Yeah, in Beijing, and from there, they send me back... to Gambia.

Me: Straight back eh?

Baye: Yeah straight back. And from Gambia, I go straight to Morocco in 2010.

Me: What can you tell me about Morocco?

Baye: Yeah the life... is so crazy in Morocco, no work. You always running on the street, trying to survive. And it's like, some friends... sometimes friends help... sometimes just stay like that, without having anything. Sometimes we stay without having food. You know, we

keep on struggling and make in the street because we are looking for something. You know, that's why. It's not like we like to live in this country. That's why we are here now, we came to find our way, to somewhere else.

Me: And where is this somewhere else?

Baye: Yeah, I'm trying to get to Spain, to cross the Mediterranean sea. Yeah, to be in the other part of the world. Because now I am in Africa, in the continent of Africa and I am trying to be in the continent of Europe, because I haven't visited Europe. But there's a lot of things going on... now they stop the route for us. They stop us, they block us. They don't want us to cross the border. So things are getting harder and harder

Me: And how do they do that, how do they stop you?

Baye: Because they put a lot of securities, police, soldiers around the seaside. And when you go to strike, sometimes you get stuck from the securities.

Me: How do you see Europe? What do expect when you start a new life in Europe?

Baye: Um... the kind of life I expect in Europe is like... for me, my dreams is to go see Europe, because what's make me... struggle a lot is to get to Europe. Before I was having a dream to go to Europe and make fast money, going back to Africa and build houses for my family, have a nice car... you know, those things. But I was young.

The dream I have now for Europe, I don't go to Europe for hustling money, but just to get some experience and see how the system is working in Europe. Because in Europe you have... it's a matter of researching. Because it's not like the Africans... because we need to research too just like all the other people are searching in this world.

But if they have this concept like we don't have to search because if they see they're blood brothers with the Africans, coming to Europe easily, maybe they think like they all have the same dream. Maybe they're thinking they are going for money, that they don't care... or maybe they go and they don't come back, but its not like that.

Me: No it's not like that.

Baye: No it's not like that at all, we need to search too, because we are part of the world too.

Me: Yeah of course, and this is the problem with Europe.

Baye: Yeah, this is the problem with Europe. They say it's a problem for them that the Africans are coming to Europe, you know. It's a big problem because if you... if I, you know... people are telling me that Europeans are crying because Africans are coming... a lot and maybe they will go back.. To me its like they are racist!

Because they can be where ever they want to be, they can be in the world travelling because they have their passport. The system make people force themselves to be in Europe, but when I go through the normal procedure, they don't give me visa, so I have to find another way.

Me: And how have you tried to cross to Europe?

Baye: I tried many times. Just two weeks ago I tried to strike, but we didn't succeed... I tried many times... a lot.

Me: But it's dangerous?

Baye: Yeah it's dangerous! When you get to the sea, you get into the boat, you start paddling and your life is no more guaranteed. It's in the hands of God... and you can die. When it's your time to die then you'll die, if you have to live then you'll live. Its a sacrifice... just take your soul and... give to God to decide.

Me: ...Wow man, that's... but people do make it across, don't they?

Baye: Yeah, yeah, people make it across, it does happen. People are crossing and people are dying. And people are staying too, everything is happening.

Me: So if you could see Morocco change, how would you like to see it change?

Baye: Well, it's not easy to change because like... the laws are different. The laws they put onto us are different to the laws they put onto themselves. They follow us because they don't want us to cross the border. And they been paid by the European Union, you know.

So, even if they wanted us to go... but money made them block us. If someone is living in your country, there is no reason to stop them. But with money, there is change. People think different with money. Maybe if I make it to Europe, they will stop me... but I am going! Why are you stopping me?

Me: So what you're saying is that, Morocco is acting like border control for the EU?

Baye: Yeah, they act like border control. And the EU is like... no-one understands what the politics they are doing. Because they are the ones paying them and they're the ones... they're fighting for them, to makes things easy... in a diplomatic way. But last time I told the people, I said this thing will never finish until they stop paying them. When they stop paying them is the time this... this will finish

Me: Yeah, you think they will just... let go?

Baye: Yeah, it's possible. And how much money they spend is a lot.

Me: I've been led to believe that's its 1500 Euros...

Baye: Yeah, so people are suffering.

Me: But with that money, they're not deporting people. What are they doing instead?

Baye: No, they don't deport people. Now... for now, they are giving people a 'Se jour', they give them a 'Se jour'.

Me: And a 'Se jour' is like a...

Baye: Like a residency. So everyone is going to register. So now there is no boumla, there is no police coming here to ask for passport. So everyone is waiting, we don't know what's gonna be the next step, you know.

Me: But with this residency, this 'Se jour', what kind of status do people have? Is it like the same as Moroccan?

Baye: That's what they say, it's like a Moroccan. You can work, you can open a bank account.

Me: And before, the control here was really bad, no? Here and Nador... and Oujda.

Baye: Yeah, here in Tangier, before, the control was very bad. And Nador, Oujda... even Oujda was not that bad, but Cassiago... you know. Because that side is forest, in Nador its forest. But here, people are not living in forest. People are in town, they came to people's apartment before. But we are all waiting to see what's gonna happen next.

Me: Yeah, it's been a quiet period, hasn't it?

Baye: Yeah, now people are just waiting. They are just taking the picture and they just say 'go' and 'we'll call you when we need you'. So people are saying they just want to know how many people are waiting. And Europa, the migrants. That's why.

Me: But before, we were talking about deportation. Now obviously, there are people that want to go back to their own country but can't. But in general, do you think that it's a good thing that people don't get deported back to their own country?

Baye: To not be deported back to their own country? I think... that they have to do it, because we still in Africa. And we don't commit a crime, so we don't get deported. The only thing is, we want to be in Europe.

If it was a criminal act then they can send you back to your country. Because it's someone trying to make their life better and you take them back again. And you don't know how you managed to make that money to reach this place, and you take him back without any... nothing, with nothing. You have to start again

Me: But they do very bad things to the people when they catch them?

Baye: Yeah, no it's not good to deport like that. Because we don't commit any crime, we are just trying to cross the border. But the Europeans pay them to stop that. They been paid for that. But this is Africa, maybe if you get to Europe... if they catch you in Europe, maybe they deport you.

Me: Yeah, I think they would, they would be following laws more, there's less corruption.

Baye: Anyway... it's complicated.

Me: OK. Well, if there's any more you want to say about anything?

Baye: Yeah... it's complicated... because of the border problem. Yeah... they should think that... we are in Africa, and we are all Africans... we should think of another way... another way to cross the border, because this way you will never stop the border. People will cross by anyhow. It's closer, it's not a far distance.

Me: Yeah... you can see it.

Baye: You can see it! And when you see what you are looking for, it's not easy to stop you because you are like a hungry lion. You know, because you see what you are looking for, that's it.

So they should open the borders, you know, and make people free in this world. But all the politicians... it's all about Europe, the big problem is the EU, you know. Because they want to be the king, the controller, to control the whole world, you know. In their own way. Brainwashing people with their vanity. To fight against their own brothers and sisters. To make them stop looking for their opportunities, you know... because of money.

Papa Mazyane

The first time I came to know the landlord was just a few days after I'd arrived in Tangier, the day after the first police raid. I woke up to find him loitering above me, staring down in disbelief.

Everyone in the house calls him Papa - I think it's a common thing to call the elders Papa and Mama, sort of like a sign of respect. I called him Papa Mazyane, after I heard an argument between him and one of the residents over rent money. I overheard them repeating over and over again 'Papa, Mazyane. Papa, Mazyane' which is Arabic for 'Papa, its good' to reassure him that he was going to be paid. And the name just stuck.

After I snapped Papa Mazyane out of his hypnosis, he turned to Baye and flipped out, speaking in Arabic at great speed. I could clearly see that he wasn't happy to see a European in his house. It seemed like the police didn't like it, so I imagine the same goes for the landlord.

There was some fierce Arabic shouting between them, peppered with Baye's calls of 'racist' many times to Papa Mazyane's face. Then as quickly as it had started, it stopped. Papa Mazyane changed completely, going from being insanely aggressive, to being bewilderingly friendly. He sat next to me and tried to have a conversation, offering a warm smile every time I used an Arabic word. I was amazed at this man's array of emotions in such a short period of time.

It was explained to me afterwards that a couple of years ago a migrant had been living in this house and while doing so was also dealing drugs - selling mostly weed and cocaine in and around the Medina, but also from the house. Then one day, he got caught by the police and was forced to lead them to the house.

Shortly after, Papa Mazyane was arrested, the reasons unclear - something to do with letting to migrants. He claims he was tortured by the police before being imprisoned for three months. Being locked up for three months is true but its all speculation on the torture part, it wouldn't surprise me though. So now I understood why he was a bit jumpy about having a European in his house.

I saw Papa Mazyane again around the same time that my friends from back home arrived. Frankie and Stephan also had a shock of being raided by the police on their second day and waking up to a bemused landlord on the third. This time he was coming to collect rent, which I quickly concluded wasn't going to be paid to him easily. It was explained to him that when the police came round, they had stolen things from the house while people were being questioned outside: things such as money; electronics and merchandise that people sold in the street for rent money. Papa Mazyane didn't care about such excuses- he just wanted his rent money.

Papa Mazyane wasn't a bad guy to be fair. I mean, he did lease his house to Sub Saharan migrants, which is a risky business due to cops and harassment. Many migrants live in just single rooms, hidden away in the labyrinthine streets and alleyways that make the city. But this house was big in comparison, and in return was very well known, gaining a lot of attention from police and locals.

Quite often, just walking in and out of the house would result in abuse from the local mafia kids, thinking they were kings of the land. They were in a sense, it's just that the land in question was just one small, run down street that no-body cared about. But regardless of its size, they protected their turf like a Los Angeles gang.



Young but dangerous

They would insist on sitting in intimidating groups right outside the door of the house, sometimes even daring each other to run up and down the stairs inside. Once I had to confront one small boy on the steps, he must have been about nine or ten years old, with menacing look in his eye and a big stick raised high above him. I thought if he was going to do something then he would just do it, so I didn't say anything and walked right passed him, not giving him a reason to feel provoked.

I guess in a way, they must have felt threatened - Sub Saharans moving into their neighbourhood, mixing up the nationalities. They were too young to understand or care about the hurt caused by racism. But in the end, young or not, they were still really dangerous. Like the rest of Tangier, these kids also carried knives, and on occasion they didn't seem

afraid to use them. Even without the thought of knives, everybody in the house knew the kids held strong bitter resentment against them.

One way that people from the house tried to relieve the tension between them and the mafia kids was to offer them a friendly game of football. Surprisingly, it worked. Every few days the residents and the mafia kids would get into whatever football gear they had and head to the dirt pitch at the end of the road. People said that afterwards there was a definite change in the mafia kids' attitudes outside the house. Instead of racial comments, they were exchanging football remarks and re-enactments. They finally had a common ground that didn't involve skin colour, religion or knives.



Football with the local mafia kids

One evening, six weeks or so after I'd moved in, I'd been out in the local market to find something to eat and was perhaps only gone for half an hour - but as I made my way back down the steep, narrow street next to the house, something caught my attention. I first noticed smoke coming up the alleyway. I didn't think too much of it but a lot of locals were also stood around talking amongst themselves.

One woman spotted me and pointed to the house followed by a gesture with both hands that I guessed meant something was 'finished'. I ran around the corner and saw the origin of the smoke coming from a huge fire outside the house.

Belongings and beds were flying out of the windows and some of the large crowd that had gathered were helping to put it all on the fire. Furniture, bags, bed things and other items from the house were going up in smoke. I was baffled as to what was going on.

I ran up the stairs into the house to find a few of the residents around but also an alarming amount of local people too. I thought they were police at first, but I remembered that there had been no vehicles outside and that no-one was wearing uniforms, so I presumed that they were locals. They were flipping everything over, tearing through bags and other cases; I saw that some were filling their pockets with valuables and discarding the rest. But

there were far too many to confront them. They looked at me and I looked at them, but none of us tried to impede each other.



House flipped by locals

I stepped into the main bedroom that also doubled as a communal room and was met with the landlord and Baye having an unsurprising vocal fight, with both shouting over each other at high volumes. Baye spots me and insists 'You see? You see this? They are racist, the Arabs are fucking racist. They are criminals! Why is he doing this?'

Papa Mazyane was stood looking at me and repeatedly pointed to his front teeth, where I could see one had been broken. I tried to ask what had happened. Amusingly, Papa Mazyane was very good at making visual descriptions and explanations, and I could figure out the general story despite the complete language barrier.

It seems that someone had attacked him then head-butted him in the teeth. Baye filled the gaps in the story with 'He just came in man, and picked up the gas threatening to hit him with it', pointing to a friend named Lamine, who sat close by, 'So he defended himself'. I pointed to the gas cylinder on the ground for Papa Mazyane to see and he just shrugged it off. It was also said that after the fight, Sayid, Papa Mazyane's son who was also there, freaked out and called to the street for help. I guess it was then that everyone came storming into the house like a lynch mob and started to trash the place.

Frankie and Stephan came back to the house around the time the loud shouting and screaming started coming from outside. I ran past the rocks that had flown in through the windows earlier and looked out to the street. I was horrified to see that the locals were fighting with some of the residents who were trying to leave, and it had rapidly got out of control.

There were far too many Moroccans outnumbering the residents. One friend was completely surrounded by Moroccans and was being pushed and shoved about. For a minute we seriously thought that the locals were going to overpower them, causing injuries and more hurt. I couldn't help but think the worst.

It would have only taken one over-confident kid amongst the chaos with a knife to end someone's life, which was frighteningly possible. Knowing the level of racism and corruption in this country, it still sickens me to think that something so implausible should yet be a harsh reality.

Fortunately, the mob of locals outside reluctantly decided against any further violence, as the police were arriving. For once, the people of the house were somewhat pleased to see the police show up. As they did so, half the locals disappeared like they were never there and the rest pretended that they were just onlookers.

The police controlled the situation very quickly - all the locals respected the authorities. We were stood outside with them at this point, but we were mostly ignored by the police unless we interjected with our opinions of disgust. I could sense that the police were still keeping an eye on us but keeping at a distance. A lot of debating was going on between police, locals and migrants, with the police constantly raising their arms to quieten the crowd.

Some time went by before a conclusion was made, it turned out that some of the residents wanted to press charges on Papa Mazyane for causing harm. We advised them against it, but it was too late because for some reason, in this case, pressing charges meant that they had to spend time at the station. We watched them being taken away and told them that we would see them the next day at the trial.

I went back upstairs and had a look around to see the extent of the damage, taking my camera with me to take pictures of the upturned rooms. I passed by several rooms, taking photos as I went. Most of the rooms had been completely ruined - I could barely tell they had been bedrooms.

One of the rooms I went in still had a young Moroccan in it, going through bags and pocketing whatever he thought was valuable. Before saying anything, I took a picture of him red-handed. When he realised he left in a hurry.



Looter caught red handed

Most of the house seemed abandoned. The few people that were there explained that they making arrangements to move somewhere else. After asking, they said that it wasn't safe for them here anymore: anybody could come and hurt them, plus the police would come and tell them to leave the next day or the day after anyway. It was really sad to think that in a blink of an eye the house went from being vibrant and lively to being destroyed and evicted.

The only person who thought otherwise was Baye, he had made a quick decision to stay and stand his ground, and I knew he would try his best to stick by it. He protested that this was his house and there was no reason that he should leave. He paid his rent, and most others had paid too, it was only one or two people that hadn't paid, so why did everybody else have to suffer?

I completely agreed with him, but I also knew that this was Morocco, and in Morocco, the laws don't apply to everyone equally. Obviously, Baye understood that far more than I ever will. I really wasn't sure why the others had decided to press charges against the landlord. I mean there were reasons to for sure, such as the fact that one of them had been to hospital for a cut leg and another for a cut head. And overall, they were being wrongfully evicted. But like I said, this is Morocco, and I know that the police will always favour Moroccans side against any Sub-Saharan migrant. It's the brutal reality of it. In the end, everyone would have to leave regardless of what laws had been broken.

The next day, a few of us went to the court house in the centre to see if we could find out what was going on with our friends. When we arrived Frankie, Stephan, Baye and I were immediately ushered through with hardly any questions. I imagine this is because we were European and apparently unthreatening.

We went through some narrow corridors, avoiding scar faced inmates being transferred, guards with huge guns and officers carrying boxes of foot long knives to the evidence room... I assumed.

Baye was frantically talking to a lawyer as we walked through the building. Eventually, they parted ways and it was explained to us that he would represent our friends if we paid him money directly, which was strictly forbidden because it wouldn't be official. It seems that the court of law in Morocco can be bought, just the same as everything else.

We finally got halted at the end of a thin corridor, made narrower by a wall of box files from floor to ceiling. At the end, it opened out a little into a room with benches, where I presume people awaiting trial were being held. There was a little desk with a couple of guard officers mostly ignoring us but ultimately, stopping us. On the other side of the small

room was an iron barred cell door, clearly for the more dangerous inmates to be held. Through the bars, I could see the four friends from the house. They'd also spotted us from inside and were waving out to us, still with gallant smiles regardless of their situation.

We began asking the guards about our friend's situation and what might become of them. But the guards quickly became bored of us and realised that we were only a nuisance, so we were ordered to leave the corridor and wait in the main waiting room with everyone else. Five long hours went by, all of us without a clue as to what was going on.

All we could do was watch the people come and go from the court, occasionally catch a glimpse of the large court room as the doors opened and closed. People would walk through with a wide range of expressions and emotions: smiles and laughter; tears; anger - but most people just looked confused and bemused. I couldn't blame them: the whole place looked a complete mess; the guards did nothing; the metal detectors weren't switched on; the queues led to nowhere and nothing seemed to move forward.

Eventually, we were signalled to come and join the court proceedings, or so we thought. When we arrived back in the box file corridor, the only difference was that Papa Mazyane suddenly showed up out of the side door, which I realised was for the court room. As he stepped out, he was talking at great length with a police officer and before finishing, he gave the officer a firm handshake and a customary one kiss on each cheek, like they were old friends.

He spotted us and drew a broad smile across his thick face, forwarding a hand attempting to shake mine. Without thinking and allowing reflex to take over, I shook his hand, immediately regretting it and feeling quite dirty for it too. I watched him walk past us, squeezing through the tight corridor, shaking each officer's hand as he went. It was disgusting to see him behave in this obviously smug way, strutting around like he was the king himself.

It didn't look good for our friends either, it was clear that the outcome was not in their favour. There was even a chance that they could be deported to the desert to add to their discriminatory misfortune. Even though the case was clearly over and Papa Mazyane had left, our friends were still locked up in their cell.

We tried to ask about what was going to happen to them but, like before, we were just shoed away or simply ignored. Baye seemed to think they would just be released in a few hours or the next day. Bizarrely, our friends were released before being taken back into the same station. Baye and I left while Frankie and Stephan waited for another few hours, bringing them food but having to quarrel with the guards to give it to them.

When released, our friends were escorted to be taken to another station. Frankie and Stephan got inside the van with them but got immediately thrown out again, so they began demanding the officers to tell them where they were being taken to. They finally showed up back at the house, with the news that the house had to be empty by the end of the next day. It was said that Papa Mazyane was coming with police to ensure that everybody was leaving as ordered.

With the threat of police coming the next day, people didn't hang around to find out. Arrangements were being made, bags were being packed and things were moving out of the house so quickly that it wasn't long before half the house had gone. It was a mass exodus, thirty people forced out of their home.

Everyone expressed a depressing amount of normality and casualness towards the fate of the house, showing the level of familiarity and most of all, numbness to their primitive treatment from the Moroccan law system. Basically, they were unrecognised as human beings, even by the allegedly unyielding judicial court.

Packing and moving went on through to the next day. Whatever could be carried was taken away to Boukhalef and elsewhere. All the large things though - such as all the beds, bedding, rugs, kitchen things and electronics - had to be stored for the time being. Half the people of the house made light of the situation and took the opportunity to move to another city like Rabat or Casablanca.

The remainder of the residents were planning to move to Boukhalef, but with such short notice they didn't have the time to sort a new place out. Fortunately, Frankie managed to make arrangements with our friend Hassan to hire a van and a place to store everything.

Throughout the day, everyone managed to gather everything and pack it onto the van to be taken away. We delivered the packed van to an underground car park where, for a small fee, things can be kept. It didn't seem very safe at all though and we later found out that the gas and some kitchenware was missing.

Later that day, Papa Mazyane showed up at the house again, luckily without police escorts. For some bizarre reason everyone gave the impression that nothing had happened, as though this little fat man hadn't just managed to get everyone kicked out of the house. There weren't many people left, but those that were left, laughed and joked with Papa Mazyane as if everything was fine. It felt completely unnatural for me to act like that. If they did feel bitter and resentful towards Papa Mazyane, they weren't showing it.

It finally came time to leave. More or less everything was out of the house apart from a few unwanted items. As we were leaving, Papa Mazyane called to me and gestured to take a crate of tile pieces that I'd left behind. The tiles were for making mosaic pictures to sell in the street, but it wasn't worth taking them along, so I gestured back that I didn't care about them.

I'm not sure if he understood because he gestured for me to take them, but a little more sternly. I hesitated, and then went for the crate, watching Papa Mazyane while I did so. He smiled and gave a nod of approval, but as I picked the crate up, I tipped it upside down, scattering the hundreds of little tile pieces all around of Papa Mazyane's feet.

The look of shock on his face was priceless; his hands went frantic, pointing down at the tiles in disbelief. Everyone behind me roared with laughter, his face quickly changing from shock to smile, whether he felt defeated or he genuinely found it funny, I'll never know.

Musa

Originally published here:

<https://beatingborders.wordpress.com/2013/10/14/migrant-death-caused-by-police-raid/>

10th of October 2013, another regular morning police raid was under way in a migrant house on the outskirts of Tangier. The police broke in through the front door and stormed through the building waking everybody inside. The residents, being quite accustomed to this kind of treatment, took their time without panic.

Witnesses in the building claim that one resident, Musa Seck, was found in the bathroom washing his face before facing his authoritarian audience outside. The officer that found him told him that he should go downstairs now or he would beat him. Mr Seck replied that he would defend himself if the officer was to try to harm him, so the officer took it upon himself to start beating Mr Seck with his standard issue baton. Within a few seconds the brawl was over and sadly Mr Seck was dead. He had fallen from a fourth floor window and had died instantly. The witnesses had become afraid of the consequences when the fight had started so they hurriedly left, therefore were not exactly sure what had happened. The police claim that Mr Seck had jumped out of the window in a desperate attempt to escape. The residents on the other hand believe he was pushed.

Musa Seck, a Senegalese man in his late twenties had been living in Tangier for 4 years and had been very well respected by the people around him. Some claiming that "If it weren't for Musa then they would have not had the hope and courage to look for a better life".

In the 4 years that Mr Seck had been in Morocco, he had been apprehended by police numerous times and always returned. It is believed that Mr Seck had correct papers to allow him to be in Morocco.

So why would Mr Seck try to escape?

And why did Mr Seck jump out of a fourth floor window knowing that it would cause serious harm or in this case, death?

Upon his death, Mr Seck was left on the ground untouched. Although being asked for help with the proceedings, the police quickly evacuated themselves from the scene, adding further speculation that the police were more than fairly involved with Mr Seck's death. Sadly the rest of the residents were left to deal with Mr Seck's body.

The next day, the head of the Senegalese consulate based in Rabat, came to Tangier to inquire about the death of Mr Seck. It is said that in the past, discrimination, violence and deaths have been mostly dismissed by the Senegalese consulate, on grounds that they believed the Moroccan police would not be so brutal and the Moroccan government would not allow such atrocities. Perhaps this time they may be thinking differently?

Boukhalef

There's a place just outside of Tangier, a place where a high percentage of migrants waiting for the opportunity to get to Spain live and work. The reason for there being such a concentrated amount of migrants in this part of town is that the area has been mostly abandoned and forgotten. This is very apparent, but the reasons for it being abandoned are little more unclear.

Speaking with many different people in the area - migrants and locals alike - I discovered many theories as to why the place was built and also why it was abandoned. The closest, most confirmed theory, came from a guy I met who was working in a place close by named "Freezone".

This Freezone was built right beside the main airport of Tangier, eight kilometres out of town, which is also situated right beside the Atlantic Ocean. Around the same time, it was decided to build a sea port for ferries and cargo ships close to the airport. This would create easy access for the import and export to the Freezone.

The Freezone itself is a large business park of sorts, mostly for European business' to come and manufacture goods at a low working cost. It makes capitalist sense, really, for large

European businesses to be situated right at the very northern peninsular of Africa. Only a short distance to the high sale-prices of Europe, they still have the cheap labour of African workers at their disposal. And of course, it is widely known that the king is a big business man himself.



Boukhalef

A bi-product of this endeavour is Boukhalef, the housing complex situated in the gap between the airport and the outskirts of Tangier, built for European corporate CEO's, staff and customers in a bid to attract more long term business and develop a tighter bond between Moroccan and European exporting. Unfortunately for the high-risk plan, it didn't quite come through as hoped.

It seems that Mother Nature has once again foiled the plans of a money-making scheme. Two years after the construction of the Atlantic port had begun, it was discovered that the ocean is too strong: with its incessant pounding of colossal waves it would be too much for the perimeters of the port to endure. Ultimately, it would be too costly for initial construction and further ongoing maintenance thereafter.

So, with only the foundations built, the project was dropped. Instead, the port constructors looked to the less fierce Mediterranean Sea to complete their port, forty kilometres east of Tangier, aptly named Tanger Med. This in turn, rendered Freezone and Boukhalef useless for the time being, until construction of a direct highway from Tanger Med to Freezone would be finished.



huge white monoliths

In the years since the abandonment of the original venture, Boukhalef has been left mostly deserted, leaving only the half finished shells of what was meant to be. The housing complex comprises several thousand apartments - perhaps a hundred five-story blocks with roof terraces, white in colour and completely identical to one another. The place looks utterly bizarre in comparison to the rest of Tangier, a cluster of ambiguous white monoliths created in the wake of European influence. Most of the apartments are bare and incomplete, with plumbing often missing and unreliable electrics. The few shops that are outside fill some spaces but change very little of the minimalist atmosphere.

It's difficult to determine who the apartments themselves are owned by. Many have been owned by Europeans but are looked after by locals, some are bought by Moroccans and some are completely unclaimed. A lot of these apartments are lived in by sub-Saharan migrants now. Whether they've paid or simply squatted the place is down to luck and the friends they know in the area.



This is an account written by Frankie, of the time they spent living in Boukhalef:

Ever since we arrived in Morocco, our aim was to open a house where our migrant friends could come over and hang out in an un-oppressive environment; a place where we could cook meals together and share lots of tea and languages. But it just wasn't possible. Every time we wanted to rent a house, as soon as we mentioned that we'd have West African friends coming over, they all said no.

At the first house we rented, the landlord stood at the door refusing our migrant female friends and their babies entry. He promptly slid a note under our door saying 'I don't want any black people in my house'. We had the second house for less than a day, before police showed up and forced the landlord to kick us out for inviting our Senegalese friends over. So our third house was in Boukhalef. We hoped that this new neighbourhood would be more welcoming, since thousands of West African people lived there already.

Some migrant friends helped us try to find a house. We were shown quite a few and were happy to live in any of them, but every time for unknown reasons we were told it was no

longer possible. After dragging our feet up and down staircases, becoming very confused as to who the landlords were and how it all worked, we finally found one that was possible to rent.

We exchanged a hefty two months' rent and deposit in Dirhams for a set of keys and a promise of a written contract after the weekend. We moved our unexpectedly large collection of mattresses and other bits n bobs into our new house and thought: 'Finally, we have a house we'll hopefully have for longer than a week'.

Boukhalef is a large suburbia, full of huge towering white apartment blocks, like gigantic Lego pieces, stacked one after another in rows and rows. The streets were wide but almost deserted of cars. Usually only garbage would park up along the kerbside.

But despite its bland buildings and cracked tarmac, it's full of life: people wandering about everywhere, going in and out of friends' open doors, sharing tea and information on police sightings.

We would talk to so many different people, from all over West Africa, some telling us stories of the latest arrests, others asking us to come over to their house later for lunch. We would often make many friends - being the only two white people living in the suburb we stuck out a mile away.

Some of our friends from the old Senegalese house that we'd lived with when we arrived in Tangier had a house a few blocks away that we'd often visit. At our friends' houses we would often play card games and drink lots of sugary tea in between going up to the roof on police lookout. All the roofs were six storeys high and flat at the top for hanging washing, or sight-seeing from.

Unfortunately, the sights we could see were either a construction site amongst scrub-land, or the cops driving from one apartment to another, taking new arrestees with them. My friends would sit there for hours with nothing to do, just watching people down on the streets being bundled into chequered vans, with absolutely no way of stopping it.

It was important to be keeping an eye out, so that when they spotted the vans driving in their direction they could quickly shout out to the other residents without papers. This would give them a few vital minutes to hide or run out into the scrub-land nearby, where the police are less likely to search.

The police were mainly looking for boats, paddles and life jackets. If they found these, they'd also grab an occupant to take to the police station. There, they would photograph

the migrant with the equipment and copy down their details, so they can send off the information to claim their €1500 from the EU for 'deporting the migrant'.

But in reality, they have no intention of spending the money on the migrant, instead, leading them back out onto the street, or 'deporting' them to Rabat and leaving them stranded there without a penny in their pocket. The police would rely on tip-offs from some Moroccans living in the area, or other migrant informers, who'd spied equipment being sneaked into apartments days earlier. When people agree to be police informers, it exempts them from being arrested, and when people have nothing more to lose some will go to these measures.

It was always interesting being invited around for dinner - climbing up the five storeys, pushing open the door out of breath and greeting everyone. At around ten o'clock someone wanders around with an outstretched hand, rhythmically tossing collected coins in their palm, this gesture means 'If you have 5 dirham's please add it to the cooking fund for tonight's meal'. Then a group will wander off to the closest vegetable stall and buy an array of locally grown vegetables, rice, spices and much to my dismay, meat.

And so the cooking begins; peeling, slicing dicing, boiling, frying, stirring, waiting, watching, tasting, and waiting. So finally, 4 hours later, at around 2am, the big orange plastic bowls are laid out on the floor, and everyone would gather around, their right hand still dripping from being washed, and the feast would begin - everyone devouring steaming scrumptious rice full of spices mixed with caramelized vegetables and diced potatoes.

So flavoursome and delicious, it's always worth the wait. After the bowls were scraped clean, we would all have a burst of energy and would resume French and Wolof lessons, or play another round of cards. Slowly our tiredness would creep back and we would say our goodbyes, then head back through the distorted Lego-land to bed.

A few days after we'd got the keys, sometime whilst I was out, police came to our house and forced Stephan to give them their passport, which they photocopied and said something in French about us not allowed to be there, and them coming back later. A little while after I came home, there was knocking on the door again, so we ignored it.

Then as I went to the kitchen, I saw a man climbing over the back wall. Next he came into the room through the un-lockable back door. He was demanding my passport too, but we shouted at him and made him climb back over the wall empty handed. From that point on we realised we needed to be far more careful, we had to always watch our backs, especially since we couldn't blend into the crowd very easily. There were also a few particular

local Moroccans that seemed to keep a watchful eye on us, following us from a distance when we went to the market.

That night, at about 3am, we were woken up to banging on our door. Stephan got up and opened the door in a sleepy haze to find two men standing there with batons. Stephan mumbled that we were sleeping, quickly shutting and locking the door. Then for the next few hours the men continuously hammered on the door, sometimes going away for a bit, but coming back to bang at it some more.

The next day, just as we were leaving the house, the same people we'd noticed following us in the past few days were at our door. They told us that we couldn't stay at the house anymore, that they were the 'Responsibles' of the building and we didn't have a contract. They demanded to know who we'd paid rent to and explained that whoever it was had told us lies. They said we had been tricked and we had to move out right then.

We phoned the person who'd we paid rent to, but he wasn't answering. We managed to get away from the 'Responsibles' for the time being, and went to a local Moroccan friends' house - one of the only people we knew who spoke good English. We explained the situation and he told us his ideas of what was going on - all of the houses in Boukhalef are run by Mafia's.

He thinks no-one really knows who owns the buildings: some people think it's the King and others think its European companies. But regardless, they are now all squatted. Apparently one gang changes the locks on all the doors and claims it theirs, then charges people to rent out the rooms, differing the price for different skin colours. But if the people who were at our door that morning wanted us out, then we needed to move out - these are not the sorts of people to be messed with.

We tried calling our migrant friends again who we paid the rent money to but they still weren't picking up, and then we remembered that our promised contract never came. We decided to forget about it for a bit and went on with our day, visiting other friends houses around Boukhalef, finding out about recent arrests and trying to sort out some work for our friends who have no money to pay their rent.

We spent the next day in the city, visiting our friends from back home who lived in a different area, telling them our stories of the police scrambling over the back wall. Later we hitched back home and when we walked down the corridor to our door, we found that it had been crow-barred open. Nothing had been stolen, but it was a clear sign saying 'Move out now!'

Some of our migrant neighbours came out and tried to help put the door back in place. They told us that the guy we paid rent to had crossed to Spain the day before. Then the two Mafia people that had been following us around town turned up and admitted it had been them whod boshed open the door.

There was a flurry of French, Arabic, Spanish, Wolof and some English. We were both trying to learn French, Wolof and Arabic, but it tends to be a lot more difficult to follow when it's being argued in. After a lot of translating, it was made clear that we just had to move out right then, even though we'd only been living there for a few days.

Some of our welcoming friends helped us move into their house, where we ended up staying for a long time. But we were still always being watched. It was made clear to us that the police and Mafias didn't want us to live in Boukhalef, as they all know that what they're doing is corrupt and they don't want the outside world to read about it

Night visitors (content: rape)

After the Senegalese house was evicted I was left with several options: I could have moved with Ebrima and others to Boukhalef, or got my own place or gone travelling. In the end, I opted for getting my own place, staying with my friend Sven in the meantime while I searched around for a place. I was looking to get a single room for as cheap as possible. I wasn't concerned about quality, the only thing that mattered was the price.

One week or so after the eviction, I was walking through our local market when I bumped into a friend from the Senegalese house. He told me that he knew of a perfect place for me: it had cheap rooms for rent, with other migrants living there and a very relaxed landlady. I agreed that it sounded ideal and asked for him to lead the way.

We weaved in and out of the narrow streets until we finally came to a stop outside a black metal door. He gestured that this was the right house and I gave him a nod of acknowledgement, before he knocked. We were greeted by a tiny old woman who everyone called Mama. She was an energetic lady, speaking rapidly regardless of our lack of understanding.

My friend got the message across that I was interested in a place and we were swiftly shown in to a cave-like room the size of a garden shed. There was one window overlooking some steps and a concrete bench in the corner splattered with old coffee stains. I was more than happy with the place and accepted, but first I had to hang around for the landlady's daughter to come back from work.

I was introduced to my Nigerian neighbours, Prudence and her one year old boy. Prudence

immediately offered me some incredibly spicy food, mostly made of potatoes and chilli. She explained to me that her boyfriend and her sister lived in their place too. I looked around and wondered how two sisters, a boyfriend and their son could live here without problems.

The room contained a small sofa, a bed behind the sofa, a fridge, a TV and various other things lying around. Not much space was left for a functional family, but from what I've seen, there are very little options. Prudence held herself as her name would imply, moving around the room with practised ease and elegance, picking things up here and putting things down there, always keeping herself busy.

She told brief, sentence-long stories as she went - stories of the house and its previous occupants. I couldn't help but admire Prudence. Although shy, she projected warmth and a sense strong motherhood. I couldn't imagine living in a foreign country with very little money and prospects, as well as bringing up a child in those conditions.

We were interrupted by a Moroccan woman letting herself in. She greeted me in English, introducing herself as Soukiana, the daughter of the landlady. She spoke unusually good English, and explained to me that during the past ten years, while she was growing up, mainly English-speaking Nigerians had lived there and taught her the language.

I asked her about police and if they had many problems with them. I was answered with a "No. As long as you don't cause any problems, then there won't be any problems". Still thinking about this slightly passive-aggressive answer, I continued with finalising the agreement. Basically, I traded 600 Dirhams for a key and a one month promise. That was all. No contracts, no advance, nothing. Very Moroccan.

So I moved in and within a couple of days I was settled. I quickly became accustomed to the daily vocal fights between Prudence and Mama, with Soukiana translating. These early-morning arguments usually involved money, electricity or visitors - but mostly visitors.

Every night, without fail, people would come to the house and hang out inside until the small hours of the morning. Sometimes, hordes of Nigerian men would come and drink whiskey or rum until they were completely out of control. They would talk and argue about life in Morocco, the life they left behind in Nigeria, and the potential life in Europe.

These arguments would often escalate to the point where a fight would break out. Things like "I'll kill you" and "Fuck you, brother" would be heard from the room, not long before crashing and smashing would start. The fights would always be short-lived but the consequences with Mama were very much apparent. She would often switch off the power

and water for several hours; she would threaten to call the police or would just put her own locks on doors, even if people's things were inside.

All in all, the friendship between Mama and the migrants living there was thin at the best of times. Seeing Prudence and her younger sister Beth around the house, mostly accommodating for the drunken visitors every night, I could tell they had little control over the situation. They would sit in silence until one of the guys would demand something, such as another drink, food or a trip to the shop.

Although Prudence said that her 'boyfriend' lived there with them, I never once confirmed that any one particular guy was this 'boyfriend'. I knew that Prudence was the one paying the rent - by what means, I wasn't sure. I knew that she and Beth went begging on occasions, but I also knew that they couldn't possibly rent a room, eat and generally live on begging money alone.

Coming in late one night I found the house completely silent, which was rare, even for the middle of the night. I'd been at Sven's house for most of the evening and had returned later than usual. I was as quiet as possible coming in, as I didn't want Mama to think I was bothering the neighbours. I crept in and swung the door gently to a close until I heard the 'click' of the lock. When I got into my room, I saw the bed and decided to go straight into it. I immediately undressed and jumped under the covers, but I didn't fall asleep right away as I thought I would.

Twenty minutes went by and I was still laying there awake. The silence was broken by a knock at the door, and then shuffling in the next room, followed by their door opening and a flood of light pouring through the various gaps in the walls of my cave. The shuffling continued along the corridor until it reached the front entrance. "Shkon?" a voice said, meaning 'who?' in a local Moroccan dialect. I heard a mumble from outside followed by the door opening, and then the same clicking sound as it locked again. The shuffling sound came back to the room, before closing the door once more, taking the light back with it.

This kind of thing was not unusual and I didn't think much of it, so I let my thoughts wander elsewhere. I must have only lain there for about five minutes longer, before I started to hear raised mummings coming from the next room. It was clearly a deep male voice doing most of the talking, sometimes answered by an almost inaudible tone of a woman's voice.

The noises soon changed to heavy breathing, getting louder and louder. I realised they were having sex. The woman's voice rose to an exaggerated moan, sounding very much forced, as though she was in pain. Another minute went by and then they went quiet.

There were some sharp bangs and crashing of furniture, then their door opened again. I could tell by the heavy clumsiness of the exit that it was the man leaving. The door to the bedroom was slammed shut and immediately after, the front door slammed shut too.

I lay there thinking a lot, wondering if I had just heard what I thought I had heard. Then another sound came from the room. I listened closely, but I couldn't make out the words. As it grew louder, I realised it was sobbing, and it was then that I knew she had been raped.

I really wasn't sure what to do, I couldn't be sure of anything. What I wanted to do, was to go and knock on the door and see if I could help, perhaps comfort whoever was in that room. And in hindsight, if I knew what had been going on from the beginning, I maybe would of burst in and beat the shit out of the sick bastard. But I also didn't know what the consequences would have been, for her, for me and maybe for the migrant community. So I thought I would leave it for now and approach it with caution.

The next morning I was startled awake by noises outside in the corridor. I jumped out of bed and put some clothes on. Stepping out of the room I saw Beth crouched over the gas cooker behind my door. She looked up and gave me a timid smile. I smiled back, asked how she was and if her sister was home. She told me she was "fine", giving me the same answer she gave me every time I saw her. She continued to tell me about Prudence being in Casablanca and how she wouldn't be back for a couple of weeks. So then I knew that it was Beth that I'd heard sobbing the previous night.

I had read several reports from Medical Sans Frontieres (MSF) when I had first arrived. They explained stories of thousands of migrant women being trafficked. After being persuaded to take the opportunity of getting a better life in Europe, they are bought in their home country to be sold again in border towns or Europe.

On route the 'boyfriend' - basically a pimp who has bought them - decides everything from how they travel to whether or not they have abortions. They are regularly raped by both their 'boyfriend' and his friends, and are forced into prostitution. Then once in Morocco, they have to live there for years, often bringing up a family of the children they were forced to have, waiting for this empty promise of Europe and a better life.

Although I had read these reports, I hadn't yet knowingly come across someone trapped in this life until I lived in the next room to Beth. But as a male, many migrant women were always reluctant to speak with me at the best of times.

Because of her generally quiet nature, I hadn't spoken to Beth very much in the time I had been living there. My attempts to make conversation with her would end in short, one-

word answers, before she'd continue with whatever task was at hand. I assumed she was just shy and took time to get comfortable with new people, so I thought I would give her space and let it be.

But after what I'd heard that night, I thought perhaps she was too afraid to speak with me. Maybe if her visitors saw her talking with me, it would bring her problems. I imagined she was probably feeling scared, ashamed perhaps. I didn't know what was going on, but my best guess was that her 'boyfriend' looked after her, but forced sex and prostitution on her, maybe even keeping all the money for himself. The thought of him basically living off her shame and misery hung heavily in my thoughts.

Again, I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to bring up what I'd read about, in fear of embarrassing or hurting her. I continued to make polite conversation with her but she never gave signals of wanting help. The small talk came to an end and I had nothing more to say, so I left. I couldn't even begin to imagine what she was feeling. I felt sick to my stomach. All I wanted to do was help Beth - take her away from this horrific situation - but I didn't have the means to do so. I was completely powerless to help.

For the next couple of days, I didn't speak to Beth very much. When I did, it would be pleasant but short. I couldn't tell if she'd realised that I knew but sometimes I saw a crookedness in her smile or a glimmer in her eyes, a glimmer of recognition. A knowing look perhaps. A cry for help.

I never once saw another woman there at the house and Beth was at home most of the time, cooking and cleaning for the visitors. I knew she left the house occasionally, but I'd overheard guys talking about her begging when Mama was demanding rent money. I don't think she had any friends, I don't think she was allowed to. It seemed like she only had her older sister to turn to but from what I could tell, Prudence was in the same position as Beth.

A few nights went by and nothing was heard from the room. Every evening I expected something, but thankfully nothing came. I wasn't very prepared, because I didn't really know what to expect. I was very much torn between doing something, and doing nothing. I thought about how if I heard Beth being raped again, of course I'd have to do something.

Bang on her door? Kick the door in and demand him to leave? Beat the guy out of the house? Besides not being physically able to do that anyway, I also thought about what would happen after I tried that. What would happen to Beth? Having someone on the outside helping Beth would probably cause various problems for her. I really didn't want more harm added to her already difficult situation and I also had myself to think about. For

all I knew, it was completely plausible that I'd be stabbed outside the house because they didn't approve of me stopping their business. I played these thoughts over and over again in my head - mostly at night when I was in bed, just waiting to hear a knock at the door.

Then some nights later, the 2am knock came again. This time Frankie was staying with me to keep me company in case of this happening. I just couldn't approach it on my own. We listened to Beth shuffle through the corridor and let the guy in. We stood anxiously by my door, waiting for any signs or sounds of distress but thankfully, all I could hear was talking.

I began to relax, thinking that we'd made a mistake in assuming it to be bad. Suddenly though, Beth's door burst open and I heard Beth shouting "Go! Go!" and the guy sharply talking back at her, ignoring her demand for him to leave. I quickly stood up again and returned to my door, listening to Beth's voice. The guy's tone became aggressive and I heard what sounded like struggling.

I opened my door and saw the guy stood in her door way holding onto Beth's arm high above her. They both looked at me and went silent. "Look mate, I think Beth wants you to leave" I said, breaking the silence.

"Its OK brother, I am her boyfriend" he replied, then turned back to Beth and started to speak in a Nigerian language so that I couldn't understand. Again, Beth said "Go, go", but the guy refused. I repeated what I had just said and this time the guy let go of Beth and walked up to me. "Its OK brother, she is a whore you know, its OK".

Beth saw this as an opportunity and closed her door. The guy stumbled back and tried speaking to her through the door but there was no reply. I looked around at Frankie for muted advice but she seemed as shocked at the situation as I was, so I suggested again for him to leave, but he just ignored me.

He began to laugh at something, I'm not sure what but it made me feel uneasy. Eventually, the guy turned and staggered back to me "You know, she is a whore and this is my business" he spat, with a strong stench of whisky on his breath. "Yeah, well it's not my business, OK?" was all I could muster for a reply.

"Exactly!" he said, and left. I stood there shaking for a minute, trying to pull myself together before finally stepping back into my room. I found Frankie stood in the doorway, and I guess she could see I was shaken up from the confrontation; she wrapped her arms around me, giving a comforting hug.

I imagine that this had been going on the whole time, but now that I had noticed, it

seemed so blindingly obvious and to be happening more often. One time after Beth shut her door on someone and I'd persuaded them to leave, I stared at Beth's door for what seemed like forever, before finally gathering the courage to knock.

"Beth? Its OK, it's only me now".

The door unlocked and opened a fraction. I stepped in and found Beth sat in the middle of the sofa, staring at her feet.

"Are you OK Beth? Are you hurt?"

"It's not what you think you know, they're drunk and talk too much".

"Don't worry about what I think Beth, it's not important"

There was a long silence and I was close to leaving. But I sat on a little blue plastic stool next to the sofa instead.

"Do you know why I am here Beth?"

"No" she looked at me for the first time.

"I...I know other people from Nigeria... and Senegal and Gambia...here in Tangier. I...I lived with some Senegalese people, in a big house just down the road from here..."

She stared blankly at me.

"..And well, if you ever need anybody to talk to about... anything. You can speak to me... or if you prefer, I also have a friend, who's a woman, and well... I'm sure that she would be happy to listen".

Another long silence.

"Erm... when does Prudence come home?"

"Soon"

"Are things better when Prudence is here?"

"Yes"

“That man before, he wasn't really your boyfriend was he?” I finally asked.

“No”

“Are there more men that call themselves your boyfriend?”

“Sometimes”

Beth was fiddling with something in her hands and seemed to be getting nervous, so I slowed down with the questions.

“Beth, I’m sorry that this happens to you...”

She looked up at me again with her huge dark eyes.

“...Please tell me if I can help you in any way”

She slowly nodded her head in acknowledgement. She gave me another smile and I gave her one back, then left.

Deep down though, I knew then that she would never say anything, and she never did.

A couple more weeks went by. Some nights I kicked people out, some nights I wasn't able to. I understood that Beth was too scared to not let them in, so if there was a knock at the door at some ridiculous hour, I would try to catch the door before her, and tell the unwanted visitor that everyone was asleep.

Beth sometimes said a quiet thank you if she was still in the corridor, but mostly she didn't say a word about what was going on. I didn't care about a thank you; I wanted her to tell me that she was 'fine', like she always did, but for once to actually mean it.

I woke up one morning to the sound of Beth singing. I guessed she was preparing food or another one of the many jobs she does throughout the day. I lay in bed listening to her. She had the most beautiful voice and she really opened up when she thought no one was listening - singing what I assumed was traditional Nigerian music, filling the rooms with nostalgia in her alone time.

One night I was woken up by a routine late-night knocking. I began to get up to catch it before Beth, but she got there first. I lay back in bed trying to stay awake so I could keep an ear out for any situations. I heard the usual drunken mumbling from whoever, followed by

the shuffling of feet, then the closing of Beth's door.

I must have fallen asleep because I was suddenly startled by a loud crash. I sat up in bed, feeling a bit confused. I heard another crash and realised it was from Beth's room. Jumping out of bed, I went straight for my door and pulled the latch open. Doing so made a loud screeching noise. I guess this must have spooked whoever was inside, because Beth's door opened before I got to it.

Facing me was some guy with dreads who I'd seen in passing before. Both the guy and Beth seemed shocked to see me and I froze in the corridor, unable to say anything. Beth thawed me out by pushing the guy lightly and adding "Now go".

The man turned to her and laughed in her face, forcing Beth to take a step back in intimidation. "I heard Beth say go, so I think you should do as she says" I managed to say, with an obvious waiver in my voice.

"Ah, white boy wants me to leave eh?" The guy turned to me and took a couple of steps forward. "You hear that Beth, white-boy wants me to leave". Beth didn't answer. Her door was closed and locked faster than he could say 'white-boy' again.

I was left alone in the corridor with him and he clearly seemed unhappy about it. He stepped forward until his face was inches from mine, "White-boy wants me to leave eh?" he repeated with cheap whiskey on his breath, his voice lower and far more menacing. I was scared. I really couldn't predict what was going to happen next.

"Hey Beth, you hear, white-boy wants me to leave!" he repeated, shouting over his shoulder at the locked door. I imagined Beth behind her door listening out. I guess he did too. At that, he turned and walked up to Beth's door again and put his face against it. He spoke quietly in a Nigerian language, opinions obviously not for my ears.

"Come on man, please just go, Beth wants you to leave and I wanna sleep" I said, speaking over the guy, but he ignored my plea and continued regardless. At that, I thought better of it and left him to deal with Beth's locked metal door.

"Just let yourself out when you're ready mate, good night" I said, not really caring if he heard me or not. I stepped back into my room and locked the door behind me, turned out the light and got back into bed. I lay there, listening to him try to persuade Beth to open her door for him, but I knew it was futile. Eventually he gave up and mumbled to himself as he stomped his feet down the corridor and left, making the final 'click' of the lock before silence took over.

When I left the house the next morning, I was faced with the same dreaded guy from the night before. He was sat on the steps opposite the entrance of the house with a couple friends I recognised. I was hoping that perhaps he'd been too drunk to remember our confrontation, but when he spotted me I could feel his eyes burning a hole on my back all the way down the steps to the main street. I glanced back at the last second before turning the corner, and met his eyes with mine. From his icy glare I knew for sure that he'd remembered me.

How could I help Beth? I sensed that if her 'boyfriends' realised that we knew what was going on, then it might cause serious problems for her. I explained the situation to some migrant friends that work for Caritas and they said that funding to help someone relocate and start again was too much, and due to masses of cases to deal with, they're renowned for slow responses.

Basically, it was a big risk for Beth. If people started to help but couldn't help her fully, then she could have been taken away and abused, beaten or worse.

Unfortunately, with my own increasing risk from the local Nigerians, I also had to think about myself. I couldn't possibly help anyone, let alone Beth, if I ended up hospitalized or worse. So - reluctantly - I decided it was time for my exit, going away to the south of Morocco to think about what I was going to do next.

In my place, Stephan agreed to take my room. I hoped - as a woman - she would be able to approach Beth better than I ever could. It was obvious that, as a man, there was only so far I could go with conversation before Beth would close up, which wasn't very far at all.

Stephan took my old room and became friends with Beth quickly. They spent many hours preparing food together while talking about many things. And I really hoped that Beth started to feel the support she was lacking.

When I came back a few weeks later I moved in with Sven again, five minutes from Beth's house. Stephan was still living in my old room and talking with Beth. The rest of the rooms were being organised for people to stay for short periods of time. Mama was very accommodating and had warmed to us quite well by this time.

I visited quite often, mostly to help out with the visitors, but also to see Beth. Unfortunately, whenever I bumped into her, she would act like I was a stranger and become very shy and timid. I would try to ask about how she was and how her sister and family were, but she would just answer in short one-word answers. This made me quite sad, but I guess things had changed.

Until one day, Soukiana, the landlady's daughter, told me that everyone in that room was moving to a different house. I knew there had been a lot of difficulties between them, with lack of rent money and the constant drunken fighting between the Nigerians late at night. So I guess it had finally come to the last confrontation with Mama.

Within a day, they had packed everything and left. Many of the men that I had thrown out in the past were there helping. We all barely said a word to each other, just an occasional glance. I did ask one of the friendlier ones where they were moving to and he confirmed 'not far, we just have to get away from Mama because she was racist'.

After they were gone, I saw Beth once or perhaps twice in the busy market street. We would give each other pleasantries, but it would never go any further. Then after some time I never saw her again. I still wonder about Beth, how she is, where she is, and what she's thinking. I wonder about the things she might still have to deal with in Morocco. And I wonder if she's ever going to have any hope of leaving.

Journalists

As valuable as journalism may or may not be, in the migrant community journalists are not well respected. This is something that has been made very clear to me throughout my stay in Morocco.

A story I was told repeatedly was of the BBC coming and doing a documentary about the struggles of migrants in the border cities of Morocco such as Tangier. Several people, Ebrima being one of them, gave their time and energy to the documentarians so they could paint a respectable picture of their struggle.

Many days were spent giving interviews, and being driven around town showing locations of events. They had been invited into migrant homes, being hosted without a second thought. Subsequently, those people that gave their time, lost out on valuable working hours and appointments with organisational aid.

When it became time to leave, the documentarians said that they had enough footage and information to finish the feature back in Europe. In return, the people asked if they could have a few jackets for the upcoming winter as compensation for their loss of time. But the reply that was given was "no, because if we show that we are on the side of migrants then we will get into trouble". Even when told that no-one would hear of their kind gifts, they refused to give anything.

An example of a journalist causing disastrous problems was described to me when talking about documenting attempted strikes. One journalist persuaded a group of migrants who were about to strike using a boat, to let him come along and see how it worked.

When at the shore of the Mediterranean, everyone has to be incredibly quiet and look out for soldiers. There are many patrols on the land and out at sea looking for migrants trying to cross. Even with a journalist, nothing was different - the level of danger was exactly the same.

Before it was time to set off, preparations were made - inflating the boat while keeping watch across the sea. The journalist then took it upon himself to start taking pictures, not thinking twice about using the flash, instantly alerting nearby boats and guards.

Within minutes, the police had arrived and detained those attempting to strike, confiscating all of the expensive equipment used to get to Spain. This resulted in the complete waste of the strikers' previous few months and the setback of the coming months after the incident.

These stories and many more like them resonated throughout the friendship circles that I knew of, and far beyond. People were clearly bitter and resentful towards professional media groups, to the point that they were sometimes so cautious that they refused to meet and greet with journalists at all.

Only after explaining that some particular individuals *do* actually care about the struggles in Morocco and not just their own careers, would they reluctantly tell their stories. Of course, this is not the same for everyone in the migrant community. Many people are also happy and sometimes even desperate to tell their tales. But it only takes a few of these counterproductive events to happen before more and more people lose trust in the media altogether.

Street Cleaning

There are many different ways for people to get money in Tangier: hustling tourists into hotels and cafés, buying and selling different things, or just plain begging. One that works well for me, especially in Morocco, is to make origami doves out of paper or old maps and sell them on the streets for a Dirham.

Often people would give me more, five, ten Dirhams, sometimes even fifty or a hundred. Food and clothes have been given to me this way too. I did fairly well, enough to get by anyway. I never really felt that it's important to concentrate on money so much.

In Tangier, the place to go for this kind of work is The Boulevard. The Boulevard is the richer part of town; the commercial center is there with all the shoe-shops, clothes-shops, money exchange places and banks. People that walk around there usually give you the impression that they can spare a Dirham or two. And I was starting to run low on money.

A few days before, I'd stupidly left a taxi in a hurry and forgot my rucksack with my passport inside, and I'd spent the last week or so trying to sort it out but that was a whole other story. So with just a few Dirhams left I decided to go to The Boulevard for the day.

I hitched into town and got dropped right by the cannons. I sat at my usual spot opposite a café that sometimes gives me a free coffee. I set up my piece of fabric on the ground in front of me and pinned five paper doves around it with paper clips. I put the remaining Dirhams I had in the middle to make it clear as to why I was there.

It was not uncommon for people to come by and ask questions, or sometimes even sit with me for a while. I got lots of smiles and nods too, everyone were generally quite welcoming. I think they found it quite strange that a European could be penniless in their country. They would say things like "Why don't you go to your country? There is lots of money in your country" or "Telephone your family, they will send money".

I always found it difficult to get it across to them that I was just fine the way I was and that it's possible to be poor *and* still be happy. But none of that mattered now, because I didn't have a passport to get home with anyway, even if I wanted to.

There I was, on the Boulevard, like I had been a few dozen times before. There's always many people there, all kinds of people. Some people are unmistakably wealthy, and some are clearly poor. Some are in their traditional Arabic attire, others are in quite westernised clothes with hair uncovered and some are just in ragged clothes that they've worn unwashed from the day they found them. Tangier is like that, everyone is mixed together.

I'd been watching one guy in particular; I had seen him a few times before begging on the streets. I could see him from where I was - he was sat with his back against the wall of a bank across the road. He had his knees up to his chest and an arm outstretched in front of him with his palm facing upwards, the universal sign for begging. I was watching for some time and he never moved, never changed his expression. He was always looking down even when someone dropped some change into his hand.

After some time watching this guy, I noticed a plain white van pull up in front of him and a couple of officers in Surete Nationale uniforms get out and approach the beggar. Within seconds they grabbed the guy by the arms, pulled him up and shoved him into the back of

the van. I was quite stunned at how quick it all happened. The beggar didn't even look up at what was going on.

Before I knew it, the same officers were walking across the street towards me.

Like an idiot, I didn't grab my things and run away in time before they caught up with me. The three of them surrounded me, one in front asking me questions trying to figure out where I was from and two behind me, making sure I didn't get away. Very quickly, they got bored with the language barrier and just hooked their arms under mine, tightened and pulled me towards the van.

I was shoved in and was greeted by two more officers, the driver, four more street dwellers and an overpowering smell of glue. After being told to kneel on the floor next to a guy who could barely see, I was made to empty my pockets. I pulled everything out and showed it to them and then put it all back.

"Papers, papers, your passport, where is your passport?" the officer who'd thrown me in said. I didn't say anything back, just handed him the photocopy of my passport.

"What is this, where is your passport?" He repeated, noticeably annoyed.

"It's in a taxi, I lost it in a taxi" I said raising my voice to the level of his.

I had a moment of panic when I realised I still had my scissors in my back pocket. I thought that if I left them in there and they found them later they might think I was concealing a weapon. So I slowly swung my hand around and pulled the scissors out, being careful to hold them by the tips of the blades and letting them dangle.

There was a sudden roar of shouting from the officers after they spotted what I had in my hand. I tried to protest that I was just trying to hand them over to them but I guess they didn't understand. The scissors were snatched from me and thrown into the front of the van. The same officer immediately went for my bag with all my origami stuff inside, I guess he was looking for more hidden gems.

Another officer proceeded to ask me questions in French and broken English, irrelevant questions, like "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"No... a girlfriend, yes" I replied.

"Ah yes, a girlfriend" he repeated, seemingly satisfied.

We drove around town for a while, picking more people up along the way. One guy they threw into the back was forced to empty his pockets onto the van floor and leave it there. The guy was clearly high, possibly on glue. They pushed and shoved him around, once hitting his head on the side of the van almost falling onto me and crashing to the van floor where he was held down.

One of the officers asked the rest of the passengers something in Arabic. Everyone in turn, replied with a name of towns in Morocco, "Tiznit", "Ouazazate", "Tetouan" and so on. I guessed it was where they were from. Some were dropped off at one part of town and others at another, I think it was where they get deported back to their home town.

I had heard of this happening in Morocco. When there's an important person coming to town, such as The King, they 'clean the streets' of all the people they deem undesirable.

When the van finally stopped for me I was moved quickly into a building, where I found more identical officers stood around in an almost empty room. I was taken straight to a holding cell of about fifteen feet squared. The cell was already full of people, probably about twenty or twenty five men were crammed inside this small space.

When they closed the door behind me, I just stood and looked around at twenty odd pairs of eyes staring back at me, all with intimidating scars around them.

The officers outside were just wandering around with the photocopy of my passport, looking quite puzzled. Sometimes I would hear a mispronunciation of my last name or birth town. At this point, I really had no idea what was going to happen to me. Was I about to be deported? And if I was, then where would I get deported to? England? Spain? Oujda?

I was in that cell for about an hour. In that time, only one guy spoke to me. We made some small talk about the police being really shit and the King being behind all of this bullshit oppression that happens to the locals. Everyone else in the cage just sat or stood in silence, some were staring at me, making me feel uncomfortable.

I couldn't even begin to imagine what they might have been thinking of me right then. They most likely thought that I was just another stupid tourist locked up for some drug offence or a victim of corruption.

After an hour, I was brought out of the cell and told to sit and wait. I could see that some more official looking guys in suits and also informally dressed guys too had arrived. One of them I recognised - he was at the Senegalese house one time during a police raid.

I remember him shouting at me when he saw me filming them from the roof, and his partner was threatening to throw a rock at me. I also remember brushing them off with 'Safi, safi', which means 'enough' in Arabic, they seemed pretty angry at the time but I had just laughed it off. I kind of regretted it looking back now; I certainly wasn't laughing at this situation.

"What organisation do you work for?" one of them said in perfect English.

"I...I don't work for any organisation. Why?" I said, already knowing the answer.

"We see you with the Africans, at the house, we see you. Why are you with the Africans?"

"Yes, some are my friends; they are some of my friends OK?" I stammered nervously.

"The camera, the camera, I see you, I see, I see" the one I recognised said to me, then to the suited guy. The suited guy nodded in agreement and gave me an inquisitive stare.

"Look, I'm just a tourist OK? I'm visiting friends that I know and that is all" I sharply stated to the suited guy, who just gave me a quick look of acknowledgement and then walked away. I was left with the guy I recognised. He was scrutinising the photocopy of my passport.

"Hey" an officer said to me softly. It was the guy that asked me if I had a boyfriend in the van earlier. He walked around the others and sat close to me.

"Hey" I said back with a smile.

"One question, this is a difficult question also, how do I..."

"Just ask" I said, I little surprised at how well he spoke English.

"Are you a... homosexual" he said with slight theatrics.

"Erm... no, I'm not a homosexual, I have a girlfriend... why, do you like me?"

"No, NO, I am not homosexual man, I am Muslim man" he replied, shying away from me.

I didn't see him again.

The suited guy had returned and I had barely noticed.

"You have phone number for your girlfriend?" he said to me as he was looking through my bag.

"Erm... yeah I have a number" I pulled my phone out and handed it to him. He fiddled about with it for a minute or two but gave up with it and handed it back.

"What is this?" he said, holding up an origami dove.

"It's my work, I don't have any money, I have to do this so I can eat" I protested.

"Why are you with the Africans?" he said again.

"I have friends here, they are my friends. Before, I stay in Senegal house, but the house is finished now"

"And where are you now, where do you stay now?" he said while looking at my photocopied passport again.

"I stay in town, just here in town" I pointed in no particular direction.

"And where is your passport?"

"I said before, I lost it in a taxi. I left in a hurry and forgot my bag inside"

"You have to go to your embassy to get a new one" he said, as a matter of fact.

"Yes I know, but I need a declaration paper from the police first, to give to the embassy in Rabat. I've been going everyday to the station..." he cut me off with a raised hand.

"You have to go back to your country; it is good for you to go back to your country"

"Is there a problem, have I done something wrong?" I said trying to get to the point.

"Err...yes, there is a problem. You are here, you see things and it's a problem for us"

I didn't reply to that rather incriminating statement.

Just then, another guy stepped in from outside and spoke a few words of Arabic to the suited guy and got a few nods of understanding in return. The suited guy turned to me, giving me a good look up and down.

“OK, you can go” he said, breaking the tension.

“Really?” my face beaming with a smile.

“Yes, but you have to go back to your country, it is good for you, OK?”

Again, I didn't answer, I just grabbed my bag from the ground and stood up; I looked around and gave smiles to the officers that were hanging around. They gave nothing back.

I took a few steps forward and passed through the door I had come in through before. The sun was bright compared to the light inside. I was only detained for a couple of hours but it felt good to be out. It's different where I'm from, I know most of what I can and can't get away with, but here I'm a foreigner in a foreign land and I don't have a clue about the laws.

As I started walking away, I looked around and noticed that I had just come from the Coliseum, a huge disused bullfighting ring, known as 'Plaza Toro'. I couldn't believe it. Not only is the place not empty as I'd previously thought, but it's also some kind of detention centre for locals to be kept before they're sent back to their respective towns. I looked around and saw the suited guy stood by the door watching me. On impulse I turned and walked back to him.



Plaza Toro

“What was the problem before? I have no money, I was just making business!” I said to him.

“It is forbidden to make public business in Morocco” he replied.

“Forbidden? People make business everywhere here. Those people...” I said pointing inside the building “...What were they doing?”

“They are forbidden to be in Tangier” he answered me sternly.

"Forbidden to be in Tangier, but why?"

"Because it is the will of the king" he finished, giving me a gesture to leave.

Hassan

I met Hassan through Frankie and Stephan. They'd needed a kettle and while walking around a market looking for one, had met Hassan. He quickly became the 'solutions guy', always having the answers to every problem.

Although pleasant, at times I found him overly generous. For example, he would show us something he was trying to sell and if we showed polite interest, he would simply offer it to us. This applied to everything, which sometimes made it difficult to be friends on an equal level with him. Regardless of this, I still grew to like Hassan very much and we became good friends.

He showed enthusiasm for everything in life and life itself. He would tell me stories of his home town and the tranquil life he grew up in. He introduced all kinds of people to us in the street, most of them addicts or recovering addicts - people Hassan had personally helped. Every one of the people I met that knew him showed only warmth and respect. They spoke kind words and always regarded him as their brother.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, Hassan had become completely penniless and was unable to continue helping people in the street. But always expressed that it would not be the end.

Me: OK, so, tell me a little about yourself.

Hassan: OK, my name is Hassan. I am thirty four years old. I have a diploma in low... its low or low?

Me: It's Law.

Hassan: Ah Law, my apologies. I have a diploma in law from Rabat, OK. But I am jobless. I fight to eat. I have some business in streets, that's all. I'm not from Tangiers, I'm living here because it's a big city and opportunities to have job but I am four years without job (laughs) yeah its OK, it's not about me.

Me: So you still find it hard to find work here in Tangier?

Hassan: Yeah, I find a lot of work but... not so much money. I don't find work with my diploma. I only find work like someone... who never go to school. With something like two thousand Dirham per month, this is nothing to live in Tangier. Tangier is so... expensive to live in it.

Me: Really? And you have work in the street at the moment?

Hassan: Yeah, I repair the phones and the computers. And I sell something... some old stuff in streets.

Me: And you get by like that OK?

Hassan: Yeah.

Me: OK, so how do you see Tangier, what do you think of the city?

Hassan: Tangier is nice, its so beautiful, nice place, nice people. But for someone without job, without money it's... so hard.

Me: And there's many people like this?

Hassan: Yes, many people. So many people from Morocco and many people from other place in Africa. But my problem is my people. A lot of people die in Morocco, they have nothing to eat. And all the people dream of going to... El Dorado (laughs).

Me: El Dorado? Interesting. Like the golden city? You mean Europe?... So do you think Tangier is quite a different city compared to other cities in Morocco?

Hassan: No it's not a different city. But the same problem, you find in Marrakesh, Rabat. It's poverty. And I see on Facebook, somebody give a proverb... I "like" it, someone...the poor have nothing to eat, except the rich. And a lot of people in Morocco... not only in Morocco but all over the world. Like in America, I know that millions are eating from the garbage in America. But you know, this is the capitalism. If you have money, its OK...

Me: Yeah, it's the same in Europe, I also eat from the garbage in Europe.

Hassan: (laughs) Yes but in Europe, you have a lot of opportunities to find job. To find good education. You have peace, we have no peace in our country. The big eat the small, the strong kill the... the weak.

Me: But you still love your country?

Hassan: Yes of course. It's in my soul. I don't choose my mother, I don't choose my father and I don't choose my country. I like Morocco, Morocco is like a paradise for me. I can speak Arabic very good, I have friends, I have family. I have a lot of place that I like to visit again and again and again. But, for my country now, is for when I get job, if I get visa for Canada, this is my country.

Me: (laughs) Yeah I understand. So you would like to leave Morocco?

Hassan: Yes, why not? If I find good job to... to be sure I have a good future, then I have no problem going to Europe. I would like to go to Europe like a tourism, like a king with a car.

Me: Is that like a dream?

Hassan: (laughs) Yes like a dream.

Me: But you've been to Europe before no?

Hassan: Yes, I have been to Germany... for one year. Yeah, without papers, without nothing.

Me: And how was that? What were the local people like?

Hassan: OK, German people are like ...like machine (laughs). It's not like French people, French people speak a lot of... and Spanish people. Germany people are people like really... straight. They only think about house, family and work. They can only go for coffee and cinema at the weekend. All the week, they are working, hard working. I like people from Germany.

Me: Which city was this?

Hassan: Erm... Bremen, in the north.

Me: Bremen? Interesting.

Hassan: It was long time ago now... maybe... 15... 20 years ago. It's been a long time.

Me: So why did you come back, what happened?

Hassan: Because I have no family to hide with until I have papers, no language. The Deutsch is difficult for me. I can speak a little English and little French.

Me: yeah, German is not an easy language.

Hassan: Yes. And also... it's very cold (laughs).

Me: Yeah, it's not Morocco.

Hassan: And there's a lot of people in the street. I was in Bremen... and Bremen is... is so cold. You can only see people in cars, not people walking in street. If you wanted to meet people you have to go to... shop or coffee, not in street. And I was in winter, not in summer.

But the people of Germany are good. They arrested me and ask me many question, I can not speak any language. They ask an Algerian woman... to translate... in Arabic. And they say "How do you come to Germany? Why did you come to Germany? Where do you live?" In the end, they know that I am a student, but they take from Germany and let me at the frontier between Germany and France. But that's good.

Me: Well... so they didn't beat you... or...

Hassan: No, nothing, no. But you know... I was young, and a lot of people are attacked by the police of Germany, they fight with all. But me, I was young, and I was a student, and I can speak a little French and English. So I say "I have nothing, I am not a killer, I am just looking for a new life for me, I want to live".

So I can do this, I can do this, I can have paper for work in manufacturing, something like this. Erm... I want only peace, I want to live. And this is the world, it's not for you, it's mine too. I'm not from Germany but this the name of Allah; I can live in every place I want. But I must respect condition to live in every place. I believe in law.

Me: OK, so what differences do you see from Germany and Morocco?

Hassan: W...We... excuse me, I will look for the words.

Me: Of course, take your time.

Hassan: ...We can not do... something like, the first world. Germany... is a rich country, and the third world is Morocco, it's Africa. A lot of people don't go to school. We also have a lot

of people... rich people, kill and stole everything. We can not choose between or give our idea of Germany or of Morocco. Germany for me, is the heaven, Morocco is the hell.

Me: I've met many people that think like this.

Hassan: Yeah, this is the world. Because this is the reality, we have nothing here in Morocco. We have mountains, we have two seas, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. We have Marrakesh and Agadir. But if you have nothing to eat, what do you want to do with a mountain?

Me: Yeah, good question.

Hassan: We are not Romeo and Juliet. I am a simple man, want to eat and to live, have a family and have children. But Morocco is good for someone that's with money.

Me: What are your views on migration?

Hassan: I know that Africa, all Africa will move to Europe... one day. Because Africa has nothing. And all Europe take money from Africa. A long time, England, France and Spain stole... a lot of things from Africa. And now Africa want to... to...

Me: Take back?

Hassan: No! Africa wants to ask, not to take. And anyway, Africa is weak, it's poor. Only want to ask. We are poor, we just want to eat. We have nothing to eat, we only have Sahara. And we want to work, we are strong to work. What is the problem?

But now we have the problem in Europe, the economic problem and a lot of companies closed. That's why people of Europe, thinking of a solution to stop immigration to Europe.

Me: Well, it's said that the economy is low but they still spend a lot of money on border protection.

Hassan: Yes but they can not do anything because... the reality is people moving all over history, people moving all continents of the world. I have a lot of African friends in Sweden and in Norway, what is the problem? A man from Nigeria living in Sweden, what is the problem? He have nothing in Nigeria but he have a new life in Sweden. He has a wife with a white woman. He have the work, he have a house.

Me: Yeah?

Hassan: Yeah... I like this. And I have a lot of people from Europe living in Morocco.

Me: Yeah, its strange that it's OK for Europeans to move freely to Africa but...

Hassan: Yes, we have a lot of... a lot of people from Spain, from England, from Holland. Choosing to pass the rest of the life in Morocco and die in Morocco. Because they like Tangiers or something like this.

Me: OK, and what kind of work do you do when you say you help people?

Hassan: OK, I only to help the... the people on heroin. I... I can not help so many people.

Me: Yes, of course, you help who you can.

Hassan: I lose a friend using heroin before. And I see the picture of my friend when he die, with the... with the...

Me: The syringe?

Hassan: ...The syringe, in his hand. I was in the university, in the third year. And I know that everyone in Morocco have a right to eat, to have a good education and to have good job. But I see the...the different things in the street. Many people looking in the garbage to eat. And we have a lot of money in Morocco.... and a bad government. That's the problem.

I try to buy medicine for them; I try to ask "Why are you using heroin? How you are using heroin? How long you using heroin? And do you want to stop?" Sometimes I only give the hope. Sometimes I lie to them, saying "Someone has stopped and now they are married". Something like this, but... what's important to me is that I am so near the people using heroin, because heroin is so dangerous. A lot of people die here in Tangiers... young people, not adult, young people die using heroin.

Me: It's like this?

Hassan: Tangier is the first city in Morocco, that have a lot of people using heroin. Heroin come from Algeria. Yeah, Valium and Heroin. In Morocco, we only have hashish and we have no problem with hashish. But heroin is expensive and the man who use it, he can do anything. He can kill, he can stole, because he is in need. Yeah, and you have a lot of people using heroin in England?

Me: Yeah, there's also many people using heroin in England.

Hassan: Yes, the same problem. When you want to use heroin and have no money, you will hurt someone for the money.

Me: It happens, yeah, it happens. And have you had good results from helping people?

Hassan: Sometimes... it's good. But you know, if you do something the government must do, you are not good. The police many times, not sometimes but many times, say "Why are you helping people in the street? This is nothing, he choose to use heroin, let him... die". It's not true... we must do something.

Me: Why do they ask you this?

Hassan: Sometimes they ask me if I sell the Valium to the people. And sometimes "Why are you helping the people, who gave you money to help the people using heroin?" and they say "Don't say that you have money to help people from using, say that someone give you money". It's OK someone give me money, what is the problem? We have one way in that... that we want to help. And I have only the people using heroin in meeting, what is the problem? "No, you have a big organisation behind you", and I say "No, I'm alone".

Me: And do they believe you when you say that?

Hassan: In the end, they take my phone and my camera. Because they find a lot of pictures of... of homeless child, people using heroin and women without a husband, in my camera. And they find a lot of bad, bad picture of small kids in street, small girl in street, poor old man, old woman in street... Yeah a lot of. And they ask me "Why you only have?"

And in the end he say that I give bad picture of Morocco to Spain, and they say that I am working with newspaper in Spain. I give him pictures... to attack Morocco. Because Morocco in war with Spain for tourism, they want that Morocco have nothing. And they say to the other people that "Morocco is dangerous to travel, to Morocco. If you want to see the world Arabic, go to Andalucia... it's the same". Something like that... yep.

Me: So you're talking about when you were arrested?

Hassan: Yeah, because they say I give bad picture of Morocco.

Me: And you were arrested for how long?

Hassan: A few days, it's not prison it's...

Me: I understand, like police station.

Hassan: Yes, commissary. Just a few days. But my problem is my phone and my camera, they take it all. I asking again, I ask... OK, we will see.

Me: What else did they ask you?

Hassan: Nothing.

Me: Were they hard with you? Did they beat you for example?

Hassan: No, I have a diploma in law. And the police man...

Me: Ah and they know that you understand?

Hassan: Yeah, but when you are arrested in Morocco, they can know all about you. Who are you, where are you from, how old are you, what diploma you have, what you do right now, what job you use before. And now that I have diploma in law and international law, they know I have diploma in technical and that I can repair computer or something like this. I have nothing, I never fight and never cause someone a problem. I was never in prison or jail... But I want to help... I'm different. This is my problem... that I'm different. I have a heart.

Me: That's good... that's really good. This is nice... it's hard to find this sometimes.

Hassan: Yeah but, you know, this is my country and the people die is my people, and I believe that... I am one of this society, and I must do something. And if I have nothing to give, I must say no. A lot of people don't say no, they hurt, but they acute. Calm. When you ask someone "It's OK, Khamdoulah", no, it's not Khamdoulah, we have a bigger problem. We need to eat, we need to have a good education, we need to have a good job, a good future, a good life. A few people is rich in Morocco, and the rest of the people is poor... that's not good. We have the king and the government, have a lot of company.

Me: Yeah...

Hassan: Yeah, this is not a secret, I don't tell you is a secret. Our king have a lot of... a lot of company.

Me: A business man?

Hassan: A big business man. And the rest of the people is... nothing.

Me: Whalloh.

Hassan: Whalloh (laughs)... it's OK.

Me: Yeah, so is there a lot of corruption because of this? Between the police and locals, and government and locals

Hassan: That is our problem, its education. The government know that if you keep people without education... then... then you are king.

Me: The King?

Hassan: No, not the king, but y... you are safe. If people get good education then you are not safe. The government will talk that... we speak with... we have a lot of diploma, all people is have a good education. You cannot lie to someone who have a good education. But you can lie and stole from someone who never go to school. They are naïve, have not good idea and have nothing to do. No solution to keep hands closed, and they stay in the jail, in the prison, in the street, in the situation a long time. But someone who have a lot of education in hand... in head (points to head)

Me: In the head?

Hassan: In head. They will look for... for a new life. For studies... to make his situation better. That's why we have the same problem in Tunisia, the revolution. Because the people is... know a lot of things. They like to ask "Please stop, enough, a long time you lie to us". That is the same in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco. That is the problem but I want my life right now. And Bob Marley say good words "Get up, stand up. Stand up for your right". No-one give you your right, you must fight to have your right. Is that true?

Me: It's very true.

Hassan: Okay (laughs)

Me: It doesn't just get given to you.

Hassan: No-one can help you with your own right. You must fight. And we need our right for Europe too.

Me: Yeah. So do you see change in Morocco?

Hassan: Change?

Me: Like, do you see things becoming better?

Hassan: No, well, if my situation changes, I will answer you. But right now, there is no change (laughs)

Me: Well, I have an understanding that student population is growing in Morocco. More and more every year. More education available. There's more people out there with... with political ideas. I've spoken with some Moroccan students here and they seem pretty switched on, they have a good understanding and a strong opinion of what is going on in Morocco. So do you think things will get better because of this? Perhaps in a generation or two.

Hassan: Yes... yes... if we only have people that can read and write in our society then we have no problem. Because when you have someone with diploma, they will find job. But we don't need diploma for philosophy, or diploma for history, we need diploma in technical.

Me: Yeah, true but if you can at least read and write, then you can educate yourself.

Hassan: And you will know your right, a lot of people in Morocco don't know their right. They say that "We live, Khamdoulah", we are okay, we are in peace. The most important thing for people in Morocco is the peace. But it's not good.

Me: Sounds like ignorance

Hassan: Yes, sometimes.

Me: And that they just don't want trouble... which I can understand.

Hassan: And they believe that they can never change the situation. Because... yeah. Because the government have money, have soldiers, have arms. And if you want to say no, they will simply kill you with one shot. We have this in Morocco before, lots people die in street because of army, they shoot them, it's nothing. Morocco is the same, same Arab world, like Tunisia and Algeria, like Egypt, like Saudi Arabia, it's the same. If you say khamdoulah you are a good man, you are good citizen, you are welcome. If not, the prison is empty, no problem, we always have a place for you (laughs)

Me: Okay, yeah... it's there anything else you want to say or add?

Hassan: No it's okay... I hope that people in Europe know that we don't like to live only in Europe because we love Europe, but we look for a new life. For me, the world is mine. I cannot go to Israel, okay? But I believe in David, and believe in Jesus too. And in our holy Qur'an, if you don't believe to Jesus then you don't believe to Mohammed. If I meet someone... Israeli people in... England, then I have no problem to talk and to sleep and t...to get like friend. But from Israel, I have this problem.

Do you know the problem right now in Morocco? A lot of young people go to work in Israel, because we have no opportunity in Morocco... and I don't like this. Because he need money and now they work with the enemy, the Israeli army is the enemy for us. They stole the land, they kill people Palestine, and now a lot of Muslim people work for Israel. If I meet someone Israeli religion in England, I have no problem with him, I must believe him, and respect him, and have no problem with him, because our prophet say "Don't hurt... the other religions and believe to the other religions", David is true and Jesus is true. And a lot of people go to work in Israel and work in Israel for a new life. For living in Johannesburg is better than living in Tangier.

Me: Really?

Hassan: Yes, and any place, in Australie, in Canada, in Norway, Sweden. But I would like Vienna, inshallah (laughs)

Boumla (content: murder, police corruption)

On the 4th of December 2013 I was visited by Baye, whom I hadn't seen in a couple of weeks - just a regular visit to see how I was doing. Soon after he arrived he got a phone call from someone he lived with in Boukhalef.

His friend told him that the police had been in Boukhalef for the past few hours and that when they'd tried to question everyone in the building, one guy had tried to get away and been thrown from the fourth-floor window.

This all sounded very familiar - only two months had passed since Musa Seck had allegedly been thrown from another fourth-floor window.

A few minutes later, I got a call from Frankie. She explained that she'd had the same call and that she was on her way back to Boukhalef to find out what was going on. When Sven

came back home soon after and was greeted with the news, he insisted that there was no time to lose and that we should go there immediately.

We quickly gathered our things, making sure that we didn't have anything incriminating or important on us. We locked the door and started to run down into the marketplace to find a taxi. We were running so fast that the locals must have been wondering what these crazy Europeans were doing.

We ran right through the busy market until we got to the end and hopped into a taxi. The taxi took us all the way to Boukhalef but had to slow down as we got closer - we could see that the traffic was being redirected at different junctions so it would avoid something, but we couldn't figure what or where this something was.

Eventually the taxi got around the 'something' and we drove into the main apartment complex area. It was quieter than I expected, there were no police or migrants - no more than usual anyway.

We walked through the streets, heading in the direction of where we knew people would be. A few people were stood around on a corner, so we approached them to ask about what was going on. Working around the language barrier, we were given the general direction of where things was supposed to be happening.

Continuing on, we crossed paths with another guy that told us he was the brother of the guy who'd died. I wasn't sure if he meant a brother as in a real brother or brothers sharing the same cause. He was going in the same direction and said he would take us to where we needed to be.

We went along a few streets, turned a few corners, following the brother. Suddenly, he stops and points to the ground and says 'This is the place', still pointing at the ground. I'm confused for second, but then he starts to move the gravel around with his foot and I realise that he's uncovering a pool of blood.

This must have been where it happened. I looked up at the apartment and tried to imagine falling from the top floor, I felt sick.

I tried to ask where everybody was - the police, the body, where were they?

We deciphered that a large group of the local migrants were going to the hospital. Feeling really confused and a little frustrated, we headed back towards the main road on the edge of Boukhalef, hoping we could catch up with the crowd and find out what they were going

to do. I tried to ring Frankie, since she was already in the march, but it was too loud and I couldn't get through to her.

We hopped back into a taxi and told him to go along the main road towards Tangier. After a few diversions and calculated guesses we saw the beginnings of a crowd. We paid the driver and got out. As we walked into the crowd, I noticed that it was mainly Moroccans.

Just at that moment, the crowd got spooked by something and they all started stampeding past us. I wasn't sure whether or not to run with them, nor was I sure what they were running from. There was complete panic for a few moments but it soon stopped and we moved forward until we could see the police line ahead.

We moved cautiously around the blockade to avoid confrontation with police. I wouldn't have been surprised to find that we were some of very few Europeans there, so we were expecting attention. We wandered around and went up to higher ground so that we could see what was going on.

I could see a crowd of about five or six hundred migrants in the middle of the road. The police line was there to my right, trying to stop the migrants going any further, and there was about fifteen police riot vans coming up behind on the left. The whole area was surrounded by a thousand local Moroccans, some in huge, intimidating groups. The whole thing was at a stand-still.

I started to walk into the crowd of migrants to see if I could find anyone I knew. I heard my name almost immediately and turned to find Frankie running towards me. We hugged.

Frankie, Sven and I were pulled into the mass of people. They were asking many questions all at once and I couldn't really make out one question from another. We were being pulled and shoved, not in an aggressive way, but in an assertive way, like they really wanted us to understand. I was grabbed by the arm and pulled through and into the centre of the crowd. The group parted and the lifeless body was revealed.

Cedric was a nineteen year old boy from Cameroon, not long come to Tangier with the intention of striking for Spain. I was told that less than an hour before his death, Cedric was giving an interview to someone about Musa Seck's death and the brutalities caused by the police. Soon after, Cedric had also died at the hands of the police.



Cedrick - Moments after his death

Cedric was now lying dead on a piece of wood. He was covered with a large cloth, but was occasionally revealed to show onlookers the tragedy that had occurred.

I could see Sven on the other side of Cedric - he was stood for a moment, an expression of horror on his face - and then the crowd swallowed him up again.

Then a roar began - a roar of at least a hundred migrants in the area directly around us who'd started shouting and chanting. I realised that my friend had started it. Sven was shouting "Boumla... Fuck boumla" over and over again, 'boumla' being slang for the police in Wolof.

The crowd were in a frenzy - grabbing Sven from every direction, they were furiously embracing him and patting him on the back. One man grabbed him by the head with both hands looking at him sharply in the eyes, thanking him profusely - thanking him for being here and witnessing the brutality that was happening. It really showed how alone they must have felt in their struggle and how desperate they were for people to know the truth about what was happening to them.

Because of the chanting, there was a sudden sharp cry from somewhere, and then I could see rocks flying towards us. Everyone started to panic and run.

I ran a few meters back and turned to find Frankie beside me. I tried to shield her with my body and shielded my head with my hands. It was only a few seconds before the shower of rocks was over. I looked around to see if anyone was hurt but it was difficult to tell amongst the chaos.

The police were trying to get the local Moroccans to go back but they were clearly outnumbered. They tried several times, but as soon as the police were heading to another

crowd, the mob they'd dealt with before would just reform. Locals would try and get as close to the migrants as possible, simply walking in and around the police lines.

A Moroccan came up to me and shook my hand. He began to speak French to me. I asked him about what was going on here, why the migrants weren't being let through and why there were so many Moroccans causing problems here. He simply answered "There is no problem here".

It was only after that comment that I realised he was a police officer that I'd met before at the Senegalese house. I recognised his face and remembered that he had said something similar when they were raiding the house. I got a bit spooked at the thought of him recognising me and made excuses to walk away.

I began to speak to individual migrants, now that the initial excitement had subsided. From asking Frankie as well as migrants, I was able to understand what had happened.

The police had come raiding, as they had many times before. They'd been going around the apartment block that Cedric lived in, checking the papers of everyone they came across, and Cedric had headed for the roof to hide.

There were two women that had also been on the roof and who'd witnessed Cedric struggling with the police – the cops had pulling Cedric and he'd been pulling back. At a critical moment, the police had let go and allowed Cedric to fall six stories from the roof.

It was not the first or even the second time this had happened - I can't be sure of the exact number but there may have been up to seven deaths in the three years previously, all at the hands of the Moroccan police.

After Cedric had died, the police had left very quickly, leaving his body behind. An ambulance had been coming to take the body away to the morgue, but before that could happen, a crowd of friends and family had gathered around Cedric. More and more people had come until the ambulance couldn't get close to Cedric.

When a migrant dies, whether it's accidental or not, the body is taken away and an investigation is never followed through. So to try to prevent Cedric's death from being swept under the political carpet, some of Cedric's close friends had decided that they would take Cedric to the morgue themselves.

A piece of wood had been taken from a makeshift fence and Cedric had been placed onto it and covered with a cloth. The close friends of Cedric had chosen to act as his pallbearers,

picking the plinth up by its corners and resting it upon their shoulders. Everyone had started to march away from the scene towards the main road that leads to Tangier and - more importantly - the hospital.

The crowd had grown in size as the procession moved on; it had grown from several dozen people to a few hundred. The police had come back soon after they'd heard about what was happening. They made lines to try to stop the demonstration going any further but Solidarity with Cedric had gotten too large for them to control.

Numerous times, the six friends carrying Cedric and the dense crowd around them had been halted by a police line - but every time they had broken through. With Cedric raised high up in the middle, and everyone surrounding his body, they'd charged at the police like a battering ram, successfully breaking through the lines.

The police had seemed to care very little about respecting Cedric's body and would try to push and shove everyone back. Several times they'd shoved so hard that the body of Cedric had fallen from his plinth and had had to be placed back up. Cedric's friends that were carrying him were noticeably covered in blood that had spilt down from where Cedric was placed.

This had gone on for approximately two kilometres until the march had come to its final halt, and that's where I entered the scene. Stood around within the crowd of migrants, I could see individuals mourning Cedric.

Some would scream and shout in despair, raising their hands into the air like they were smiting their god for letting something like this happen. Some fell to the ground, unable to hold back the anger and frustration of their loss. And others ceaselessly shouted at the police, telling them that *they* had done this and that they should be *ashamed* of calling themselves police officers, Muslim and - especially - human beings.

Once again I heard shouts coming from another direction. As I turned to look, I saw another wave of rocks flying towards us. Everyone tried to shield themselves as best they could. I looked up and abruptly witnessed a man nearby being struck by one of the rocks flying through the air.

It was a Moroccan, hit by a Moroccan-thrown rock. I saw him stood out in the open, with barely anyone around him and - THUNK! - the rock hit him square on the head. He made no movements for a second then raised both his hands to his head, wrapping them around tightly.

I started to run towards him, as did many others. He began to stagger around in big circles and by the time I had reached him, he was on the floor having a massive seizure. Others were there - Moroccans, police and then paramedics. They tried their best to hold the guy down as he was convulsing. They seemed to be examining him for a few minutes, checking his vitals. Eventually, he was carried away and I never saw him again. I still wonder about that guy hit by the rock and whether he recovered or not.

I got a call soon after from Sven and their friend, telling me that after the first rock-throwing they'd gone to the side to get shelter and had attempted to help a paramedic treat an injured migrant. They'd been spotted by the police and questioned about their reasons for being there and whether or not they were journalists - also having to get their passports photographed. With that, they'd decided that it was time for them to leave.

I was approached by some official looking guys too, who spoke to me in French about getting the migrants to go home. For some unknown reason, they made it seem like I had some kind of control. I just demanded that he should tell the police to go home. We both agreed that the body of Cedric should be taken away though, and then they promptly disappeared.

I stood around for a while, occasionally being asked if I was a journalist doing a story on this atrocity. I always replied with a 'no' but they continued to go into great detail about how evil the Moroccan police were, how they are breaking Human Rights laws, and how the European Union funds these atrocities. They were right of course but I couldn't help feel that I was disappointing them whenever I said I wasn't a journalist coming here to report on the evil that was happening here.

The crowd began to get louder again - there was a lot of talking amongst the migrants. Soon enough the mass had collected together again and Cedric was raised up high once more.

I could tell that they were going to attempt to push through the police line - everyone had a look of assured confidence, like they knew that this time they might actually make a difference and win one against the Moroccan police. The dense crowd around Cedric started to move forward towards the police and a little further towards the hospital.

At that moment, I thought about what they would do if they actually made it to the hospital. I guessed it would become even bigger news than it already was, but that's the thing they want the most - to have the rest of the world recognise that Morocco is Europe's little Pit-bull, clamping down onto so called "Illegals" and not letting go.

Because for most migrants, going home is not an option and going forward is notoriously dangerous. So they're stuck in this endless cycle of catch and release, exploited as part of Morocco's money-making machine that Europe has created. With that thought in mind, I realised that I too wanted that to make the news - I also wanted the world to see what was happening here.

In a moment of madness, I followed the crowd and moved through until, before long, I was at the police line. I was right at the front with people full of aggression all around me, like at a Heavy Metal gig except that instead of having my favourite band in front of me, there was a line of angry police armed with guns, batons and riot shields. This really scared me.

I noticed an ambulance to the left, squeezing through the crowd. I knew that this was for Cedric but I wasn't sure if the friends carrying him were going to agree with the police's plan. The crowd became even more dense and unpredictable. I could see that some harsh decisions were being made around Cedric and the ambulance.

There were furious conflicts starting too. Most of the people were becoming enraged because they knew they were losing their footing. The police also became tighter in the line and started to intimidate the crowd with deep chants, barking at us from behind their transparent shields. The whole situation was becoming volatile.

I squeezed in between the police and the migrants, trying to get closer to the ambulance, raising my hands high in the air to show no aggression, pushing my body into the shields, shouting "attention" over and over again.

I had almost made it to the ambulance when – BOOM! - I felt a sharp blow to the side of my head. I felt it slow me down considerably but I think it was just a warning poke at me - a reward for my stupidity. I stood confused for a few seconds, right in the middle of everything.

Then a Moroccan came squeezing through the police line, glancing at me - then turning to the police line before speaking to them and making gestures to stop - pointing at me, then making the gesture again. The police seemed to calm down at this and I figured that the plain-clothed officer must have been a bit higher up in the police ranks.

I looked around at the ambulance, as Cedric was still in the middle of a tug of war between the migrants and the paramedics, accompanied by the police. One last time, Cedric fell from his makeshift stretcher before being lifted into the ambulance. Some of the friends that carried him were allowed to travel with Cedric's body in the ambulance, but the rest had to make their final goodbyes.

One guy was in hysterics - he fell to his knees with his hands together raised high, crying and sobbing uncontrollably. And many others were still shouting and swearing as the ambulance was driving away.

Some officers came in through the crowd and started to try to disperse them, but nobody seemed quite ready yet and continued to yo-yo back and forth, to and fro from the police line, shouting and chanting.

Slowly, the crowd did disperse, and everyone started to head back towards Boukhalef. But first we all had to walk in-between the riot vans that had followed the crowd all the way. People were banging on the front and sides, shouting up close to the officers that locked themselves inside. Some of the officers looked as if they feared for their safety, and others just looked on passively at the mass of people passing through.

I found Frankie again and we talked about what had happened. We walked on, listening to the sporadic calls and shouts of everyone around. People would pass us either coming fast from behind or slowing down from the front. Some would be curious and ask us questions about why we were here and where we were from. I told many that I was here for solidarity, to witness the brutality of Morocco for myself and try to help in any way I could – which, most of the time, felt like very little.

As we were walking, we heard a sudden flash of shouts that sounded familiar. Moroccans were throwing rocks again - groups of them were following us by the edges of the road. Every now and then a rock would narrowly miss someone. Then some individuals gave chase to the stone throwers.

Frankie and I followed, running through a small field and onto a road. By the time we had caught up, the Moroccan had been thrown to the ground and had been kicked a few times by another local. There was lots of Arabic being spoken very quickly. It seemed like individuals on both sides were pleading for it to stop and for everyone to go their separate ways. A minute or two of coarse debates passed and everyone left, leaving the guy behind to dust himself off. On we went.

All in all, I thought what had been achieved here was amazing. Nothing like this had happened here in Tangier before, not to anyone's immediate knowledge.

For everyone to rally together and stand up against the oppressive state they have been trapped in - to finally fight back after all the times they had to submit to forces beyond their control - to break through the police lines time and time again and to show that they

won't take any more abuse from the king's dogs - even in the shadow of Cedric's death, that must have felt empowering.

After the death of Cedric, life changed dramatically for migrants in Tangier, especially Boukhalef. Because everyone had risen up and made a stand against the cops, the national media had the chance to bring a lot of attention to what had happened that day. It became big news in Morocco and managed to spill over a little into Europe too.

Everyone in Boukhalef knew that the police would not return for some time after Cedric's death. This had happened every time the police had caused the death of a migrant – it was usually estimated that Boukhalef would be quiet of police presence for two or three weeks after someone had died. In the past this had given the migrant community the opportunity to get together the necessary materials for an attempt to strike for Europe, without the worries and setbacks of police raids and arrests.

But, this time, several weeks went by before police were even *seen*, and even then the police were only at daily checkpoints on the edges of Boukhalef. They were still checking migrants for papers, but only as they were coming and going from Tangier city, where many worked.

It appeared that the death of Cedric and the following march had had a bigger impact than usual - but people were certain that the police would slowly be coming back into the area, working their way back up to the level of violence that they were before.

Worries soon subsided though, the police checkpoints went from being stationed every day, down to just a couple of days a week.

There were theories going around that many migrants had gotten too tired and scared of the rise in deaths by the police and had decided to apply for the Moroccan 'Carte Séjour' (residency). If this was indeed true, then the number of migrants without papers would decrease and the police would have little need to check for papers as much anymore.

This might sound promising to an outsider, but speaking with migrants about what the 'Carte Séjour' means for them. I was explained that having residency gives a migrant the same rights as a Moroccan – but that being Moroccan in Morocco is also very difficult.

The most minor offence can result in imprisonment. For instance, if a sub-Saharan migrant is found at sea trying to get to Spain, then they get deported to the desert, which in itself is very dangerous. But a Moroccan migrant found at sea trying to get to Spain will be put in

prison for a minimum of six months. This is why most sub-Saharan people avoid getting residency.

With Boukhalef becoming relatively peaceful, everyone had full opportunity to strike. From Stories we heard, attempts out at sea went from happening a couple of times per week, to a couple of times per night - and the attempts at the fences increased to the point that thousands of people were storming them every week.

As we didn't have any involvement in these attempts at all, the whole working dynamic changed for people like my friends and I trying to support migrants.

Before Cedric's death, the obvious effectiveness we'd had lay in living with and nearby migrants so that we could witness and deter police brutality. But when things changed, we began to collect information on the strikes that were happening at sea and at the fences.

We felt it was valuable because when reading the news following events that were happening we found that the reported information would be far from the truth, if events were even written about at all.

For example, there were cases of groups perishing out at sea and the coastguard knowing but not helping - or of people dying during mass attempts at the fences at Ceuta - but the following news reports were saying that there were no casualties, even though there clearly were.

With the level of danger and the amount of people scaling the three six-meter-high, razor wire fences, it's almost impossible for there to be no casualties - and that's not even accounting for the brutal retaliation by the Moroccan border police and the Guardia Civil, who viciously attack anyone attempting to cross.

The fences that surround the city of Ceuta end a hundred meters or so out at sea and it's common for migrants to try to swim around them to get to the Spanish soil on the other side. Sadly, because of advancing technology and resources provided by EU funding - such as infra-red cameras and movement detection devices - swimmers are spotted relatively quickly.

When spotted, border soldiers will deploy tear-gas grenades into the water, making it incredibly difficult for anyone to breathe - often leading to suffocation and drowning. If people are able to get close to the shore, the Guardia Civil will either shoot them or throw rocks at them in an effort to knock them out, often killing them.

Bodies would wash up on the shores on both sides of the fence, but the Guardia Civil would “transport” - basically kick and drag - them to the other side, violating yet another major international law by crossing over to the Moroccan side.

Acquiring evidence for these atrocities has proved to be harder than anticipated. Until it has been, European newspapers will continue to go to the Guardia Civil for answers, which are certainly complete fabrications.

Finally, I feel that I should mention the loss of my passport and the problems that came afterwards. It was completely my own fault of course - I should have sorted it out straight away.

It happened early on, when I'd been in Tangier around two months. A friend had come from England to visit and we'd decided to find a few drinks in the centre of town. Far too many drinks and wild conversations later, I left my rucksack with my passport inside a taxi as we were quickly leaving.

For the next couple of weeks, I went from the police station to the taxi office and back again so many times that I could have walked it in my sleep. Eventually, the officer got so sick of me bothering him every day that he decided to process me.

The police station itself was a parody of any seventies cop show that you may have seen. The main room was divided by flimsy glass panels that made no difference in noise reduction. Leather jackets and pointy cowboy boots were standard uniform. Officers would shout at one another like they were speaking through a concrete wall - often arguing and throwing things around like siblings at home. It was hard to tell if there were any ranks or a chief - everyone shouted and grimaced at each other equally, regardless of who was boss.

The guy I spoke to asked me a series of questions about what had happened and when. Luckily, I had a photocopy of the original passport so it saved a lot of time in proving who I was. After some minutes, I signed a bunch of paperwork before being handed a document stating the loss of my passport. I took this as a pass, sort of like a Carte Séjour - but this would prove to be a big mistake later on.

Frankie, Sven and others left for Spain and different people came in. Stephan stayed - they were the only constant for me - and another companion from Christmas onwards was Pipo. It was good having newcomers to freshen the atmosphere - it was easy for people to become tired and burned out, me included. New ideas and concerns sparked enthusiasm in us all as a group.

One of the ideas was to concentrate on healthcare – particularly for people with injuries sustained while striking the fences - but also for people that needed everyday care like allergy treatment and painkillers. We would insist on going to the hospital, doctors or pharmacy ourselves and paying directly to make sure that funds were going to healthcare.

Not having a passport, these activities were difficult for me to accomplish. I mostly became increasingly paranoid about going in and out of Boukhalef in case I was controlled by plain-clothed police. Also, when Pipo and Stephan made plans to go to Ceuta and Melilla attempting to collect footage of strikes, I was unable to go. So unfortunately, I know very little about the goings on at the fences apart from what I've been told.

In the end, there was little for me to do apart from leave the country and come back when I had a new passport. When I was given a kind donation from a friend to help get out of the country, I was able to go to the embassy in Rabat to apply for a temporary passport. This was relatively easy and I was back in Tangier the next day.

The thing that I didn't account for was that I had passed my visa expiry date by three months. In my continuing idiocy I'd assumed that my loss of passport document was a waiver, clearing my visa responsibilities. So when I was inevitably turned down at the port, I had to conduct further negotiations in order to find out what to do.

It turned out that I had to go to court with the immigration department and face whatever penalties might be given, whether it be a fine, imprisonment, or nothing. After spending a few hours in a cell with sixty Scarface lookalikes, I was given a sickening feeling of guilt at my European privilege by only having to sign my name to be cleared.

In the few months that I was in Tangier - from the moment I arrived to the moment I left - I was treated like family. Everyone I met, migrants, activists and locals alike, helped me far more than I ever could have in return.

See:

beatingborders.wordpress.com

For more info on the struggle of migrants in Morocco

Clandestine Morocco was written by a writer from the UK who spent several months living with Sub-saharan African migrants in the city of Tangiers, Morocco on the Straits of Gibraltar – a tiny strip of sea separating Africa from Europe.

The book seeks to represent to a European audience something of the basic humanity of migrants from Sub-saharan Africa, to put into context their struggle to cross the EU's external borders and to explain the many ways in which they suffer from racism and police brutality during their time in Morocco.

To contact the author email addisonbloom@hotmail.com.

We are looking to get the book published now so please get in touch if you can help in any way.