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2009

BORN FREE AUDIO SLIDESHOW TRANSCRIPT

MUSIC

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SOFIA MOVED TO ZIMBABWE AS A TEENAGER AND FOUND WORK ON A WHITE FARM. HER HUSBAND WAS LATER MURDERED AS A RESULT OF HIS POLITICAL ACTIVISM.

FEARING HER LIFE WAS IN DANGER, SHE LEFT HER CHILDREN WITH RELATIVES AND FLED WITH HELP FROM HER CHURCH. THEY SENT HER TO THE UK, WHERE SHE CLAIMED ASYLUM.

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[Sofia:] "I love myself. And I respect everything I live for. And I want to live my life to the fullest, and make the best of it. And I'm not going to let anyone bring me down. No way! I'm Sofia Mweni and I'm proud of who I am.

"The painful part of my life - it's something I always struggle with - is there was no explanation. I couldn't say goodbye. I couldn't tell my children 'I have to run. Mummy also has to leave you'."

SOFIA'S CLAIM WAS REJECTED IN EARLY 2009. SHE IS NOW DESTITUTE, WITH 'NO RECOURSE' TO PUBLIC FUNDS AND NO RIGHT TO WORK.

"You are a refused asylum seeker, you have no right to be in the UK anymore and they expect you now to leave the UK. That's the letter that they sent me. You have to empty the accommodation...nothing...no support from anyone.

LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHER FAILED ASYLUM SEEKERS WHO REMAIN IN THE UK, SOFIA SURVIVES WITH THE HELP OF LOCAL CHARITIES AND FRIENDS.

SHE COLLECTS SIGNATURES AND CAMPAIGNS IN THE HOPE THE HOME OFFICE WILL RELENT AND LET HER STAY.

"Really to tell you for the two years that I am an asylum seeker, it is a misery. For me asylum is a big crime because you've been persecuted in where you've run from and I'm being persecuted still in Britain today.

"It's horrible because it's not like you are a human being. It doesn't matter if they say that I'm an asylum seeker. When I was born, I was born free. God has given me a free life and I've made the choice not to be treated in the negative way."

"TWO OUT OF EVERY THREE HOMELESS ASYLUM SEEKERS COME FROM JUST FOUR COUNTRIES - IRAQ, IRAN, ERITREA AND ZIMBABWE" - JOSEPH ROWNTREE CHARITABLE TRUST, JUNE 2009.