**Never Give Up**

My name is Malema Yusuf. I am 23 years old. I come from a small farming village in Darfur, Sudan. I had to leave my home and family when I was only 20 years old. As a member of the [Masalit tribe](https://njas.fi/njas/article/view/36), we have been subjected over many years to violent attacks by armed militias who want to kill us. I had to escape and flee the conflict. I left behind me my mother, father, five brothers and two sisters. They still live in fear but not everyone gets to leave.

I came to UK in 2018. At first, I didn’t know anyone, I was really struggling. But when I was dispersed to Swansea, my life got much better. It’s a very welcoming place for asylum seekers and soon I made many friends here. Before corona virus, it was really good. I would go to the community gatherings at the [SASS](https://sass.wales/) drop-ins on Fridays and Saturdays where I would meet people from many different countries. We were able to take English classes there. It was a friendly sociable occasion and we would all eat together.

At the [Waterfront Museum](https://museum.wales/swansea/), I used to volunteer working on the community garden project. It was fun. The people were really friendly, chatty. They have become really good friends. I would very much like to continue working with them after this corona virus passes.

I am very ambitious. I have to be for my family. I want to do my best. You know, before the time runs away, in the next three or four years I want to go to University to study law. I want to study Human Rights law, because I want to help the people who are struggling. I hate violence. I hate what violence does to the people. It is dehumanising, degrading. I will never give up until I achieve my goals. I also want to learn many different languages. My mother tongue is Masalit, my second language is Arabic. I learned Arabic school from the age of seven. I am still learning Arabic. My third language is Zaghawa, from Darfur. And now I’m learning English.

Since lockdown I’ve been very lonely. It has been very hard. I couldn’t speak to my family and friends at home in Darfur. I tried but sometimes there was no network. You have to spend a lot of money to talk with them on the phone - maybe £20 or £25. I couldn’t visit anybody here either. I couldn’t travel from Swansea to Cardiff to see friends. And it was difficult to go shopping. At the market, you have to stand and queue for ages.

I got depression. No plans, nothing to do all day. it was a bad time. Too much time alone. Too much time to think. Too much time to worry. I worry about my family all the time, and especially since lockdown. Lots of people have suffered depression in lockdown, like me. In that sense, I am not alone.

Now everything’s getting better much better. Step by step. I have found ways of tackling depression. When I feel lonely or frightened, I listen to my favourite music, like 50 Cent or Drake or Osman Hussain, and it makes me happier. I do a little dance, literally. Yeah. Sometimes I go to the beach, see people, keep distance.

The virus has destroyed the economy of the country, but some people are helping each other more. I joined lots of zoom classes. English classes on zoom are amazing. You can hear everyone very clearly. I would like to say thank you to our teachers because they refused to stop teaching. They are very good people and very kind. Last Friday, I told the class about different types of Sudanese food, rice with chicken, lamb kebab, traditional Sudanese food. But unfortunately, I didn’t have enough money to buy the ingredients to cook my favourite dishes. But I will one day.

We have a lovely garden behind our house and when we don’t have things to do, we try to do our best to make it beautiful, grow things, exercise, play football. Better every day. Last Monday I spoke to my mum. That made me so happy. She’s well. Sometimes I get so worried about them because I can’t contact them. I don’t know if they are ok.

We do not know what is going to happen next in the future. We don’t yet have a vaccine to prevent the virus but my message is – never give up.

*You can find a recorded conversation with Malema on our YouTube channel* [*here*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgLlMIYlVMg&t=8s)*.*