



Urban Justice Center

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PODCAST SERIES: MARISOL

MARISOL: The reason why I'm in this business- I've been in this business for a very long time. I started when I was 19, I'm 28 now. You know the only reason why we really do this not for-cuz we want to, it's because we have to, to survive somehow. There's no jobs, there's no really education for girls like us. We've tried to get jobs and stuff like that; they just look at us and laugh. You know, like, who's gona hire us? And that's why, you know, its really hard. A lot of girls have to do this. It's not for the fun of it. Its because you have to survive.

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Do you mind us having like a little bit of your background- like your age, your nationality, your gender, orientation, you know?

MARISOL: Well my gender is female and I'm 28 yrs old and I'm Hispanic.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the troubles you've encountered while doing the line of work that you do?

MARISOL: Well I mean like any business you know you gota be really careful in who you go to, but like there are some clients who get really rough with girls. And not to mention the harassment and the typical abuse by the police. You know, it doesn't help. One time I was just walking down the block, I was on my way to the train station. And the police car, the blue and white car just stopped me. Got out the car, slammed me against the car that was in front of me, they started searching me. They threw me in the car, um, kept me there for like almost two and a half hours just to let me go.

INTERVIEWER: K, I mean is there anything else that you feel that people should know about this line of work or how you feel as a person or when you know someone asks you about yourself, you know, how do you feel when you interact with people on an everyday basis in your line of work?

MARISOL: Well I'm not ashamed of what I do. You know I mean I do what I have to do and I'm the best at what I do. So, you know, it doesn't really- I'm not ashamed, I'm not embarrassed. Why would I be? You know, it's a job like any other job. That's how I see it.

INTERVIEWER: And how long have you been doing this work?

MARISOL: Since I was 18.

INTERVIEWER: Since you were 18, and how old are you now again?

MARISOL: 28

INTERVIEWER: 28, alright that's ten years. And outta curiosity, how many times have you been arrested?

MARISOL: Oh wow. Roughly I would say maybe 37/38 times. But over the course of when I started till now. They don't care you know you can just maybe be like talking to a friend in the street you know, and a police car will come arrest you just because you're a transsexual, you're

prostituting. And I've seen it done to a lot of girls. You know they're not in this line of work, but yeah the police see them, they get out the car and they arrest them, saying that they were prostituting. They do that all the time. It's not like, you know, it's nothing new. And whose gona believe you? You know the judge isn't gona believe you.

INTERVIEWER: Great.

MARISOL: I've done community service in the past. But now they don't give it to the girls really anymore. They just make you do time. Automatically you do time, it's not like they give you community service anymore. Now if you're like, maybe, if you get arrested maybe like the first time like when you've never done it before, and the first time you get arrested, and you get arrested, they'll give you community service, like maybe the first few times. But after a certain amount of times, they don't give it to you anymore, no matter if you've done it or not. They just take you straight to jail and um the maximum time they're giving the girls is like almost a year. I did 6 months just for this. And I don't think that's right. If they had some kind of like you know programs for transgenders such as you know, schooling, education you know some kind of job employment where you know that you're gona be safe and you don't have to, you know, you don't have to feel as if you have to hide from people. That's why a lot of girls are in this business because they can't function like in the normal world. They really can't, cuz it's hard. You walk into a place you know where you're oh is there any jobs available? They'll just look at you and laugh in your face because it's happened to me plenty of times. I don't like doing this but I have to. Most of the friends I've grown up with they're no longer here, they've all passed away you know due to HIV and AIDS and stuff, some overdoses and drugs. Because of the situation we're in now you know. Its really hard out there. But I just want, you know, other people to know, that we don't do this for fun. We do this to survive, literally. We live basically a day, everyday that we work. That's how we get by. A lot of girls are in the streets now; they're 15, 16 years old. And you know, they need something for the kids growing up now, to try to help them out so that way they don't go through what we went through. I just hope I'm still alive to see that happen, you know.

INTERVIEWER: We thank you very much for your time.

MARISOL: No problem, anything I can do to help.

INTERVIEWER: Have a safe night.

MARISOL: You too.

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