



10-4-2017

Katja

Ketevahi 'Katje'

TSOS

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Recommended Citation

Ketevahi 'Katje' and TSOS, "Katja" (2017). *TSOS Interview Gallery*. 33.
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/tsos_interviews/33

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116 Ketevahi "Katja" Gabadze
Naples, Italy
October 4, 2017

Katja: I'm from Georgia (*the country*) but I have lived here in Naples for nine years. I have different jobs. I watch over an elderly person each night. I also work as a waitress, a seamstress, and I am a caregiver for children.

There are 4,000 Georgians here in Napoli. And more are coming because things are getting worse in Georgia and more are leaving. We meet regularly in church.

My (*common law*) husband here in Naples is a shoemaker. He lives a little ways away. He works and takes care of his elderly mother during the week and comes to be with me on the weekends.

I studied psychology in the university so the way people act is of interest to me. A nation has its own culture, its own way of doing things, and you need to respect it. There are good people and bad people. I always take the good from others. Here in my neighborhood I have their respect because I treat them with respect. I give money to those who need it. I live a beautiful life.

Destiny will take you in all sorts of different places. I am an invalid. (*She didn't explain and didn't have apparent disabilities.*) I have problems and it makes it difficult to work, but I work anyway. Even if I have a disability, I still need to work. There are good people here.

I work with a 96-year-old lady and she tells me rude stuff but I am kind to her. She lives an antique life and doesn't live in the real world. It's only humanity to treat her with respect. I take care of her at night. I'll be sleeping anyway so why not sleep at her house and get paid for it?"

People are losing their souls, are becoming less humane. Love is what's important. I give to others in whatever way I can. (*Katja is Christian, has a poster of Christ above her tiny kitchen table.*)

My father was an engineer (*in Georgia*). My mother died when I was twenty. After that my father became "emaciated" (?). I couldn't get married because I had to take care of my brother and father. (*However, Katja must have married at some point before leaving Georgia because she mentioned later that her husband left her before she immigrated. Nothing else was said about him. She was in her late twenties when she left.*)

My family owned a farm and had many animals, which required a great deal of work. I grew up taking care of animals and horses. I remember it when I sleep, or when I'm out on my balcony. We lived in the country. You feel nature more there. I love

animals. I'm grateful to God that I have this feeling. Not everyone has it. I miss the actual ground, the earth! When I visit there I pick up some earth and smell it. I go barefoot. I miss going to my mother's grave and talking to her. I can feel her voice there. I miss the past, the feeling I had with my family.

Some day I'm going to build a house (*a vacation home*) in Georgia and go back from time to time. Tablisi is where I'll build it. But it will be two hours from our family home where my brother now lives with his family.

War came to us. It was a crisis in Georgia in 2004 but it got worse and from 2009-2012 there was war. Americans saved us from Russia. The American soldiers came and protected us. We'll always feel so grateful for them.

There was a crisis. The Soviet Union, which we were a part of — when communism left, democracy came and the fifteen republics became separate and free. But we continued to have trouble with Russia. It's all political. It's not the peoples' fault. It's leaders who are involved in politics, which is dirty. There became enmity with Russia. We were friends and now we're enemies.

Politicians should do things that bring goodness to the people but it's the opposite of that now. Now women have to go to work to support the family and men stay home. Women have to leave the country to find work — babysitting and housekeeping. But the men can't find work. So they are needed at home while the women leave to work and send money home. That is wrong.

After my mother died, I felt the best way to take care of them (*her father and brother*) was to go somewhere where it was safer and send money back home. I have to buy medicine for my father. That is why I am here — so I can help my family. My brother takes care of my father and I help financially. If you say you believe in God, this is what you do.

In all of the old Soviet republics the economy is bad. Now no one understands anything anymore. Religions are at war. There's no real answer to that. If the world is going to be destroyed, what good is money going to do for you? We're just simple people. We just want to live. Instead of taking care of people, they (*politicians*) just seem to want war. And what good will that do?

In Georgia, I am worried that people will lose their homes, that the government will take them from us. I don't go back to my home often because I see the people starving. They ask me for money. And I can't help them all. There are so many! They will die of hunger. We have such a great history but they have killed our dignity. The politicians. When we split up into republics, the Russians didn't want to leave us in peace. Why couldn't they just leave us alone? We just wanted our independence. The people are not to blame. They are good people. It's the politicians. Now we are destroying ourselves.

At first, I wanted to go to the U.S. but when I applied for a visa, it was denied. The people at the consulate told me they thought I only wanted to go to the U.S. to find a husband there. I understand. American law is in good order.

I have friends in Florida and the people in America treat them well. *(One of Katja's neighbors, who was with us during this part of the interview, said she would like to go to "New York" to visit. She mistakenly thought that was the general term for the United States.)*

When I couldn't go to America, I went to Turkey, instead. Some Jewish people we knew in Georgia sent me to work for some of their Muslim friends in Turkey. When I left Georgia it cost 3500 Euros to pay for falsified documents.

The people in Turkey had a store where they sold gold and silver. They were honest and they wanted honest people to work for them. They hired me. And they treated me like a princess. If you send out good, you receive good.

They were really good people but they were devout Muslims. I wore a crucifix around my neck and the Muslims there told me that I should take it off but I wouldn't because I wanted to stay true to my religion. A Muslim man wanted to marry me but I didn't want to change my religion. It would have brought displeasure to my father. That's why I left Turkey.

So I came here to Italy. The money I earned there made it possible for me to come here. I had friends here. I took courses and learned the language.

The world is like this necklace. *(Katja pointed to a strand of religious beads hanging by the poster of Christ on the wall.)* If one bead breaks off, they will all break off. If my world is ruined, yours will soon be ruined. Why do you think we call it the "family of man?" Tell me who your friend is and I'll tell you who *you* are. That's how the world is. What we do demonstrates who we are. That is what worries me. If you are not well, I will not be well. If you are strong, I am strong. We are all one world family.

As a company — say one, which makes shoes — if it does well it's a good company. If they make a good product, it's a good company. That's how it is with countries. If they produce good results, it is a good country. It doesn't matter whether a leader is a communist or otherwise, if they produce goodness, then it's good.

They say democracy brought us liberty. But this liberty, if you choose to act like an animal, then what good does liberty do you? If we are children of God, then why would you want to change the nature God gave you? Liberty has made it too confusing. Why should a man want to become a woman, or a man marry a man? What good comes from that? There should be rules to keep things in perspective — to keep it from becoming too confusing, too chaotic. Do you remember when you were a child? People were more honest and good then. Too much liberty brings mental illness.

Money is not the answer. People lock their homes with one lock, or two locks and still bad people break in. The world is becoming a worse place. I will soon be fifty years old. Half of my life is gone. And what is happening? How about the children? What are we giving them? What is more important than love for family? Love exists. That's what matters.

I'm happy because I eat honestly and live honestly. My soul is tranquil. You have to be a human being. Everyone has to be their own person. We must each be the best self we can be. When I look in the mirror, I'm happy.