



INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ETHNO-RELIGIOUS MEDIATION

"Fostering a culture of peace among ethnic and religious groups"

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U.S. 501 (c) (3) tax exempt public charity, nonprofit and non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

MEDIATION ACADEMY

Specialized Mediation Training The Mediation of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

Mediation Project

Mediation Case Study (Sample case developed by Natan Aslake, Spring 2017)

Proposed Case Study: Frosty Attitude Towards Refugees in Italy

What Happened? Historical Background to the Conflict

Abe was born in Eritrea in 1989. He lost his father during the Ethio-Eritrean border war, leaving his mother and two of his sisters behind. Abe was one of a few brilliant students who made it through college. Studying information technology at Asmara University, Abe had a part-time job to support his widowed mother and sisters. It was during this time that the Eritrean government attempted to oblige him to join the national army. Nevertheless, he had no interest at all in joining the army. His fear was that he would face his father's fate, and he didn't want to leave his families without support. Abe was imprisoned and tortured for one year for his refusal to join the military. Abe was sick and the government took him to the hospital so that he can be treated. Recovering from his illness, Abe left his home country and went to the Sudan and then Libya through the Sahara Desert, and finally crossing the Mediterranean Sea, he made it to Italy. Abe got a refugee status, started to work and continued his university studies in Italy.

Anna is one of Abe's classmates. She is anti-globalization, condemns multiculturalism and has a strong opposition towards refugees. She usually attends any anti-immigration rally in town. During their class introduction, she heard about Abe's refugee status. Anna wants to express her position to Abe and had been looking for a convenient time and place. One day, Abe and Anna came to class early and Abe greeted her and she responded "you know, don't take it personal but I hate refugees, including you. They are a burden to our economy; they are ill-mannered; they don't respect women; and they don't want to assimilate and adopt the Italian culture; and you are taking a study position here at the university that an Italian citizen would have the chance to attend."

Abe replied: "had it not been the mandatory military service and the frustration to be persecuted in my home country, I wouldn't have any interest to leave my country and come to Italy. " Additionally, Abe denied all the refugee allegations Anna expressed and mentioned they do not represent him as an individual. In the middle of their argument, their classmates arrived to attend the class. Abe and Anna were requested to attend a mediation meeting to discuss their differences and explore what could be done to reduce or eliminate their tensions.

Each Other's Stories – How Each Person Understands the Situation and Why

Anna's Story - *Abe and other refugees coming to Italy are problems and dangerous to the safety and security of citizens.*

Position: Abe and other refugees are economic immigrants, rapists, uncivilized people; they should not be welcomed here in Italy.

Interests:

Safety / Security: Anna holds that all refugees coming from developing nations (including Abe's home country, Eritrea), are strange for the Italian culture. Especially, they don't know how to

behave towards women. Anna fears that what happened in the German city of Cologne on the New Year's Eve in 2016 that includes gang rape might happen here in Italy. She believes that most of those refugees also want to control how Italian girls should or should not dress by insulting them on the street. Refugees including Abe are becoming a danger for the cultural lives of Italian women and daughters of ours. Anna continues: "I don't feel comfortable and secured when I encounter refugees both at my class and in the surrounding area. Hence, this threat will be curbed only when we stop providing the refugees the chance to live here in Italy."

Financial Issues: Most of the refugees in general, Abe in particular, are coming from developing nations and they don't have the financial resources to cover their expenses during their stay here in Italy. Hence, they are dependent on the Italian government for their financial support even to fulfill their basic needs. Besides, they are taking our jobs and studying at higher educational institutions that are also funded by the Italian government. Thus, they are creating financial pressure on our economy and contributing to an increment in the nationwide unemployment rate.

Belongingness: Italy belongs to the Italians. Refugees do not fit in here, and they are not part of the Italian community and culture. They don't have a sense of belongingness for the culture, and are not trying to adopt it. If they don't belong to this culture and assimilate to it, they should leave the country, including Abe.

Abe's Story - Anna's xenophobic behavior is the problem

Position: Had my human rights not been under threat in Eritrea, I wouldn't have come to Italy. I am here fleeing from persecution to save my life from the dictatorial government measures of human rights abuses. I am a refugee here in Italy trying my best to improve both my families' life and mine by continuing my college studies and working so hard. As a refugee, I have every right to work and study. The faults and crimes of some or few refugees somewhere should not be attributed to and overgeneralized for all refugees.

Interests:

Safety / Security: Eritrea was one of the Italian colonies and there are lots of commonalities in terms of culture between the peoples of these nations. We adopted so many Italian cultures and even some Italian words are being spoken alongside with our language. In addition, many Eritreans speak the Italian language. The way Italian women dress is similar to the Eritreans. Additionally, I grew up in a culture that respects women in the same way as the Italian culture. I personally condemn rape and crime against women, whether refugees or other individuals commit them. Considering all refugees as troublemakers and criminals who threaten the host states' citizens is absurd. As a refugee and part of the Italian community, I do know my rights and duties and I respect the rights of others as well. Anna shouldn't be afraid of me for the mere fact that I am a refugee because I am peaceful and friendly with everyone.

Financial Issues: While I was studying, I had my own part-time work to support my families back home. The money I was making in Eritrea was much more than I am earning here in Italy. I came to the host state to seek human rights protection and to avoid persecutions from my homeland government. I am not looking for some economic benefits. With regard to the job, I was hired after competing for the vacant position and fulfilling all the requirements. I think I secured the job because I am fit for the job (not because of my refugee status). Any Italian citizen who had a better competence and the desire to work at my place could have had the same chance to work at the same place. Additionally, I am paying the proper tax and contributing to the progress of the society. Thus, Anna's allegation that I am a burden for the Italian state's economy doesn't hold water for those reasons mentioned.

Belongingness: Although I originally belong to Eritrean culture, I am still attempting to assimilate in the Italian culture. It is the Italian government that gave me the appropriate human rights protection. I want to respect and live in harmony with the Italian culture. I feel I belong to

this culture as I am living in it day-to-day. Hence, it appears to be unreasonable to ostracize me or other refugees from the community for the fact that we have different cultural backgrounds. I am already living the Italian life by adopting the Italian culture.