

## Ariane Interview 2

**Mo** [00:00:00] Hello, everybody. This is Mohammed Tahir, I work for MerseyCare, I'm a community development worker and I've been working with the Many Hands One Heart supporting group for the LGBT+ people seeking asylum and refugees.

**Mo** [00:00:12] Welcome to the first episode of the Season Two of Mic Drop.

**Mo** [00:00:15] Today, we're going to talk to one of the members of Many Hands One Heart: Ariane, about her life. And how are you Ariane?

**Ariane** [00:00:21] I'm all right. Morning, everyone.

**Mo** [00:00:25] All right.

**Mo** [00:00:25] And just basically, I know that you got your status, refugee status. When did you get that?

**Mo** [00:00:32] Last year was it?

**Ariane** [00:00:34] I think it's already almost two years now since 2019. Yeah,.

**Mo** [00:00:39] Well, time goes fast when you enjoy yourself.

**Mo** [00:00:43] OK, well, I was there with you in the court. That was when you got the status. Just tell us a little bit about how you felt when that happened and what do with thinking you had your mind about your future.

**Ariane** [00:00:55] I'm always very happy because obviously it's a step forward. And I was also very positive about what I really wanted to do. So, yeah, I was happy.

**Mo** [00:01:06] Yeah.

**Mo** [00:01:07] And you always wanted to do something with your education, further education, because that's one of the things you always talk of telling me that you wanted to go to university and stuff like that. How did you manage to help you actually achieve anything, regardless of that?

**Ariane** [00:01:23] Yeah, because when I got my refugee status, like three months after I was accepted to uni because I was like in May and I started uni in September, which I was very happy about that. So, yeah, it was pretty much good.

**Mo** [00:01:38] What are you doing while you're studying?

**Ariane** [00:01:41] Nursing, adult nursing.

**Mo** [00:01:43] And in it in which university?

**Ariane** [00:01:46] Up in Edge Hill University in Ormskirk.

**Mo** [00:01:50] So it is your second year now. Is that right?

**Ariane** [00:01:52] Yeah, I'm a September 19 cohort so this is my second year.

**Mo** [00:01:57] Is quite nerve racking when you start a new thing in your life.

**Mo** [00:02:01] What did you feel when you went to the university for the first time in a foreign and other country that's not yours. And you didn't know anyone? I do. And also, what sort of a financial strain did you have on you going to the university?

**Mo** [00:02:14] Was it difficult or you know...

**Ariane** [00:02:18] I guess it was a bit difficult because as a refugee I don't have a lot of support. Like if, for example, you were born in the UK and you knew you had family to lean on, kind of things and stuff like that. So I was very much hard for me, but I got sure it was hard because I had to find everything like accommodation, everything at the same time. And it was pretty much hard.

**Mo** [00:02:43] And financial was hard as well for you, wasn't it?

**Ariane** [00:02:45] Yeah, it was hard because you get allocated student finance, but actually it's not that's enough because you have to think of the fact that, oh, you just got your status. You still have to look for accommodation, have nothing else for nothing, like you have no small thing, so you can't apply for council things because technically your student and you can't either wait for council accommodation because technically they want you to pay for your own housing costs. You have student finance. So it was quite hard to get accommodation. And yeah...

**Mo** [00:03:20] It was just basically by council thing, you mean housing benefit. You couldn't get any housing benefit. So you get that from wherever rent money you were getting from grants or loan from university that had to go for your housing?

**Mo** [00:03:33] And also where's Edge Hill University.? You live in Liverpool. Where is actually Edge Hill University?

**Ariane** [00:03:39] It's an Ormskirk. It's a bit far, I have to travel like one hour and thirty minutes..

**Mo** [00:03:44] that was that was another cost for you wasn't it.

**Mo** [00:03:46] Was quite difficult.

**Ariane** [00:03:47] Yeah. Yeah. Because you have to travel like every morning and every evening back home and it's hard for us to travel. If your classes start at nine o'clock, I usually wake up like five and I have to be out by six to be sure I'll be on time because it's almost like one hour and a half from here to Ormskirk.

**Mo** [00:04:06] So, yeah. And I mean, for the people who don't know, Ormskirk you know, I've been to a few times, it's not a very diverse city. So what's your univeristy like? Is it very diverse, do you see a lot of people from Africa or the same colour as yourself or what were you just like, you know, one of the few?

**Ariane** [00:04:30] Erm I think I was just one of the few, like there's not a lot of Black people like you couldn't count from the seat of your hands.

**Ariane** [00:04:38] Like it's not very diverse. I guess it's diverse, but not that much for Black minorities. It's very, very scarce. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:04:47] And did you get involved with anything regarding the refugees and helping other refugees, you know, in Liverpool or in UK? You know, because another thing was I know about you is. You still very committed to help other people in regard to detention centres, and can you tell us about that?

**Ariane** [00:05:06] Yeah, I did a small talk with "These Walls Must Fall" which is a campaign against immigration detention. So a couple of times the we came to uni to just share and raise awareness. Most of the systems we know if it's this like detention, which is what they didn't know it exists. Yeah. So it was a good campaign just to stop immigration detention.

**Mo** [00:05:33] Why did you get involved with that? Just originally about what interests you to get involved with the what it was 'These Walls Must Fall'? What's it called again?

**Ariane** [00:05:42] Yeah, "These Walls Must Fall" campaing. I got involved with it because when claiming asylum, I was at risk of detention. actually I was going to sign every time and I was very scared I would get detained. And I know a couple of friends who were detained for like six months or more. So it's quite a scary process and I don't think it's fair enough. So I just felt like I have to get involved more.

**Mo** [00:06:08] And if your housemate was if I remember rightly, she was detained in a detention centre, wasn't it?

**Ariane** [00:06:13] Yeah, yeah. One of my housemates when I was in Asylum, she was detained for I think almost two months. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:06:22] And well, obviously, there is a lot of financial problems, you know, difficulties adjusting yourself, and I do remember then you came to me and asked me if I could be your referee or the right reference for the job in the care home. Why did you want to work? What was the reason behind it?

**Ariane** [00:06:42] I just felt that I was very much struggling financially. And I feel like, imagine you're a refugee or you're like left in the world and you don't know which direction to take because you just say, oh my God, I have to have a house. I have to have this, I have to have that. And obviously I could have been on benefits and then like staying in the house where housing association does that everything for me. But I couldn't have the opportunity because I chose to school first. So when you choose to school them you're not entitled to any sort of benefits on the student finance and everything. So I found it very necessary for me to have a job, to be able to have at least a spoon, or a cooker or whatever at home. And yeah, that's why I really wanted to have a job like a normal job.

**Mo** [00:07:31] And then you got the job in a care home just before the was it last March, just before this lockdown and all stuff?

**Ariane** [00:07:40] Yes, and it was around february 20, 2020.

**Mo** [00:07:46] I could just tell us a little about it. What was it like when you went there to work because you were you scared? You know, with regard to COVID and did you have any help? Did you give you any sort of PPE or masks or anything like that?

**Ariane** [00:08:04] I think I was quite scared because obviously you're putting your life at risk, but you have to weigh the good and the bad, because if you don't do that, then who will do that for you? You know what I mean? So I was very scared at first. Like the first day I went, I was like, very scared because I didn't have a lot of experience. I just have experience from uni, from placements and stuff like that. So I was quite scared. And given the fact that there was COVID, I was like is really scary. And I got some I remember with my agency, I got sent twice to places where there's there were COVID patients. And I wasn't aware of that. And I think that was the really beginning of the COVID last year. So I was sent twice to two different care homes. And when I got there, I remember I said I was like ready to go in and then immediately told me, oh, do you have PPE and everything? And I was like, no, I've not been trained to know how to do the doffing and the donning of putting on PPE and everything. And I was like, oh, because it's a COVID residence, house, and house. And I was like, shocked. So what I did is that I called my agency and I told them I couldn't go because obviously they just shipped me in without letting me know what was really going on and it was really at the really beginning, so when everyone was very, very scared, what it was like, very...

**Mo** [00:09:30] I do remember when you came back home from the first day. Yeah, talk to you because I didn't give you any masks or any PPE or things like that. If I remember rightly, you were crying.

**Mo** [00:09:42] You were just to. But you carry on.

**Ariane** [00:09:48] Yeah, just because I didn't have a choice. I mean, I just knew I didn't have a choice.

**Mo** [00:09:53] And then you basically university, obviously.

**Mo** [00:09:57] One of the advantages of the COVID was that you didn't have to travel to the university, you did online at the university.

**Mo** [00:10:04] Did you get any other jobs or any placements that.

**Ariane** [00:10:09] Yeah, because afterwards when I was walking with the agency, I just feel like it's hard for me to be in the NHS rather than being with the agencies, because then I know with the NHS is better because you're more protected. I know you're protected in care homes as well, but is very complicated. Sometimes you reach this no like law or whatever because you are not a permanent staff. So that might treat you differently. So that's why I applied for bank staff for the NHS, because I just felt like for my placements I'm still doing placements in the wards and the NHS. So it's like the same thing working there. And you don't have a choice because that's placement. I know now you have a choice. Like if you're at risk, you can't walk, like you can do your placement and defer your costs. But it depends on how what level of risk you are on. Like, so I was just saying you don't have a choice at the end of the day, because if you want to progress, you have to confront it. So yeah, I just decided to work with the NHS will have more experience in regards to unions and stuffs, yeah.

**Mo** [00:11:18] This lockdown down and online student, what is it like for you? I mean, obviously you have some sort of difficulties in the beginning to make friends in the university. You know, you think that this is so overcome that or you still have problems. Obviously, it's more difficult because you don't have any face to face. So I just wanted to know, how is your life? Student life is you know, if there is any such changes your life now.

**Ariane** [00:11:46] I just think my student life is the same, like from now to when we're going to uni is quite intimidating because you just find yourself in a whole lot of people and everyone is coming from different places and stuff and everyone is distant like everyone is doing. It sounds like, I guess most of the people they knew themselves from probably college and stuff like that. So they are in group. So you find yourself like a little bit isolated on your place. And I think the university offers a lot of support, but still, the reality doesn't always match the what you're saying. So it's quite hard when you're a refugee and then you're a black minority and then you have a lot of history, negative history, like from what you've experienced personally to be able to really make attachments, because I guess people don't understand your perspective, like from where you come from and stuff like that. So I just think it's the same thing. So hard to have friends. I don't mean for me. I just think it's complicated.

**Mo** [00:12:47] I think it's probably difficult for a lot of people, you know, and also I've seen some I've seen some news about the foreign students that they are also struggling, you know, in universities, you know, like in regard to the financial year. And a lot of food banks are full of the foreign students as well. OK, just going back to your life, sort of an start when you came here. I am sure I got to know you through the Many Hands One Heart you're still going to the meetings Many Hands One Heart

**Ariane** [00:13:19] Yeah. Are nine meetings yeah.

**Mo** [00:13:23] What do you what do you think is that, you know, obviously I met you when you were at a certain time that you weren't really. Wow. You know, in regard to your mental health or, you know, how do you think your life is in regards to mental health now? You know, when you go to things that happens in your life since then, apart from university, anything else that you want to share with us?

**Ariane** [00:13:46] Am I saying I feel quite happy now with mental health or anything because I feel very much stronger and I always think I value more what I've become than what I was before. And I know it's due to a lot of support, Many Hands One Heart, a lot of support around. And I just think that you always have the prints of what you've been through, but you just have to use it to move forward. So I think I'm much more happier now.

**Mo** [00:14:19] Are you on your own now?

**Ariane** [00:14:22] No, And I don't live on my own anymore because I brought my daughter here. She came through family reunion, I think, from a family reunion. Yeah, like a couple two months ago. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:14:34] When was the last time you had seen your daughter before.

**Ariane** [00:14:37] And it was maybe up to five years or almost five year old.

**Mo** [00:14:43] how old is your daughter now.

**Ariane** [00:14:45] She's eight.

**Mo** [00:14:46] OK, how do you feel.

**Ariane** [00:14:48] I feel happy. I feel happy. I'm embracing my age coming to be twenty seven soon. I'm just embracing.

**Mo** [00:14:56] All right. Just a few more question about your future. So obviously you studying your in second year, you've got another year left, is that right?

**Ariane** [00:15:04] Yeah, I've got one more year after.

**Mo** [00:15:07] And what is your plan after that?

**Ariane** [00:15:10] I probably, um, I work as a nurse for probably one year or something and then try to do my master's in maybe Anesthesia or something else. I know just I just live my life.

**Mo** [00:15:26] So you're planning to sort of settle down here and, you know, live your life here and work here?

**Mo** [00:15:32] Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

**Ariane** [00:15:35] And I don't think it's as you said, you had some placements in the NHS. Yeah. Have you got any other difficulties to finding out placement of other places? You know, because, you know, a lot of times, you know, it's about who you know and you've got contacts. Have you had any difficulties to find other placements in the offices and stuff like that sort of thing, you know?

**Ariane** [00:15:59] Um, no, not really.

**Ariane** [00:16:01] Because we get allocated placemen is just recently that we have the three weeks placement in March. And that one was supposed to be international placement. But due to covid, we've just been asked to find for volunteering somewhere where we can be attributed those hours and stuff. Yeah, but it's difficult to get because you have to volunteer like in charity's food banks and stuff. But in lockdown everything is closed, so it's quite hard to get it. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:16:27] OK, well thanks very much Ariane. It's been lovely. I just want to Britney wants to say something as well. Just coming.

**Britney** [00:16:35] Oh hello everyone.

**Britney** [00:16:38] I've been hearing I've been hearing all this interview and honestly, I'm totally amazed with all this story Ariane. You know, actually, I just told Emily backstage. That's I what what I wanted Mo here, because he knows a lot of details that I don't know. Yeah, yeah. It's really, really, really, really impressive. All the stuff you've been doing. You know, I didn't knew the stuff about the campaign against detention centre, which is something really, really, really big in my point of view, because like, you know, fortunately, we are refugees now. So another reason and that but we've been in a situation that, you know, I remember when I went to report to the Home Office, I was like with anxious all the

time, because the way they treat you is like you feel like are they gonna detain me today because, you know, they they can detain you for without any reason.

**Ariane** [00:17:39] Yeah. They can say it always felt that way too, because I used to wake up in my bed and I'm like shivering till reaching the line, just like you have a right to talk or something. And it's real. Like you just see your life flying through. You just think you will never come back. And this is a real big problem.

**Britney** [00:17:59] And so thank you for being part of that. And I think that we know about that. We know the struggle. It's horrible the way you feel. And I was also impressed about your amazing job during this pandemic. You know, it's like completely, completely amazing. And also as a refugee, thank you for being an image, an example of that, you know.

**Britney** [00:18:30] And I think that's the purpose of this episode, like to remember, we are refugees. Yes, but we also are a person that work that contribute to the society Ariane and sometimes is difficult to read a lot of hate in social media, you know, against refugees. And, you know, I got a little bit of fame around me lately. And, you know, there are, there were a lot of good comments, but there were a lot of also bad comments that I read. And most of these comments is like the perceptions of the refugees, you know though. They. So this this guy just came in, put a wig on his head and and now he's going to have state benefits. He's going to be lazy for the life, access to social care and everyone else. But the truth is, we are trying to contribute to the society. You know, that's the other side of the coin that what we really are doing here. And, yes, like you said, there are struggle trying to access to opportunities, but once we get those opportunities, we get the best of those opportunities, you know, like like in your case, you've been fighting against the COVID and risking your life, totally the opposite of those shady comments on Facebook that they are just in there in their sofa eating pop corn, you know, like you are the really real the real heroe fighting alongside, not shady people on Facebook. So thank you very much for that Ariane in a refugee. Like I said, I'm really proud of people like you, especially because you're also my friend and I know you are.

**Britney** [00:20:14] And it's it's amazing, you know, and I know you're being scared because,we everyone had a moment with they being scared so.

**Mo** [00:20:25] I think if it's just a when the first time I saw Ariane, I knew before to Sahir House and Shereen that she was not well she was very depressed and she was as she was, you know, if you wanted you know, the metaphor was just a bird with the broken wings, you know, and she basically learnt to, you know, little by little to walk. And she's basically got them because of the Many Hands One Heart, the friendship, the support, but also a lot of credit. Got to go to yourself, Britney, and people like Ariane and all this, you know, because it's a survival is fighting every day. And, you know, what Arianna done is it's it's basically she didn't go for the easy option and she basically chose because she from the day that I met, you know, I knew that she had this purpose to want to do her life better. And she wants to be independent and she wants. So I am pretty sure that you would get the way you want. You know, just being privileged to know both of you and a lot of members of the refugee community and people seeking asylum, because even if you didn't do any of those things, you know, what have you gone through to be able to actually sit down and talk about it all through your day to day life is is a great, great achievement. So it's been and as I said, it's been a privilege to actually have I don't call it work. It's just a pleasure to be with you.

**Ariane** [00:21:58] I just think also that we have to point out the the most important thing in this is that we are refugees. Yes. But the word refugee itself has a lot of meaning because we are refugees, not by choice, and then we are refugees. We might be happy here, but I am certain 100 percent that I will find more happiness in my country if that was possible, because I feel more like if my roots like there's a lot of feelings, memories and stuff, but so just having to let that go is the biggest thing. Every refugee has to face, because no matter how you know, you're not safe somewhere, you still feel like, why am I not safe where I'm supposed to be safe? Because that's supposed to be where I'm from. So that's what we have to go through every day. And that people have to understand that we are refugees is not just a word. It means you have left a lot behind you. You've had to live with, not by choice, because you didn't have a choice.

**Ariane** [00:23:03] So, yeah...

**Britney** [00:23:05] That touched me a lot, like a lot because I always tell people that I have a massive group of friends. I mean, in terms of care, you know, it was tiny, but at the same time, it was my world, my friends back there in my country and just lived them and not be able to hug them to have a time with them. It's just horrible, like the way that we used to, you know, you leave everything behind you because you don't have any other choice. It's not like. It's not something you really like to say, like I'm got to leave everything and go in with eyes, like you miss a lot of those back at home now. And yet you're trying to do your best here. Yeah. And I just wanted to ask you maybe something related to that I say before. It worked in this in this stuff with the NHS, just because I'm curious about that. Do you have any struggle or did you have any difficulties, like in the way they treat you for being a refugee?

**Ariane** [00:24:15] And I just think they can look at me and just know that I'm a refugee. I would think that I would look at that trauma of like being black minority. I just think that one is not about the NHS. It's just about like the staffs, British people or non British people like those the staff individuals because you sometimes it has happened to me sometimes. And I've been to shifts where the staff are totally shit with me, like you can see it. It's not even hidden like so you get you have to be doing the most hard, the hardest job, and they leave you to do the worst bit or even the there's patient in that isolation and they'll say, oh, tonight your shift is about this patient in this time. So it's more about the racism for that one, I think. And it's more about individually, because I want to say, oh, is a particular trust or is the NHS and I guess just the system, because people are racist, some people are racist, not everybody. So sometimes you get with bad people and there are few times, when I worked with very nice people that we like, very kind. But I just think with this COVID because we were scared that tends to bring out a bad character comes out automatically even if they don't or even if they're not like that usually. So you reaching the hospital setting and you see for perhaps all you have to do this and then you can just even if you say no at that point is your responsibility because this patient's life can be in danger and you be the one that failed. So is quite intense. But I think it happens a lot, particularly when you're black minority and in these times of COVID they prefer to rescue them themselves. And this is about individuals.

**Mo** [00:26:04] I can confirm that as well, because you're not the only one who said that about a few other people who have been in the care homes and the refugees from other countries is just coming like your students.

**Mo** [00:26:18] And they said, you know, that they've basically been told from the first day to go do things without training at all, and that's is put them into danger. And because I first



of all, they need the money, but also to scared to say no in case they won't get any more jobs, you know, from agents and stuff like of. So again, that is, you know, thinking going to your work every day and that sort of a danger and also of discrimination is not fair at all. Yeah.

**Mo** [00:26:51] OK. I don't know if I've got a I've got no other question to ask.

**Mo** [00:26:56] I don't know if if anyone else wants to ask any questions or discuss anything else,.

**Britney** [00:27:02] I'm just speechless, honestly, and, you know, Ariane. I mean, it's like I want we want to open this space to to hear those experience, you know, but like now we know all a little bit more about this picture, you know, like how you said there's even a racist with some person that they prefer to put you. You put you on risk because you are black and it's like, oh, gosh, because, you know, they might be someone that say, you know, I don't care if this person it's it's a new it's just learning. We want to put them on risk if they prefer to put that on risk that my own life. And it's like, well, at the same time you say like, yeah, it can be a little bit shitty that situation, but. You have also a duty with the patients and it's like a you know, that moral thing that that that is like inside of me breaking in like, yes, I've been put in this uncomfortable situation. But that doesn't mean. And this risky situation, better, I'd say, because it was a risky situation, but at the same time, you not give up with the patience. Yeah, take care of them. And it's like. Like Mo said, you're not the only one that said that there's been a lot of minorities, workers, that they said that and it's like mind blowing at some point and.

**Ariane** [00:28:42] I think he's just about ethics is just about like morals, I get I get it every day.

**Ariane** [00:28:49] So it's just about when you're walking, you just have to decide what to do at the end of the year. You have a choice to say no. But when you are an employee, someone and you're responsible for a patient or for someone in general, even if it's a child, you have to take care of the child and respect ... if you feel like you're not supposed to do that, because at that point, it's not about you, the profession or whatever. It's about the patient or the person that needs help or something. So it's quite difficult. So when you get put in those type of situations, you just feel like you have to still do it and complain, but still do it because you don't have choice at that point.

**Mo** [00:29:32] And I think is is I mean, I don't know about you, you when you work for the agencies, if you're off sick, then you won't get paid, you know, so a lot of times, you know, you've got no other options.

**Mo** [00:29:47] You know, I don't know if anyone is that like, you know, I hope not. You know, it's actually symptoms of the COVID and gone to work. But that, again, if you've got bills to pay and you've got children to feed and all that sort of thing, that is something that, you know, a lot of times happen. I'm not just talking about the refugees that happens to a lot of people who work on the agencies. But then again, most of the people who are refugees, they they are working through the agencies. You know, they have you know, they haven't, have they?

**Mo** [00:30:15] Either they don't know or they haven't had to, but call it them information sort of like, you know, to you know, they've got no other option. So that is another thing is you've got no other option. And I know for the fact that there's lots of times when people

see your payment, they're in a hospital or a care home and you see the situation's getting a little bit you got sick or you don't have to work or you go look for something else.

**Mo** [00:30:40] And that's not probably the case. The part that I just want to finish knowing all that sort of thing and then put it in.

**Mo** [00:30:46] All right. Thanks very much, Ariane, for this. And thanks very much for Britney for the arranging this and this interview. And I really enjoy that. And I thank all the listeners as well. And hopefully we carry on. Wish you both all the best in the future.

**Ariane** [00:31:03] Thank you