

Mic_Drop_31.5.2022_Faith+Sexuality.mp3

Larry Hi there. My name is Larry Achiampong And welcome to The Mic Drop. The Mic Drop is a collaborative podcast with the sole purpose of creating a space for migrants by migrants exercising agency in exchange for a shared space of collective thinking, storytelling and debate. It is created for a long term collaboration between members of Many Hands One Heart and myself, supported by hearts of grass.

Britney Hello, everyone. I'm Britney here and we are here in that really very sunny day with a lot of heat because we are in Easter. And this is a lovely time to talk about this topic. I'm here with Kieran. Hello, Kieran.

Kieran Hello, Britney. Hi, everyone.

Britney Good, good. Kieran is from the Open Table Network, which is LGBT+ Christian supportive network, but is more than Christian actually is open to any religion in any faith.

Kieran It's open to anyone that wants to belong in an accepting and loving community. Absolutely.

Britney That's good to know. So we're going to talk about a little bit a faith and religion today. So the first question I have for you, Kieran, is can you talk about what is the the feeling or the the heart of this movement? How it started?, what it makes you want to start this?

Kieran So yeah, the first open table community began in Liverpool, so it's always been a local thing and there was just a small group of us, only about six people who gathered at St Bride's church in Liverpool, and people wanted to feel like they belonged. You know, people were feeling isolated in their own church community. They weren't able to be open about their sexuality or their gender identity. And they they felt like they would they weren't able to bring the whole self to that community. And so when when the six of us came together, we said, you know, we'd like to to create a space where we can do that, where we can bring our whole selves and express our faith and belief in God and and our belief that we're loved as we are and as our whole selves and not feel like we have to hide parts of ourselves when we come to to church.

Britney Okay. That's nice to know because because, you know, I hear a lot of comments on social media, you know, and because a lot of people are struggling nowadays to understand that, that you can actually be LGBT and at the same time have a faith. They are not at all, they are. They can match. You don't need to exclude others. It's quite interesting. Sometimes I read on social media that, oh my God, the churches, they do this because they want to be, to look inclusive. They want to do I like a wash of their faces or it's like they don't want to be outdated. So the thing is I just realised I got a little bit of formation in this. In fact you might not know this, the audience know these, but I was training to be a priest.

Kieran I don't know that.

Britney Yeah, so?

Kieran So was I.

Britney Surprise, surprise, surprise. So I ended up the theology. Yeah. And what I say, I quit because I like boys and you know, that's my personal experience. I cannot live a double life. Yeah, you know? Yeah. You know, I hope I will be happy, too. If I still was a believer or something like that. I will be happy to carry on the ministry like being a priest. But if I could have a partner or something.

Kieran Sure.

Britney I am honest with myself in that sense. I cannot believe that double life, you know. Yeah. And so the thing is, coming back to this, as I say, got anywhere with the formation and my understanding of being LGBT and that kind of stuff is still on the Bible. Which is, which is what everything starts like my church. It's a Christian church, isn't it? So it is still there on the Bible. So can you talk a little bit more about this? This is like being LGBT in that excluded from the origins of the Christianity.

Kieran No, it's not exclusive at all. Although many church leaders and Christians with a public profile make it. People think that it is. And people have had negative experiences, which is why some people feel they have to leave. And some of us feel like, well, actually, we want it to be a better place, so we're going to stay and work to make it the place that we want to see. But in terms of the Bible, you know, there's lots of misunderstanding, a lot of very simplistic understanding because, you know, a lot of people don't know that the word homosexual, for example, and the first time it was used in an English translation of the Bible was 1946, that translations in English before that it didn't exist. So there are many hundreds and millions of people of faith who believe that it's not purely black and white. And it and it is possible to bring our whole selves of sexuality and gender identity and bring our faith together.

Britney Yes. And I can actually we can do a podcast talking exclusively about the theology, because these are the really extensive topics, you know, like do we we need to like go step by step of, like you said. You know, I would like to also highlight that we cannot think about or standards or moral or current moral, with the moral of 2000 years ago, you know, so the meaning of some stuffs they were what they were by the time. But today I know this is sort of. Completely different stuff.

Kieran That's right.

Britney coming aside a little bit different is throwing the theory. I want to go a little bit more into practise. So we have another special guest here, which is Sam. Sam already has one episode with us and he told us about a little bit about the open table. But I want you to lead you the mic so you can speak with Sam about that pure experience to be part of this group. Is that all right?

Kieran That's beautiful. Yeah. Thank you for the opportunity.

Britney It up to you, Sam.

Sam Hi. Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Sam. I'm from Malaysia. I come to know Kieran from the Open Table Church in the St Bride. We shall live next door.in Birley Court

Kieran Thanks, Sam. Yeah. It's been been great to know you in these in these last few years. How long has it been since you came to the open table community?

Sam I think I know you from 2015 when I arrived in the Birley Court

Kieran Yeah. So, so I mentioned earlier that the st the the first open type of community began at St Bride's, which is next to Bailey Court, where many migrants are sent to live when they first arrive in Liverpool. And so we've supported, you know, many people and been privileged to get to know people like yourself as part of the open table community there. So how did you find out about the open table community? In the beginning.

Sam It was, I was living next door in Birley Court and I noticed the church the St Bride church. And one Sunday I walk in for the church service and I noticed there's a sign open table and I didn't know what is open table about. Then I start asking the member of the church as it was open table. It's for LGBTQIA. And honestly, I don't know what is this. LGBT is then for disclosure form. So then he says, Yeah, you can speak to other Nick Heron But that is more on the gay and lesbian. Yeah. Than, than, as they say we have a open table every fortnight for Sunday and the Sunday night so I started attending the open table was brilliant and I will enter will also be in the kitchen serving drinks like coffee and tea and biscuits. Then we know more and more people and I stopped to attend more open table up all the way up to men. Just the I mean, just take a minute. Just to open table. Yeah. And I know Campbell Nicola, Nicholas Campbell.

Kieran That's thank you. That's a really as a whistle stop tour of the story. So we'll just unpack a couple of moments then. So you mentioned LGBTQ. I said some folk listening might not know what all of those letters stand for. Yeah. So, so in the beginning, we, we started talking about being for LGBT Christians and then people came and said, What about me? You know, I'm intersex. I have an intersex condition. So I is for intersex or I'm asexual. That means I'm not I don't have a strong sexual attraction or even romantic attraction to people. And sometimes faith communities don't understand that. So people said, What about me? So that's LGBT, lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer or questioning intersex, asexual. And you mentioned Kieran and Warren. So Warren's my husband and we've been part of the open table Liverpool community since the beginning. And you also mentioned that you've been over to the community in Manchester. So, so the first open table community began 14 years ago and then seven years ago we started multiplying. So there's now six communities on Merseyside and three in Manchester and a lot more across the country. And so you've been to several of them, haven't you?

Sam Yes.

Kieran And you've been asked to speak some of them, too, to share your story?

Sam Yeah. I think a lot of people shared a story and I was invited to be in the ITV News and that and also those stood in for me. John Moore, student, invited me for live interviews. So so yes, people seem to know my name. So popular. Only yesterday. Recently I rented a kush for their tour to the police. Not released the driver said oh I feel that came across their name so is are you said and the LGBT is. Yeah that's how.

Kieran Yeah. So so so you won your leave to remain in this country but that wasn't easy for you was it. So how did, how did being part of the open table community help you in your journey.

Sam Is great because once I was with the LGBT groups, they really give me a very good support and they do me on the petition on life support, and they write a lot of letters to

support me. And finally I got my status to remain in UK for five years. Thanks so much for they church and the open table.

Kieran And well I mean your your your story was it was a really tough one wasn't it, because the judge was saying you can't possibly be gay because you don't have a partner.

Sam Exactly.

Kieran And yet we also supported a couple from Uganda. Two women. Yeah. And the judge said to them, well, you can't possibly be gay because you can't prove that you're a couple. I don't believe you're a couple. So the system is unjust, saying, well, you can't be gay because you're single where you can't prove that you're in a relationship, so therefore you can't be gay. You can't have it both ways. But the system isn't always it doesn't always feel very just and fair, does it?

Sam Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Kieran So you did very well. To persevere in a really tough situation. Has been a privilege to get to know you during that time.

Sam And also I really wanted things open table I was ambushed by the Echo newspaper were published by my paper and The Guardian.

Kieran Oh, that's right. Yes. You go into the national news.

Sam You had.

Kieran While you were while you were appealing against the decision, Tess, to send you back.

Sam Yes. Yeah. And also the merseyside radio also. I was on the live radio talk also.

Kieran But if I remember rightly though, Sam, didn't you come to the Sunday morning service? But, and then for a while you didn't know what open table was. So you didn't come right away, did you know? So so didn't you volunteer at the Pride Festival? Yes. And that, I think it was actually at the Pride Festival was the first time we met. St Bride Church. I didn't know what was behind me. I joined the march and then slowly I get to know the open table. This how we get to know

Kieran Yeah. And it's a lovely photograph, actually. We've got a couple of people took photographs of you as a volunteer walking alongside the group from St Bride's and Open Table in the other Christian churches that were in the park. So you're right next to us. Yeah. We didn't know each other then. Yeah. And, and we made that connexion after.

Sam Exactly.

Kieran And there was a, a writer published a book about being gay and Christian. And that photograph of you walking next to us was on the back cover. Do you remember that?

Sam Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think we got. God Love gay. I remember that.

Kieran God loves gays. Think that's what it is.

Sam This book. Yeah. And also I waited by the Legion that what the reader digest one in the way for a book so they want to put in.

Kieran I did not know that one but maybe we can share the details of that book with that photograph and afterwards. Yeah. And so, so obviously because you've moved to a new place to live now and see, you know, so and with COVID and everything, we haven't seen you as part of the community for some time. So yeah. Have you maintained your connexion with the faith and church in some way?

Sam Yes, I'm the mayor of a non we are in the open table we have the Zoom meeting. I do attend a Zoom meeting. Yeah. During the COVID. So we obviously we can't attend in person.

Kieran Yeah. But that's been has that been helpful to to join community online.

Sam Yeah. You still have for at least we can see a meeting going on and we know what is happening. Yeah, it's good.

Kieran Also because you were living in Kirby and travelling to the city centre even when you only had less than £5 a day. Yeah. So, so that was a huge commitment that you were making. And so it's good that we've been able to stay connected with people who maybe couldn't travel because of COVID, so because of low income or whatever it might be. And so what would you say to someone who might be thinking about whether to come to an open table community and give it a try?

Sam I always spoke out to people who I know for Many Hands One Heart I'll say this open table in some brought you can come in in the evening from first Sunday and it's a Sunday pop in have a meeting there and yeah I always tell them.

Kieran Yes rather you mentioned it means twice a month. So at the moment the first Sunday of the month is just on line. There used to be a bring and share meal and if hopefully we'll be doing that again before long. So anybody can join on Zoom and there's a Facebook group, Open Table Liverpool that you can get the details. And on the third Sunday we are back at St Brides since last summer thank goodness. And everybody is welcome to come and come and see. And so what what advice would you give to someone who may be new to Liverpool or maybe doesn't know if there's a faith community that supports them? What advice would you give them?

Sam Yeah, to be honest with you, I do enjoy a couple, a charity like Asylum Link and the Prescott one. Those people who are new from Liverpool. I just I give them more information about LGBT group in the St Bride church. Yeah. So you always will come to attend. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kieran Sam, it's a delight to catch up with you. It's been too long that we haven't been able to sit down in a room together for some time, so it's great to. Be with you again and thank you for sharing. I hope it's an inspiration to many who are listening. And and just to remind folk, it's not just Liverpool where there's a community. We've got one in St Helens and Sefton and Wigan and Widnes and Warrington in Merseyside, plus three in Manchester and one in Chester. And there's quite a few where people might be listening and not know that there's a community for them. And perhaps we can share the Open Table website with

podcast listeners later. So thank you so much for the opportunity, Sam. Let's go back to Britney.

Sam Thank you so much, Kieran.

Kieran Thank you. Over to you, Britney.

Britney Thank you, Kieran. Thank you. There was so lovely to hear it. Oh, my gosh. A little bit of nostalgia, you know, because we haven't been like in that room for over two years or something like that. I just remember Sam's story was like two years ago actually when we were living times getting his status and everything and is like just remembering everything right now it was like, oh my gosh.

Manono Telling you to.

Britney Times goes so far as.

Manono Time goes. Yes.

Britney And talking about time goes so fast. I have a little special guest here. You hear here. Boys are ready. It's Manono We already have an episode with her, actually. So this is like the revenge of the part 2 or Sams and Manono's revenge? Well, yeah, it's like catching up again after a long time aside and. Yes, Manono And something. One of their reasons better say I want you to be here with me is because in your episode we talk about your special relationship with God. You know, and I remember we have that conversation. I was like, Oh my God. I mean, I ra Britney believer, you're like, I'm a Jesus believer. And it's like, who is the biggest diva is more about a how that influenced in your life, you know, and I just want people sometimes to understand people lives their faith in different ways. Sam, for example. A He lives his faith inside the the open table with the community. And I remember I ask you about that. If you were part of the community, you say you went to a different church. Can you remind us a little bit about that?

Manono Yes. AM As I say, where I'm coming from is a very Christianity country and talking about LGBTQ it's abomination, really, and also myself. I'm coming from a very Christianity family. And you can't talk about this. Really, you can't. And by coming here, I've been going to the churches that the African churches that we're we don't really believe in LGBTQ. I've been to the open table in St Bride couple of time I do get emails and the only thing that I don't really go like normally supposed to do is because I don't feel protected a lot living in this country because whatever I do, I feel like the Home Office will challenge me in that one will take advantage from it. So for not feeling much protected, I'm also like still living in closet that I have to be going to my church. So that may be the people in my church can support me in a way, knowing that or in a way knowing that I'm not lesbian. I'm just someone I don't know who's coming to church. And yeah, so the thing that I've said I don't feel protected is because of the way, you know, my case is I'm exhausted. Now, I've just told you that my head doesn't function very well now. It's like this long waiting for home office is damaging my brain. That's what I've noticed, because I'm not going out anywhere. This since that pandemic, I've never been to change. I'm not going anywhere. It's hard for me to focus is hard for me to go to the meetings. I'm just staying at home. So when I met you, you told me about this. I was like, copy. But I was also telling you, Britney, my brain is kind of.

Britney You were like, Really? Tell me you called me on that date or that date.

Manono Tell me. Because yeah. So whatever I do because of Home Office, it's I don't feel protected at all. So if I'm coming out, if I've come out and. Home Office is not protecting me. So who's going to protect me this time? So I'm, like, kind of not knowing where to go. So should I go to my own people or should I just be wild like someone who doesn't have, like, not a human being?

Britney Yeah. Yeah, I understand that. Well, that's quite interesting, because, you know. Well, I, I guess as everyone in the world, things have changed a lot in lockdown. And as I say, it was two years since I since we first talking and you share us your experience. But I believe even now the experience of of living your faith is a little bit different. You know, you're like, you're not even going to the church, you're not even going to any other groups. So you're still living your faith in private right now, if I can say that. So that's the way you are trying to to live your your faith. I wanted to to ask if if you want in, because I think it's really important sometimes for a lot of people that listen that they are LGBT and sometimes the church are saying, like you said, that's abomination, that's that's a sin, that's a wrong. how you in your personal experience, how you find peace being LGBT, being lesbian like in warm is how you find peace. If the people that are supposed to guide you in the path of their religion are telling you are grown.

Manono And I'm just trying to do I mean, that's what I'm trying to do to me. This is the way I am, and I've tried to suppress it for a long time, and now I make up my mind to come out straight. And I cannot listen to what if if I say What if? Are they saying these things that they saying in charge? They've been saying since I was born and these things I've been suppressing myself since I was born cause I knew that I'm different from them since I was born. And so for me to listen to what they saying every day is like making my brain as will not work. Because before I was thinking on my mental on my own animal am I whatever name that they are calling people because of what they're saying. I'll I'll be there and I'll be hearing the names that they calling me though they don't know me that I'm that person. So it's really hard to be hearing the church that me talking like that, but also you going to praise God and yourself. You just want to live the way you are and it's between you and your God not to you and then, you know.

Britney Yeah, I think that the three touched me the way you said because I mean, I don't want to make this about me, but I can share and many LGBT people can agree that this this is something that is inside of us. Because I remember when I was a children and I watching old animes, Candy Candy, one of my first crush was Anthony. You probably don't know who is Anthony. It was a blonde, blue eyes guy. And the thing is, I know I was a children and since I was a children, I like it boys where I got that feedback from church. Like you said, that's a sin that's grose that abomination and is like like you said. Exactly. I really feel when you say I suppressed that for many years. For many years I suppressed that.

And even even I spoke a little bit about this before with Kieran and that I wanted to be a priest because I loved to serve communities. And by that time, the the best way I thought I could serve people or I could be in service. It was in the church within because there's something curious about this. How about salvadorean churches? And I'm when I do I side notes from this not trying to make it longer but the Salvadorian church has always been with the poor people and it's been an example worldwide with Monsignor Romero and everyone that Salvadorean priests and that kind of stalls they always chase a or they always protect the most vulnerable people. So I like that. I like to, to, to leave that service of, of with with the people, with this Salvadoran people. But anyways, as you said, there

was a moment like like exactly. You say that. What am I mean when you say no? I mean, this is me. I cannot hang myself. So if God creates me like that, why are they trying to catch me? Why are you trying to change me? Why? Trying to to heal me. Let's eat. Why? Then I got all this many questions inside my head. So it's it's. It's like a probably. You got that?

Manono It's not easy, because, look, as I told you before, I'm coming from a country where religion came from England. Mm hmm. To my country. That's how they teach us. By other. And coming to no Bible willing Bible. But most of the churches where I'm coming from is Church of England. So when I decided to come here so that I can be me the way I am, because I know back home I know that they will receive people in coming to know that be judging me in a way that I don't believe you. Mm hmm. You don't have a partner. What I'm going through right now. Maybe you can even defend me on that one. The life that I'm living now, who can be thinking of having a partner?

Britney I am. But I understand you. I understand you.

Manono I'm going through a lot.

Britney I know. I know. I know. I know.

Manono I don't go anywhere. Fine. If I have a partner, I want to live normal life. Who can live normal life with £35 and crushed?

Britney No, no. Of course they get you. And that was what was that was one of my struggles. Because there's one thing, okay, I want to cook to clarify, but to say one thing is I want and I can. So there's two different things, because when I was an asylum seeker, like you said, my self-esteem is still under the ground. But it was even lower a few a few years ago, I'm still trying to to build my self-esteem. But by that time when I got like no immigration status, I got no papers, no right to work, no money, not at all. I feel I have no value. So even people say, you're a great person, Britney. Oh, my guys, you're great, you're a sunshine. Blah, blah, blah. Inside, I feel I had no value. What can I offer to a partner if. If. Oh, my understanding, Harvey, I am my understanding a partner is someone you really you don't use a partner for sex. You use a partner to build out a project of learning.

Manono And be happy.

Britney A project of life. Exactly. So in that sense, when I was like in the same situation and he was like, what can he offer to this person? I'm going to be just a kind of way. I'm going to be just like a big luggage that they carry on and I don't want to be that. So I understand you in that sense. Even inside of me, I really wanted a guy to hug me and take care of me and feel protected. The other side of me is like, yes, you want that for yourself is because you want that because you don't have any value. You are, you know.

Manono Britney and me. I got it letter, black and white letter. Seven pages from home office that I'm not supposed to receive any gift from anyone only the uncash card, that made me scared alone. That alone made me scared because I know here in Britain Christmas they exchange gift easily student gift gifted the exchange gift. And there is some other thing here which I don't remember very well, the exchange gift, Mother's Day we exchange gift. So if I have my self I'm going out with someone. Do have to have gift to

exchange here. So I know they've told me that I'm not supposed to receive any gift. How can I give to Mother? How can I give gift to my loved ones.

Britney Mm. Yeah. Thats sick that sick and made me feel sick.

Manono That alone in my brain it goes every day that. Wow, so am I a human being or not.

Britney Yes.

Manono You know there would the how long have been in this country you only come knew. I've been in this country for 18 years.

Britney That's a long time.

Manono Ten years have all no money. How am I surviving? I depend on food banks. So for me to go get the partner somewhere, somewhere. And I'm telling the partner this is. These are the way I live. I get food from the food bank, I get help, money from people. But also they told me I should not receive anything from anyone. So if I start telling you that, you'll be scared. If I'll give you £10, is it not going to give you problems? Yes, it's going to give me a problem. Even me. I'm scared to receive that. Ten pounds. Yeah, I was in the home office coming to look. They'll stop that. The different part of whatever they get.

Britney Yeah, I got you that. Yeah. Because I got a little bit of problem when I was in my accommodation that someone gave me a fridge and they asked me, why do you have a fridge? And I was like, because the other guys here in the house, they stealing my food and they don't buy their food. The other guys, they, they use their money for buy, buy tobacco or buy cigarettes, buy drinks and that kind of stuff. And they steal my food because I do like the weekly grocery. And it was not fair that I use all my money for one week and then you seeing one disappear because they use that food to eat. Then it was like so someone was good enough to give me a fridge in the home office. They just came and said to say, Why do you have a fridge? You're supposed to have that the fridge needs to have a test and blah blah blah and was like, I didn't have this fridge because this is something I just made up or. Doing this because I want to have a fancy fridge and say, you, I have cold drinks here. I'm having these because the only money I have, I use it on food that is being is stealing how I supposed to eat. So the home office on they don't understand that kind of situation.

Manono So me, I'm a human being. I've been suppressed, my sexuality. Now they've been forcing me to leave this kind of life. Am I going to be like a human being?

Britney Yes, I got this.

Manono So these are things that you have to understand. So when I say that, I don't feel protected, that's what made me to live the way I'm living, like segregating myself from whatever is happening. I just want to be by myself because if I do something, the home office will take advantage from it. But I when I saw Sam doing whatever he was doing himself to help himself through the case. Really? Because me, my energy's gone. It's like I don't feel it. I've been here for a long time and I've studied here for a long time, and I've got whatever certificate that you can tell me for a long time now, I don't have that confidence of going out, being standing work. I love to give treatment to people, but now I'm scared because if I'm overdosing myself.

Britney Yeah.

Manono Can I go and work overdose someone else? So these are the things that I'm going through now in this country where I'm living. I've lived for a long time and this long time I don't think that even if the Home Office, they really, really human beings can be looking at someone struggling with suffering the way I am. I don't want to depend on food banks. I don't want to depend on people giving me whatever they give in. Whatever they give me is really expensive that I cannot manage to buy. But when they see that, they think I'm buying it with my own money. One time there was a time that SERCO went through my wardrobe and the next thing that I received that all you've got exclusive feelings or but people that they help me they are the ones that they give me my almost my everything is second hand from people that they put on in the wash. He didn't give it to me. I don't like to live that life because I've lived that life before that I was working to pay my bills, buying what if I want to buy it, help my child back home. But now I cannot even manage to do that.

Kieran Manono I'm really touched by your story. It's really, really profound and moving. And I really want to ask because I think your your story might help others to understand better in our churches, you know, our communities. Yeah. You you said that you'd been to the open table community in Liverpool sometimes.

Manono Yes.

Kieran Yeah, but you haven't kept going there and you've been part of another church community. So what is it that you've been worried about in going to one church and then feeling like you can't carry on with the open table community? What's that about?

Manono Oh, the the only thing that made me not to choose one church which is or open table church and it's because I'm out. I'm an LGBT lesbian woman, but because I'm not feeling more protected. So it's cause my own people, if they come to find out that, oh, she's a lesbian. Oh, have you seen how she goes to, to, to LGBT church? If I want help from these people, they will not help me.

Kieran Okay?

Manono So don't push me away that. Oh.

Kieran So the people in the other church who are who have been helping you might stop helping you.

Manono Yes. Okay. So help.

Kieran Yeah. That's really helpful to understand because I think you won't be the only one in that position and our communities would do well to learn from that. So the people who lead our communities around the country, there's places like Liverpool and Manchester and London where we we meet a lot of people who are seeking refuge in asylum and we want to be there for them as best as we can. And so what what advice would you give to the leader of an open table community or volunteers in an open type of community who who meet people who are seeking refuge in asylum? How could we help you better or how could we help you feel more protected?

Manono Yeah, we help that you can, because there is a lot of people out there who are like me. Some they're still in closet, some they're scared to come out because when I told them their story, my story, they would be like, Oh, wow. So really, I don't want that. I don't want that to happen to me. And because they get shocked like you the way you. But anyway, cases are different and that's what I know. I know I've been in this group many hands. One had for a long time and I've seen people getting their papers and they go in. And when one time I went to court. With my with my girlfriend. They refused my girlfriend, too. They told us right away that we don't believe you. And if you see my girlfriend now, she's, like, confused about the country that I was thinking that they can help me the way I am. Now they saying that they don't believe me. And who can I go and tell my story? Yeah. Do you think if I go and tell my story to people, they are ever going to believe me? Or are they going to understand me very well, like where I am right now? Which is true. That's the way I feel. If people that I believed. They're not giving me freedom. Yeah. So if I go on because I've been talking about my story to a lot of people who are professionals, they ask me questions, what can I do to help? I don't know. Yeah.

Kieran Well, it sounds like what you really need is for people to believe you. Yeah. And that's the perhaps the. Maybe the most important thing. Well, that's a huge lesson that we can all learn from that. And thank you for the opportunity to to ask and for you to be so open and honest. And I really am responded to what you were saying about the Home Office, not believing you can be in a relationship, but also how can you be in a relationship when you've got so little money and maybe so little opportunity to.

Manono To live.

Kieran Live? Yeah. Just to spend. Spend time with people in a in a relaxed way because of the challenges of your living situation. And it reminded me of the support we gave to Sam when the judge was saying, you can't be gay because you don't have a partner. Well, how can you have a partner when your life situation is.

Manono Such a mess? It's in a mess. Yeah. Talking about moving houses. I don't know. For ten years how many houses have lived that alone? You feel unsettled that you can't be relationship. I came here when I was young. Now I'm not getting younger. I'm getting older. When am I going to live like a human being from good life to badly? Now. I want to talk about this now. This is Rwanda now is going to happen. Yeah, I'm not stopping anything, but I'm trying to tell him that. Well, whatever they want to do, but LGBT. Imagine sending LGBTQ to Rwanda. It's way, it's abomination to live.

Britney I know we what we I want to carry on about that, but I think is right always everything so, so confusing and even the home office they being smart enough to not disclose who is going to be there who is going to be sent there and is like, that's really tricky.

Manono Don't forget the bill was saying before about LGBT people.

Britney Yes. So so the thing is they are doing is like they are really they are not making everything clear. So we cannot protest and that's even more dangerous.

Manono And this when they did when they announced this, I received a message from home office the very day that they are now the very same time that the Boris was saying it on TV, I received a text message that if I want help to send a voluntary return. You know,

they can help me to do so. Now, everyone knows that I'm living my life as a lesbian here in England, and I have to say, never voluntarily to go anywhere.

Britney Yeah, that's going nowhere.

Manono Is it my home country or Rwanda? How can if they want to take me to Rwanda, then they better just kill me here before I go.

Britney Yeah, I've been there. I mean, that was my thought. They tried to kill myself here, trying to go back to El Salvador. And.

Manono And with my age, I don't want to be thinking like that. Yes, but really, imagine taking the LGBTQ person to Rwanda, where Rwanda itself cannot accept LGBT.

Britney Yeah, it's really dangerous.

Manono And very dangerous. And they're not saying it was going to be because they're just saying, oh, if the application being successful, then you build your life or you can come to England. I don't think so. They are lying.

Britney Yeah, yes, that's a lie. And I would say I would like to carry on that conversation. You're probably inviting someone that is a solicitor or something like that that can help us with that very, very good idea.

Manono That we can.

Britney And but keeping us on track. Thank you. Be really generous, honestly. And as I said, I've been there, so I understand really well what is all that struggle? And sometimes the feeling of not being comfortable to defend yourself against these systems is just horrible. And I think we learn, I learnt here and hopefully people out there, they learn a lot today and we got to different experiences. You know, it's difficult, it is difficult for other asylum seekers to carry on the process like Sam with a community of support because Christian is a mandate, open table is based on that and love and supportive each others. We have the other side of the coin people like you or me that we struggle that long we don't have like the supportive network even like you said, you feel sometimes you are scared to feel rejected by your own people. So this is the two sides sometimes of the coin.

Manono And.

Britney Maybe there I think sometimes to leave that, to think and reflect should if you want to say a few words Kieran.

Kieran Here just to say thank you so much for the opportunity to to to hear your stories and to come alongside you for a little while and and to take the advice that you've both given us about how we can be better at believing your stories and supporting you and affirming you and loving you in the best way that we can. You know, it's it's a privilege to share this time with you today. Thank you.

Britney Yes. Thank you to everyone that spend this time with us. And as I say, I hope you learn something as we did today. So this is the mic drop and we are out.

Larry My name is Larry Achiampong, and thank you for listening to The Mic Drop. If you'd like to listen to previous episodes of the series or to tune in for more episodes coming forward, please check out heartofglass.org.uk Additionally, The Mike Drop can also be found at anchor.fm