

The Mic Drop, Season One, Episode Two: Ariane

Mo [00:00:01] Hi, another session of The Mic Drop podcast. This is Mo, Mohammed, I work with the people seeking asylum and refugees. And I've been working with the Many Hands One Heart since the start of it, it is a supporting agency or a supporting group with the LGBT+ people seeking asylum and refugees.

[00:00:21] And one of our popular members of the group, you know that is, adds lots of spice and colour to the group is Ariane, and Ariane is here,

[00:00:31] I'm going to talk to her about her aspirations and her life.

[00:00:35] Welcome to Mic Drop podcast Ariane.

Ariane [00:00:41] Thank you.

Mo [00:00:41] How are you today?

Ariane [00:00:42] I'm all right. How are you today?

Mo [00:00:44] I'm good.

[00:00:45] You know, just basically first, tell us how old are you and where you come from.

Ariane [00:00:53] I'm 25 and I come from Cameroon

[00:00:57] in Africa. Yeah.

Mo [00:00:57] Yeah. And English is not your first language, is it?

Ariane [00:01:01] Basically both like English and French, cause it's like both languages spoken by..

Mo [00:01:08] And when you were a child, you know,

[00:01:11] I know that you know, you were telling me a lot about that you'd really liked studying and you were very good at maths. Is that right?

Ariane [00:01:18] Yeah.

Mo [00:01:20] And what did you want to do when when you know, when you know, you grew up, what you wanted to be?

Ariane [00:01:26] I always wanted to be like doing engineering. Yeah.

[00:01:32] But things didn't happen the way you planned?

Ariane [00:01:35] Things don't always happen the way you plan.

Mo [00:01:36] I want to just ask you a little bit about your sexuality, because that's one of the reasons that you, your reason that you got status as a refugee.

[00:01:47] What are you, how do you identify yourself?

Ariane [00:01:49] As a lesbian, yeah.

Mo [00:01:53] And what is a life as a lesbian life back in Camaroon?

Ariane [00:01:58] It's basically like not existence cos

[00:02:03] most people don't accept it or don't consider that as being a normal thing to be. So I guess life is not possible there and it's a bit stressful. You go through a lot and it's just not normal to be a lesbian there.

Mo [00:02:20] Is it illegal as well or is it?

Ariane [00:02:22] Yeah it's illegal,

[00:02:23] you can be sentenced to like up to 2 to 10 years imprisonment. And as well as the population public whipping or anything else, like it's not accepted there.

Mo [00:02:36] And that's one of the reasons you left your country?

Ariane [00:02:38] Yeah.

Mo [00:02:39] Yeah. And when you left your country, I believe you had a relative here, is that right?

Ariane [00:02:44] Yeah. My auntie.

Mo [00:02:45] Yeah. And you went to stay with your auntie is that right?

Ariane [00:02:48] Yeah, I was staying with my auntie for up to a year and eight month. She lives in Manchester.

Mo [00:02:55] And if I remember rightly, you told me about your auntie when she finds out about your sexuality, how did she act?

Ariane [00:03:02] She didn't appreciate it, she was just like 'No', she couldn't believe this, like this isn't happening in her family, which is my family as well. But she was like, no she couldn't just accept it.

Mo [00:03:15] What happened to you then?

Ariane [00:03:16] She basically told me to go out of her house and that she couldn't live that influence around her kids.

Mo [00:03:25] So did you. Yeah. So you were homeless?

Ariane [00:03:28] Yeah. Like for two weeks.

Mo [00:03:30] Two weeks. Where did you sleep? What did you do?

Ariane [00:03:33] I was just wandering around because I had some friends but we're like that close

[00:03:37] to go to their places or to their homes. But I was just basically like in the town wandering around and everything.

Mo [00:03:46] So you lived basically lived in the street?

Ariane [00:03:48] Yeah.

Mo [00:03:51] I hope you don't mind me asking you, how did you get money to eat or stuff like that.

Ariane [00:03:57] Basically, like there are like some charities, organisations in Manchester, that offer like free meals and free food, like shelter places where you can go and in churches as well, where you can have like free meals. And just that's just it.

Mo [00:04:13] I forgot to ask you about your parents. Did they accept or did they know? Did accept your sexuality?

Ariane [00:04:18] No, they don't. They definitely don't.

Mo [00:04:20] So you couldn't ask for help from your family?

Ariane [00:04:23] No, from nobody from my family, no.

Mo [00:04:25] You really didn't know, is that right, you didn't really know that when you come to UK, you can actually seek asylum on your sexuality.

Ariane [00:04:34] Yeah. I didn't know that I wasn't aware.

Mo [00:04:36] How did you find out?

Ariane [00:04:38] There was this girl, Pamela, I met her in Manchester once and she's the one who advised me to go and claim asylum. That's basically what I did. Because she's the one who told me, oh no, you can claim asylum and everything.

Mo [00:04:51] And they would send you to Liverpool?

Ariane [00:04:54] Yeah, I went to London, I claimed asylum and they sent me to Liverpool like three days after.

Mo [00:05:02] I do remember that, I do remember you coming to the group. You weren't in a happy place, was that right?

Ariane [00:05:09] Oh, I was in a very dark place, like I wasn't in a happy place at all.

Mo [00:05:14] Yeah. And do you think the group Many Hands One Heart help you in any way to sort of...

Ariane [00:05:19] Greatly, like,

[00:05:21] really, they really help me like emotionally as well as socially. And also I can say even intellectually, because I was not feeling so isolated anymore. And I knew like I had more knowledge from taking parts in meetings from the group and everything.

Mo [00:05:39] Sorry to interrupt you.

Ariane [00:05:41] No, it's fine.

Mo [00:05:41] I just want to say then you start having a relationship with another member of the Many Hands One Heart.

Ariane [00:05:47] Yeah, we started like dating and stuff.

[00:05:53] Yeah.

Mo [00:05:54] And that was probably the first time you had openly...

Ariane [00:05:57] Yeah. Because obviously when you're coming from somewhere where it's not openly accepted you don't necessarily think it's going to be accepted here as well, you still have those like the fears, thinking of, or probably you're still scared or you don't think it's allowed or..yeah

Mo [00:06:16] Your case was quite interesting, you know, the reason I would I'm saying that is because you had a lot of evidence that about your sexuality back home.

Ariane [00:06:27] Yeah.

Mo [00:06:27] There was an article about you in the newspaper in french. And also, there was no problem with proving your sexuality. And also sexuality, as you said, is, homosexuality is illegal in your country. So there are two reasons that they should,

[00:06:44] you should have been accepted and your case should have been accepted at the start. Can you tell us why you weren't accept at the first, when you applied?

Ariane [00:06:54] Yeah, I think when I went for my interview with the Home Office they were like, they sent me a letter. And in the letter they were saying, giving me the reasons of refusal and the most, the main reason was like your documents are in french so we don't understand it,

[00:07:11] so we can't give you asylum because we don't we don't consider the documents...

Mo [00:07:14] Did you have solicitors?

Ariane [00:07:15] I didn't have a solicitor, I just went, like...

Mo [00:07:18] So you didn't have solicitors?

Ariane [00:07:19] No.

Mo [00:07:19] And you had no money to translate your documents.

Ariane [00:07:23] No, I didn't have money.

Mo [00:07:23] And the Home Office didn't help you at all with that?

Ariane [00:07:26] No. So basically they said your documents are in French, so we won't consider these, and you don't have a partner, we won't consider this and that it just it, those are just the two reasons they gave.

Mo [00:07:40] After that, your appeal you got solicitors.

Ariane [00:07:44] Yeah.

Mo [00:07:44] Can you just tell us what happened, how did it happen, you know, because I come back to you joined the group, sometime in March was it?

Ariane [00:07:55] Yeah. I guess it was March 18th.

Mo [00:07:58] And we had the event in May. What was the event?

Ariane [00:08:03] It was IDAHOBIT I guess it was in 2018, right? Yeah. National Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. Yeah. And I sang there and I guess that's where, that's where it started, that's where you met this Jo Berger (sp?) I don't remember her name..

Mo [00:08:22] Just basically this story, if you don't mind me telling people.

Ariane [00:08:26] Yeah, it's fine.

Mo [00:08:27] It was just you sang and your voice was unbelievable. A lot of people cried because I actually told them about your story, not a lot, and then many English people that were in the meeting group, they started offering us help from all around UK, not just from Liverpool. And then you find a solicitor. And they translated your documents. And then you were accepted. So your talent there, you know, helped you.

Ariane [00:08:55] Yeah I guess.

Mo [00:08:56] And I like to at the end of this, I like you to give us a song, if you don't mind. You know, I've just tried to because you're a good, really you've got a fantastic voice. Have you actually tried to, you know, go on to television or, you know, to, you know, performing in a higher profile event?

Ariane [00:09:16] I was referred by I don't remember who it was but I was referred to Britain's Got Talent. Yeah. And I did the auditions and they accepted me and they asked me to send a second video, which I did but I guess at that stage it was mainly about my status here, because I wasn't having my papers yet, so that's the reason I didn't go forward.

Mo [00:09:42] OK, since you've got your status, you're still in a relationship, is that right with the same girl?

Ariane [00:09:46] Yeah.

Mo [00:09:49] And also, you know, one of the things you always wanted to do when you were a child was to go to university and to study.

[00:09:57] Is that right? What are you doing now, what's happened since?

Ariane [00:10:02] I'm actually studying at Edge Hill University, which is in Ormskirk in Lancashire, so I'm doing Nursing, first year adult nursing, general nursing.

Mo [00:10:14] Are you looking for a job?

Ariane [00:10:18] Yes, I've been applying for these jobs like Support Worker or Student Nurse at Royal Hospital. But they told me there's going to be vacancies around August, so while I'm waiting I'm just trying to apply for Support Working with some agencies yeah.

Mo [00:10:37] And apart from Many Hands One Heart are you do you have any other activities to help other people seeking asylum, refugees or immigrants?

Ariane [00:10:48] Yeah, because I go to this group in Manchester called African Rainbow Family, they've got to offer support to LGBTQ+ people and basically they do meetings once a month as well. I equally go to this, also a member of a campaign of These Walls Must Fall.

Mo [00:11:09] What is it about?

Ariane [00:11:09] Which is a campaign against immigration detention. Because I've, I have friends who have been to detention for six months, or people who died being in detention. So it just basically campaign which campaigns and against immigration detention. And with the aim of closing the immigration centres.

Mo [00:11:32] Well there are lots of stories about it, first of all I think people should know the UK is one of the only countries in Europe, or the EU, that there is no time limit in regard to their detention centres, so you can be there as long as they want you to be.

Ariane [00:11:47] Yeah there's no time limit.

Mo [00:11:47] And also there is a lot of stories about sexual assaults and abuse. And I was actually very proud to see you in the university do a talk about that, you know, and I wasn't aware that you were doing the campaigning. Where did you get my last question before you start singing is where you gonna see yourself in five years time?

Ariane [00:12:10] I see myself probably having graduated from uni, working, moving into a bigger house than my new flat and getting married, I don't know, I don't know yet, but just basically...

Mo [00:12:28] Are you in a happier place? I know that your life is not very easy because you're studying university, travelling and financially still got a lot of problems, but are you a lot happier now than you were two years ago?

Ariane [00:12:40] Oh, wow. I'm like, extremely happier than when I was like two years ago. But the more you go further you still have some issues or problems which is inevitable. But yeah, I'm more happier. I think I'm in a better place. So I guess happy.

Mo [00:12:56] Personally, I think you give a lot of hope to a lot of other LGBT+ people seeking asylum, because, you know, basically you had a lot of difficulties and you're here, there and you're smiling. Will you give us a song now?

Ariane [00:13:13] Ok.

Mo [00:13:13] What are you gonna sing?

Ariane [00:13:16] 'You are the reason' by Callum.