

LBE 2009 – Migration

Episode 4: Asylum Seeker

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Characters:

Voice 1: Narrator, female

Voice 2: male, official attitude

Inserts:

Bobby (English, 1 German): male, 33 yrs

Eddie (German, 1 take only): male, +/- 36 yrs

Jean Pierre (French, 1 take only): male, +/- 35 yrs

Intro:

Hello! Welcome to “Learning by Ear” and to the series about migration. In this programme we will introduce you to Bobby, a young African who has been living in Germany for six years now. When he came to Germany, he asked for asylum. All this time he has been waiting for a working permit. Join us now to find out how life is for somebody whom asylum has been denied!

1. SFX: Typing machine

2. O-Ton Bobby:

„My name is Bobby.“

3. SFX: Typing machine

4. O-Ton Bobby:

„I'm 33 years now.“

5. SFX: Typing machine

6. O-Ton Bobby:

„I was born in Ghana.“

7. SFX: Typing machine

8. O-Ton Bobby:

“I'm in Germany since 2003.”

9. SFX: Typing machine

10. Voice 1:

It must have been like this, more or less, when Bobby legalized his stay in Germany. That happened in 2005, after the young African had already been in the country for two years.

11. O-Ton Bobby:

“Where I found myself is Europe, I don’t know the country, (...) white is white. (...) Because I’m the first time in Europe I don’t know here is Deutschland, here is Italy or here is Holland or here is Spain until I found out that I’m in Deutschland.”

12. Voice 2:

From 1987 to 1992 the number of asylum applications increased drastically in Germany. Therefore, on July 1st, 1993 a fundamental change in German asylum law came into force. One of the items added to the law concerns the entry into the Federal Republic of Germany. Anyone entering from a “safe third country” no longer has the right to be granted political asylum. All countries in the European Union, and Norway, and Switzerland and some other countries are considered as “safe third countries”.

13. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

14. Voice 1:

Bobby came by ship, one with containers. He doesn’t know how long the trip took. He just doesn’t remember. Once he’d arrived in Europe, someone took him by car to the North of Germany.

15. O-Ton Bobby:

“That person told me ‘Here is Hamburg! So you can find your way. Ask any black man if you need help. For me I just do my work. So I don’t know you, you don’t know me’.”

16. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

17. Voice 1:

Bobby stayed in Hamburg, he recalls, for about eight months, from October 2003 until the beginning of Summer 2004. There he earned his money begging from the passers-by in the streets. But he wanted to improve his way of life. Thus he moved from the harbour city of Hamburg to Essen, a centre of industry in the west of Germany. In Essen he didn't stay for long either. But that belongs to the past, that was in 2005. Since then, he's been living in Cologne.

18. SFX: Sweeping, piece of cloth in the water

19. O- Ton Bobby:

“I'm a serious worker (...), you have to work and be serious about everything that you are doing. Cause if it's not like that, you cannot sit down and say I will get food to eat. (...) If I'm not working, I'm sick.”

20. Voice 1:

Bobby lives in a special home for asylum seekers on the outskirts of the city of Cologne. Everyone living there helps to maintain the house, an old building where dozens of people from all over the world stay.

21. Voice 1:

While some take care of the garden or the kitchen, the Ghanaian cleans the stairs three times a week. It is the only job he is allowed to do at the moment.

22. SFX: Moving the bucket with foot

23. Voice 2:

An application for asylum will be considered as „obviously unfounded“, if the applicant comes from a so-called safe country of origin. A “safe country of origin” is a country where, in the view of the German government, there is neither political persecution nor inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment. Ghana is considered to be such a “safe country of origin”.

24. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

25. Voice 1:

When he arrived in Cologne, Bobby followed the advice of the man who had brought him to Hamburg: he met a fellow countryman and went to stay with him. Today, he says, he doesn't know where that person is.

26. O-Ton Bobby:

“One day I was inside room, police came to control. They asked me, my passport, I said “I don't have that!”. The same day I was arrested. (...) I was shocked because how people have to go to prison, I never steal, I never kill, I never commit anything. Because of that paper I was shocked.”

27. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

28. Voice 1:

The officials interviewed him in prison every two weeks. He stayed there for eight months. After being released he got the status of being “tolerated”.

29. Voice 2:

Article 16a of the German Constitution only applies to people who are politically persecuted. These are individuals who because of their race, religion, nationality, adherence to a certain social group or political ideology, suffered from persecution by their government or were in danger of being persecuted with significant probability at the time they left their country. Once asylum is denied, the person is tolerated in the Federal Republic of Germany until the state finds a way to send him back to his home country. This condition – called “Duldung” in German - can lead to a sudden deportation or it can last for years.

30. O-Ton Bobby:

“Duldung (toleration) is like you are shaking, but the shake is like one leg is outside on the street and one leg is in your car. So anything can happen: either you are moving your car or some car will come and take you.”

31. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

32. Voice 1:

Bobby is an auto mechanic – that’s his profession and gift, as he says. He didn’t get asylum in Germany because the ones who he

claims persecuted him were neither state officials nor close collaborators of the state.

33. O-Ton Bobby:

“Somebody tried to send some people to try to kill me. Because of I’m just getting my business so successful and his business is not going up, then he tried to attack me. (...) When I get the call from my phone, they told me that “This one is serious, if you come back your life is gone!”, so I say “Anywhere I will find my peace. (...) But because of no security I say – I’m not safe, I have to leave the country.”

34. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

35. Voice 1:

Bobby was outside his workshop when a colleague called to warn him. And he never went back again. One of his uncles organized everything: he let him stay at his place, paid for the trip, set the day of departure. Since then – in all these years of waiting – Bobby has learnt to live patiently.

36. O-Ton Bobby:

“I don’t know what God is doing to me but I always think that, if I go back it is ok for me, God will prove it, if I’m staying here, it’s good for me, God will allow me to stay, that’s why I’m staying. But I don’t know what is happening tomorrow and I don’t know what will happen the next tomorrow also. So (...) I’m just waiting for God to answer my prayers.”

37. Voice 2:

In 2008 approximately 22,000 people sought asylum in Germany. 3,856 applicants came from Africa, more than the year before. Most of the African applicants came from Nigeria, followed by Algerians and Eritreans. Ghana occupied the fourth place with 206 requests.

38. Music “No woman no cry”, then fade under

39. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

40. Voice 1:

Whenever the weather allows, Bobby spends long hours in front of the house. If it rains or snows, he remains in his room – normally listening to music.

41. O-Ton Bobby:

“I’m always thinking, thinking. Thinking is not good for me. I’m not feeling good inside me. (...) The music I play is the music give me hope, give me happy and give me life.”

42. SFX: Bobby singing “No woman no cry”, then fade under

43. Voice 1:

His room is limited to twelve square metres, packed with things. There are travel bags with pieces of clothing poking out of them. Shoes of every colour and for every season are spread all over the little space that is still free on the floor. Coats are hanging over one another on the door hook. But these things, or the majority of them, don’t belong

to Bobby. They are from a friend, whom he met in the African football team of the city.

44. O-Ton Jean-Pierre_12, french:

I don't think – I know that he is a good person. Because I've known him for a long time, since I had my own company here and he works well. He's my friend, therefore it is his right to come to my company. But only to help me, not to get a salary."

45. Voice 1:

Whether he got money at his friend's or not remains unknown. But as the maintenance worker at the asylum seekers' home puts it: Bobby is not a person to get into trouble.

Today is Sunday and for Bobby it's time to go to church.

46. SFX: Bobby talking to his friend:

...Ok, see you later, ok bye!

47. SFX: Bobby leaving his room and closing the door

48. SFX: Footsteps leaving the house, fade under

49. Voice 1:

Sunday is the most important day of the week for Bobby. For the mass, he untied his plaits – he had had them for weeks – and put on a black suit with a white shirt. In the hand he carries a plastic bag. Inside is the Bible and a clean pot. He wants to return the pot to a lady who prepared some African food for him the week before.

50. O-Ton Bobby:

“I call her Mama, Mama. So she always calls me son: ‘Today I want to give you something to eat.’ That’s why she gives me this food.”

51. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

52. Voice 1:

Mama also goes to the Pentecostal Church, a few bus stops away from Bobby’s home. The mass takes place in a cultural centre at 2:30 in the afternoon, every Sunday. The congregation is exclusively African. That’s why Mama understands what Bobby misses: African food, for instance.

53. O-Ton Bobby:

“You have much food there. (...) You have fu-fu, we have different fu-fu we eat, is not like here Kartoffel and all this thing. Is not like that. Let me say, cassava fu-fu, plantain fu-fu, cocoyam fu-fu, all this thing you get it here, it’s expensive. So you have to force yourself to eat the deutsche (*German*) food. And sometimes you don’t feel the taste. But because of your condition you have to force it to eat it. But sometimes you miss what your mother used to give to you.”

54. SFX: Typing machine, fade under

55. Voice 1:

While Bobby is waiting for the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to decide whether he may stay or whether he has to leave the country, he lives from day to day without a clear ambition. He keeps on working, and waiting, and sharing the same bus and the

same train and the same supermarkets with the German people. Until the day comes when he gets his work permit from the German authorities and then he knows he's inside the car – with both legs. Or not.

56. O-Ton Bobby:

“End of my story!”

57. SFX: Typing machine, suddenly stops

Outro:

Bobby told his story to Marta Barroso. And this is also the end of today's “Learning by Ear” programme about migration.

If you wish to find out more about migration issues in Germany, you can go to the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees at:

www.bamf.de

And if you would like to listen again to this or other programmes made by “Learning by Ear”, go to our website at:

www.dw-world.de/lbe

And don't forget to tune in again for our next episode. Good bye.