

LBE 2009 – Migration

Episode 5:

Students in Germany

Author: Florent Kossivi Tiassou

Editor: Thomas Mösch

Translator: Anne Thomas

Characters:

Narrator, male

Inserts (French):

Muriel, young woman

Amélie, young woman (1 insert only)

Intro:

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series about migration between Africa and Europe. Today, we are meeting Muriel, a young lady from Cameroon who came to Germany to continue her university studies.

1. Atmo conversation

2. Narrator:

Armed with a Master's degree, Muriel arrived in Germany in January 2006 to pursue her studies in business economics. Immediately, she was forced to confront the realities of student life in a new country. Despite everything she is going through, this 25-year-old Cameroonian student had a fit of hysterics when we asked her to tell us about her first days in Germany two years ago.

3. O-Ton Muriel (French)

I was so excited the first time I saw snow. It was like heaven on earth. It was all so beautiful. Unfortunately, I was somewhere where it snowed so much that I hated snow three months later.

4. Narrator:

Welcomed by the cold, Muriel did not warm up when faced with the realities on the ground. The young Cameroonian first lived in a student hostel in Essen, right in the heart of Germany's western Ruhr industrial region. Her room was barely half the size of her room in the Cameroon. But that was not a problem and six months later she passed her first test – the language test. Now, she thought she could really start her studies at the economics faculty of the University of Essen-Duisburg. But she was in for a surprise. Her language was up to scratch but her Master's degree was not enough. It was difficult for Muriel to get her African certificates acknowledged. The university refused to put her in the Master's

course. When she talks about the early days at university, her smile disappears.

5. O- Ton Muriel (French)

I had to go into the Bachelor's course do take some exams first. I had to spend three or four semesters doing that. So basically I was doing a Bachelor's that I already had although I already had a Master's.

6. Narrator:

Finally, the young student got a Master's place at the University of Bochum, a city not far from Essen.

7. O-Ton Muriel (French)

Something that my old university had not even offered me! On the contrary, they had tried to bring me back to the lowest level.

8. Narrator:

But the fact that she had found a place at Bochum has not solved all her problems. In Germany, university fees now have to be paid for. Muriel doesn't receive any help from her country as opposed to German students who sometimes get a grant, which is called Bafög. She has to pay her fees herself.

9. O- Ton Muriel (French) *(if you need to shorten the script, cut this insert out)*

I always have to skip certain subjects so that I can work but I don't do that during exams because we're in Germany. It's an organized country and a student has never been kicked out for

not paying the rent. Sometimes I'm behind with the rent but I don't mind because I've got a goal to reach.

10. Narrator:

But there's a problem: in Germany, foreign students are not allowed to work more than 90 days a year. But Muriel is persistent and absolutely wants to get her German Master's. She remembers the problems students have in her home country. This could explain why European states don't necessarily want to automatically accept qualifications obtained in Africa.

11. O-Ton Muriel (French)

I came here because I thought a European education would be better than what we get at home. My old university for example – there were about 2,000 of us in the management faculty and the lecture hall had about 700 places. So you had to get there really early to get a place and you could never sit down if you got there late. Our lecturers always go to Europe, which means that lectures don't always take place. Here university education is more structured than at home. At home, we study without knowing what goal we'll reach tomorrow. In Europe, the question is: "What am I going to specialize in?"

12. Atmo – keyboard

13. Narrator:

At the university of Essen-Duisburg, Muriel has specialized in finance. There are lots of facilities for the students. Muriel spends a lot of time in her university library. There is a good IT section and students can do their research easily. This was not the case in Cameroon:

14. Atmo+voice clip Muriel (French)

(at the library)

..... As you can see, this is our computer in the library, I can click here and the library gives us access to all the books, as you can see. Any fee-paying student can easily take out books –
(sound of books)

15. Narrator:

Muriel's workplace is just a few meters away. She recently found a job at the university where she works two hours, three times a week. This helps her to finance her studies and she also sends some money to her relatives:

16. O-Ton Muriel (French)

I got this job, I had to read a lot, do some Internet research. You have to look in order to find... *(Atmo her phone rings)*

Ah! Just a moment please... a phone call. Yes, hello? (...) Hello mum, yes I'm fine, very well. (...) Wow – Thanks for thinking of me this evening. (...) No I just got back and I'm tired. *(Continues in one of the languages of Cameroon)*... (...)

(Continues in French) :

...Yes, that was my mum calling me. She wanted to find out how I was. We haven't spoken for a few days and our relatives in Africa are always worried. They have to call every two or three days to find out how everything is. She asked me if I needed her help and told me to call her if I did. Poor woman, I can't tell her about everything here. When they call me I don't feel as if I've been abandoned, I feel I still belong to a family.

17. Narrator:

Muriel's parents and family are in Cameroon but the young woman says that she is beginning to feel at home in Germany. She has solid links to the university and in her student hostel. Links that have helped her to integrate more:

18.O-Ton Muriel (French)

It is really important to make German friends and not only to talk to them and improve one's German but also so that they can meet us. They know how the university works and they help us. Sometimes we don't understand something and they help us. Our German friends tell us what certain things mean.

19. Music (free choice)-----

20. Narrator:

This is our second meeting with Muriel, two years later. Everything is going very well for the young woman:

21. O-Ton Muriel (French)

My studies are coming along nicely, I'm in the final stage of my Master's and I'm writing my dissertation. That wasn't easy at the beginning.

22. Narrator:

There are many African students who do not manage to cope as well as Muriel and abandon their studies. Some of them become illegal immigrants and others have to go back home. Everyone in Muriel's student hostel has a different story to tell. Amélie is Nigerian-Togolese. She is Muriel's neighbor but she has been in the hostel longer:

23.O-Ton Amélie (French.)

We met here at the student hostel. She told me about her problems. And I understood that this was a woman who knew how to fight her way through life. She worked in Düsseldorf. You could tell she was determined. She was ready to accept any job so she could pay her student fees. All the foreigners have the same problems. I also did. Often the systems are not the same or they don't recognize our level and try to keep us behind.

24. Music (free choice)-----

25. Narrator:

A few months after her arrival in Germany, Muriel almost went back to Cameroon:

26. O-Ton Muriel (French)

At the beginning, I wanted to go back because I was disappointed but now that I've integrated I don't want to. I want to achieve something before going home otherwise what will I have brought to my country from Europe?

27. Narrator:

One of the links that continues to unite Muriel with her country, despite her European exile, is the food. She doesn't want to swap her Cameroonian food for German sausages.

28. Atmo Kitchen

29. Narrator:

In her little kitchen at the entrance to her flat, there are vegetables from Africa. They might be expensive but she buys them to bring variety to her plate:

30. O-Ton Muriel (French)

As you can see, there's rice and a little sauce. At lunch, I eat German food and in the evening I eat African food. That's the way I like it. Old habits die hard!

31. Narrator:

If she gets homesick, she puts music on – Makossa is a type of Cameroonian music:

32. Atmo (Music+voice clip (Muriel, French.) :

To be honest, I wish I could just go home for the night and come back tomorrow.

Music up

Outro:

We've come to the end of our program. The author of this episode is Florent Kossivi Tiassou. You can listen to all the Learning by Ear programs broadcast by Deutsche Welle by visiting our website:

www.dw-world.de/lbe

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

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