“I ask myself, is it because I am a refugee? Because I am a woman of color? Or because I am LGBTQI+?”
Stories from Samos LGBTQI+ Group

Liliane's Story: "Never lose hope, the world is big, you'll be accepted somewhere"

You can read Liliane’s Story in her native French below. Here I am, a member of the LGBTQI+ community and I have been granted international protection in Greece. However, sometimes I wonder if Greece has really accepted me?
Nothing is easy for me. I have been traumatized by the police, by the people who insult me in English in the stores, by some stores who don't even want me to go in to make purchases and finally traumatized by my own bank who asked me to leave because Greeks were waiting.

I ask myself, is it because I am a refugee? Because I am a woman of color? Or because I am LGBTQI+?

I have been living in the camp for 18 months now. It all started after I registered with the police. Left to my own devices, I met a Congolese woman, asked her for help and to spend the night at her place, she accepted and told me that it was not free. We agreed that I would have to pay 30 euros a month and that's what I did. At the beginning, everything went well until the day when she asked me why I left my country. I told her that I was homosexual and that if I stayed in Cameroon they would kill me. She was very angry and started to insult me and chased me out of her tent. I was humiliated and rejected, and it was not finished, she went to tell almost all the camp that I was a lesbian. I was insulted everywhere, I couldn’t go out anymore, nor go to get food, I was afraid of everyone's looks. I went on hunger strikes, I had only one idea: to kill myself; but when I thought about my children I didn't want to leave them orphans. I became sick and went to Med'EqualiTeam, there I found a very kind doctor, she saw me frustrated and stressed and said 'Talk to me about everything, you are safe here, everything will be confidential' and I remember in the office I saw a brochure about LGBTQI+, I knew I could talk about everything. She helped me see a lawyer and get into the LGBTQI+ group. I went on Saturday. At the first meeting the welcome was very warm and meeting members of my community made me so happy. I always waited impatiently for Saturday to go there. I learned a lot about my community, health, etc... And I will always thank the project coordinator for his respect, courtesy, sympathy and love towards us. I made very good friends there with whom we shared a lot despite our very difficult conditions in the camp, but at least we could talk about everything without fear of being rejected or stigmatized.

Then I was raped in the camp by two men, I had to leave the camp and was entrusted to the Diotima association. I was in a state of depression, I consumed enough alcohol to chase away the feelings of fear and shame, because once again I had been humiliated. I didn't know what to do anymore, I was sinking and covid prevented me from seeing my psychologist to talk about everything, the phone sessions were not enough, I was sinking day after day. After Diotima, I was sent to IRC where I could see my psychologist face to face, she told me that I needed to see a psychiatrist, I went to treatment and everything is great now, according to the psychologist's report. As always at camp, we are discriminated against a lot. My two girl friends who are in a relationship were physically assaulted and it panicked all of us. I was very afraid because they told my friends, "We know you all and know that we will kill you all." I still live in fear and when I saw their injuries I felt very sad because it can still happen to anyone. We get rejected a lot and sometimes I ask myself this question, what did we do so wrong? Is it just because of our sexual orientation?
**My whole family rejected me, for who I was.** Since the age of 12 I have been attracted to girls, but I had my first experience at 23. All these years I have been stifled. At the age of 9 I was sent into a forced marriage, it was at the age of 20 that I was able to escape from there, from the clutches of my parents. I was physically and sexually enslaved so that they could earn money from me. **I suffered the worst humiliations possible and at least today I have my freedom even if I have a very long way to go, I know I will get there.**

My story is very long, here is the short version. I ask my LGBTQI+ community not to abandon me, I am moving forward but I don’t really know where I am going. I need to integrate, have a job to support myself and at the same time Greece traumatizes me a lot due to the way in which I am treated in Samos. I hope the future will be different, otherwise I ask my community to take me to any country. I dream of having a girlfriend, traveling and living freely.

Aled’s Story “Welcome to the Open”

"FOR THE ONES SUFFERING IN SILENCE, FOR THE ONES WHO ARE AFRAID AND IN DANGER NEVER GIVE UP"

**THIS IS ALED'S STORY:** "WELCOME TO THE OPEN"

@SAMOSLGBTQIGROUP
READ THE FULL STORY: LINK IN BIO
My name is Aled, i'm gay and i hate myself for it, here is why....

2 years ago, when i was 23, I was accidentally outed as gay and I had to flee home. I had some time to see my bestfriends and say goodbye before leaving them for good... The same goes to my twin sibling and my very old parents who would never accept seeing a homosexual person on TV/internet let alone a family member sharing the same roof.

It escalated so fast. I literally had to arrange the flight / goodbye gathering altogether - in the airport. Even though I was leaving my family, my job and just before I was due to start my masters I felt so lucky I could make it out safe and alive before the news spread. However, little did i know, it would be even worse in Turkey.

Too many bad things happened there. I try hard not to remember them, not to think about them... but i will never forget.

I will never forget when the Turkish Coastguards locked me up with men who claimed to be from a terrorist organisation in the same cell. That first night they woke us all up and made us pray, only after forcing me to take off my earring and throwing it in the toilet. It was really the last thing I had from my boyfriend. But I knew it wouldn't really help saying so, that it would only put me in more danger.

I just kept a low profile, hiding who I was, until I could make it to the Greek side ... to the european lands, where I thought human rights were respected and I could live safe and free. But I bet you guessed already, after too many failed attempts i finally made it, but only to get even worse.

The first time I made it to Greece, I had by that time passed the land borders from Turkey to Greece only to be caught by the Greeks and only after they had beaten me first. After this I finally made it to Samos.

There's so much more to my story. Writing this has brought back too many bad memories. I really feel a bit unlucky I had to come to this life with this certain sexual orientation, where i am treated so badly for it.

Long story short, after i made it to Samos, i was lucky to be able to afford private accommodation and escape the discrimination in the Camp, since the authorities have neither allowed me to exit the island nor provided a safe area for me as a person of different sexuality. Two years have passed without doing anything useful. Who is to blame anyway.

I wish people could just leave us alone.. why would anyone really care about what i do with my own body.

I'm writing this and I know the bothering won't stop..I know haters are all over the planet and this is the same exact reason why i am writing you my story. Times are so tough here for asylum seekers, and it can be even worse for people who are stuck in countries where being gay is illegal.
So..maybe we can make it easier for one another.. with our allies and supporters all over Europe, remember that love will always win.

For the ones suffering in silence, for the ones who are afraid and in danger.. never give up, failure is only when you give up.

**John’s Story: "No choice but to deny who am I"**

"EVERYONE I KNOW TURNED THEIR BACK ON ME ALL BECAUSE I AM GAY... I LEFT GHANA TO SEEK SAFETY"

This is my story, choosing to live as myself, as a gay man. It is my personal will and by choice.
It all started in 2011 when a course mate invited me to a pool-side party consisting of young guy’s and ladies swimming together. After a while I joined and enjoyed it alot, remembering it touches my heart. We exchanged contacts and after that our friendship began, we would hang out and socialise a lot. In my final year in high school, our
friendship developed into partner’s. After that the majority of us made it to university. **When we got there we couldn't hide our feelings from each other any more,** even though the institution didn’t (and still don’t) give us much room to operate and per the Laws of our land prohibit same sex relationships. But because we always stand up for LOVE, we also try to operate from the dark web to keep each and every one safe. But upon all these happening, birthday parties were not left out.

The Birthday Party
The unfortunate incident happened on the first Saturday of May, which was my partner’s birthday party. As usual, I decided to celebrate with him which we usually did. We rented a pub and organised the day. The Party started around 10pm and we were 15 LGBTQ+ members present at that time and with some more people on their way. About two hours later, 5 unknown guy’s entered the premises. Since we knew each other we knew these guys were not a part of our community so I went to them to ask them if they were looking for someone because the place was rented purposely for the birthday party. Even though i calmly approached them 2 of them became annoyed with me and we realisised that were youth vigilante anti-gay groups. **They said they had seen us in “Gay acts” at the pub which is against the Laws of our land Ghana.**

One guy shouted " let's beat them up". So they started misbehaving badly inside the rented Pub in the form of mob attack and I was the first person to received two dirty claps followed by other LGBTQ+ members. Some of my friends managed to find a way to escape them. They beat me up badly to a point where I couldn't do anything. They also took away my phone and some money from my pocket then left.

Later the Police came to the scene, found me there and took me to hospital, since I was unconscious, then later they sent me back to police station, for further interrogation. At the police station I was tortured, I sustained injuries on my forehead at the left side of it, right hand shoulder dislocation and back pain within the spinal cord. The Ghanain Police arrested me and put me into a cell for 4days without any charge, where I faced lots of harassment, extortion and physical abuse. Upon all the pains I was going through, no bail was granted. After 4 days, I had to bribe the office on duty so that I could escape from my judgment before time. **Gay victims face a death penalty up to 5yrs but not more than 20yrs, if caught into that act.***(Criminal Code 1960, Section104 unnatural carnal knowledge) Ghana.*

Family and Community
I managed to escape from the police but I had been missing from home for almost 5days and by the time I got home, there was already news all over the community of what had happened. People started pointing their fingers at me and saying all kinds of words and insults to me. When I got home, it was not different. My father disowned me without listening to my side of the story but as for my mother she only wished me well. Since I was not welcomed by my parents my father asked me to leave his house in the next few minutes for what I had done. I picked up my small bag and left home and went to stay with my Aunty. **Over there the story was the same because the whole family was saying that I have brought shame and disgrace to them.**
So within the month of May, everyone that I know turn their back to me all because am Gay. I therefore decided to leave Ghana and go find what makes me who I am. I then started my journey from Ghana to seek safety.

I got to Turkey and the struggle of seeking safety in Europe became so difficult for me. As a state Turkey they always try to stop Homosexuals from growing and is not a safe place for LGBTQI+ people. So I stayed there for about 2months, my first attempt to cross the sea to Greece was not successful and I was caught by Turkish police and spent 25 days at Turkish police cells. But on my next attempt again, I was able to enter Samos Island.

*Camp and Asylum*

Life in the camp has not been easy at all. Starting from bad living conditions, fire outbreaks and the rest of which I lost everything twice, I was a victim of it. There also I did my asylum interview which did not go well due to basic errors made by the casework that led to my asylum case being rejected. With the help of my Lawyer, an appeal was made so that matters will be resolved but as at now there is no response from the Asylum office to my Lawyer which has made me feel even more stranded.

**I hope one day justice will unfold for me.** And I sincerely thank our Samos LGBTQ+ group community for supporting me up to date.

**Liliane's Histoire: "Ne jamais perdre espoir il est grand le monde on vous acceptera quelque part"**

Voilà, je suis membre de la communauté LGBTQI+ et j’ai obtenu la protection internationale en Grèce. Pourtant, parfois je me pose la question la Grèce m’a-t-elle vraiment acceptée ?

Rien n’est facile pour moi, j’ai été traumatisée, par la police, par la population qui m’insulte à tord et à travers en anglais dans les magasins, certains magasins qui ne veulent même pas que j’entre chez eux faire des achats et enfin traumatisée par ma propre banque qui m’a demandé de partir parce que des Grecs étaient entrain d’attendre.

Je me pose la question, est-ce parce que je suis réfugiée ? Parce que je suis une femme de couleur ? Ou parce que je suis LGBTQI+ ?

Cela fait maintenant 18 mois que je vis dans le camp. Tout a commencé après mon enregistrement auprès des services de police. Livrée à moi-même, je rencontre une congolaise, lui demande de l’aide et de passer la nuit chez elle, elle accepte et me dit que c’est payant. Nous tombons d’accord, je devrai payer 30 euros le mois et c’est ce que j’ai fait. Au début, tout s’est bien passé jusqu’au jour où elle me demande pourquoi j’ai quitté mon pays. Je lui dis alors que je suis homosexuelle et que si je restais au Cameroun on allait me tuer. Très furieuse, elle s’est mise à m’insulter et m’a chassée de sa tente. J’ai été humiliée et rejetée, et c’était pas fini, elle est allée raconter presque à tout le camp que j’étais lesbienne. J’étais insultée partout, je n’arrive plus à sortir, ni à aller manger, j’avais peur des regards de tout le monde. Je faisais des grèves de la faim, j’avais une seule idée me suicider ; mais quand je pensais à mes enfants je ne voulais
pas les laisser orphelins. Je suis tombée malade et je me suis rendue à Med’equaliteam, là-bas j’ai trouvé une docteure très gentille, elle m’a vue frustrée et stressée et m’a dit « Parle-moi de tout, tu es en sécurité ici, tout restera confidentiel » et je me souviens que dans le bureau j’ai vu une brochure sur les LGBTQI+, j’ai su que je pouvais parler de tout. Elle m’a aidé à voir un avocat et à entrer dans le groupe LGBTQI+. J’y suis allée le samedi, à la première rencontre l’accueil a été très chaleureux et rencontrer les membres de ma communauté m’a fait trop plaisir. J’attendais toujours le samedi impatiemment pour y aller. J’ai beaucoup appris de ma communauté, de la santé, etc… Et je remercierai toujours Dan pour son respect, sa courtoisie, sa sympathie et son amour envers nous. Je me suis faite de très bons amis là-bas avec qui nous avons beaucoup partagé malgré nos conditions très difficiles dans le camp, mais au moins on pouvait parler de tout sans avoir peur d’être rejeté ou stigmatisé. Ensuite j’ai subi un viol dans le camp par deux arabes, j’ai du partir du camp et ai été confiée à l’association Diotima. J’étais en dépression, je consommais assez d’alcool pour chasser le sentiment de peur et de honte, parce qu’une fois de plus j’avais été humiliée. Je ne savais plus quoi faire, je sombrais et le covid m’empêchait de voir ma psychologue pour parler de tout, les séances au téléphone ne suffisaient pas, je sombrais jour après jour. Après Diotima, j’ai été envoyée chez IRC où j’ai pu voir ma psychologue en face à face, elle m’a dit que je devais voir un psychiatre, j’ai suivi un traitement et tout va super bien maintenant, selon le rapport de la psychologue. Comme toujours au camp, nous sommes beaucoup discriminées. Mes amies qui sont en couple ont été agressées physiquement et c’était la panique pour nous tous. J’ai eu très peur car ils ont dit à mes amies « On vous connait toutes et sachez qu’on va toutes vous tuer ». Je vis toujours dans la crainte et la peur et quand j’ai vu leurs blessures, j’ai eu beaucoup de peine parce que ça peut encore arriver à n’importe qui. Nous sommes beaucoup rejetées et parfois je me pose cette question, qu’est ce qu’on a fait de si mal ? Est-ce juste à cause de notre orientation sexuelle ?

Toute ma famille m’a rejetée, pour ce que j’étais. Depuis l’âge de 12 ans j’ai été attirée par des filles, mais j’ai eu ma première expérience à 23 ans. Toutes ces années j’ai été étouffée. A 9 ans on m’a envoyé dans un mariage forcé, c’est à 20 ans que j’ai pu m’enfuir de là-bas, des griffes de mes parents. J’ai été esclave physique et sexuelle pour qu’ils gagnent de l’argent sur moi. J’ai subi les pires humiliations possibles et au moins aujourd’hui j’ai ma liberté même s’il me reste un très long chemin, je sais que j’y arriverai.

Mon histoire est très longue, en voilà un peu le résumé. Je demande à ma communauté LGBTQI+ de ne pas m’abandonner, j’avance mais je ne sais pas vraiment où je vais. J’ai besoin de m’intégrer, avoir un travail pour subvenir à mes besoins et en même temps la Grèce me traumatisée beaucoup dans la manière selon laquelle je suis traitée à Samos. J’espère que le futur sera différent, sinon je demande à ma communauté de m’amener dans n’importe quel pays. Je rêve d’avoir une petite amie, voyager et vivre en toute liberté.