

Learning by Ear

People Who Make a Difference

SamsKleJah, Musician (Burkina Faso)

EPISODE 03

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Sound clips in DALET: Learning by Ear – LBE_PEO_Musician_xxx

CHARACTERS:

Announcer: female voice

SamsKleJah, musician (male, 38)

Sylvestre Ouédraogo, tradesman (male, 20)

Yacine Sama, daughter of SamsKleJah (female, 10)

Geoffrey Darakoum, student (male, 23)

INTRO

Hello and welcome to Learning by Ear. In this series called „People Who Make a Difference“ you'll get to know some of the well-known and some of the less well-known heroes of Africa. They are courageous, genuine and committed. And they want to share with you their ideas of a just and peaceful world, believing that a change for the better is possible. Today we meet SamsKleJah, a Reggae-musician from Burkina Faso who is an everyday-hero to many young people in West Africa.

TEXT:

1. SFX: Car (constant background sound of a car's motor)

We are travelling in a car with SamsKleJah through Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. 38-year-old SamsKleJah, whose real name is Karim Sama, is happy because they are playing one of his songs on the radio. It's hot in Ouagadougou, the car windows are wound down and SamsKleJah is singing loudly along with himself. Young people at the side of the road recognise him and wave and smile at him.

2. SFX: SKLJ is singing (sound remains down)

SamsKleJah is known throughout Burkina Faso and beyond. Not only for his own type of Reggae, but also because of his weekly radio show, called "Roots, Rock, Reggae" which can be heard all over the country, either directly on the radio and also on cassette and CD.

3. SFX: Excerpt from „Roots, Rock, Reggae“

He doesn't only play rock and reggae music on his show, he also talks about life. Young and old alike in the whole town listen to him when he criticises the present situation or offers advice. He sometimes has studio guests, but normally it's a one-man show because there's almost nobody, apart from him, who dares so openly and plainly to say what's really going on. Though his criticism does not only apply to corrupt politicians in power. He always says that personal engagement, responsibility and honesty start small.

4. SFX: Car door, footsteps

He explains why, as he arrives at home:

5. Sound Clip SamsKleJah

“Everyone has to understand that they can change things, each individual has to grasp that he is a link in the chain. Each person has a brick he can contribute to the building. And once everyone has understood and grasped that, then something has already been achieved.”

SamsKleJah becomes very serious when he talks about how important it is that each and every person takes responsibility for his own life and doesn't allow himself to get disheartened.

6. Sound Clip SamsKleJah

“For ages now I have repeated this in my show for the young people:- Nelson Mandela is a human being and I can also be Nelson Mandela. Barack Obama is a human being and I can also be Barack Obama. And that is exactly what you should think when you wake up every morning. And before you go to sleep, weigh up your day – have I done something today that has benefited myself and others? That's my barometer. What I mean is, that I can also be one of them, because they also don't have two heads or four arms. We are all the same! In fact what makes a difference is having the guts to get involved. Otherwise we are all the same.”

7. SFX : Grand Marché de Ouaga (let the sound run under the text)

The central market of Ouagadougou – all over the place traders and marketwomen are trying to sell their goods. It's as loud and chaotic as you would expect in the country's biggest market. Sylvestre Ouédraogo sells handicrafts here. Come Friday evening at 8 o'clock and he stops everything to listen to SamsKleJah's show. This especially means a lot to him if he's had a bad day and is fed up.

8. *Sound Clip Sylvestre Ouédraogo*

"Personally his shows cheer me up no end and sometimes when I am frustrated, I'll listen to his show and he consoles me in my life. When your worries get on top of you, you simply don't know what to do. But then you hear what he's saying and that helps you to find the strength to carry on."

SamsKleJah doesn't begin his show with , Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen', no, he says ,Hi Brother and Sisiter Warriors!' to remind his listeners that they have to struggle all the time.

But what does he mean by fight? Like, war? Or armed conflict? Totally the opposite, explains Sylvestre:

9. *Sound Clip Sylvestre Ouédraogo*

"To fight means to always remain positive, to be cool in what one does and lead the country in the right direction. In the here and now, to do something that advances humanity, advances our Burkina, our Africa. Anyway, that's what I get out of it."

10. *SFX (slowly fade in concert excerpt)*

'C'est la vie qui est comme ça, that's how life is' SamsKleJah sings at a concert celebrating the tenth anniversary of his radio show. 'There are ups and downs, but whatever happens you mustn't give up!' And he knows what he's talking about, for his life wasn't always so easy. Many times he found himself in situations which made him afraid.

11. *Sound Clip SamsKleJah*

"I also have problems. I often hide away to have a cry, because I experienced something painful, because I was disappointed, because, because, because..."

He always thinks the most important thing is never to lose courage, but to accept a challenge. He laughs as he remembers his first broadcast in June 1999.

12. *Sound Clip SamsKleJah*

,It was a real baptism of fire for me. I arrived there but had never before spoken in front of a microphone. On that day I had taken the time to write out everything that I wanted to say. But although I had everything written out I was shaking like a leaf and my heart was going like the clappers. Well, ok. I did the show, once, twice, three times and then I began to develop more self-confidence. And one day I arrived at the station and there was a letter waiting for me. A listener congratulated me on my performance. Then I said to myself, hey, that's unbelievable – people are actually listening to me!'

And that was the beginning of his radio career. Today he not only has his own show, but also is head of programming and vice-director of the Burkina Faso's most popular radio station. Not only that, he's got a 10-year-old daughter called Yacine who goes to school in Ouagadougou. Yacine gets on very well with her father and is even allowed to sing on the stage at his concerts.

13. *SFX Playing boules in the country*

It's the weekend and Yacine and her father have gone off on a short trip to the country. SamsKleJah regularly organizes such trips for children and young people so that they can get away from the polluted city. This time however, Yacine is here alone with her father and is watching him play boules.

14. *SFX Playing boules in the country*

She knows him inside and out and knows what makes him angry.

15. *Sound Clip Yacine Sama*

"He doesn't like it when people bad-mouth each other. He likes people to respect each other. What's totally unacceptable is when people steal, rape or kill. And that the prices which are too high, and that people have to live on the street, poor people."

Yacine also knows what her father is fighting for:

16. *Sound Clip Yacine Sama*

,He said to me that he's fighting for all people to have the same rights.'

Back in Ouaga, Geoffrey Darakoum sums up why SamsKleJah is so important. Geoffrey, who is 23, is a third-year Business Science student at the university and has listened to SamsKleJah's show for the last 10 years.

17. *Sound Clip Geoffrey Darakoum*

„Our musician SamsKleJah is truly an inspiration for the young people of Burkina. He's the only one in the country who says what the others don't dare to say. He's someone who calls a spade, a spade. His songs inspire the population to have a vision of democracy, justice and equality. Justice above all!”

Because only they who know what their rights are, are able to demand them.

18. *Sound Clip Geoffrey Darakoum*

“We say: You never get anything if you don't ask for it.”

This is why SamsKleJah always says in his show that in a constitutional state, everyone has the same rights and responsibilities, and that everyone is subject to the same laws. No wrong should go unpunished, irrespective of who committed it. And one more thing is very important, he says, especially for the young people:

19. *Sound Clip SamsKleJah*

‘You must ask lots and lots of questions, because that's the only way we come to understand things. That's obvious! As it says in the Bible: that which from our ancestors remains hidden, will be brought forth to light by the children. So, children must ask lots and lots of questions!’

(Laughter)

OUTRO

That was a portrait of SamsKleJah, a courageous Reggae artist and radio journalist who speaks his mind and therefore is a role model and hero for many young people in Burkina Faso and the neighboring countries. He especially encourages young people not to give up in difficult situations and reminds everybody to take responsibility for themselves and others in order to make this world a better place. Did you enjoy what you just heard?

If you would like to send us your comments, read more about the topics or just listen to this story again, visit our website at:

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Thanks for listening! We hope you will join us again next time for a new story in this Learning by Ear series about People who make a difference.

Good bye for now!