

MUA MUA LE ATUA

Seraphim Lino is a 16-year-old Samoan young woman who was born in American Samoa, brought up in Washington, but moved back to American Samoa when she was 12 years old. Seraphim grew up with her grandma, so she rarely got to see her parents or even have a bond with them until she went back to American Samoa. Sera is currently attending Lincoln High school; she is in the 11th grade and enjoys spending time with family and friends. I interviewed Seraphim because I wanted to get a deeper understanding of how it is back home in American Samoa opposed to how it is in America, but my interview took a turn of better events. This interview shifted to where I got to gain deeper understanding of Seraphim as a person and what drives her today as she keeps on pushing throughout life. This interview was conducted through voice memos on iPhone.

Me: Talofa lava Sera ua mai oe gagei? – Hello Sera, how are you doing today?

Seraphim: she sat nervously in her seat and took a deep breath and responded

Ua Manuia gagei le Aso. - today is going well.

Me: Sera when you moved back home to Samoa how was that change for you?

Seraphim: she sat back and thought to herself traveling back to her twelve-year-old self to embrace the feelings and the memories she had going back to American Samoa.

Let's see um, it was kind of hard you know, moving from a totally different place to a new place where I had to adapt to my surroundings, my environment, and new people and for me it was kind of a new language you know. I would say it was happy because I finally got to live with my parents after not being able to live with them for like twelve years. It was happy but then it was like a fearful kind of moving. It was something new and you know new things can be scary.

I sat there thinking about this transition of Sera's life, taking it all in, understanding the things that were said. It was very understandable for me to see where she was coming from because it is a new world and totally new and different things are presented to you when you move from the states to an island in the south pacific.

Me: How did you feel being there in American Samoa

Seraphim: thought to herself and looked up as she remembered the feelings she felt

I felt nervous, I haven't been with my parents, I don't know what it was going to be like living with them. I didn't know how school was going to be like over there. I didn't know nobody except my cousins, and we didn't go to the same schools either, so I had to meet new people and I guess it was exciting and it was like an adventure.

It is extremely hard especially at a youthful age to be able to overcome and adapt at the same time is something that is very adult like facing adversity sometimes gets the best of us but for Sera this adversity is challenge but an adventure she is willing to endure.

Me: What was the environment there in American Samoa like for you?

Seraphim: It was a safe environment I could go anywhere, and my parents would know I was safe because back home in Samoa everyone knew everyone, you'd try to walk to the store get something you see the neighbors they be like "hey

what's up you good" and then if you trying to leave anywhere your neighbors got your parents back, they'll be like "hey you better go home its almost nighttime" it was just a safe friendly environment people always had your back there.

As Sera was talking about the environment back home her face started to light up with joy and happiness because the feelings back home brought to her the sense of community, the sense of family.

Me: *Do you feel like it was a sense of family everywhere you went?*

Seraphim: *Sera smiled and continued to say*

Yeah, it was just joy, you could see someone you knew every day and they would be like what's up how's your day? how's it going? Everyone's like a big family over there.

Me: *can you tell me one key moment of your childhood that you brought here to the states that makes you who you are today.*

Seraphim: Without hesitation, she responded and gave me something insightful on who Sera is.

I think me becoming a Christian, me fully surrendering my life to God in Samoa I brought that here.

Me: *How big is religion back home?*

Seraphim: *Sera giggled and continued to smile as she was thinking about her life in American Samoa*

Oomph nobody on Sunday missed church, if you were sick, they would be like get up you're gonna go get healed today. Nobody missed church, Sunday was always one of the busiest days.

Me: *How were Sundays in your household?*

Seraphim: *Sera's smile continued to grow brighter you could just see the nostalgia of how just talking about back home was giving Seraphim.*

On Sundays in my household, we'd wake up early every day to prepare the food so no one had to stay home and make the food, and if you didn't wake up early you would get the broom.

I am going to skip a little ahead to the part of my interview where the interview shifted, and my understanding of Seraphim grew deeper. The thing about this section of the interview is Sera became vulnerable and was very open which is not easy for everyone.

Me: *who are some of the key people from back home that you think made you who you are today?*

Seraphim: um I would say my pastor, he passed away February 13th and he helped build a relationship with God. He helped me focus on school and do what was right. He was an inspirational man he would push you to your limits and he wouldn't go beyond them he knew what was good and he never disrespected anyone no matter how disrespectful they were to him; he would always only see the good in people. I miss him a lot, you know I miss him. He would always be like, "How's your parents?" you know how you are doing in school? NHS remember? always pushing me to be a scholar get good grades and represent and reflect on how big God is in me.

Sera's voice started to tremble, but she was remaining strong I could see that this man was a very key person to Sera's life, and he motivated her in a way that is not just physical but very spiritual as well.

Me: *how did you feel losing such a key person in your life?*

Seraphim: um it was terrible, but in the bible, it says grief comes and goes, you don't see the big things that are behind it. It was hard, you know? I still had to come to school not because my parents wanted me to, they wanted me to stay home I said no because he would want me to go to school, want me to do good.

Sera looked down and I could see that she was reminiscing about the past and as I gathered my thoughts, I took a deep breath and gave her my condolences.

Me: *So back home how were you able to maintain everything and get through life?*

Seraphim: Let's see the first time I was there I was falling apart. First time I was there I had no relation with God I knew who he was, but I just didn't care for it and everywhere I went, everything I did it just seemed wrong. I was a bad person back then and I would say that I would fall and stumble like every single day. Until that day where I finally accepted Jesus Christ into my life, I let him be the planner be the creator who he was that's when everything started to change that's when everything started to be better. There's still days where its rough I now have faith now that he's with me.

She seemed to have dwelled on this specific topic for some time and this shows that Sera as a person is very faithful and very grateful for the faith that had been introduced to her. She sits in silence with a face of reflection as if she was thinking about how far she has come, and it was honestly a sight that cannot fully be put into words you have to feel in order to understand.

Me: *Do you feel like religion differs from the kids back home opposed to the kids in America?*

Seraphim: I don't believe in religion. Religion is just another word of being high that's not what it was like though Jesus sat with the sinners he ate with the sinners, but he didn't like what they were doing but he loved them as a person. Kids nowadays everyone's the same everyone's struggling everyone's going down the wrong path because nobody has taught them the right one, so I'd say it's the same all around unless you have someone who will be there for you to push you to help you to support you in what'd you do

Me: *So, do you feel like back home has those types of people that push you and guide you opposed to where up here doesn't have those types of people?*

Seraphim: Yes, back home we had like a community, back home there was like a youth where everyone was one everyone could speak, and they wouldn't be judged. But over here I feel like if I were to say the wrong thing I would be judged and be discriminated against for what I had said.

Sera's smile slowly started to dim as she was talking about up here in America

Me: *Discriminated by who? Other Samoans?*

Seraphim: You know it's kind of that way nowadays Samoans discriminating other Samoans. Samoans looking down on you for who you or the culture you come from.

Me: *Back home they wouldn't do that?*

Seraphim: No back home everyone supported everyone even other schools when we had pep rallies it would be more pep than over here you know. Everyone would be all dressed up ready to cheer for our school graduates from passed school they would represent. I'd say it's different because back home you got everyone's back. Someone talk to you differently they would be taught up.

This seemed to be something that Sera felt so strongly about because of the difference in community and in culture. Sera's face and body language gave the vibe of why does it have to be like that? Why can't everyone just come together and be as one?

Me: *Do you miss back home?*

Seraphim: I do, I miss back home for the environment the people the schools it was just safer it was more comfortable, and it was like less judgmental.

Me: *Do you feel like Samoan's up here are all around judgmental they feel very maualuga- (higher than) to other Samoans up here?*

Seraphim: I get that kind of sense in Samoans over here, Samoans over here feel like they better than other Samoans maybe because of the money they have may because they are more cultured but you know you can't control where you were born or where you grew up at so yeah I feel like Samoans over here they act like they are higher than every other Samoans when we should be supporting and bringing up each other.

It seemed as if this difference in community in America did not sit right with Sera because of the act Samoans put up day to day trying to be fia manaia and the constant put down of Samoans Soley because of the need to be maualugua to other Samoans.

Me: *And when you were growing up back home you didn't ever feel this way?*

Seraphim: No, Samoans were always trying to help other Samoans if you needed anything you could just go to your neighbor without feeling a sense of you are going to be judged because you don't have enough. Over here you try to someone for something, and they look down on you and they judge you for not having what you need.

Sera's face continued to dim but this brought out a Point of View on Sera of how strongly feels about the differences of here and American Samoa.

Me: Sort of a sense of belittling

Sera: Yes.

Me: I understand that, *can you tell me the story about your transition from Samoa to here America?*

Sera: ok, so um when I was little, I had to move up here from American Samoa and I had to move only with my grandma for twelve years I didn't get to live with my parents. I did not feel what it was like to be daddy's little girl or my mama doing my hair every day. I didn't get to do that because my parents did not have their visa. It was hard growing up every day in America seeing kids have opportunities that I could not get. And moving back to Samoa it was an opportunity that I did not ask for but it was something that I needed to be able to grow up with my parents seeing the type of people they are. I may have grew up here but that is where my childhood is. My parents raised me and moving back here was a struggle trying to adapt. I come here have AP classes. It is something different. I still struggle daily, and I get through it because I push myself cause im here to honor my parents and I'm here to reflect on the teachings they have taught me.

Sera's face started to light up again because this who she is she won't be down for long because of the overcoming of obstacles she has faced.

Me: *Do you feel like your parents are your why?*

Sera: My parents are my why because I don't know I wouldn't be here without them I broke their trust and I regained it back and Im never losing that trust no more.

Me: *Did this all happen back home?*

Sera: yeah it did which is why I am who I am right now which is why I always have some sort of kind of conscious friends would be like you wanna skip you wanna skip class I would say no I gotta be early I do these things because that's who my parents taught me to be that's who God wants me to be and that who I should be.

Me: *Do you feel like since you broke your parents trust regaining that trust made you and your parents' relationship stronger?*

Seraphim: Yeah, it did because now I get to do things, I thought I wouldn't be able to do because of how serious that trust that I broke was, but they trust me enough to go by myself to an event, they trust me enough to get a job and go work over there and the trust that I have with them the relationship that I have now it's like no other.

Sera said these things with so much power and assertiveness I was genuinely uplifted and grateful that she was able to regain that trust and be able to overcome such things with her parents to make their relationship stronger.

Me: *What is one thing you have to say to the kids back home in American Samoa?*

Seraphim: Be who you are embrace your culture your ethnicity cause that's who you are that's what brought you up to be who you are right now and don't be ashamed. I had to learn the hard way but don't be ashamed for who you are because people who are around you who are judging you, they don't matter. What matters is you, what matters is the people who love you for you what matters is how God sees you and what matters is what God thinks.

Me: Thank you Sera. That is all for the news folks back to you bob.

*After this interview I felt like this really gave me insight on Sera's life, Sera's beliefs and on who Sera is a person and as a woman of God. Seraphim has not had a walk through the park life, but she has overcome some great obstacles who made her a stronger person today. I learned so much about Seraphim and Im grateful for the opportunity I had to interview her. I discovered why she is such a faithful person, and it is because she was saved not by Mankind but by God with amazing people who helped become who she is today. **Isaiah 41:10, God says to "fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."***

