**“Disability and Ethnicity on Film: ABDALLAH & SARA”**

**Host: Pauline Vetuna**

**Guests: Sara, Adballah, Ayan Shirwa**

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PAULINE: Tune into Power from the Margins, 3CR's broadcast for International Day of People with Disability on 3rd of December from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. We'll feature BIPOC perspectives, live music, artists and discussions. For details, visit 3CR.org.au/disabilityday2019.

Hello, you're listening to Power from the Margins on 3CR for Disability Day. We're here in the studio today with a special guest. Well, two special guests. Abdallah, there he is, and his mother, his lovely mother Sara.

PAULINE: We'll just adjust the mics. Thank you for joining us today.

SARA: You're welcome.

PAULINE: Where did you come from today? Where did you travel from?

SARA: We traveled from Melton.

ABDALLAH: I live Melton.

PAULINE: You live in Melton?

ABDALLAH: Yes.

PAULINE: And I found out about you through your friend Fatima, whose film you were in. What was the name of the film again? Remind the audience who's listening.

ABDALLAH: This name [inaudible] 21.

SARA: Amar.

ABDALLAH: Huh? Amar. This beautiful Amar, my movie star.

AYAN: Yes. So is this the first time you've starred in the movie?

ABDALLAH: Yes, I do movie. I am star. I am movie. I am best. I am good. I push myself and I push my heart. I apply myself. This Abdallah beautiful movie star. Thank you. I said thank you my family. I said, thank you all of this. This my beautiful life. I am best, I am a star. This my life. And it's me.

PAULINE: I love that. Lots of blessings in your life.

ABDALLAH: Oh, that's a good one. My life, oh. Okay, my name Abdallah, I from Saudi Arabia. But I am dance. I am music. All of this from me.

PAULINE: Yeah. Let's talk a bit about that. You are a dancer, so I heard that you belong to a dance group called e.motion21?

ABDALLAH: Dance group 21.com. Life. Abdallah www.com. Thank you, bye. That's me.

PAULINE: No, don't go yet! Don't go yet. We still want to talk to you.

ABDALLAH: Okay.

PAULINE: I've got so many questions.

ABDALLAH: Okay, go.

PAULINE: So I've seen on the internet, on Facebook, I've seen clips of e.motion21. There's a lot of people in the dance group, yeah? Quite a few people? So I was talking to Sara just earlier in the kitchen and, first of all, happy birthday. It's your 60th birthday.

SARA: Thank you.

PAULINE: I can't believe you're coming to the studio on your birthday.

ABDALLAH: *[singing*]. 60, beautiful lady, this baby girl queen!

SARA: Thank you.

PAULINE: Queen!

SARA: Thank you.

PAULINE: Honestly, thank you for coming on your birthday. That's amazing. Where was I? Ah yes. We were talking in the kitchen before and you were talking about how dedicated your son is to go to this dance group because, tell us about how long it takes for you, Abdallah to travel to go to dance.

SARA: It's the Saturday, it takes for us two hours going into two hours and back home. Because we travel from Melton. Train and we walk, jump on the bus, and train and then tram. Get off from the tram and walk and we be in the dancing class. Because e.motion21 is everything I feel for Abdallah. When I saw it first of all on the TV, oh, I just decided to take him.

PAULINE: Yeah. So that's where you found out about it, on TV?

SARA: Yes, on channel 10 I saw one [inaudible], and one day I decide I have to take him. Yes.

PAULINE: Abdallah do you remember that? How old were you when you started going to e.motion21?

ABDALLAH: e.motion21?

SARA: 20.

ABDALLAH: 20? 1?

SARA: No, 20. 20.

ABDALLAH: 20. 9. That's a long time, 20.

PAULINE: Yeah, so you're 29 now. So you were 20 when you started?

SARA: Yes.

PAULINE: That's nine years. That's a long time, of two hour journeys on-

SARA: Yes.

ABDALLAH: Okay. Me and mama come here 2007, it's a long time. That's a long time, 2007. But then now I 2019 live.com. That's now, 2019. But a long time, I have 2007, 2004, 2005. That's me.

PAULINE: That's amazing. Yeah. What is it that you like about dancing?

ABDALLAH: Okay. Dance?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ABDALLAH: I like dance.

PAULINE: What do you like about doing it?

ABDALLAH: Yeah. I like do a dance. I like to do anything in my life do, that's me. Okay. That's one question to me. I work hard. I do my best. I don’t think this all of me but I like dance. I like music, work, money. And it's all for me. It's all for me. I like work. I like work hard and I do my show. Yeah, I do my show. I work hard. Money, fitness, company. I have sway. From me. That's it.

PAULINE: That's great.

AYAN: Money is important.

PAULINE: It is.

SARA: Yes.

AYAN: Money is good.

ABDALLAH: Money, money, money, no funny. Like that. *[laughter]*

AYAN: What kind of dancing do you do? Is it hip hop?

ABDALLAH: Yeah, I do dance hip hop dance. Hip hop dancing, hip hop dance, [inaudible], inside the dance, that's Abdallah.

AYAN: Do you have a favorite artist?

ABDALLAH: Oh, I don't like this one.

AYAN: Which one?

ABDALLAH: I don't know.

AYAN: He don't have it.

AYAN: Oh, you don't have... Do you have a favorite song that you like to dance to? I'm guessing you like all of them.

SARA: *[Arabic]*

ABDALLAH: *[Arabic]*

AYAN: I’m guessing you like all of them.

PAULINE: You said you liked Arabic music before.

SARA: You say Arabic music? *[Arabic]*

ABDALLAH: *[Arabic]*

AYAN: Is it called Tubeman?

SARA: No.

ABDALLAH: My favorite music is Arabic and Ethiopia. I have two music. Arabic, Ethiopia, and that's it.

AYAN: And Mom, what was it like the first time that you saw ABDALLAH dance?

ABDALLAH: Come on, that's me. I am music.

AYAN: How did it make you feel? Take me.

PAULINE: Aww.

AYAN: I know. A lot. A lot. It's incredible. You must have felt so amazing. I can just imagine. Mom is tearing up because... Mom, yeah, Mom is really feeling it. And seeing your baby, I can only imagine what that's like. Seeing your baby pop, lock.

PAULINE: Pop and lock.

AYAN: What other dances do they do? The Whip?

ABDALLAH: Whip, yes.

AYAN: The Whip?

ABDALLAH: Yeah.

AYAN: Do you know the Nae Nae?

ABDALLAH: Oh yeah! [inaudible].

AYAN: Gang gang gang gang. I love that.

ABDALLAH: Yo, yo, yo! Neck neck neck. Tw.com. That's me.

SARA: Because he loved dancing, you know, always it was my dream to see him on the stage with a group. The dancing will... Just to see Abdallah. He can do something. This what he has got inside. I just want him to show for people, for himself, to express his dancing, you know? That was always what I said. I have to take him wherever it is, whatever it costs me, I have to take ABDALLAH.

AYAN: And do you come from a family of dancers Sara?

SARA: No. No. Just, we love music. Me, I love music.

ABDALLAH: Me and mama love music.

SARA: And I love dancing, yes. Just, no, we are not from the family dancer, no. But Abdallah he love dancing.

PAULINE: He was born dancing.

SARA: Yes, he love music.

AYAN: Yeah, because usually it's relatives or it's in the family. But that's amazing that it just came from Abdallah.

ABDALLAH: Me, myself, I love my, I have big family to me, watch. Big family to me. I have cousin, auntie, my mom, my dad. It’s me and [inaudible]. I have bigger. My cousin, half Africa. Yeah. My cousin half Africa. My family, my sister, two brothers and me, my mom. And my dad is-

AYAN: It sounds like you have a big loving and supportive family.

ABDALLAH: This me I have. Number one, my family. Number two, I have wife and kids. One time, my future. Forget this, this is my plan for life.com.

AYAN: Inshallah.

SARA: We don't forget to say inshallah. One day.

PAULINE: One day.

SARA: One day, inshallah.

ABDALLAH: The same, the same. One day I have.

AYAN: Yes. That's gorgeous. Do you have any dancing shows coming up?

ABDALLAH: Oh, that's a...

SARA: Yes.

AYAN: What do you have coming up?

SARA: Pascoe Vale. He go to Kew with the e.motion21 and he attend Pascoe Vale. Now the Carols in the Candlelight, it will be...

ABDALLAH: Kew, Pascoe Vale and...

PAULINE: Christmas carols?

SARA: Yes, Christmas Carols By Candlelight, but area I forgot the name. It will be next Saturday, the coming Saturday.

PAULINE: Next Saturday, okay.

SARA: Yes. Yes.

ABDALLAH: Next, this coming, working.

PAULINE: I think they can find it on the e.motion21 website or Facebook page.

AYAN: Beautiful.

SARA: Yes.

PAULINE: We will definitely put it out there on our website.

AYAN: Do you get nervous when you perform Abdallah?

ABDALLAH: Oh, yeah.

PAULINE: It doesn't seem so. He seems very confident.

ABDALLAH: I know funny, but I am very serious. I'm like that, I know.

AYAN: As soon as you hear the music, you feel it. And then...

ABDALLAH: Like that. Which I born was, I grew up in Abu Dhabi, my mom. Oh, that's a good one. Okay. Now I push myself and I push my heart, I am star. I am best, but I never give up in my entire life. I am integrity, my entire life. I never give up but I have to win in my life. If I good, in my house, I could my beautiful life, my beautiful family.

AYAN: I love the passion. I love how much you love music. And I love how hard people work.

ABDALLAH: I am sixteen. Oh, yeah, yeah.

AYAN: Yeah. And do you get that from mum? Mum, does he get the hard work and the love-

ABDALLAH: My hard work still.

AYAN: Where does this all come from?

ABDALLAH: Can’t wait to do it!

SARA: Always, I tell him, you can do something. You can, he can. You can do, you know? Just push yourself. Never give up.

ABDALLAH: Never give up. That's my life.

AYAN: I love that. I love it.

PAULINE: You mentioned before, when we were talking, e.motion21 took you on a trip to India?

ABDALLAH: Yes. *[crosstalk]*. That's me.

PAULINE: Yeah. So could you talk a little bit about that trip? So I know that when you went there, you went there for a Down Syndrome conference?

SARA: Yes.

PAULINE: What did you do there?

SARA: We do the dance, *[inaudible]*.

ABDALLAH: *[inaudible*], is an Indian dance.

PAULINE: Indian dancing, yeah. But something else that happened was sort of like a family reunion, yeah?

ABDALLAH: I have big family. Because there is one Indian in the family. That's my mom. Yeah.

SARA: We met my sister and my niece, my grand niece, after nearly 25 years.

AYAN: Wow.

SARA: Yes. That was amazing. Yes.

AYAN: Oh my goodness.

SARA: When we went India, we are going, I told them we are coming and they travel also 12 hours by train to come and visit us. It was a short period. Because we had the gala dinner on the night they arrived, all that. But next day they left. Even though, they visited me.

PAULINE: That's amazing.

SARA: Yes, amazing, really. And we see the Taj Mahal. It was...

ABDALLAH: *[inaudible]*.

SARA: You remember Taj Mahal, how it was beautiful.

PAULINE: So beautiful.

ABDALLAH: My surname is Bakhsh and my dad's name Siralater Saminks Bakhsh Mutmahail Bakhsh. My family is Bakhsh. Yeah, that's it, that's me. But mama family is adopted Indian. But my family's name's Bakhsh. That's it.

PAULINE: You say you speak Ethiopian?

ABDALLAH: Okay. My language Arabic, number one. Number two, I speak Ethiopia.

SARA: *[Arabic 00:14:17]*.

ABDALLAH: Ethiopia, and that's it.

AYAN: Oh, English.

SARA: English.

ABDALLAH: English is small.

SARA: English is-

ABDALLAH: Arabic, English, Ethiopian, that's it. I speak three language, I have.

PAULINE: Yeah, well let's talk about that because what I get from you is you're a really strong, confident person and really work hard.

ABDALLAH: I am strong. Listen.

SARA: And listen.

PAULINE: Yeah. So you taught yourself English, didn't you?

ABDALLAH: Yes. Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. So how did that happen?

SARA: Yes. He didn't go to english, we travel, we moved to Australia in 2007 from Saudi Arabia. And when we settle, just he started in Jackson Special School for one year and a half. From the time he started, he just started to pick words, what he heard in the class and he come and he practiced in his room. This means that, and then just he taught himself by himself. He didn't go to English class, whatever. And stilll, you know?

ABDALLAH: That's a long time. A long time I have. This I speak myself. Yeah, that's it. Thank you.

AYAN: Do you have a favorite language?

ABDALLAH: No, I speak three languages. But I don't speak different language. I speak Arabic, I speak Ethiopia-

SARA: *[Arabic 00:15:40]*.

ABDALLAH: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. No. These are the languages I have, Arabic-

AYAN: Stop Mom!

ABDALLAH: ... after Arabic it's Ethiopia in Africa. Three language. That's it. Yeah.

AYAN: What was it like being in the movie? Tell us about your-

ABDALLAH: My movie, oh, that's a good one.

AYAN: And the movie is? Ama? Amar?

ABDALLAH: Oh yeah, second. My movie's name is Amar. But second and the third. I have two name. I am movie star, Amar Abdallah.

AYAN: And did you feel like a movie star in the movie? In Amar?

ABDALLAH: Oh yeah. Yes I do. And Amar, this my movie. Yes.

AYAN: Was it nice getting dressed up? Looking good? Looking flashy-

ABDALLAH: And the movie star in Amar, he's happy for others. Happy for others than me. Oh I have people like this name Amar, my movie star.

AYAN: Oh your movie star movies. Was it good working with her?

ABDALLAH: Oh yeah.

SARA: Really.

AYAN: Yeah? Aw, that's amazing. And Mom, were you there for the shooting?

SARA: Yes. We had hotel there.

AYAN: What was that experience like? Watching Abdallah and watching everyone else?

SARA: Yes, everyone else there. For me, for Abdallah, it is a dream come true. Whatever he do for me it's a big thing, you know? So yeah, that day was a very big day.

AYAN: Was there a lot of traveling this time?

SARA: Yes. Even we missed, you know, that's why I said, always we'll never give up, Abdallah, to find the place.

ABDALLAH: Never give up one time. Yeah, it's me, I know.

SARA: We were late even, the first day for the interview, the audition. But just, I never give up, I said we have to find out the place. We found the place and then we end up, yes.

AYAN: Well that's where Abdallah gets it, this never give up energy. It's from you.

PAULINE: That's right.

SARA: Yes. From the time I know Abdallah, he need my support. I'm his carer always. I said, as long as I'm alive, I have to…

AYAN: You're an incredible, incredible mom. You remind me of my mom. My mom is around your age as well and the love that you are showing us and the passion as well. You could have given up, you could have said, "This is too far. I want to go home."

SARA: Never. Even last time we travel overseas when we come and we said no, it was the family and we talk and just we stop the Saturday. I said, "No." He just always said, "Saturday we have class." I said, "No, no, no. I have to go." "It's too much for you." I said, "No, I don't have other person to look after." He's living with me so I have to give him as a carer. I'm his carer and look after him. His mom. I have to give him as much as I can.

AYAN: You two have a beautiful relationship. What does your mom mean to you? Abdallah? What's mom for you? How would you describe your mom?

ABDALLAH: Oh, my mom for me. Yes.

AYAN: Everything. I'm assuming everything.

ABDALLAH: I can't stop crying. I can't hide my life. No, no, no. This I can do. I'm say this now. I lost my dad long time and now I have...

AYAN: How about we play some music. Let's get some-

ABDALLAH: Let me just, okay. Second. I like listen music. I lost my dad long time, but I have my mom. I have my mom in my heart, and my life, in my mind, but I lost my dad long time but then now I forget, I'm happy myself. Because I am one son, Abdallah.

AYAN: Yes. And your mom is so proud of you.

SARA: Yes. I am really proud of Abdallah. And always I say he can do... He has lot of things inside, you know. He can give and he can do. Yes, we get the chance since from the time we moved to Australia, we got the chance. Chances here we can do. Alhamdulillah. "Thank God," I said, yes.

ABDALLAH: For me, second, this is Australia. For me I love Australia. Or, I love Australia because I love work, I love Christmas, I love dinner. I love all the things in my life in Australia and my cousins are all here now.

AYAN: You know who I love? Missy Elliot. Should we play some Missy Elliott? Let's play some music. Yeah?

SARA: Music.

AYAN: All right. We're now going to play a song by Missy Elliott called Get Your Freak on.

\*

*[“Get Your Freak On” by Missy Elliott plays]*

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PAULINE: Welcome back to the program. Well we're with Abdallah and his mum, Sara. We just heard, what did we just hear? Missy Elliott?

AYAN: We heard Missy Elliott, yes.

PAULINE: “Get Your Freak On”. And I kind of wish this was being filmed. Well, we kind of took some footage. But you just missed the most amazing moves in the studio. Most amazing.

SARA: Thank you.

ABDALLAH: Thank you.

PAULINE: You know you're good.

ABDALLAH: Yeah, I know.

PAULINE: In this short time that we have left in the program, I want to talk about the future. So you talked a little bit before about what you see in the future.

ABDALLAH: Okay. Stop there. So now, in the future. I have more money, one. I buy house, car, I have beautiful wife, and kids. And I take my wife... second. Yeah and I have wife and kids, and I buy a house, I buy a car. And I can work from the house and that's it. But that's in the future. Not now. Thank you.

AYAN: That's a beautiful, beautiful dream. I really hope it comes true. Dreams are so important. So important. It's good to think big.

ABDALLAH: Okay, in a second. I'm going to tell you. My birthday's in Ramadan. And Ramadan, I'm happy for Ramadan. Sun come up, stop. And sun come down, have to eat dinner. In Ramadan. That's me.

AYAN: I love Ramadan. Do you have any favorite foods? What do you eat in Ramadan?

ABDALLAH: You come my home, I make for you all food in Ramadan.

AYAN: Yea! Okay.

PAULINE: I'm inviting myself over.

ABDALLAH: In Ramadan this dinner you come my home. But then there's something. This halal food. You know halal food is? Bakousa, soup, baklava, coffee. Any of that. And, yeah.

AYAN: I love it. Halal food is so good, it's so delicious.

ABDALLAH: Yes, I tell you.

AYAN: Ramadan we make so much food and we eat and we celebrate.

ABDALLAH: And pray.

AYAN: Pray!

SARA: Abdallah, mashallah. *[laughter]*

ABDALLAH: That's good, don't forget that.

AYAN: Don't forget that?. I'm sorry! *[laughter continue]*

ABDALLAH: Maybe open your hand and pray.

AYAN: How could I forget? That's so haram of me. I'm sorry.

ABDALLAH: That's haram, big haram. Haram is *[inaudible],* not say *[inaudible]*. You cursing, you bad thing, you baby, this not good. Allah say, not say that. No, we are, do.

AYAN: That's important, yeah. Only positive things. Nothing bad or nasty.

ABDALLAH: Not bad, yes.

AYAN: Before we leave, next year. What is one thing that you would like to do next year?

ABDALLAH: Next year. One week this me, I do. Next year, aha! There's big day for me. Next year, my birthday coming next year.

AYAN: Yea.

PAULINE: Well, that's 30, right?

SARA: Yes, big.

ABDALLAH: Okay, just a second. This big, let's sing my birthday. *[singing]* Happy birthday to you, to me!

AYAN: Oh my God. I wish I had the Stevie Wonder song. I would have started playing the Stevie Wonder “Happy Birthday”. But that's a good, amazing song. Thank you so much.

PAULINE: That was amazing.

ABDALLAH: Thank you.

AYAN: That was incredible.

PAULINE: And I know it's your birthday next year, but it's your mom's birthday now.

ABDALLAH: Yeah, I know.

PAULINE: So can we sing happy birthday for your mom?

ABDALLAH: *[singing]*. Happy birthday to Sara, this best queen, this beautiful birthday today.

SARA: Thank you.

PAULINE: Happy birthday again.

SARA: Thank you. Thank you so much.

PAULINE: Thanks for coming in. AYAN, are we're going to play some music now?

AYAN: Yes, yes we are. We're going to play a song that you picked. So when we come back, we'll name the song, unless you know it off by heart right now. No?

PAULINE: Just play it and we'll figure it out. We are winging it today!

*[song plays]*

AYAN: The song that you're listening to right now is from the soundtrack, Amar, a song that hasn't been cleared but it is from Amar. And it was sampled by Wasi B.