

Angels of Islington

By: Justin T Shaul
15 February 2021

Just south of a usually quiet Angel Station, lays a bustling Regent's Canal. There are people in pairs catching up whilst drinking a cup of coffee, teenagers zooming past on rented Santander bicycles, children giggling and running along as their parents struggle to keep up, people of all ages reading alongside the edge of the pavement, couples sharing a kiss while the setting sun paints an orange blanket upon the water, and, of course, those who are brave enough to exercise in the cold.

While all of these residents of Islington appear to have vastly different lives, they all share one thing in common: they all have a story that's unique to them. Though it would be virtually impossible to tell the story of everyone that has ever stepped foot on the pavements of the Canal, here are some of the stories of the angels of Islington.

Louise Tormaehlen, 24



“I’m very creative and open,” the German 24 year-old Louise Tormaehlen tells me. “In my early 20’s, I went partying a lot and met very interesting people. It was a wild era where I was experimenting a lot, but I found myself afterwards, I think.”

Louise was sitting on a bench, smiling and taking in the scenery when I approached her. The moment I asked her if she would like to be interviewed, she grinned with her eyes and nodded excitedly without any hesitation.

Tormaehlen, a fashion design student, is currently studying in London through the ERASMUS programme with a goal to learn English. Though born and raised in Hamburg, Germany, Louise has always wanted to study in London.

“I always thought that London has a lot to offer, there’s big diversity and a lot going on. It’s challenging because it’s so different from what I know, and my new university is very different. It’s a big challenge, but it’s really good.”

Unlike most people, Louise actually enjoys the challenges of life, and with a smile, adds: “In life, I think you’re always in some kind of challenge and always moving somehow, I am looking forward to finding some peace somehow.

“Also I’m looking forward to see what life has to offer, the different steps I have to take and reaching a point where I have settled.”

Before continuing, she sighs and looks on.

“Because right now I’m still finding something, but I still don’t know what.”

Robert Macauley, 59



“I was born in a rainforest in a place called Freetown, Sierra Leone from a white, blonde-haired, blue-eyed European woman,” says Robert Macauley, 59.

Growing up in lush Sierra Leone, Macauley compared his childhood to that of the character Mowgli, from the movie *The Jungle Book*. He learned the ability to adapt to changes at a young age thanks to growing up in a jungle filled with dangerous animals, but nothing could compare to his biggest change yet: moving to England.

“There was this new mental survival because I had to worry about being separated from human beings just because I had a tan,” Macauley explains. Without breaking his intense eye contact, he elaborates further: “My dad’s a black African and my mum’s a white European, but that didn’t matter in Africa because there was none of that separation between human beings.

“When I came to England, the Europeans would always make me choose a side to defend.”

Despite having to make the choice between his two races, Macauley insisted he “never chose” and learned just how lucky he was to have grown up the way he did. As he grew older, he bought properties, and started a family in England, but still doesn’t consider himself to be English.

“I realised I don’t see myself as belonging to Africa or England or anywhere. I’m a world citizen, and that doesn’t need papers or authorisation.”

Eva Avershina, 23



“In my country, I was not a normal teenager,” states Eva Avershina, a 23 year-old au-pair from Belarus. She laughs as she continues to reflect on her past: “I looked really different from now. I had pink hair, crazy makeup, wigs, but now I’m more calmed down.”

Avershina always considered herself “bright” compared to the close-minded people she grew up with. She would get weird stares from strangers, as if she were different, but this changed when she moved to London three years ago.

“Nobody thinks I’m crazy here, and I really like that. I’m trying to find myself, but I think so is

everyone in London.”

There’s wire that outlines Eva’s eyes and nose. It shines in the midday sun and dips into her mask. When asked about it, she confesses she’s making her own styles of jewellery as she one day wishes to work in the fashion industry and gets inspiration from Japanese streetwear.

“During lockdown I started to do what I like. I started to experiment with jewellery and customise shoes.” As she says this, she points at her white chunky Fila’s with intricate sharpie doodles.

At the end of the interview, when I asked permission to take her photo, she nodded and giggled: “Yes of course, but can I close my eyes? I think that will be different.”

Life is constantly changing, and people are constantly telling their stories. Even during lockdown, this hasn't stopped. In fact, the citizens of Islington flock to Regent's Canal and make the waters their audience.