



Voice of Aroha

If you're a Wellington local, you may have tuned into the radio show 'Voice of Aroha' that airs fortnightly on Access Radio. If you have, you'll know that Voice of Aroha is more than your ordinary radio show. It was established by a group of former refugees with the vision to create an inclusive platform for the diverse communities in Wellington. The team includes Kodrean, Narjis, Beth, Hamid, Juan, Luis, and Michael. Kodrean Eashae, the founder of Voice of Aroha, is part of the Iraqi Assyrian community. Though he only moved to New Zealand two years ago, it's now Wellington that he calls home.

Talking about the mission of Voice of Aroha, Kodrean says "Our vision is to highlight and inspire stories of people from refugee/migrant backgrounds and their contributions to New Zealand, which hopefully in turn will encourage and empower our youth and communities. We aim to increase awareness on topics that aren't covered in mainstream media and open a dialogue to create solutions."

When New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4 as a result of COVID-19, Voice of Aroha had to come up with some creative solutions to continue their work. "Some of the challenges we have faced are obviously not being able to be in a studio space with the right equipment to record our episodes", Kodrean says. Like others around the country they've had to switch to online platforms for their meetings and recording sessions. Despite the difficulties of producing a radio show with new technology, some positives have come from the change. Recording the shows remotely over Zoom means that Voice of Aroha has been able to invite international guests onto the show!

The biggest focus for Voice of Aroha right now is making sure the refugee communities they usually engage with feel supported and connected. Coming from a refugee/migrant background can already feel isolating, and staying in self-isolation increases this feeling of disconnection. Going forward, Voice of Aroha's radio shows will have a specific focus on how refugee/migrant communities can cope through COVID-19 and self-isolation. Many former refugees have incredible stories of resilience and Voice of Aroha are going to feature older people who have lived through similar lock-down experiences on their show.

As well as continuing to run their usual fortnightly radio show, Voice of Aroha has created a Facebook group chat for members to talk and share their thoughts during this difficult time. Connecting through the Facebook group chat means Voice of Aroha can provide their communities with opportunities to co-host and share their experiences on the show. They also use the group to simply provide entertainment to their communities. They're planning to host remote game nights and music nights where they can showcase artists in their communities, including Voice of Aroha's very own sound-engineer!

Voice of Aroha has made it their mission to continue to provide refugee/migrant communities with a sense of connection. This has come with some challenges. However by acting fast, being adaptable, and responding to the needs of the people they engage with, Voice of Aroha have been able to help refugee/migrant communities feel united.

You can listen to Voice of Aroha every other Tuesday from 3-4 PM on Wellington Access Radio 106.1FM.

Wellington Access Radio is one of the many community radio stations registered as charities in New Zealand – operated by Wellington Access Broadcasting Society, Incorporated (trading as Wellington Access Radio. CC42168).

You can find out more about Voice of Aroha on their [website](#) and on their [Facebook page](#)

