

Charly, Democratic Republic of Congo & Uganda

Mary: What was the first thing you thought of when you heard you were coming to Missoula, Montana?

Charly: Well, I was just surprised to hear about Missoula, Montana, because, I never heard about Missoula, Montana before and I did not have very good picture of what Missoula is like. I need just to get in so that I can know what is going on. But when I came, I was just like, no, man, I can't live in the mountains because I've never been. And I was just like, let me see what is, what am I going to learn in Missoula?

Mary: Have you ended up enjoying the mountains? Do you enjoy them now?

Charly: I've started going up the mountains and having fun with new friends I'm making here.

Mary: I wanted to ask you a little bit more because I know that fashion is a huge passion of yours. How did you get into fashion and how did you learn to sew?

Charly: I started fashion because I was like, every day I used to ask myself, what am I good at? And then one day I was like, I like styling. I love doing style. But there's a school somewhere, but they asked for a lot of money. How can I get to that school for what I love? I start making friends with a teacher from there, but they used to teach English as well. And I wasn't able to speak English. He was like how can you come and just join the English class for free? But one day my teacher was like keep coming and come to see me if you need something. And I was like, that's the time when I got an opportunity to tell her, I need to, I need to know how to sew. And since you are a refugee here, I don't know if they can accept you. She was like, okay, just come. I was like sewing on machine doesn't need a language. A lot of things they write, they draw, they explain it so everyone can understand. And I got a chance to start going at school. I just grow by myself creating and I feel like I start loving it until I, um, I was ready, I was perfect on it.

Mary: What is something that you are looking forward to or excited about in the next year or two?

Charly: I was planning to join, uh, forest fire fighters, because since I came here, which I was just stuck on that and think about it all the time. How can I do that job or how can I be the part of that job to be helping people? And they told me that I have to be a citizen here, so I'm waiting and I'm ready to join whenever it's time.