

# PLASTIC SURGEON PODCAST

## FTM Navy Assault to Slam Poet

### SPEAKERS

Dr. Javad Sajan, Ebo Barton

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**Dr. Javad Sajan** 0:00

Ever wondered what motivates people to get plastic surgery? Did they regret it? What can we learn from the stories of plastic surgery patients? We're here to explore those questions and get some answers today with my guest **Ebo Barton** on the plastic surgeon podcast.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 0:31

Hello, my friends. Welcome back. And thanks for our listeners for the amazing feedback. We have had so much fun so far and look forward to more of your insights and suggestions. Please rate and review us on Apple podcast to help us get you more great content. On the plastic surgeon podcast, we listened to real plastic surgery stories of triumphant and pain from real patients and providers to further understand why they would risk their life under the knife. I'm **Dr. Javad Sajan**, and my guest today is the amazing **Ebo Barton**.

**Ebo Barton** 1:01

Hello, how are you?

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 1:02

I'm great Ebo. How are you, my friend?

**Ebo Barton** 1:03

Pretty good.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 1:04

We're here to talk about your journey, how we came to know each other the procedure you underwent, and how it affected you Ebo.

**Ebo Barton 1:10**

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 1:11**

So Ebo, I have the privilege of meeting you over a year ago. And the operation I did for you was a transgender, or gender affirming surgery. And we did a surgery called FTM or female to male top surgery. That's a generic word as many variations of it. But what that really meant for you was a double incision chest reconstruction.

**Ebo Barton 1:11**

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 1:11**

Is that correct?

**Ebo Barton 1:14**

Yes, that is.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 1:18**

Awesome. So Ebo we're going to talk about the surgery and get into that. First, let's learn a little bit about you.

**Ebo Barton 1:40**

All right.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 1:41**

Where are you from?

**Ebo Barton 1:42**

I'm originally from Los and I'm actually I was just talking about this ever in the San Fernando Valley of Southern California, in Los Angeles County. So I usually tell people LA just to get it over with. And I came up here about 15 years ago, I was in the United States Navy. And I was printed here in Everett. So this this area is actually the first area I was introduced to. And then as I was exiting the military, I started getting into spoken word poetry, and found a community there and did not want to go back home.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 2:17**

That's cool. And when you grew up, did you have both your mom or dad or was it was one parent.

**Ebo Barton 2:22**

Mostly I just had my mom. In my younger years, I was raised by my grandmother. My stepfather was sort of in and out and my biological father was not there at all.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 2:34**

Did you have any siblings?

**Ebo Barton 2:35**

Yeah, I have an older sister. She's four years older than me.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 2:39**

Okay. And with your stepfather? How close was your relation with him?

**Ebo Barton 2:45**

During the times that he was around, we were very close. I you know, I remember mimicking his style, like whatever he was wearing, I would try to wear similar and there was also a lot of, you know, I feel like there was an understanding between the two of us that I wasn't the girl that everybody wanted me to be. But it was definitely unspoken. There was never a spoken or acknowledged version of that.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 3:15**

How old were you? When that started happening?

**Ebo Barton 3:17**

I think I was like not to say eight or nine, eight or nine years old. I started playing softball, of course. And that was sort of like my connection to my stepdad, right? Was that I played a sport and he knew about it. And he knew about fitness. So we work together a lot. And that sort of bonded that relationship.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 3:35**

And did your mom notice that you were maybe featuring more characteristics that weren't with your gender identified at birth?

**Ebo Barton 3:44**

Yeah, I think my mom find it very hard. Yeah, as so I'm half Filipino. And I feel like my mother really wanted that traditional, young Filipino girl that, you know, went off and got married and was very religious, and all of that, and I definitely wasn't that. So she fought it very hard, like very much, had dresses for me available to wear, found other activities for me to do. And I feel like the way that's played out at me as an adult is that I'm sort of this masculine person that has a lot of like, domestic skills, right? Like, I cook I, you know, do yard work, you know, like I so all of these things, and I'm in I can't even compliment a young woman's fashion and be on point about it, but from a masculine perspective.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 4:32**

Yeah. And what religion or was your family?

**Ebo Barton 4:36**

A Roman Catholic.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 4:38**

Are you still Roman Catholic?

**Ebo Barton 4:39**

I'm not. I'm spiritual, but I don't know that I have a name for it yet.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 4:44**

Sure?

**Ebo Barton 4:44**

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 4:45**

Well, when you were eight or nine, other than dressing, what other characteristics? Did you have that one more, quote unquote, male-ish?

**Ebo Barton 4:54**

Yeah. And it's so hard to answer now because we have better ways of describing masculinity versus femininity now. But in those times, it was the energy that I felt was more along with, with the boys that I knew. Then with the young women that I knew and the young women that I did hang out with, I feel like we're sort of tomboyish like I was. And I don't know and that was when I sort of identified the range of masculinity was through the young women that I vibed with. So it was, oh, I don't have to necessarily be as male as the football player, or as masculine as a football player, but I am more masculine than this young girl. And so I started recognizing that there was a way for me to belong, without necessarily being all the way both ways.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 5:45**

Since this was so different from your cultural background, how did you feel about it?

**Ebo Barton 5:54**

it was, honestly, it was rough. I'm 37 years old. And I didn't come out till I was about 32. And I think what ends up happening is you don't think that this is what you want, or that we what is for you. Because of family, right? Like family is such a large part of our lives. And so our biggest goal is to never disappoint them to make them proud, right. And I feel like this was one thing coming out as transgender, and a minor was the one thing that would tear everything down. And so I held on to it for a really long time. And when I came out, that has been sort of a work in progress with my family, trying to figure out how I can change enough to be comfortable with myself to also make them comfortable with me. But I also need them to meet me there. And I think that that's the struggle we're having.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 6:51**

So you, when did you start dressing more masculine?

**Ebo Barton 6:55**

I've been dressing on and off masculine since I was about that age. And I think that it was this sort of mental struggle of what do I have to be? Where do I have to belong? And it wasn't until I think I was about 23 ish, where I just said, I'm not going to try anymore. This is what how I feel comfortable, regardless of what gender a I may or may not be.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 7:18**

How did your mom understand that you were headed more in this direction? What do you tell her?

**Ebo Barton 7:24**

So I came out to her in my 30s, like I said, and her first reaction was, you're talking too loud about this now. And so immediately, what I thought was, oh, she's embarrassed not because she's embarrassed, She's embarrassed because of what everybody else is going to think of her and not me. Right? And so our lid, there was this narrative of, you know, like, I failed as a mother and I and that's something that as her child, I want to protect her from, but at the same time, I'm the reason, right?

**Dr. Javad Sajan 7:59**

Were you close to her?

**Ebo Barton 8:00**

We were close in a different way. Like we were able to have like deep conversations. But there is that barrier between us. And I feel like I put another one there by coming out.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 8:13**

When you were going more into tomboyish direction, if you will. Did you guys talk about that at all before you came out to her?

**Ebo Barton 8:22**

I think because I came out as a lesbian, many years before that. And I think that she still struggled with that identity. And then to move to changing my gender was just too much, right? Like I was already having trouble with this one thing. And now you're telling me this whole other thing that I'm not even sure I have a grasp on?

**Dr. Javad Sajan 8:44**

How old were you when you came out as lesbian to her?

**Ebo Barton 8:46**

I think I was about 20, 21.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 8:49**

Did you have any relations with the opposite gender before that?

**Ebo Barton** 8:52

I had very casual and not at all serious relationships. So she like never met a boyfriend of mine by any means.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 9:00

And how did you come to understand that you were lesbian?

**Ebo Barton** 9:04

In high school, I started recognizing that the feelings I was having was actually for my friends and not for the boys in my class or whatever it was. And it wasn't until I think I was interested in a classmate. And she also happened to be a lesbian.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 9:22

How do you know she was a lesbian?

**Ebo Barton** 9:24

She told me, I feel like when we're younger, it's a lot easier to admit like in within our peers. It's a lot easier to admit what our sexualities or identifications are than it is to the outside world.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 9:37

Who said it first. Did you say it or she said it?

**Ebo Barton** 9:39

She said it for sure.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 9:40

Does she announced it to your friend group? How does that come up in a conversation?

**Ebo Barton 9:44**

I feel like we were in class for sure. And it was very casual. It was just like, Oh, yeah, we're going to pride because we're going to, you know, do whatever it was right. And I was like, Oh, I wonder if I should do that, and so there's this like it, like, interest in it, right? But then at the same time there was also like, Oh, I wonder how she got to be that way and just totally fine with it, you know?

**Dr. Javad Sajan 10:14**

And where did you learn that being lesbian was even a possibility? Because it sounds like you grew up in a strong, disciplined atmosphere.

**Ebo Barton 10:21**

Yeah, I'm. So growing up in LA, we hung around West Hollywood a lot, which is the sort of the gayborhood. And so there was a lot of permission in those in that nightlife for me, seeing people out and not scared and holding their partner's hand or dancing with somebody else. And so there was this permission that I saw. And it almost gave me this idea that I was living in two different worlds where I could go to West Hollywood and be whoever I was, and then I would go home and you know, sort of put the disguise back on. Yeah. And so and then I felt like that carried over into this identity of being transgender and non binary in which I was like, Okay, so here, I am just a lesbian. And I home by myself, I can be this trans man that I think that I am, right? Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 11:13**

And did you have a relationship with that high school classmate?

**Ebo Barton 11:17**

I did. I did. We dated for about two years. And, you know, it was just sort of a high school thing. So I just think you kind of went away.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 11:26**

A lot of people often ask, you know, or wonder when someone transitions their gender, if they had an intimate relation with the opposite gender? Did you ever have that before coming out as lesbian or no?

**Ebo Barton 11:38**

Oh, yeah, I had intimate relationships with the opposite gender. But it I feel as though there was always something missing for me. And even in my sexually, I identify as pansexual, which means that I am romantically interested in all genders. And I feel like at that time, it felt more oppressive, to be in a cisgender woman's body, and have a relationship with a man. And it wasn't until I transitioned that I felt comfortable again, being with a sis man.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 12:10**

Okay. And after you came out as lesbian, your mom probably sounds like she had a heart attack or something like tha?

**Ebo Barton 12:17**

Something close like that. Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 12:19**

You else in your family knew about that?

**Ebo Barton 12:21**

Um, so the way my mom processes, which is very interesting, is with all of our family members, and so she just sort of blurts things out. And little to my knowledge, she had already told everyone, it was sort of like separate phone calls.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 12:36**

Who's everyone?

**Ebo Barton 12:37**

Oh, my sister, my stepfather, my uncle, my aunt and my cousins who are sort of our immediate family group in that area. And I did had no idea. And we were at my mom's house. And me and my girlfriend

was there. And my uncle comes in, and he was like, Oh, hey, and I was like, Oh, and I never said, This is my girlfriend. I was like, Oh, this is Sam. And he was like, Oh, so you're the one. And I was like, Oh, crap. This, you know, right. And then, you know, a days after that my sister called me and was like, Mom told me what you said, you know, like, and so it was this, I had to figure out that everybody knew.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 13:15

How were they, were they supportive? Or were they like, more not supportive?

**Ebo Barton** 13:19

I think that there was a lot of discomfort and grief from my elder family members, like my mom and my uncle. And I think the way that played out was making a joke about it. Oh, that's because you're gay. You know, like that kind of thing. And so while hurtful, it was interesting to watch them process in this way.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 13:40

The anyone tried convincing you that you weren't lesbian? And this was wrong.

**Ebo Barton** 13:44

Oh, absolutely. My mom definitely said things like that.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 13:47

What does she say?

**Ebo Barton** 13:48

She would say, you never gave men a chance. Or it may be if you tried makeup or a dress, or you know, like, tried everything she could do you want to get your hair done? Do you want to get your nails done, you know, like, all of these sort of cookie cutter ways in which to be a girl, right? And was trying to force them on me just to see what would happen. And it was just never something I wanted to do.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 14:14

And how did you respond to that? When she made those ----?

**Ebo Barton** 14:17

There was a couple of times in which I gave in, but it was more of trying to make my mom happy for the day, yeah, it was never for me, it was just an activity we would share together.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 14:28

And I know your biological father seems like wasn't that involved?

**Ebo Barton** 14:30

No.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 14:31

Did you ever talk to that person? Or do they know about your transition?

**Ebo Barton** 14:35

You know, I don't think so. And so it's interesting is that I actually did try to look for him recently. And in my brain. I said, Well, how do you explain who you are, if they don't, if he has no idea of who you've become, what the story is from point A to point B? And how do you explain that? What do you do about his reaction was, you know, I sort of went through this whole thing in my head. And in the end, I said, Well, if you weren't invested in the story, then you don't get to have the ending. So I just I was like, You know what, I'll leave you where you are. I know where you are now. Because the, you know, the internet. But I don't think that you deserve this part of the story.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 15:21

Why did you want to look for him?

**Ebo Barton** 15:23

I think it was more, uh, you know, when you start taking HRT, I think one of the things that they tell you, when I started taking testosterone was that you will start to, you know, have the characteristics or take on a lot of things from your, the male side of your family. And I and I never got that I didn't have any evidence of that. Right? So I was like, Well, I don't know how my facial hair is gonna come in. I don't know, you know, like, all the different ways. And so I went to go look for at least a photo of him. So I could see what I might not necessarily what I might look like, but how my progress might go about, right? And I never found what I found an old high school photo of him that looks very much like me. And then after that, I was just like, you know, maybe this is just not part of my story.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 16:12

What did your mom tell you about him?

**Ebo Barton** 16:14

She told me that he was very angry man. He was also funny, like, you know, he's very much a comedian type guy. And that's pretty much all I know.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 16:27

Was he Filipino too?

**Ebo Barton** 16:28

No, he's a black man, yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 16:31

And then you did a high school, you transitioned I mean, you announces came out as lesbian and then after high school, what was next? Did you go to college?

**Ebo Barton** 16:41

Yeah, I went to college very briefly, before leaving for the military. And that sort of that era of my life was me trying to figure out what I wanted in terms of the big. What do I want to go after?

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 16:56

What interested you in the military?

**Ebo Barton** 16:58

The interest in the military was the benefits only service? No. At that point in time, there was no interest in like being a soldier by any means. It was also a way to get out of where I was.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:13

In California.

**Ebo Barton** 17:13

Yeah. And so I took the opportunity. The weird part was that I left with a lot of folks wait six months or a year before they leave after signing up, I left within 30 days of signing a contract. So it was just sort of this push into independence and adulthood and figure it out.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:31

Why did you did you leave college for the military?

**Ebo Barton** 17:34

I graduated, I have a fashion design degree that I don't use. And then I then eventually I left. So it was like, maybe I want to say six months after I graduated.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:44

Is that four or two year degree?

**Ebo Barton** 17:45

Two year.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:46

Okay, so is that like a community college?

**Ebo Barton** 17:48

It was at a vocational college.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:50

Oh, cool.

**Ebo Barton** 17:50

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 17:51

So, then you signed up for the military? And then what were the benefits that were so good?

**Ebo Barton** 17:56

The free school, and then like your track to career, seemed they were selling it to me, seemed like it was something I really wanted to do to have more stability as an adult,

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 18:09

And what's the attractive career,

**Ebo Barton** 18:11

Attractive career, they train you for a job in the military, you do it for your set amount of years, and then you come out and they give you the resources to get that job outside of the military is what's supposed to happen?

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 18:23

How was the Navy?

**Ebo Barton** 18:26

It was, it's very interesting. Culture. You know, like, it's a totally different world than being a civilian, because you're under these rules and regulations and dealing with people in this new set of ways and how do we exist? It's obviously very gendered, which was an which was interesting in my own brain, in my own privacy. Because I was, you know, around women, all day long, almost every day. I lived with 92 other women in one, you know, one room on the ship. And so it was just very interesting. And then exiting that room to work with, to like mix and intermingle with the males, was just a very interesting experience in which what women take from men. What the ways in which we have to keep silent. You know, and I say we because in that in that moment, that's what I you know, that's the way I had to identify. And so it was just watching all of that, and almost watching the world in this microcosm, and like, and being trapped on this ship for days and years and months.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 19:37

What was your position in the Navy?

**Ebo Barton** 19:39

I was a culinary specialist.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 19:42

What does that mean?

**Ebo Barton** 19:43

I worked in the kitchen. I was a chef for all the members on board.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 19:47

How many years did you do that?

**Ebo Barton** 19:49

Two and a half.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 19:50

Do you think the military sort of gendered roles or was it pretty open? If you want to do like a mechanic or something would that be possible?

**Ebo Barton** 19:57

I mean, it was possible but I feel like the environment isn't set up for women to appropriately succeed.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 20:07

Did you pick that position? Or was it assigned to you?

**Ebo Barton** 20:09

It was assigned to me.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 20:11

Really?

**Ebo Barton** 20:11

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 20:11

How do they assign those roles?

**Ebo Barton** 20:13

They will take your general interests, and whatever becomes available is what they will offer you and then ask you if you want to leave. I think with my story, it was more like I'm wanting to leave more than I wanted a job. And so I took what was available.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 20:29

On the ship, I would think mostly things are like processed or ready to go. But is there a lot of cooking involved?

**Ebo Barton** 20:34

Oh, yeah, lots of so we did 4000 meals a day for 1500 crew members. And so it was just yeah, it was constantly so breakfast, we would prepare for breakfast, serve breakfast, prepare for lunch, serve lunch, prepare dinner, serve dinner, you know, it was just automatic. On the clock.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 20:55

How many hours a worker do a day?

**Ebo Barton** 20:57

I want to say was something around, it was something around 12 hours 12 to 13, depending on who you were and what you were doing. Much of my time was spent in the bake shop. So like 13 hours. And then when we are out to see we don't get days off. So

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 21:14

How many years? Were you in the Navy?

**Ebo Barton** 21:16

About two and a half?

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 21:17

Did you overall like it?

**Ebo Barton** 21:19

Overall, I think it was an experience that I needed. I don't know that I say that I would, that I liked it.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 21:26

How do you leave? Was it like your turn was over? You were done with it?

**Ebo Barton** 21:29

Oh, I was discharged. So I was how do I say this? I want to say this appropriately. I was sexually assaulted while in the military. And that particular incident sort of blew up into a bigger issue. And then I was given the option to leave.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 21:51

And do you mind telling us what happened?

**Ebo Barton** 21:53

Sure. So I had a relationship, a friendly relationship with a crew member.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 22:02

Was that person male?

**Ebo Barton** 22:03

Yes.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 22:03

Okay.

**Ebo Barton** 22:04

Yes. And it was sort of this idea that all you know, like, once you find a friend on the ship, like their friends are sort of your friends. And I was one of the very rare younger folks that had an apartment. So everybody just sort of hung out there. And I think that things just got out of hand and out of my control, which is the most dangerous place to be in any situation. And so that happened.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 22:17

So how did things get out of control?

**Ebo Barton** 22:31

I feel like there was a lot of alcohol involved with, you know, with him with everybody else. And I lost control of that situation, because

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 22:38

It was your friend or a friend of a friend?

**Ebo Barton** 22:40

It was my friend. Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 22:42

Do you mind sharing with us? What happened?

**Ebo Barton** 22:43

Yeah. So we were in my room, and I think that he was intoxicated. And honestly, I don't remember how it happened. I just know that it did. And then after that, it became it started weighing on my mental health.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:03

Did you rape you?

**Ebo Barton** 23:04

Yes.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:05

You were fighting him off?

**Ebo Barton** 23:07

Yes. And it started weighing on my mental health, because I wasn't sure if I could tell anyone. I wasn't sure if anybody would believe me. And so finally, when I did say something about it, there was no action whatsoever.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:23

Really?

**Ebo Barton** 23:23

Yeah. And so

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:24

What year was this?

**Ebo Barton** 23:26

Early, mid 2000s I feel like.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:30

How long did you wait to report it?

**Ebo Barton** 23:32

It was weeks before I waited to report it was I want to say was more than a month for sure.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:37

Did he hit you during the encounter?

**Ebo Barton** 23:39

No. Yeah, um, it was more of and I think honestly, it was more of, he just wanted to be able to do it to say that he was that he did it. And that's the stories that I heard afterwards and like from other crewmates.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 23:57

And then when you report it at what happened?

**Ebo Barton** 24:00

You know, like, there's this artificial care that obviously happens with the person you're reporting to. And when you see the actions play out, it's that they moved me away from the his department. He got, you got to stay. And then I found out a few months later that he was promoted. And so considering that story, I would assume that would have a role in not promoting him. And that sort of really bothered me where I was like, what, like, How is this even possible? And now technically, he's my supervisor.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 24:33

Are you kidding?

**Ebo Barton** 24:33

Yeah, like suppose we're all in the same department. So

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 24:36

He was in the kitchen, too?

**Ebo Barton** 24:37

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 24:38

Oh, my God.

**Ebo Barton** 24:39

And so I was so that really weighed heavy on me. I started seeing a therapist that was in the Navy also. So it's sort of this like, their rules are what they're going to try to enforce. And so because he was a good sailor, he couldn't have been somebody who did that. That was sort of the line. I was given you. Though as I he was a good sailor look at his records. And then you're telling me he did this, and then it didn't align to me. And so that started weighing heavy on my mental health. And I went to it into a very deep depression in which I couldn't work anymore. And then that's when we had to have a conversation about whether or not I was able to continue. And then I was given what's called shore duty, in which you get to be on base instead of on a ship. And eventually, I they just were like, okay, so do you want to get out? And I said, Yes.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 25:36

And when you were on the ship, with this rapist, Who was your supervisor? How did you do the day to day?

**Ebo Barton** 25:44

Well, big when they changed my department, I didn't often see him. But there was an obvious unspoken agreement that we wouldn't no longer speak. And from my end of it, it almost felt like he then just didn't see me anymore.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 26:01

There was no discipline they did, that you know?

**Ebo Barton** 26:03

Not that I know of. They didn't inform me of anything like that.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 26:07

Wow. And when they discharge you, were offered you the discharge, do they give you your full benefits and what happened with all that?

**Ebo Barton** 26:15

So I was honourably discharged. But because I didn't finish my term. I owed a bunch of money for bonuses that I got, a lot of my benefits were cut in half. So it's really interesting how it plays out while I was able to get an honourable discharge, because dishonourable would keep me from getting employed ever again, or you know, any of those things. That was beneficial. But they definitely took half of my benefits away, because I didn't fulfill my contract.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 26:43

How long was your contract?

**Ebo Barton** 26:44

Four years.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 26:45

Wow. It's horrible. I think hopefully, it seems like they've done a lot of reforms.

**Ebo Barton** 26:50

Oh, yeah, from my understanding, there's been a lot of reforms. But like, we're seeing it now. Like, in terms of what's happening outside politically, I think we need to rebuild everything, with people in mind this time, you know, and so like, with the military, it was obviously and I, you know, I understand like that it was founded on the basis that men will fight for us. But once you allow women in, you have to make room for how that's going to play out between all people involved.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 27:19

Absolutely. After the Navy, what did you do?

**Ebo Barton** 27:23

So I was, as I was getting out, I discovered a poetry slam in Fremont. And I was just, I became addicted almost immediately where I was like, people are speed, that's something I could never do. And I wrote poetry, but it was very much a private thing that I did for myself, like, you know, while I was in my bed after work, and just, you know, shoved it under my mattress. So I went and I saw and I saw how incredible it was. And maybe after the third time, people started recognizing me and welcoming me and you know, buying me a drink or asking me what I was writing tomorrow. And I just fell in love with that community so fast that I was like, Okay, so I'm not going to go back home. And I'm going to see what this is. And, and so I was able to not only process all of the different things that have happened to me out loud, and with people that were willing to help me create these things. I found a community.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 28:24

And what was their community?

**Ebo Barton** 28:26

Writers, poets, artists, weirdos. And then within that, there were also sub groups, one of which was a queer writing Institute, have a bunch of different folks. LGBTQIA LMNOP. writing, writing and sharing,

and processing and honestly being supports for each other. So that I didn't have that in California. And I was like, how can I leave? If I found the thing that I mean, in.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 28:55

You know, in California, my experience overall, is people are a little bit nicer, more approachable. Seattle, you know, not as much.

**Ebo Barton** 29:02

It's too cold. We got to get back inside.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 29:04

Yeah, it's definitely better than New York, but a lot less warm than California. So I promise people will engage you. So being new here, how did you connect to people? Was it like, How did you meet and start making relations?

**Ebo Barton** 29:17

Honestly, I you know, I tell people this a lot like everything that I am and everyone that I know I've in Seattle, I've met through poetry in some way, shape, or form. So whether that be somebody who's just an audience member, or somebody who was the producer of the show, or the lighting guy, like any of those things. I know through poetry.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 29:38

Do you just went up to them after the show and started talking? Or how do you connect?

**Ebo Barton** 29:43

So a lot of folks will come up to you after you've read a poem on stage. Or, like I said, because I was a regular face in the audience. People started recognizing me. And so like, Oh, yeah, I know you from the slam. And it was sort of this like, it's almost like a club in which like, you know, You'll be at a restaurant and the waiter was like, Oh, I think I saw you at the poetry slam, you know that I was like, okay, so it was like sort of this inside underground community of people.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 30:09

That's cool. And you built your friends that way?

**Ebo Barton** 30:12

Oh, absolutely.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 30:13

And now you're in your mid to late 20s. Right?

**Ebo Barton** 30:16

Mentally? Or if that time, yes,

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 30:18

Yeah. And when did transgender starting become something that you were interested in?

**Ebo Barton** 30:24

Yeah. So when I was younger, the only represent the representation of trans people I had was one was from what was that movie, The Silence of the Lambs. So it was a trans woman who was basically a murderer. And then the other example I had was this weird documentary I saw on HBO, of a trans man, sort of his transition going through, you know, going through surgery and all of these things. But he lived in a trailer in the middle of the forest, you know, he had overalls on and all this stuff. And those two things were the only thing I knew about transgender, and I knew that it wasn't me. And so I sort of tossed it in this container of like, Well, I'm not a murderer. And I also don't want to live in a trailer in the middle of the forest. So that's not me, I'm not going to do it. So, so I sort of put it out of my mind, I was like, I'm, you know, this is me, this is who I am. And as I started getting into writing community, especially with queer community, I started recognizing that folks were introducing themselves with different pronouns.

**Ebo Barton 31:26**

And I, you know, like, and a lot of my friends were having top surgery or going through the motions of top surgery or changing their names. And I was like, What is this about, like, what's going on, and I did a lot more reading a lot more, a lot more googling, and having a lot of like, deep conversations with friends. And recognizing how life saving it was for them to just admit this thing that's been weighing on their brain for so long, and to be able to live their lives. And as I started to discover, I came across non binary. And I wanted to know so much more about that identity. And so, I did a lot of research in terms of like other ways, it shows up in the world. And you know, how people look at it and all this stuff. And I was like, that is something that I feel.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 32:16**

What is non binary, tell her?

**Ebo Barton 32:17**

Yes. non binary is someone who doesn't identify within the gender binary identifications of male or female. So you can live as both or as none, within your one body. And I identified with that so easily, like I was like, Yes, I do feel that like, 9 times out of 10. That's exactly what I'm feeling. And that-

**Dr. Javad Sajan 32:40**

If you both or non?

**Ebo Barton 32:41**

I feel now in this moment, right now, I feel I'm leaning towards the side of male. But I do feel that a lot of me still has this grasp on female. Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 32:56**

And how did you transition start?

**Ebo Barton 32:59**

So it started with, so I was going through a divorce.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 33:03

You were married?

**Ebo Barton** 33:04

Yes. After the military.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 33:07

Was this person a male?

**Ebo Barton** 33:08

No, this person was a cisgender female. Yeah. And so and we were married for about seven years. And I was going through a divorce.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 33:17

What led to the divorce?

**Ebo Barton** 33:23

She was not a faithful person.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 33:25

Okay.

**Ebo Barton** 33:25

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 33:28

You were going through a divorce. You learn about transitioning? Yeah. What was your first step?

**Ebo Barton** 33:33

I think my first step was deciding how I was going to let everyone else know. So I feel like even now, as an artist, I feel like I live two different lives, in which I have this public artists life. And then I have my own stuff. And, and I was like, how do I change my How do I change my name? How do I change my pronouns? How do I do all this stuff? And sort of ease people into this? As it as somebody who's in the public a lot. And so I, the first thing I decided to do was change my pronouns. I was like, I feel like that is something that people can work on. And I can see where people are failing or slipping up. And I can apply that knowledge to when I change my name.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 34:18

What did you change them to?

**Ebo Barton** 34:19

They them at first? Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 34:22

And how did that go?

**Ebo Barton** 34:24

It was very, very interesting to see how your closest people are the worst at the worst that honouring it. And I think it's because you're so close that they're like, Oh, it's okay. Because we're cool. Right? And I'm like, actually, it's the exact opposite of that. I expect you to show up more than anybody else. Right? And so I constantly have that battle if people closest to me, but for the most part, I think because of the people I choose to hang around, it was mostly honored.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 34:56

And when did you start hormone?

**Ebo Barton** 34:58

I think it was about Two years after I came out, and that was also a battle for me, because there's a conversation that we often have in, in within community about what does it mean to look a certain gender? And, and there isn't really a way to look like a certain gender, right. And so, in my head, I said, Well, I don't, I'm non binary. So I don't really want to do all that, or I don't need to do all of that. But what was lurking behind and why therapy is just like, the greatest thing you can do for yourself. And I started talking to my therapist, and what came out was that I was trying to preserve the person that my, my ex wife wanted me to be. Right?

**Ebo Barton** 35:46

And so I was trying to preserve because I thought that that person was worthy of being in a relationship, or that person was worthy of this thing. And then eventually, I came to terms with Oh, I don't need to preserve myself anymore. I can be who it is that I want to be and be happy with who I look at, and be comfortable in my skin. Which is how that all evolved into then taking testosterone and then deciding to have surgery.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 36:11

How did surgery come up on your list of something that was part of your translation?

**Ebo Barton** 36:15

I think honestly, looking at my body in the mirror is the like the most I feel dysphoric I feel like gender dysphoria shows up when I'm looking in the mirror. And my chest was definitely that barrier.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 36:31

How did you start researching surgery?

**Ebo Barton** 36:34

so at the time, I worked at a non profit that works with a lot of health care, folks. And my boss, I mentioned it to my boss, who was also trans. And I said, you know, I'm thinking about getting top surgery, but I don't want to make this giant decision. Just and just sort of pick from this list that I haven't worked, right, like just sort of close my eyes and be like, oh, there's one, right. And so he gave me two recommendations, one other surgeon and you. And so I went to both consultations, just to see what felt most comfortable. And in the conversation that you and I had, one of the things that you said to me immediately was, you're a person of color. So your healing is not going to be the same as everyone else. Right. And I was like, just the fact that you named it was how I was why I was like, I'm going to go here. And instead of the other.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 37:30**

Oh, okay, because you thought they were going to give you something more standard, or?

**Ebo Barton 37:35**

I felt like there was like, because of that statement, there was more care involved in the overall procedure. I you hadn't even shown me a knife yet. And you were already showing me all of this care in which all of the different ways in which I'm thinking to, and I felt that, you know, like, this is obviously not like a diss track on other surgeons by any measure. I feel like there because of the amount of patients that many doctors or surgeons may see that there's less of that it's more of checkmark boxes of like, oh, let's do this, and this and this, and this, Okay, see you later. Bye, right. And I felt like in this moment, I really needed someone to tell me what it's going to be how it's going to be and what to expect. Because I'm just so like, you know, that's not it's not the easiest decision to make.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 38:27**

But we're not going to ask for the name of any other providers.

**Ebo Barton 38:29**

Well, nothing. I'm just kidding.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 38:32**

Were there any other differences that you noted that matter to you?

**Ebo Barton 38:36**

Yeah, I think that the other part was, is that the rest of the staff as well, right? Like that's like some somewhere I feel safe in the environment, where people are talking to me like a person. And not just a client or a number. And that was something that I felt immediately when I came here. And you know, honestly, going to other health care providers, you often feel like a number, right? And like you often are like, Oh, well, most people here's this medication, right? Um, and then also, I think that what drew me also was the Instagram feed that you have and the Snapchat feed that you have, because there's a level of accountability there.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 39:19**

Big time.

**Ebo Barton 39:19**

Yeah. Like, you can't say what you're gonna say, Well, you know, like, say what you want to say about someone while they're, you know, like, while someone's filming, or that it goes the way it's supposed to. Because I know that other surgeons also watch you, right? And so like, other surgeons can say, whatever it is that they're here to say, um, and I and I, as a as a client, like, I can make my decision like, hey, if I agree or don't or whatever, you know, yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 39:47**

How did you make the call to have surgery?

**Ebo Barton 39:51**

That was really, really hard. But I kept telling myself, that one it was going to it was going to save my life, which it did. And that too, I want to know, in every decision that I make for myself, that I did everything I can to experience the joy I deserve. And if meaning that I look in the mirror, and I can see even partly of the person that I know that myself to be, that's me going after the joy I deserve.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 40:19**

That's wonderful.

**Ebo Barton 40:20**

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 40:21**

So then surgery day came, how were you feeling?

**Ebo Barton 40:23**

Oh, my gosh, I was a mess. I don't know if you remember this, I went to the wrong place. And then was late, got here. And I was like, I think the fear that I sort of slept with for a week or so was that, for some reason, I thought I was gonna wake up during surgery. And I don't know what that is or why it was, but I was like, it's the anaesthesia is gonna wear off and I'm gonna wake up. And you know, all of my friends and you know, my sister came with me and all of them were like, that's not a thing that's gonna happen to you like, Yes, you've seen it on Grey's Anatomy, but it's not going to happen, right?

**Dr. Javad Sajan 40:56**

Yes.

**Ebo Barton 40:58**

And so I sort of tried to calm myself down. I also talked to your anaesthesiologist about it. And, you know, he reassured me like, yes, that's a thing sometimes, but that's not going to happen. And here's why. So that really kept me calm. And, you know, I'll ever and I tell everybody, all I remember is talking about my job, and then waking up to see a friend, like, be there when I wake woke up. Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 41:26**

Who was life been after surgery?

**Ebo Barton 41:28**

Oh, man. In terms of my body, it's been quite the roller coaster. Because I went to Tulum, Mexico and was on the beach topless, which isn't something I'd never thought I was going to be able to do. And, you know, I take photos topless. I you know, like, there's all of these different ways in which I like, I feel like I'm flexing. And And honestly, like, feeling better in terms of how I engage and participate in the world because there's this confidence now that I'm not, you know, in a binder and you know, like, hardly breathing and it's like, Hi, my name is Ebo. I'm so confident and now it's, you know, there's a certain sense of almost literal, a weight has been taking off me.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 42:13**

Are you happy with the results?

**Ebo Barton 42:14**

Oh, absolutely.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 42:15**

What do you like about it the most?

**Ebo Barton 42:17**

When I honestly when I put on my when I put on shirts, my fashion, you know, I'm fashion degree. So like, looking at myself in the mirror just feels so much better. And feels like I'm This is the person that I am.

**Dr. Javad Sajan 42:31**

That's awesome.

**Ebo Barton 42:32**

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 42:33

Ebo, thank you so much for being my guest.

**Ebo Barton** 42:36

Absolutely. Thank you for having me.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 42:37

Your story is so unique. There's so much you've been through and for you to share that with others. We really help them understand their journeys through yours.

**Ebo Barton** 42:46

Thank you. I hope so.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 42:47

Yes. And that's what I really love about the podcast, one of my most favorite things.

**Ebo Barton** 42:51

Yeah.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 42:52

I've learned a lot on your deal. And our listeners will start their own journey through you. I appreciate your time. And I'm honoured to have you as my guest and good friend.

**Ebo Barton** 43:01

Thank you.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 43:02

If you could look back at your journey through this surgery process in transition. And if you could share one thing with others that may have changed, or may have been good for you to know before, what would that be?

**Ebo Barton** 43:17

Hmm. Something for me to know before is that you're everyone is perfect exactly the way they are. But you get to make the decision of what it looks like. It is totally up to you. And I feel like that's not an easy thing to grasp is that I'm perfect, but I can change it if I want to. But I feel like that's a place to start.

**Dr. Javad Sajan** 43:44

Yeah, I believe that. Thanks for listening to the plastic surgeon podcast. Please rate and review us on Apple podcast to hear more great content. For my live surgeries and my adventures throughout the week, catch us on all social media @realdactorSeattle. See you next time. Bam what.