



Oral History Project Interview

Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute (AMWRI)

Interview Number: JD 1.00

Date: 29 September 2015

Name: Raman (name changed to protect interviewee confidentiality)

Gender: Female

Date of Birth: 1984

Year of Immigration: Born in the U.S.

Abstract: Overall I asked Raman 25 questions in regards to her background. Among the questions and the information included in the transcript include the following. I first thank Raman for her time and explain the purpose of the interview. I also informed her that if she felt uncomfortable, please let me know and I'll move on to the next question. The first question I asked her was her background information. This included questions such as where she was born, where did she grow up, where did she live, where did she go to school, does she have any hobbies. I also asked her about her family background which included questions such as "Why her family come to the United States," or "describe to me some of your family members." Much of the interview includes information about her Palestinian cultural background. I do also ask Raman some of her own personal views such as "what her reaction was to 9/11," "her views on Al-Qaeda and what is going on in Syria, Iraq, and ISIS," "some of her philosophical views", and even some of her own views on topics involving Islam.

Key Themes: cultural background, current events, cultural landscape, history, family life, oral history, memory landscape, religion, women's role

Note: In the transcript, I refers to Interviewer, and R refers to Respondent/Interviewee.

I: Alright now that that's all set up let me introduce myself. My name is Joe Domblesky. I am conducting this assignment in order to collect oral historical data on Arab Americans in Milwaukee. I guess I'll start off by first thanking you for your time and for agreeing to conduct this interview with me. I have a set of questions followed up by a set of follow up questions near the end if you don't mind.

R: Sure.

I: And if I ask you any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, just let me know. I won't press any further.

R: Sure.

I: I guess the first question I'll start off with, tell me some background information about yourself. What is your name, age, birthplace, level of education? Anything you feel is relevant.

R: Sure. My name is Raman. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1982. I am 33 years old. I am currently an account manager at AT&T. And I went to college and earned a double major in Marketing in MIS. I graduated from the University of Milwaukee Wisconsin.

I: Second question. Any hobbies?

R: I like arts. I like to do Henna Tattoos. I like to draw. I like to go walking and hiking.

I: Alright very nice. Can you tell me a little more about the Henna tattoos?

R: Yes, these are when someone gets married, they are made for the bride. And sometimes I do Henna tattoos for the bride. It's just a temporary tattoo.

I: So, you were probably born in the United States. When did your family move to the United States? Are you first, second, third generation migrant? Why did you and/or your family migrate to the United States?

R: My father moved to the United States in the 70s for college. He met and married my mother. And then he got citizenship from my uncle who was married to an American. And that's how it all started. My Father is from Palestine. Specifically, he was from Nablus. That is in the West Bank.

I: How was it for you as an Arab American growing up here in the U.S. at first? Any difficulties in

adjusting to the culture?

R: It wasn't bad, I lived here in Shorewood. I felt I would get along with other people from other ethnicities. And then in high school I went to St. Joan Antida. It is a Catholic School for about a year. I went to UW Milwaukee in 2000.

I: Okay that's fairly recent. Any particular childhood memories that stand out? What about when you are growing up?

R: I would have to say my father's death was the biggest event that affected me when I was young.

I: I'm sorry. Why and how did he die?

R: He died from Cancer. We then lived in Palestine for about seven years.

I: Okay and where did you live in Palestine?

R: In Nablus, for about seven years. And from 7th grade to about 10th grade.

I: Okay. Thank you very much. What type of cancer did he have?

R: Bone marrow cancer.

I: Ouch.

R: From the time he found out to the time he passed away it was about only six months. It was 90 to 97 not 92 to 97.

I: Do you have any unique philosophical views? Any admiration for any foreign or American views? Or even just views such as, "You reap what you sow. Things happen for a reason"?

R: I believe that things happen for a reason. And I think it is also good to always be positive and not be negative.

I: I think so too. Although I will say that this past year has been rather rough for me. I was actually just kicked from the Army ROTC program. I have heard that way too many times. It is still very painful for me to discuss.

R: Perhaps there's a reason why that happened, and you just don't know it yet.

I: Thanks. Some of my friends have always told me that I could go commission through OCS and there are still other options out there.

R: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me about your family members? Rowan? Mother, father? Siblings? Grandparents? Aunts and Uncles?

R: I am the oldest sibling. Then there is my brother and sister from my dad, my other 4 brothers and sisters from my stepdad. (Name omitted for confidentiality) is the youngest child. But we all feel as if we are all one big family because of mother. What makes us unique is that we always have fun together. We're best friends.

I: It's interesting to me because my family is rather small here in America. I just have one little sister. I actually had a middle one. She's dead though, she passed away when she was two due to pneumonia actually. She had multiple developmental problems, so I guess, dare I say this it was a blessing in disguise. Can you see, tell me about your grandparents?

R: Both my grandmothers are still alive. I never met grandpa when he was still alive. He died when I was younger. I did meet my mom's grandpa. He did pass away from cancer.

I: Ah such is life.

R: Yeah. And my mom's mom, she is actually from Venezuela and Palestine. She's actually over 100 years old and still alive.

I: I'm half Filipino. I mean, I've never met most of my family on my mom's side. I actually did go back to the Philippines when I was ten. I was actually born in the Philippines. My grandmother actually came to the U.S. when I was in high school. I wasn't actually able to communicate with her because she doesn't know or speak English. She never learned English. My grandfather actually died due to alcoholism. I'm sorry about that. He was a bit abusive towards my grandmother and her family. But interesting thing he did still show that he cared and loved his family in various ways. That's just a little bit about my family. Otherwise, I know most of my dad's family. I have two uncles and I don't know most of my grandfather's family, it's pretty big. About the size of my mother's family.

R: Yeah, we're eight. Six boys and two girls.

I: Can you tell me about the friends that you made while in America? In your home country?

R: Yep. I have a childhood best friend who I was friends with. She was my neighbor while living in the neighborhood in Shorewood. I lost touch with her while overseas. We met again while back in U.S. because she is friends with one of my college girlfriends. We still meet up at least once a month for lunch and breakfast.

I: Ah very nice. Anybody else that may have had an impact on your life?

R: My cousins are my best friends; they live in United Arab Emirates. We went to college together. Kept in touch with best friends from Palestine. Group on Facebook. Only when I would go overseas.

I: I also have a lot of cousins on my Filipino side. I'm friends with them on Facebook but I don't talk to them very much. I did meet many of them when I visited the Philippines when I was 10 years old. Ironically, we had to the choice of visiting on September 10th of 2001 or July. Luckily, we chose July given that 9/11 actually happened in September. Interesting how coincidences like that go. Do you still keep in touch with your friends from Palestine?

R: Oh, we still keep in touch with each other. We actually lost touch with each other. But now we keep in touch with each other on Facebook and we keep in touch with each other via that.

I: Amazing how technology allows us to keep in touch with people over long distances. If you don't mind me asking, how were you able to keep in touch with them previously?

R: Facebook. Oh! Before that I would just visit them overseas and some of them, I would visit in college.

I: I see. Actually, I have a really good friend that I met when she was a foreign exchange student here at Marquette. She's Korean. Her name is Choi Eunyoung.

R: Wow that's a long name.

I: Yeah, I met here through Chinese class and Bayanihan, that's the Marquette Filipino American student association. Yeah, her and I actually kept in touch on Facebook. I actually visited her once back in her hometown once in Seoul in South Korea. (R: Sure). Her and I still do talk every now and then.

R: That's nice.

I: Yeah. She actually helped me out a lot last semester. I talked to her a lot on Facebook. Yeah, I actually also talk to her a lot on Kao Kao, which is a Korean messaging social media app. It's their equivalent of Facebook. Yeah, there's a lot more to the relationship than that. That's all I'm going to touch and mention on that.

R: That's really nice though.

I: Yeah thanks. Can you tell me about your years in school growing up? Any significant challenges you faced there?

R: I didn't know Arabic, I had to learn that. Then I had to learn English all over again when I returned to America. I knew English but I had to learn how to go to school and learn how to go to school all over again. The most difficult thing was grammar. I felt like I was stuck in the middle. Just sometimes you're thinking in Arabic yet sometimes you're speaking the other language.

I: Who are the people that you interact with daily? Reactions of non-Muslims to you being Muslim?

R: Well of course my family members and my husband, and my coworkers, and my customers.

I: Any other close friends you keep in touch with?

R: Yes. Over the weekend, once a month with friends, special events such as graduation or weddings. And I also have a friend that I go to the gym with.

I: Yeah, it's always good to have a workout partner rather than just by yourself. Sometimes I do work with other people in Taekwondo, and when I was with ROTC or with other soldiers. Sometimes I would work out with my fellow soldiers in the National Guard. Do you get any reactions of non-Muslims to you being Muslim?

R: Recently not that much. Not that much now, in the past around 9/11 more so. I was actually driving up this hill going to college when someone started yelling at me for no reason. And I didn't know why and I saw security all when I got to campus.

I: I see. That is very unfortunate. It could've been a lot worse.

R: Yeah. But I do feel that it is a lot better. People are more cultured and more educated now.

I: Can't help some people these days. What are some of the places that you go to daily?

R: Starbucks, gym, work. Go to meet customers at their locations at companies. Sometimes I will go for walk.

I: How often do you go to Mosque? Prayer? Do you have a prayer mat?

R: Worship on Friday, the Muslim holy day. So at least once a week? Yes, I pray five times a day. Mass on Fridays. Prayer mat, yes.

I: Okay this is kinda a repeat question. But what were the main difficulties that you faced when you first immigrated? Migrated back. Then growing up.

R: Just the culture, trying to relearn it all over again. And then trying to adapt to people around you.

I: Any specific examples?

R: Yeah, overseas it took some time getting used to not having ketchup and cereal. Wasn't easy to find then (now it is though), not having everyday access to it. Trying to improvise while try to make our own ketchup.

I: Interesting.

R: Yeah, when I came back here, I wore scarf at the time. I was only one around me. It wasn't common back then, it's common now.

I: You obviously know your native language. How often do you use it? Has this been a cultural barrier between you and Americans? Have you regressed in Arabic since returning from overseas?

R: No because we speak it at home to each other.

I: Currently I am learning Chinese. I learned German in high school. I don't really know it that well anymore. I wish I knew Tagalog, what we speak in the Philippines. My mother tried to teach it to myself and my sister. Unfortunately, she wasn't very successful, and it doesn't help that only my mom knows Tagalog. I wish I knew it. It would be really cool to know and a useful skill to have. I really don't know that many Filipino Americans who know Tagalog. Or any of the dialects like Visayan. That is really cool. It is one of those critical languages, along with Chinese that the U.S. government wants and needs.

R: Wish I knew Spanish. That's one language that I kinda wish I could learn.

I: I have a whole list of languages actually. Like Russian is somewhere there along with, trying to think of some others such as Korean, Japanese among others.

R: Nice.

I: Okay this is a weird question. One that I kinda already touched upon. I guess I'll just rephrase it. Can you talk about the difficulties you faced since you immigrated back to United States until now?

R: Not really. The difficulties I did encounter I got through them, so I feel that I'm in a good place.

I: This is kinda an obvious question yet something I have to ask. How do you feel wearing cultural clothing? Especially in regard to the hijab?

R: It feels comfortable, people around me accept it, its pretty common, people don't look at you in the kind of weird way. Some people stop and ask me. I actually like explaining and answering any questions people may have about it.

I: I actually have religious guidelines that I follow too. I actually just got here from church. I go to church on Saturday. Also, I have to explain why I don't eat certain things like pork.

R: We don't eat pork either (long pause). There are lot of things that are forbidden in our religion. For health and scientific reasons.

I: I completely agree. I guess that's something we both have in common. It actually says in the Book of Leviticus, a Book of the Bible. It's funny, Marquette is a Catholic school, and they have no problems with doing stuff like eating pepperoni or sausage. Not going to lie it does create some difficulties like if they cook pork for lunch, I find myself having to skip lunch. Sometimes it's hard to resist when that piece of food looks good.

R: Yeah, have to pay attention to lard or gelatin.

I: Do you feel that there are any obstacles between you, your culture? Your identity as an American citizen?

R: No, not really (shifted closer).

I: Why do you feel that?

R: Most people I know are American citizens. More common is dual citizenship. I can blend in with both areas.

I: That's good. Some of my questions are going to get a little more personal now. Your views on certain things. I guess I am going to have to ask you this. What is your experience and opinion regarding certain world changing events such as 9/11 and the Gulf War? The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and the rise of ISIS?

R: I feel that they use religion to hide behind it, as an excuse. Political issues as well. I don't approve of ISIS; they don't follow Islam. It doesn't condone what they do. There was probably an ISIS group when they started but they evolved into something bigger.

I: They sound a lot like the way you explain it, barbaric. I read up on it in the economist and the reason why they do all their barbaric things is because well they especially use end of time events to recruit. Well, I feel they use that to recruit some of the "dregs" of society.

R: And I feel that they're there to create problems for other cultures and to get between our cultures and religions. Do you get what I mean?

I: Sort of, could you explain please?

R: For example, I believe that they're using religion as an excuse to create problems such as racism. I feel that today people are more educated so it's not working as well as they like to. But like I said our religion does not condone it. So, what they're doing is not necessarily Islam.

I: Yeah, I feel that they're such a minority yet it's scary because they have such as following. They're scarier than Al-Qaeda because they have such a huge terrorist army and they're going around doing

scary things such as persecuting minorities. Persecuting, pillaging, and raping women. Selling them into slavery.

R: Yeah, none of Islam condones that. Yeah, in our religion you're not supposed to go after somebody who doesn't have a gun. You can't go after a town, village church. The Koran itself says all that. If they followed it as they should, they wouldn't be doing anything the way that they're doing it right now.

I: How do you think things would be different for you and your family if none of the above had occurred? Have you experienced any discrimination, crimes, racism, Islamophobia, as a result of those events?

R: Racism yes. I've been called a towelhead, and I've been told to go back to your country.

I: Islamophobia?

R: Not so much. I mean people will say terrorist. They will associate ISIS with our religion.

I: Yeah, ISIS tends to be very misogynistic. Quite sad people would still resort to that even in the 21st century.

R: I just wish people would live in peace. I even have a Jewish customer who thinks the same way. Politics is what causes all our issues. Politics exist though along with religion, and it hides behind religion.

I: It's interesting that you mention your Jewish customer. This goes into my next question. What are your views on other cultures? Such as Jewish, Asian, Indian, African, Latin American?

R: I like all cultures. I think it's good to embrace, good to embrace especially if you want to visit other countries. Good to embrace. Good to get to know. I believe everybody should live in peace. I mean if you didn't want to learn about other people's cultures then you should just stay at home.

I: You mentioned that you were married?

R: Yes.

I: What is your husband's name?

R: Nidal.

I: Nidal. How old is he?

R: 33, same age as me.

I: Any children?

R: No children.

I: Reasons for marriage?

R: Not really. Oh, you mean he had to ask for my hand. Then parental consent involved, made sure he qualified for the criteria.

I: Is he Palestinian like yourself?

R: Yes.

I: Would you say that there are more intercultural Islamic marriages?

R: Yes, people are more open because I have friends that are Palestinian, and they're married to Pakistanis.

I: Do you have any cultural or personal views on finding a potential husband? Raising a family? Marriage?

R: You mean like advice for someone else?

I: Personal views.

R: It's good for a guy to have good morals, education, values, come from a good family, follows religion in a way where they don't drink or break laws. This can be any religion and not just Islam. In my religion if you were to marry outside your culture you have to marry Muslim. If he were non-Muslim, he has to convert for the right reasons. For men, it doesn't matter, they can marry any Muslim or any religion. Man has the potential to affect the woman later on. My uncles did that, both are married to American women. I have a friend married to White American, she converted before marriage. I actually have two, three.

I: It's interesting. I'm actually reminded about a story in Time magazine, I remember an American soldier who married an Iraqi nurse. He converted to Islam, brought her over to Florida. Retired from the

army. They have a family. She talks to her family sometimes but doesn't really make contact with her family. I guess it was more common post-WWII for American soldiers to marry foreign women from Germany, Japan, Korea, Vietnam. Not so much during this current War on Terror due to religious reasons. I just found that interesting. Next question I have is a question in regards to cultural landscape. Can you tell me about your cultural landscape? Memory and attachment to places or things? Favorite foods, places? Cultural holidays?

R: Two holidays. One just passed. On Thursday, Adah Adheid, Eid al-Adha is the biggest holiday. Then there's this pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. That day, you sacrifice cows or lambs. It goes back to story about Abraham and Ishmael when Abraham had to sacrifice Ishmael but was stopped by an angel to test his faith. I believe it is different in Christianity and Judaism.

I: Yes, it is different.

R: We also have a smaller holiday, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. During Ramadan, we fast from sunrise to sunset. We break the fast at sunset and we can't eat or drink 30 days. Afterwards, we celebrate breaking fast and use that month to celebrate poster from God. We use that to feel about how the poorer feel.

I: Doesn't this holiday have its origins from when Mohammed was on the run?

R: I'm not sure about origins. I do know about incident you're talking about where he's running from disbelievers.

I: Any specific places you remember?

R: There are specific places I remember: Jerusalem, church for all three Abrahamic religions, Dome of the Rock, the Mosque Al-Aqsa. People who go to pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia will go to that church.

I: Is your town known for anything significant?

R: Yes, Namblis is known for sweets, like Kunafa, basically a cheese with doe on top, food coloring on top. It's like a cheesecake (giggles) with pistachios on top. It's famous for olive oil soap, my grandmother makes soap. Lots of land and olive trees and almond trees there. There are shops called Alslouk.

I: This reminds me of the Barrio in the Philippines, it's an open market. You can buy all sorts of Filipino fruits, like jackfruit, and animals, such as chickens and goats. My mother thought it would be nice to have a goat, so she bought one. It actually had a baby.

R: That does remind me of how my grandparents were farmers, they lived in the countryside. They had a lot of land, raised chickens, goats, donkeys. Ube (purple).

I: My mother actually raises chickens at home as a reminder of home. It's nice we have fresh eggs. Do you know any Arabic? Any Arabic phrases?

R: A lot, like Inchallah – God willing, alhudallah – thank God, masahallah – when you see something you like, don't want to jinx. We don't use Wulluah because shouldn't use name of God in vain. In Islam, only God can judge on the day of judgement. When you die you stay dead, but everybody will be judged. Only God can judge people.

I: Okay that sounds very similar to my views in regard to my religion. But I have more questions I need to ask so we shall continue one. In regard to your native homeland and culture, can you describe to me your feelings of belonging? Could you describe any specific images, nostalgies, displacements, feeling of association to group, community, society?

R: Family and friends, I still visit, I still have a lot of family, I might go back next summer to Qatar to see a few weddings. Family visits back and forth, asking family to visit from Palestine.

I: Okay that does remind me of how when I was in South Korea. There was actually a little Arabic town that I really wanted to go visit. Koreans are actually very fond of Arabic culture. They seem to have an affinity towards it. I unfortunately didn't have time to visit it, I wish I did. It is right next to the Korean Ministry of Defense building. Are there any romantic images of home that you have in Palestine?

R: Yeah, actually there is. My grandpa's house where I grew up in. My family, my grandmother still lives there. I want to go back and fix it up.

I: That reminds me. I do have a romantic image of my grandparents' farm in Pennsylvania. I always enjoyed visiting my grandparents farm when I was little, I always had fond memories of it. I always enjoyed visiting it during Christmas time. It's been in my family, on my grandmother's side for a long

time. The house has actually existed since the 19th century, it was even used to store contraband liquor during the Prohibition era. It was actually given to my grandfather even though it was supposed to go to my grandmother's older brother. When I retire from the military, I would actually like to go back and repair it and keep it in the family. I especially loved playing with my grandpa's dogs. He's always raised dogs. He's getting old so he's not able to take care of them as well as he used to. Most of my family actually lives on the East Coast. Do you have any feelings of displacement in regard to your native culture?

R: I'm part of Muslim student association, part of student board, Muslim student association. People who were fasting.

I: Any specific life changing stories that occurred in United States?

R: Not really, I would say I went overseas to Qatar, came back for a visit. Then I got a job for AT&T. Helped to get job at AT&T. I went to visit my aunt because she lived there.

I: It definitely sounds like your time overseas in both Palestine and Qatar helped you to get a really good job. If I can, I still do want to try and study abroad overseas in let's say China or Korea especially. After all, I am studying Chinese. My dad keeps telling me this, but I actually would like to go earn my master's degree overseas in China or Korea. My Korean friend that I mentioned earlier, Eunyong actually tells me that when I speak Korean I sound like a native speaker. She has taught me a couple of Korean phrases. Anagtayo, Kamasatidad. Anagtayo is how you say "Hello" in Korean. Kamastidad is how you say thank you very much. (pause) Yeah.

R: That's nice.

I: (Taps against the table). Well, what do you feel makes your culture unique to you? What makes it different from American culture?

R: I like the tight knit community. Don't leave unless you have to, you leave when you get married.

I: I guess I have that sort of things going on my mom's side of the family. That also reminds me that they wanted me to live at home after I got accepted into Marquette. My little sister, she's a little different. She wanted to get into Madison, she got in and she immediately moved onto campus. She enjoys her freedom from our parents. In regard to ROTC, I do wish I lived on campus. It would've helped me out to have other cadets nearby. They would have helped me out in different assignments, who knows if I lived on campus I may have still been with the program.

R: Sure. Yes. Also, for example if you were to come to our house, we'll try to serve you lunch or dinner.

I: In regard to your culture. That does remind me of my best friend Andrea, she goes to my church. She actually visited the holy land several years ago. She was quite fond of Palestinian culture. She especially commented on how friendly Palestinians were to her when she was over there. They were very hospitable to her.

R: Yeah. If we had you over to our house, we would try to make you food, lunch or dinner. We would try to make our guests comfortable. Palestinians are known for hospitality.

I: What does it mean to be an American to you? What does it mean to be an American Muslim to you? What does it mean to be an Arab Muslim to you?

R: It means I was born here. I have the right to live here. To be educated, the right to work, raise family, and raise kids here.

I: What are some of your views on modern society? Modern Islamic society? Do you feel that Islam needs to be modernized much in the same way Christianity was modernized through the “reformation?”

R: Not really because that would mean that you are turning Islam into a culture rather than religion. People dress in modest clothing. Completely covered swimming suits. Used to wear abayah, Saudi Arabia still wear it. In the U.S. people still wear modest clothing.

I: What are your views on modern American society?

R: What do you mean?

I: Take for example what people say in regard to the Catholic Church. Some people believe that it needs to modernize its stance on certain issues such as let’s say, abortion, contraception, homosexuality, gay marriage, etc.

R: Oh. Religion already has boundaries, can’t already said in book. Koran was set this way. Most books were changed and modernized. If Islam were to change, it becomes a culture. Things are progressing and becoming more diverse and becoming more open minded. I do not think Islam really needs to change at all. In regard to cultures take for example Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is more culture than religion. Women and men are supposed to be equal, it’s in the Koran. During the day of judgement, both are going to be judged equally.

I: That does remind me of how more progressive Iranian society is compared to Saudi Arabian society.

R: Right. That’s why when those people come here, they often forget their beliefs and focus more on culture and religion. Scarf. Mention about uncle. There is a difference in views. We have a choice to wear hijab, it should be a choice.

I: Do you have or feel a connection to your culture? It definitely sounds like you do. Is there a larger connection to the Arab World, Islam, the world in general?

R: What do you mean? How do I feel? I do have a connection; I wouldn't mind living overseas again in the future. I do feel comfortable around people, especially in United Arab Emirates, it's a place where American and Arab ideas come together.

I: What does feminism mean to you? What about in the context of Arab culture or Islam?

R: (Asks sister for advice about feminism). It doesn't really mean anything or have context in my culture. In my view both men and women have equal status but different duties. In our culture for example, I don't feel bound to duties, I just feel I need to do something, like I need to automatically take care of that. I believe in that part of feminism.

I: It's one of those concepts that's misunderstood. It started out as a movement in 19th century to bring about equal rights such as women's suffrage. However, I feel it's been misused and misconstrued by "feminazis" to make women higher than men.

R: Sure.

I: Not something I know enough about. I would definitely say that Filipinos are more patriarchal, they have their respective duties, but the man is the head of the household.

R: It's nice to know, not worth arguing over.

I: I already covered part of this in an earlier question. However, I will ask you a different one along these lines. What do you have to say if anything about Islamic extremists such as Al Qaeda, ISIS, Hezbollah? What's going on in Syria? If it were up to you, how would you have dealt with those issues?

R: I don't approve of any of it. It's not fair that men, women, and innocent children should be dying over this. President Assad should have stepped down. It's sad that what happening over is happening over power, politics, and religion.

I: It is scary what ISIS is doing to children over there using them as combat soldiers.

R: Agreed it's scary to see them brainwashing them.

I: What are your attitudes towards non-Muslims?

R: I think everybody should believe in peace, don't judge a book by its cover, and leave judgment to God. If you don't have anything nice or constructive to say, don't say it. Everybody is equal. You can't force somebody to believe what you believe. You can give people information, it's your duty to spread.

I: That does remind me of a favorite quote of mine. Morpheus from the Matrix. It kinda goes along with my beliefs, "You can only show a man the door, it is up to you to open the door and walk through it".

R: Right, I agree. Sometimes when you answer peoples questions themselves, they become more curious and that's when they decide to open the door themselves.

I: Last question. Do you have any advice to non-Arabs and non-Muslims in regard to Arab culture or Islam?

R: I think that if you had the chance, learn more about it and research more about it on your own, especially in regard to culture and religion. Don't go off of what you see on tv or media.

I: I agree, I have my own views on certain subjects. I don't trust much of the mainstream American media myself. However, I try to diversify my media sources. I do like getting news from the Economist, BBC, Russian Times, Al-Jazeera.

R: It's good to get all the pieces of the puzzle everywhere so you don't go off of one biased view.

I: Exactly. Those are actually all the questions I had for this interview. I wanted to thank you for your time and energy and for sharing your experiences with me. You have given us valuable information about your life and your family history. If you need to contact me, please do so. Also, if I have any additional questions for you, may I contact you again? Thank you so much!

R: Thank you and no problem!

I: I definitely wish I had taken Modern Middle Eastern History from 1500s to 21st century with Dr. Naylor. However, I couldn't fit it on my schedule. Dr. Naylor is really cool guy. He's actually the expert on Middle Eastern history in the history department.

R: Why thank you. It was nice meeting you!

I: You as well. I'm sorry I forgot your name?

R: My name is Raman. Nice to meet you.

I: I'm Joe. My best friends call me Dombles after my last name (Raman's sister chuckles). It's part of my last name. I inherit it from my dad who's white. Most Filipinos have Spanish sounding last names from being conquered by Spain. I go on about the Philippines.

R: I actually had a friend who's Filipino, but she lives in Qatar right now.

I: There are actually a lot of Filipino migrants that moved to the Middle East recently. They live in diasporas such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. There is one in South Korea that I wish I had the time to visit but I didn't unfortunately. Thanks once again for you time!

R: No problem. If you need any help just let me know!