



Oral History Project Interview

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

Number of Interview: EA 1.00

Date: September 29th, 2019

Gender: Female

Name: Emaan Ali (Requested anonymity for release)

Country of Origin: Pakistan

Year of Immigration: Born in United States

Abstract: This respondent was born in Rock Island, Illinois in 1998 to two Pakistani immigrants. She was raised in the Quad Cities, primarily in Moline Illinois. She plans on being a 2020 Augustana College graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Public Health. Alongside that, she was married over the course of 2018 and 2019 to a Pakistani Muslim man. She identifies as a Pakistani Muslim American woman and is very closely connected to her faith. Growing up, she struggled with the attention wearing the hijab brought in her small, rural town upbringing. She also struggled with being a minority and drew support from her similarly marginalized Muslim friends. While she has recently moved to Iowa City to pursue her master's degree with her husband, she is still close to her roots and visits home often. She is a prime example of accepting the struggles that being a Muslim in the States brings and taking it all in stride.

Key Themes: Marginalization, education, Islamophobia, marriage, identity.

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

I: So first what we have you do is just make sure that, like we have a verbal consent to being recorded for this interview.

R: Okay. Yeah. You have my consent.

I: Yeah. Cool. Okay. So first off, can you state your name and age?

R: Yeah, [redacted], I am twenty-one years old.

I: Oh, last name change. I forgot about that.

R: Yeah, last name change, yup.

I: So, our next question, it talks about like, we're getting into, like, background and homeland and stuff like that. So where would you refer to as, like, your homeland?

R: When you say homeland, it brings up, like I feel like that way when people talk and they ask me like, where are you from? Like, and homeland is usually used like, well, what's your homeland?

I: Yeah.

R: So, like I, I, I automatically think Pakistan. So that's what you're saying? Or like Moline, Illinois I guess is my homeland.

I: Yeah. Oh, do you know what city in Pakistan?

R: I'm from Karachi.

I: Okay, cool. And were you born in Karachi or were you born in the States?

R: I was born in the States. I was born in Rock Island County.

I: Okay. So, tell me about like the places and the buildings that you spent a lot of time in during your childhood.

R: Sorry, can you repeat that?

I: Like the places and like the buildings that you spent a lot of time in during your childhood? Like I'd say like the masjid and stuff like that.

R: Oh, okay. Yeah, a lot of places were just like my house. and the masjid and probably, Baqi-chachu's house. So those two places are mostly...

I: When like everyone lived in the same apartment building?

R: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Yeah. It's cool. Yeah.

I: So then when did your parents immigrate to the US?

R: My dad came in '96, 1996– and he brought my mom in '97 and I was born in '98.

I: And then, so were you guys the first in your family to immigrate here, or did you already have some relatives here?

R: My dad was the first, he has only six siblings and he was the first and yeah, no other like cousins or anything like that I know are some probably like distant, really distant.

I: Yeah. And then after, after your dad came, did anybody else in your family come eventually come and immigrate to the US?

R: Not to the US, but to Canada. So, one of his brothers and my mom has two sisters. They came to Canada, but no one to the US.

I: And then, which of your family members live in Australia?

R: Oh, yeah. My dad's sister lives in Australia.

I: I just remember because they were fun to hang out with at the wedding.

R: Yeah. Yeah. So, they came around. Yeah. And he hasn't, I don't know. Yeah. Yeah.

I: And then, so you got married, it was two summers ago now, right?

R: Yeah, so summer of '18, I had my, ceremony, basically wedding ceremony then this July, I had my like, reception.

I: Yeah. Yeah. It was the, it was the Nikkah in '18. Right? And then it was the Shaadi in '19.

R: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

I: There's a lot of questions about dowry on our, like our breakdown sheet and I kind of don't want to ask those cause I already know most of the answers to that.

R: Oh wow. That's interesting that they have that. Yeah.

I: Well, the, my professor, her name is Dr. Enaya Othman, and I can't remember where she's from, but she's also like a Muslim immigrant. So, she's really interested in like seeing all the different takes on it.

R: Oh, interesting.

I: And I know you don't have children so I'm not going to ask those questions. So, you're currently pursuing your college degree, right?

R: Yes, I am. I am getting Bachelor of Arts and communication studies in public health. and I just applied for a master's program, health care administration.

I: Okay. And where are you getting your bachelor's from?

R: Augustana College.

I: Okay. And then, what school did you apply to recently?

R: I just applied to University of Iowa's program.

I: Okay, cool. I think I'm visiting Iowa over my fall break. I'm really excited.

R: Oh, nice.

I: Yeah, I'm going to like touch base with like Shoaib and Zafar. And some of my other friends there.

R: Well, that's good. Yeah. There are a lot of people here. Yeah. Yeah.

I: So then when it comes to like working in the States, since you know, you, you were raised in the States and stuff like that. How has your Muslim identity intersected with, being a member of the workforce?

R: Muslim identity. I mean, so, my first job I ever had was at, Riverside. It was like a pool. And so I worked admissions. So, basically, like just entering people into the pool. but we didn't have air conditioning. And it's like out, it's an outdoor pool. So, they just had like a cement building, like, you know, brick building side and it would, you just had to have the doors open. It's in the summer, obviously it's open only in the summer. So, no air conditioning, just the fan. Yeah. So, yeah, I mean like of course you always get the, are you hot questions? Aren't you hot? Yeah.

I: Yeah. Cause you wear the hijab regularly, right?

R: Yeah. Yeah.

I: And so currently, are you employed right now?

R: Currently no. Okay. At school.

I: Yeah. Which— totally understandable.

R: Yeah.

I: So, when you think about like your parents immigrating to the US, what do you think— or what have they mentioned that their main reasons were?

R: I know biggest, I mean money was a big thing. Trying to find like a good job. I, my dad came, and he got his master's here actually. Okay. yeah, so he studied here. He got his master's from Wayne State University in Michigan. Oh yeah. and, and then I don't, I don't know what it was and it's probably something like, computers, finance, probably something like that. But, he got his masters and then that was like the first step in coming. And then after that, obviously just getting job here. Yeah. Yeah. Money's probably...

I: And then did your mom come because like, were they married at the time?

R: No, no, my dad started his master's program here. Then on a trip back, like he got married to her then, like she applied for the visa and everything while he was here. And then once she got her visa, then she came. Yeah.

I: And so, then I can think, we can assume that like they plan on staying in the States rather than like, coming here for a bit and then heading back home.

R: Yeah. They went to make this place home because they knew that their conditions over there, y'know, like with lights going out, no water coming in and stuff like that. It's, it's a different lifestyle, a lot different hurdles. You have to go through a hardship. Yeah.

I: I know. my sister always says like, it's not a trip to Pakistan unless the lights go out at least twice.

R: Yeah. Oh, good.

I: So, then what made, do you know what made your parents end up choosing like the quad cities Moline area to like end up settling at?

R: Yeah, it was John Deere. Yeah. So, he just got his first job at John Deere. And he's been there since.

I: Yeah, and he got the rest to come.

R: Yeah. So that's the incentive. Yeah. That like, I remember actually what's happening right now at the, I don't know if your dad told you or your parents. Same thing. That happened back then, is happening right now where they needed to kick out all the old guys bring in new blood. Back then that's what happened. That's how our dads got into John Deere, you know, because they were the new blood. That's happening right now. Yeah. So

I: Oh, that means my dad's old blood. The tides have changed.

R: Yeah. Really.

I: So, then the next questions that we're going to go into is just kind of like experience and being in the US, rather than background stuff. So, like in being like an adult Muslim woman in the States, like what are some of the obstacles that you have to go through?

R: Clothing is a really big hurdle. It's hard to find appropriate clothing that like, I mean some Muslim women choose to, like, everyone has their own way of dressing this, their choice. But, from my standards, it's hard to find long sleeves, loose, long enough. you know, clothes, I feel like that is a struggle, especially in the summer. It does get hot. Yeah. When people ask you, are you hot? Yeah, yeah, I bet. Especially working. Yeah. So that's why fall and winter are nice because I mean, you can dress it up. I mean, there was always like sweaters and stuff, but in the summer it's just difficult. But yeah, clothing. I think when I first started, my biggest thing was, to people staring. Yeah, it was just staring, but then you, I got used to that. And then it, it actually moved me. I feel like it built my confidence that I was able to do what I wanted, and it didn't bother me if people were looking because I was like, okay, they're going to look anyway, so I can do what I think is right. You know, and not have to worry about, you know, whatever people are saying because it's just, I just, I got used to it. Yeah. Yeah.

I: And that kind of ties into the next question, which is like, how do you like overcome those obstacles? You know,

R: The, yeah. I guess at this point I'm used to it. I don't know if I notice it as much. like I'm just used to that kid looking or, you know, I actually tried to, like, I go out of my way to smile at people if they're looking or like, you know, if it's a kid, say hi, oh, you know, stuff like that. Yeah. Cause I feel like it's also my opportunity for like maybe people, like, especially in small towns like where we're from. Moline and like stuff like that. You know, people just don't have the exposure. So, I get it. Strange. It's something different. You're going to look at it and then I get that. Yeah. Yeah.

I: And so then— oh, I lost my point in the document. One second. So, your spouse— [his name]— right?

R: Yes.

I: So, what kind of jobs is he like working towards? What's his like educational background?

R: Yeah, so, he just finished his undergrad at University of Iowa. In like anatomy and physiology major. And he's currently in University of Iowa's dental program.

I: Okay. Gearing up for that dentist paycheck.

R: Yeah. It, yes.

I: So, he's working towards, what is like dental school count as that's not like working towards your masters? That's, that's, a doctorate, isn't it?

R: Yeah. So, like from that, like basically it was four years of dental school and then after that if you want to specialize in something. So, he's wanting to, specialize in like oral surgery. So that residency is another four years.

I: So then moving into like the ideas about like marriage and stuff. So, like in like Pakistani culture and like, I guess like in how like Muslim culture and Pakistani culture like, that overlap there. How, how do you perceive the way that, like women are viewed and like what is their, like what's the gender role disparity there?

R: Oh man, what a heavy question. Okay, so you're asking, so you asked like the overlap of culture and religion?

I: Yeah, cause like Muslim, like, being Muslim and being Pakistani are two very different things that like we conflate all the time. And so then, like in thinking about that and in thinking about like gender roles, I don't know, like what's the status quo?

R: So, the first thing, like marriage wise, like is wedding wise was, one of the biggest things that where culture and religion overlap, that you see, like I'm more of more focusing on the religion side where you just have your Nikkah done and you have your Valima, you know, that's it. There you go. And the culture is way different. The culture is multiple parties, lots of money, lots of times. So, a lot of clothes, all the fun stuff. So, people tend to mix them together thinking that it's mandatory to have a huge party mandatory to invite people. But yeah, that's the biggest, thing that I see. In gender roles, I don't know, that sort of tells me, I've never thought about that. I guess like what it means. It's just like when you... I was trying to figure out that gender role part that I'm trying to incorporate.

I: I think this one's a little broader, just kind of in culture in general.

R: Okay, okay. In general. Yeah. there's always like, when people say that, you know, women in Islam don't have rights, but there are clear statements everywhere in the Qur'an, in Hadith where the woman is given so many rights. And it just happens to be that the culture is the one that, takes away the women's rights, you know? it's just like how, you know, they mixed that thing that is religion somehow trying to, you know, make it true. Yeah. Yeah.

I: And so then, what are some of the ways in which like you balance like your Muslim faith with your American identity?

R: Oh man. Okay. I still like, I still go out and have fun. I feel like I do the American ideals of working hard. And like, I'm able, I go out and have fun, but it's just there are lines that I won't cross. I won't drink and I, you know, won't do drugs, stuff like that. And then, yeah, but I'm still able to, you know, drive a car. Some countries I can't.

I: So, you'd say that like the balance is kind of like, it's easier to find than you'd expect.

R: Yeah, I don't think, personally for me at least how in the environment that I was raised in. it hasn't been too hard to balance. Oh yeah. Growing up, growing up it was a bit hard because you saw kids doing, you know, whatever. and you just weren't sure maybe, like about your identity yet. Yeah. So of course, it was hard. It's not bad. Yeah.

I: Okay. So just broad question, what does marriage mean to you?

R: Oh man. Marriage is working hard and giving it all, you've got to stay together and be happy for one another. Yeah, and I guess that's marriage.

I: So, you touched on like, like how like in Pakistani culture there's like a lot of like ceremonies and parties and stuff like that. So, like, let's talk a little bit about like the way that you went about with your wedding. Cause like, I know we mentioned that like you had your Nikkah earlier in like, 2018, and then your Shaadi was in 2019. So, can you like, explain, just like the breakdown of how that all happened over those like two years?

R: Yeah. So, like, we first decided to have my Nikkah done and then we decided to, to have our Shaadi done later— just because we were in school. Well, actually, I mean I didn't really decide that was totally my choice for that, but I took it at those options we got. And so then, we had our Nikkah done. And so, it was just like one event that happened. And then a year later we decided we wanted to get married, have our Shaadi done. So, we had, three events, I guess. Yeah. So, the, yeah, so like pre-wedding. I don't know if I have to say all this. Should I say all this?

I: Yeah, sure.

R: Yeah. So, like pre wedding events, like, other where you just do like, like a dance party type thing. [Dholki]. And then the actual, Shaadi which was hosted by my family, and then the Valima, which was hosted by my husband's family.

I: And so, then this, do you think that your brothers are going to go through this same kind of like tradition? Like same like, ceremonies?

R: No. Oh, okay. So, this is where you were talking. Okay. Yeah, I was trying to think of something. There we go. No, there's a difference between what being a, we call it "Larki-wallah" or "larka-wallah," like the girl's side and the guy's side. So, there's a big difference with more if the parents of the bride or if you are the parents of the groom. Parents of the bride have a lot more expectation on them to provide, the best that they've got to show that they're giving away. I guess their, in their words giving away the best that they have. And like in the culture, there's a lot of expectations from the guy side to have, the girl's side do a lot. Wedding wise. Yeah. So yeah, there is, yeah. My brothers definitely will not— and I know my mom has already said it, that when it's your brother's times, all of this stuff is not happening. Yeah.

I: So then, for you personally, is there anything that you would've changed, or done differently?

R: If it was up to me, I would have just had done it, got done that first year. I wouldn't have had any of these parties. Like honestly, whatever it happened on the Nikkah day last year was good enough for me. I mean it was fun. I'm not gonna lie, I just don't think it was necessary, yeah. Yeah.

I: So, this next question, so this one kind of gets into your parents' perspective because I know that like, parents are a very big contributor to like the marriage, process. So how open, like are your parents when it comes to like marrying people outside of like your religious or your national group?

R: Oh yeah. I know for some parents, like some Pakistani parents, it's really like has to be Pakistani, Muslim, and has to be even from the specific city that their family is from. That's a lot of what like people usually think. I think that, I feel like I have seen people usually think that way. My parents had told me from the beginning that as long as the person was a good, was like a practicing Muslim, it didn't matter, on nationality, but religion of course, and for me as well. that was really important. Yeah.

I: So, do you think that like they might have a problem if like they, say like [Interviewee's brother's name] wanted to marry like a white girl or something?

R: A non-Muslim? Yeah, yeah. And I think even though they say nationality, it'll be a tough pill to swallow. Yeah. for me, like if even, even if he brought a Muslim non-Pakistani person, it's still hard to swallow, but like I feel like at the end, like they would be okay. But yeah, no, a white, non-Muslim. Yeah. Anyone non-Muslim is out of the question

I: So, who influenced your decision to like get engaged to, and marry [Her husband's name].

R: So, we had, a person who knew both of our families. [A family friend's name], and she was really close to both of our families, so she was, a big influence. Like she first like started like, because we didn't really know their family that well. And she really supported the idea of us getting married and yeah, a lot of influence, I think some just how their family is and how great it was there. So, it wasn't a hard choice.

I: So, these next few questions move into like career and stuff like that. So, we can get off of like the hard marriage questions. So, you're currently obtaining your bachelor's and your major, you said was, communication studies and health sciences?

R: Public health.

I: That's it. So, what, why did you choose those majors?

R: Okay. So, I first started off as a biology major. Wanted to be a physician assistant. And then I started to take some classes and, I also, took an EMT course, like you have to get clinical hours for PA school. So then I did like some rotations in the ER, in the ambulance and stuff. and with the class that I was taking, I realized that like, more healthcare is based on preventative, like health should be preventative based. and I found that administration level is the way, like at the administration level, you are able to provide that in the best possible way for a lot of people. So I had communication studies already in my back pocket as a double major, so I dropped the bio and just took communications studies and added public health on.

I: Okay. So, when it comes to like healthcare administration and stuff like that, are you familiar with like what's going on in politics with like people trying to institute universal healthcare?

R: Yeah, I'm, I'm not like super well versed in who is saying what at the moment. But yeah. I know the idea of universal healthcare. Yeah.

I: Yeah. and like, I don't know, does that like influence the way that, like you see your career playing out or is that more of like an independent thing?

R: What do you mean?

I: So, like, if health care is universal, and so like everybody in the States gets like a set health care situation. Kind of like how they do it in Canada, does that like influence the way that you perceive your like future career?

R: I think, I'm not sure. I guess I haven't really thought about that. I think, there are different views on like how people like, you know, money-wise I'm not totally versed, like how financially this would work out and if it would help us out or not. So, I guess I can't really say I had like, I don't have that knowledge of it.

I: No worries. Yeah. The next few questions move into like parenting and stuff like that. So the first question asks, in what ways, if any, do you think boys should be raised differently than girls?

R: Okay. let's see. So, I think it is important, especially in our culture for our parents to, I guess like how it usually works out is like, you know, the boys get, like, you know, a lot of leeway in whatever they're doing, and girls are treated more strictly. And that has to come when it goes to like going out or like, what you have to do around the house. Stuff like that. I think at least basic necessities of how to live on your own or like be able to support yourself is important for it to teach boys. I think the girls do have it down because they've been wired to, you know, cook and clean but as, as a boy later turning into a man who has to take care of a family, and have a job, it cannot be possible or, it just doesn't work for someone to baby you. It's not a possible or someone else to take care of you, in the capacity of you not being able to do anything. So, I think, that is important. Yeah.

I: So, like in the instance that like, you have kids, you, how would you raise, your daughters differently than your sons?

R: I think I would try to push more of like a confidence, like try to build their confidence up more. And I think just because like how, I mean I can't blame my parents for anything they did because they just didn't know better, you know. But now that I grew up in this country and I know how things work, I do know how I can like push both those, the genders of my children to be productive members of society.

I: Yeah. Okay. So, you personally, how do you identify yourself?

R: Gender-wise?

I: Oh, just like in general.

R: Oh. I identify, I guess as though, okay, Pakistani-American-Muslim woman. There we go.

I: There we go. All the hyphens.

R: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah. All the hyphens.

I: So then, are there any like aspects of your identity that you, like lean towards more than the others?

R: I do lean towards, I feel like more— well I guess I just don't know what to compare it to, but personally, I feel like I, because I know people that are like really desi, like really into Pakistan and all that, even though they were born here. So, I feel like I lean a little more towards American. I like the food and stuff. And like the clothes. Yeah. I mean there are just not as many values, I guess. there's good and bad to both, but yeah. And I definitely lean more Muslim.

I: Okay. So, at home, what languages do you guys speak at home?

R: My parents speak Urdu and, and my Urdu is pretty fluent too, now because I'm, I have both of my grandmas living at home with me and they don't obviously understand English though. If I'm talking to my parents, I like, reply back in English, sometimes Urdu if, you know, I get into it.

I: Yeah. And so then how would you describe your religious life?

R: My religious life? well, I pray five times a day. Well, try to pray Fajr, which is the early morning prayer. and I fast, try to go to the Masjid. Lately it's been hectic. I haven't been in a while.

I: Okay. And then, so I know that the— do you still live in Moline? Or are you currently living in...?

R: I'm in Iowa City right now. Throughout the week, yeah. I'll be in Iowa city. And then on the weekends we usually, and like when I have my class, I only have classes Tuesdays and Thursdays, so I just go to classes.

I: So then do you make it back to like participate in like community activities at the Masjid there, or no?

R: Lately, no. It's sometimes, I know they just had one on Saturday, but I had things going on. No, it's been harder to do things.

I: So, as far as like political participation in the US goes, do you vote regularly?

R: I've only been able to vote once, which was in the last election. I have not voted in like the smaller, like, what is it called?

I: Like congressional elections and stuff.

R: Yeah, yeah. Like congressional elections. I haven't voted in anything like that. No. But, yeah, last year I voted.

I: And then when it comes to like candidates who are from your own culture, homeland or religion, does that affect like the way that you, the way that you perceive voting and like your voting behavior?

R: If Ilhan Omar was running for president, it would, yeah, I think I would take a lot more close attention.

I: That's exactly what I was going to say. Like if you were going to ask me to clarify the question.

R: Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah, I mean you lean towards people you identify with, but, I think that obviously like actually listening and understanding what the person was saying as well is important, especially in politics because there's a lot of rhetoric that can be manipulative, so you just have to be extra critical.

I: Yeah. And then how about like politics back in Pakistan? Are you involved in that at all?

R: I remember when, okay, this is like some random memory I have, but I remember when Benazir Bhutto was, shot. I like specifically remember that day, remember watching TV. My grandmas are really into Pakistani politics, so, here and there I'll hear things, whenever they're talking about, and then they'll like, you know, they'll talk to my parents about it and my parents don't really watch it. don't watch Pakistani politics. They only like, listen to like whatever my grandmother's telling them. Yeah. yeah, recently. Imran Khan I hope is, doing good. And he had just a huge UN speech that a lot of people are proud of. So yeah, I didn't listen to it. I heard excerpts, but he's a good speaker. Definitely.

I: Yeah. It's all those cricket interviews.

R: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. He has experience.

I: Okay. Now we're going to get into the big topic that we always talk about when it comes to being Muslim and in the States, you guessed it, 9/11. So how old were you? on September 11th?

R: 2001 so I was like three. Yeah.

I: Sorry, I moved my phone away from the mic. Can you say that one more time?

R: Oh yeah, I was three years old. Yeah.

I: So, do you remember it at all?

R: No, not at all. I don't remember. I was in the, I, yeah, I don't remember it all. And just know that when my parents told me some stuff, like a later on, like a few weeks or so later and people did show up to our house, like, like agents and stuff and just asking questions.

I: So then like, since, cause like, I don't know, like you, me and like all the other like, people in our generation, we've kind of lived in America in like a post 9/11 world where like we don't really remember. So how has, how has that like incident influenced the way that, like the trajectory of your life?

R: I would say that, politics-wise it has changed a lot of like how people view, I think people who lived through it probably have more of like a— it was probably harder for them. Obviously at that time. We're kind of getting like the back end of it. So, the things that it causes, I know that like, you know, I feel like some people are ignorant and don't, you know, know the difference between a Sikh and almost, you know, so you see Sikhs being attacked as well. so yeah, when you received the back end of it.

I: Okay. So, like you personally, did you experience any like, prejudice in regards to, I don't think 9/11 in specific, but like, just like being a Muslim in a post 9/11 world?

R: Yeah, I mean, no, when they got Osama bin Laden, I was in eighth grade, middle school. So yeah, I mean like I was called towelhead. Oh, I know some kids, Muslim boy was made fun of as well. And especially for kids who are named Osama, it's a lot harder.

I: Going through that, like where did you draw support from?

R: Support from my friends who were also hijabis. So like your sisters, [names of Interviewee's friends]. Yeah.

I: Okay. our next section, which is our last like big overhead section before we get into the closing is like talking about, disability and like that in Muslim culture.

R: Sorry, can you repeat that?

I: Disability and like how that, like how that is perceived when it comes to Muslim culture. So, do you think people with disabilities can lead lives are as fulfilling as people without disabilities?

R: Are you talking, are you trying to like put it in Pakistani culture's scope, or just my own belief?

I: Right now? It's your own thoughts.

R: Okay. no, I don't believe that they're able to, if it's a physical like, I mean it's on to the, okay, let me gather my thoughts. It's, I guess it's on the person. If the person chooses to accept that their disability, limits them in this, is their like capabilities, like if they're physical problems, and if they choose to find the happiness in that, then I think, yeah, maybe they can be even happier than people without disabilities.

I: Okay. So then generally speaking, do you think there's a prejudice towards people with disabilities in like the communities that you find yourself in?

R: Yeah, definitely there is. I wouldn't say like, I know that mental illness for sure is definitely something that is not talked about, and as seen as a weakness or not even as a problem or like, you know, but, mental illness is not a problem or if that even happens, you know, like if you're sad, get over it if you're anxious, get over it, yeah. Physical disability. Yeah. I haven't really been exposed to a lot of people who've been physically disabled...

I: So then do you feel like, talking about like, do you feel like these topics are kind of taboo to talk about in like Arab and Muslim families?

R: The disability topic? Yeah. I mean, I would say that I think in the older generation, yeah. Because they just get really defensive, like, I, I honestly feel like they just don't have, they just don't know about it. You know, they don't have the education on it, so they don't, and I bet they're also experiencing it themselves, but they're writing it off as something that their parents told them, and their parents told them, you know. So, I think now with the proper education that we're getting, people in, like in my generation, I talk about it with my friends. Yeah, with the

older, you just have to be careful with what they say, and you know, you just don't want to offend anyone.

I: Yeah. so just to wrap things up, I know that this has been a long talk, so, is there anything, any like last minute stuff you want to throw in? Anything else about your history that you want to add?

R: Okay. Hmm. I grew up in like in a smaller town. So, I don't have the exposure to like a lot of, like, when I go to Chicago, like I have friends in Chicago, and they're surrounded by Muslims all the time. So, I don't have perspective on, how other people feel in big, bigger cities. And how like that works. I feel like there's probably more of a community base and maybe people feel more confident in how they are, but, I know it, I, I personally feel like it's harder for me like in a smaller town when there's not as much exposure that people have. But you are seen as the thing of this religion or this culture.

I: Okay. Yeah, for sure. and then so I mentioned that this interview is being done through my class and with the Arab and Muslim Women's Resource and Research Institute. So, have you heard of this organization before?

R: No.

I: Cool. Neither have I before I took the class. So then, how do you think that, like, or do you think like outreach from this institution would like help to benefit your life or the life of the other Muslim women around you?

R: What would benefit sorry, you cut off a little?

I: Oh, sorry. If, the Arab and Muslim Women's Resource and Research Institute were to, like, work towards it's outreach and stuff like that, do you think that that would help the lives of the you and the other Muslim women?

R: I mean, yeah, definitely if they are teaching specifically women because it's definitely different. Because they are used to like a lot of what their cultural stuff is telling them what is

religion, and they don't have as much freedom as they should. So, or like the resources that they should, to get knowledge even on like basic things. Things like sexual education is just not taught. It's just not, you know, the kids don't know. Women don't know men. Even men don't know. I mean like, you know, so.

I: Yeah. I got the talk from a seventh-grade health teacher.

R: Yeah. I mean, exactly. And it's different and in Islam, you know, people don't have that education, and then they just throw in whatever cultural stuff is, whatever cultural stuff that is, if you get education based on our culture. Which isn't probably unlikely that your mom or dad would talk in depth with you.

I: Yeah, exactly. Well, thank you so much for this. I really, really appreciate it. Just a last-minute thing. If we have any additional questions, is it cool if we contact you again?

R: Yeah, no worries. Yeah.

I: Okay, great. Thanks for this. I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording.