

Oral History Project Interview

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

Interviewer/Number of Interview: (SA 1.00)

Date: May 7th, 2019

Name: Anonymous

Year of Birth: 1995

Gender: Female

Country of Origin: Palestine

Year of Immigration: Born in the U.S.

Abstract: The interviewee is a Palestinian woman who was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is a college graduate who was diagnosed with Anxiety, Depression and PTSD in 2017. In the interview, the interviewee discusses how her condition has impacted her throughout the past few years and how her mental health has really deteriorated, impacting her personal relationships in life. She discusses the type of support, or lack of, from the community and those around her and gives insight on what she feels can change within the community to really help others like herself. She discusses future goals and striving to branch out of Milwaukee, and the integrated and familiar, yet toxic community she grew up in. The interviewee describes her biggest struggles dealing with mental health issues, bringing awareness to members of the community, and encouraging others to branch out and go into professions that can help the youth in the community, specifically those undergoing mental health related issues.

Key Themes: Mental Health, depression, anxiety, family, relationships, counseling, religion, goals

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

Transcript:

S: Okay so I'm just going to tell you a little bit about the project that we are working on and so I am student at Marquette University conducting interviews on people with differences of abilities and Milwaukee Muslim immigrants. So the project is to under the leadership of Dr. Enaya Othman, you may know her, the president of the nonprofit organization the Arab and Muslim woman's research and Resource Institute, and Assistant professor and director of the Arabic and cultural studies program at Marquette. So it's important that we understand the experiences and perspectives of Muslims who have any difference in abilities or who are caregivers- in your case, you are the individual with it. Currently there is a lack of serious knowledge of people's experiences, the barriers that they face or things that they may need like resources that they need. So we're just conducting interviews just as a first step to bring more awareness to these issues in our community and kind of like understand the weight of cultural beliefs and how they may impact these kinds of issues and just likes spurring dialogue within the Muslim Scholars- and

that's why you know is interviewing Imam's and other Muslim people within our community. So your story is important to us in just educating others and identifying needs that you, specifically, may have- and other people like you that may it. So the first question is what's your name?- oh, yeah that's anonymous- we can skip that. Your age?

R: I'm 22 years old

I: Okay, and then where were you born?

R: Milwaukee, Wisconsin?

I: So how do you identify yourself in terms of your National background?

R: Palestinian, American

I: Okay, and what's the highest level of education that you have completed?

R: Bachelors

I: And where did you complete that?

R: University of Wisconsin of Milwaukee, school of Architecture and Urban Planning.

I: Okay, and are you currently married? What is your marital status?

R: Not married

I: Okay, and you can choose to not answer anything- you can say pass. Do you have any children?

R: No

I: Do you currently work outside of your home?

R: I freelance, so no, not really outside of my home.

I: Okay, so how many hours a week, about, would you say you work? Or does it depends?

R: It honestly varies. It kind of depends but you could say it goes from 20 to 30. It's not too much.

I: Okay, so, part time.... so that I do have like a better understanding of your situation, identify if you have one of the following. so for you- since I do know your case, we're talking about mental health. Are you currently going through this, or is this something you went through in the past?

R: What do you mean?

I: Like is this something that has happened to you and it's over, and you want to talk about your experience? Or is this something that you're still kind of, feel like you're battling till today?

R: I think I've endured many things and I'm still still battling it. So there is not necessarily a root cause, I think they're just like a bunch of little things that just added up and that were neglected so that overtime it just became worse

I: Like it built up?

R: Yes

I: Okay, so could you kind of describe the issues related to your disability that you experienced? Just anything and everything that you feel like you do experience and the way it impacts you negatively or positively if you feel like it does?

S19: Uhm, so in winter 2017, I was diagnosed with depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The PTSD was because of certain events in my life in third year of college. Even though I was diagnosed on in 2017, It was not treated for a long time. So it was just very bad at that point. Let's see. I was very anti-social. I I didn't know how to make friends or keep friends and that's something I still struggle with. My- I would say i have a very distorted sense of self and also distorted sense of time. You go through life kind of living in your head more than in real life. A lot of time like a lot of side effects of that are you just have very unrealistic sense of time. You're always late. You put put off things longer than you need them to- you have anxiety going anywhere or see anyone . You overthink anything you say or do. It's just honestly a lot of stuff. It's so hard to explain to people.

I: And- but that impacts your everyday behavior your everyday relationships

R: Yeah, my quality of life is just- not the best, you know? And it doesn't help when you don't really have a lot of friends that understand it, just because it's something that is not really talked about or where a lot of things are seen as an excuse me.

I: Yeah, you can't really have them like understand what's really going on your head, you know, so it's just the way- like a personal inner battle that you have to go through.

R: Yeah, exactly.

I: So what factors do you think might have led to this condition? Just in general. And you don't have to get specific, but just in the realm of things. What do you think was the- and you can not answer. But what do you think was kind of- like- I know that you said there was not one root cause, but do you think was friendships? Do you think it was your family? Do you think it was your religion? So what do you think was a factor that led to this?

R: Honestly, I think if I were to generalize at least one factor, it would be like a toxic community.

I: And that was actually what I was going to ask. Do you think that this relates to you being like Arab or Muslim or- Do you think- exactly, like if you were in a different Community, you know a different type of culture or type of nationality, do you think that would have been different for you?

R: I wouldn't know, I just feel like Milwaukee is a very unique place. I feel like there's so much struggle and sacrifice that came into living here but through that, there's just a lot of disconnect between generations and just not knowing how to really be there for each other and I think I was just neglected as a kid. Misunderstood by friends and family. This environment could be better. I feel like a lot of it is environmental. I could thrive somewhere else. I've just become just an escapist through my artwork and paintings.