



## Interview for Study on Impacts of COVID-19 on U.S. Muslims Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute (AMWRRI)

Interviewer/Number of Interview: NS1

Date: 2/14/2021

Name of Interviewee Assigned by Researcher (to protect identity): Respondent

Year of Birth: 1987

Gender: Male

Country of Origin: U.S.

Year of Immigration: N.A.

Current State in which respondent resides: California

**Note:** In the transcript, *I* refers to Interviewer, and *R* refers to Respondent/Interviewee. To protect the identity of the interviewee, some responses to questions are not provided. In such cases, this statement will show in the transcript: Information is not being made available. In other responses, specific details that might identify the family members are omitted or made more general.

### **Abstract:**

The respondent is an Arab-American male who was born in the United States. He is married and has one child just over a year old. He emphasized desire for unity across religious backgrounds and how this could contribute to the betterment of addressing racial issues. Stated to have a large interest in the topics of social justice and demonstrated a larger involvement and interest in how not only the recent social justice movements, but COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the ways that individuals are seen and can affect change. Respondent supported that the Muslim has and is one of inclusivity and that, as such, its followers should support inclusivity and multiculturalism in their own lives. He also suggested that Muslims, Imams and other religious leaders should speak out and comfort the people who are getting discriminated against. Knowledge and teaching are needed, especially teaching the younger generation how important it is to judge somebody by their heart and not by their religion or race. He also believes that the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities should be working with one another.

## **Key Themes:**

Family structure, familial impact of pandemic, connection, adjusting to pandemic, Muslim faith and inclusivity, aspects of history of Islam, social justice causes in the U.S., Islam and social justice, accommodations for pandemic in faith, differences in experiencing religious practices, desire to engage with faith. The importance of inter-faith connections among Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities. His family has been financially secure during Covid. Benefit of Covid: more time with his child and wife.

## **Edited Transcript**

R: Hey can you hear me?

I: Yup, I can hear you just fine. How are you doing?

R: Good man, how are you doing?

I: I am doing alright. Are you at a good spot right now to uh...

R: (overlapping) Yes I am, let's do it.

I: Just quickly I want to go over some of the stuff that is the purpose of this research for you. So just the idea is kind of to document the way that COVID-19 has had impacts on the Muslim community.

R: (Overlapping) Okay.

I: Regarded with their daily lives, just kind of fulfilling their religious obligation and also the communal aspects of the religion. In addition, it's just kind of to explore some of the engagement with social justice, um, and then within the community itself. And then just working to hopefully empower and connect Muslim communities by creating this kind of digital record. And um, just kind of generally to gain a better understanding of how these kinds of situation do impact the community at large. One other thing that I just wanted to run by you before we kind of go any further is that for the purpose of our research we are supposed to record these phone call interviews and make transcriptions of them. So in those transcriptions we would remove any sort of identifying information and then the recordings will be deleted after that, once we have the transcriptions. So we won't include any name, where you're from, or anything like that. So I just wanted to check with you and make sure that was okay you with you.

R: That is okay.

I: Alright, did you have any questions before we get started today?

R: Nope.

I: Alright, then we can get started with just some of the first information here, it's just some demographic info, so the first question on here is just what is your name?

R: (Interviewee states, then spells their name)

I: Alright, and how old are you today?

R: Uh, 33.

I: Okay. Next question is where were you born?

R: Uh, I was born in (states place of birth).

I: Have you moved around since then?

R: Uh, yeah, now I'm in (states city of residence).

I: Oh, nice. How do you identify yourself in terms of national background?

R: Arab-American.

I: Okay. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

R: Bachelor's degree.

I: Okay. What in? What did you get that degree in?

R: Business management with a concentration in international business.

I: Cool. What would you say your marital status is?

R: Married.

I: Awesome, congratulations on that.

R: Thanks man.

I: And then including yourself, how many adults live in your household?

R: 2.

I: Okay, and then are there any children 18 years or younger?

R: Yeah, one.

I: Okay, so the next one is where it kind of gets into more of your personal information, kind of your personal experience with COVID. So thank you for going through that first part, I know it can be a little boring.

R: Okay.

I: So in here, however you need to, just feel free to take whatever time you want to think of your responses, no need to rush through any of these questions if you want a minute, just let me know. And then as this will be getting into more of the lived experience kind of information if there is anything in the situation that you know, you're feeling uncomfortable with or you don't want to answer a question just feel free to let me know.

R: Sounds good.

I: Alright. So the first question is how has the outbreak of the COVID virus affected you personally in terms of your financial, social, and health situations?

R: I'll say social, impacted it tremendously. As you know we're used to going out every weekend, hanging out with friends or, you know just, even traveling. Different locations.

I: Yeah, definitely.

R: So it's impacted that you know, as we're in our small little bubble because we have a young child. Business-wise took a little hit as the company I own, we're a staffing firm, so we partner with [companies] like the Googles, the Intuits, the Facebooks, and helped them find talent. Alright, so hiring people. And a lot of people kind just took a little, kind like a hiring freeze. So it took a little step back, but not too much financially.

I: Okay.

R: And your third question, oh, health wise, for the first couple months, cuz the gyms here in (home state) have been closed. So it impacted, like by putting on like 10 pounds.

I: Gotcha.

R: So, yeah, it's impacted the weight there. You know I used to go into the gym every morning for a couple hours, now I'm not able to go to the gym.

I: Yeah. That can be a big disruption, I imagine, for someone who's used to doing that on a pretty regular basis. I know the gyms here, they've been closed for a while and even with the reopening a lot the procedures and limitations on people that can be there at one time are pretty difficult to work around.

R: Yeah, absolutely. And the only thing we're doing is, you know, watching movies and shows, and just snacking.

I: Yeah, I don't think you're alone in that on for sure, but, big change up definitely in previous lifestyles for sure.

R: Absolutely.

I: Alright, next up, how has the outbreak of the virus affected the way you conduct yourself with people close to you? So this would be like friends and family.

R: Just more cautious, right? Usually, you know, if we see a friend we're inside their house. Now we're outside, we're hanging out. So it's just more awareness of our surroundings.

I: Gotcha. Any other ways that you can think of?

R: That's it. Just being smart about who you're hanging out with.

I: Yeah, definitely. Since the virus outbreak, what are your primary ways of communicating with friends and family?

R: FaceTime, Zoom, Messenger, and that's about it.

I: Gotcha. Do you have a lot of friends and family kind of nearby or they kind scattered around?

R: I got family in (city), got family in, overseas in (country), got family in (state). We're everywhere.

I: Okay, gotcha. So that's a fair spread to try and stay connected with for sure.

R: Yup.

I: With the new ways that you're using to connect with others, are there any challenges or unexpected benefits that you've experienced here?

R: Challenges is, uh, like, the grandparents not able to see or the family not able to see our 20-month-old. They're able to see him when he was first born then besides that because they're older they're not traveling too much. So, they haven't really been able to see him. So, I think the biggest challenge is not being able to have the hands-on with the family.

I: Yeah, definitely. Any kind of benefits that you can think of or anything that you've seen change?

R: Saving money.

I: That's a fair one for sure.

R: Right?

I: With the family kind of relationships there, and the traveling to see each other, was that a pretty common thing for your family and friends in the past?

R: Yeah, so like, we'll see prior, in 2020 from January, no we'll say from July of 2019 to January we traveled like 4 times.

I: Okay.

R: We'll see, so July, August, September, October, November, December. So in 6 months, 7 months we travelled 4 times, so we travelled pretty often.

I: Gotcha, yeah, so that would definitely be a pretty big disruption to that kind of family connection or even just that social aspect, too. I can imagine, too, having such a young child and then not necessarily being able to connect with relatives who would be pretty standard figures in their life before would be a little difficult.

R: Exactly, yeah.

I: During the pandemic, are there any apps that you have begun to use or blogs that you have begun to read or listen to?

R: No, the only thing that I downloaded is that 24Go. That gym app where I literally signed up for it for a second and that's about it, and I haven't really used it.

I: I believe I know the answer to this one, but I just wanted to double-check, before the COVID-19 outbreak were you employed?

R: Yes.

I: Alright. And then you said that you actually are the owner for your own business, correct?

R: Yeah.

I: Nice. What would you say is like the average hours per week that you work?

R: Jeez, you know being remote now I would say about 30 hours.

I: 30 hours. Before the pandemic was that different?

R: beforehand, you know when you're in the office you're showing more face. So you're doing like 40-something, now it's like you're working from home getting it done and doing whatever you have to do afterwards.

I: Okay. How would you say that's kind of impacted your own life, just kind of having a little bit, potentially more time not working?

R: It makes me closer to the family.

I: Is that something that you're hoping you can kind of maintain outside of, you know, hopefully when we're on the other end of this?

R: Yeah, you know it's pretty cool, you know the last year and half being able to spend more time at home, seeing your kid get raised. So it's, not taking things for granted. So, yeah, it's kind of good, that's something where it's kind of slowing down and spending more time with the family.

I: Gotcha. Kind of an unrelated question, but it, I'm not entirely sure so I'm just asking for clarification. With the child raising, it sounds like your spouse does a lot more of that for you, at least historically?

R: Yeah, pretty much, yeah. Yeah, she does.

I: Gotcha, yeah, sorry I probably didn't phrase that super well.

R: \*laughs\* No man, you're good. Usually she is, but now it's like, you're there so you're more, you're more involved.

I: Yeah, how has that been for you as a bit of a change up? I know you're still a relatively new parent still but...

R: It's a good feeling, you're being around, you're seeing changes, it's definitely a good feeling, rather than being in an office and being away from your child you know, it's been getting home and hanging out for like an hour or two then going to sleep. So it's been a very positive thing for us.

I: Well good, I'm glad to hear that that's been a positive change that you've been able to get out of this kind of experience. I know, it's difficult at times.

R: Absolutely.

I: Alright, in what ways, if any has the COVID-19 outbreak affected you or your family's financial wellbeing?

R: You know, we've been blessed, it hasn't really impacted us.

I: That's very fortunate.

R: Yeah, we've been very blessed.

I: Just kind of generally throughout this have you received any kind of help from anyone in the surrounding community?

R: No.

I: Just based on like daily function, and situations like that are there any specific current needs that you're experiencing that you're feeling are more difficult to meet as a result of the current pandemic?

R: No.

I: Okay. During this time have you been able to give help to others, like including g friends and family?

R: Yeah, I have.

I: Would you be able to share any of what that has been like for you?

R: Just people that are not financially doing well, indirectly reaching out to them, donating, or sending over like meals to them. You know sometimes people are too prideful to say that they need the help so you gotta indirectly help them out. Right, like, "Hey we haven't done dinner in a long time so we're gonna DoorDash you some food," or something like that. So stuff like that or you know, going to the community center and you know donating money there that you know is gonna get back to people in need.

I: Well that's awesome to hear that you've been able to do those things.

R: Yeah, absolutely. Something small.

I: Yeah, but I mean, you know honestly, at this time I think that we kind of are realizing more and more that even small pieces matter.

R: Exactly, you know, that's, you know, it's all a test. You might have it today and you might not have it tomorrow so if you don't have it tomorrow those people are gonna be free. It can all be taken away.

I: Yeah. In what ways if any has the COVID crisis affected your physical and emotional health?

R: It's just, I'd say, physical, I'd say just putting on more weight. Mental, you know going to the gym, sometime, you know after a long day at work or before you start the morning, it puts you in a better mindset. Right?

I: mmmm.

R: So I think it's impacted me by not being able to relieve more stress, you know when you got to the gym. And that's about it. Physical is just putting on more weight.

I: Gotcha. Are there other ways that you've kind of been able to find yourself getting some of that emotional relief that you have been able to get always with gyms being closed at times?

R: Umm, just going for walks.

I: Okay. I think a lot of people have maybe picked up going for walks during this time.

R: Yeah, it's like the new norm dude. I mean, everybody's going on walks, you know?

I: Yeah.

R: It's the new thing to do.

I: Are there any other strategies you can think of that you've been using to cope with some of these challenges?

R: No, that's about it.

I: Okay.



R: Maybe watch movies, I'd say.

I: Okay, yeah, definitely. I've made a substantial way through a movie list for sure.

R: Right, we've been on this Cobra Kai thing. Finally decided it was time to start it.

I: Oh, yeah.

R: It's pretty good man, it brings back memories of the Karate Kid.

I: So this next group of questions is focusing on how the pandemic has impacted religious practices and beliefs or just kind of your own experience throughout this time. Kind of same general practice as before, if there's any sort of thing you have questions about, need clarification, or just want to take a minute to think about just let me know. Are we good to keep going for now?

R: Yes, sir.

I: Alright. So first question is, how have you continued your religious traditions, so it's giving examples of Friday prayers, Ramadan, Eid al Fitr, any sort of other religious ceremonies or activities during the COVID pandemic?

R: Yeah, so the pandemic hit last year right before Ramadan started.

I: Okay.

R: So during Ramadan there's a thing called tarawih where you got this nightly prayer after you break your fast. So that was cancelled, you know because all the mosques were shut down. I personally feel it was more, you know praying at home, and spending time at home rather than going to mosque was more beneficial for me because you had nothing else to do. You could read more, you could be more involved rather all these distractions of going to like the community center. Ramadan was kind of, you know, everything shut down, so you're just sitting at home, you can't really go to the mall for a couple hours and just waste some time until it's time to break your fast. So it was, the mosques on Friday, when you get into like a tradition, you've been doing this for over 25 years, 27 years going to the mosque every Friday, going to the tarawih, the night prayer, and then all of a sudden it stops you feel like an emptiness. Like, man, you know, like it's just, what happened? And it makes you again, be thankful for what you had and not take things into, like into, you know, like, what's the work I'm looking for? We take things for granted a lot of time and it's just like shit dude, it can all stop in a second.

I: Yeah. I can definitely, yeah, based on what you say imagine that was some pretty distinct changes not only in like your ability to spend times doing things during Ramadan specifically, but then also just like, the continual practices you had basically throughout your entire life.

R: Yeah, and you gotta remember dude, during Ramadan like when you break the fast you got to friend's house, friends are coming over, so you couldn't even do that for eating. That's like the fun part where everyone goes in the morning you get with family, friends, kids get gifts. And that was pretty much all virtual this year.

I: Yeah, wow, that definitely, you lost out not only on some of those religious practices but then even like the social aspect of it as well and the enjoyment potentially.

R: Yeah, and every religious group you know, from Judaism to Christianity, to Buddhism, everybody faced that this year. But like for Christmas we don't, we don't celebrate Christmas as Muslims but, you know, like I have a lot of friends that celebrate Christmas, and it wasn't the same. We're like I usually go spend it with my mom and dad, this year I gotta do it solo. Right? So it's across the table, and it's, like I said, the biggest lesson is not taking these events for granted. Because a lot of people are like aww man I gotta go to mom's house for Christmas or my dad's house. It's like dude, now you wanna go really bad, but you can't.

I: Well thank you for sharing that. I appreciate that. Since the outbreak, have you been able to participate in any virtual religious activities?

R: Uh, yeah. You know, since the outbreak now they do this Friday prayer, they opened up the mosques here but like added social distancing. You know, I know how, so when you pray you're usually foot-to-foot with the people you're praying next to.

I: Okay.

R: Now it's like there's like 6 feet in between you and the person you're praying next to, and now they pray outside. There's like a park. So now, rather than praying inside, they pray outside in the park. And then also another thing is they pray in like the back, there's like an indoor basketball court rather than praying inside where it's closer, so they give everybody space so the last couple months things are starting to open up more and more.

I: What would you say like, your own opinions of this kind of accommodation for COVID, like how do you feel about them?

R: I would, you know, you gotta remember, I'm not trying to get religious and all that, but the prophet said, if you're sick or you came down with like a disease or anything like that it's a big sin for you, so say that I know that I have a temperature, right, and I'm not feeling well, if to go the mosque or say I go to church and I get somebody else sick, that's a big sin on me. So it says like, hey, if you're sick or there's something going on, keep the distance, be smart. Right? So for me, I think it's smart, I think it's, if they kept things open and people were going and getting sick that's very selfish and it's not the way things should be.

I: Gotcha. Yeah, and I mean, thank you for sharing that I appreciate that. Obviously, like, I don't have a perfect knowledge of everything that goes along with like the teachings in the Muslim faith, but I appreciate you sharing these little bits with me.

R: Yeah, and that's a big thing man, the biggest thing if you wanna like know about Islam, is like wish better for the person next to you than you wish for yourself. So you gotta keep that in mind for like your neighbor, for your friends, for your family. You never wanna harm people, so if, say you have a temperature, things are heating up, why would you got to the mosque? You gotta always work for the well-being of the other people.

I: So the next question we have on here for you is have you Imams or religious leaders drawn on scriptural or Muslim historical sources to help community members understand and cope with the COVID-19 crisis?

R: Yeah, so like the big thing now is about the vaccine, right? Some people are like oh, is it wrong to take the vaccine, is it okay to take the vaccine? The Imams what they say, you know, different Imams say, there's another saying that says, you know hey, I'm just gonna put my faith in God. If God wants me to get sick I'm gonna get sick, if he wants me to get better he wants me to get better. But it says, there's a Hadid, a thing in the Quran that says that, "God says to tie your camel and then put you faith in God." Or "Lock your door and then put your faith in God." He doesn't say "Hey, just keep your camel or your horse untied, and God's gonna..." it says use your head, you know be smart about it, right?

I: Yeah.

R: So that's like, that's a good saying that's going on.

I: Yeah, that's a really interesting perspective, and I really appreciate, too, the little commentary you gave there as well.

R: Yeah, cuz a lot of religious groups, we'll say about 90% of my friends are Christian, right? Or like, a lot of them are like, "Oh I'm putting my faith in God." It's like nah dude, God. If you look at Christianity, you look at Judaism, and you look at Islam a lot of them have the same teachings from you know, but over the years, when it gets through other people's hands people are adjusting it to make it benefit them. But, at the end it's like, God says use your mind, use your head. You know, like, it's not like "Oh it's all in God's hands," it is in God's hands, but you gotta be smart and put yourself in a situation where it's gonna benefit you.

I: Yeah, that's a really interesting perspective for sure, not one that I always hear from people with different religious beliefs. Next question we have for you is in what ways, if any, have your prayers and religious practices played a role in how you understand and cope with COVID-19?

R: Probably just remembering that everything happens for a reason. Everything is a test. So uh, every, going back, sorry man I keep saying things about the Quran.

I: That's totally fine.

R: But like it says, God is the one that controls everything, so you could say "Hey I'm gonna go make a million dollars, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that." But at the end of the day you could be stopped in a heartbeat. Right? You could plan everything and you could just say, like we were supposed to travel this summer, last summer right, and then all of a sudden all of our plans got cancelled. So it just, always, I keep going back to this, always remember things could change in a second and you just gotta be thankful and run with it, it's all a test.

I: Definitely. And I just want to say really quickly I mean, like, there's no reason, in my opinion, where you need to apologize to me for like, referencing the Quran or anything like that. If that's kind of where your perspective is coming from and that's, the answer that you have or part of the response that you want to give like, that's totally fine with me. There's not issues there, that's not like detrimental to the research in any way I don't think.

R: No, you're good man. \*laughing\* You know I'm trying to be respectful too, I'm just like, "Man, this guy keeps talking about this, jeez."

I: Yeah, no worries. This is about your perspective and your understanding, so however you're thinking about these things, that's what we're interested in.

R: Okay, perfect.

I: Alright, next up. In what ways, if any, has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your religious beliefs or faith?

R: I think it's um... how do I say this, in some ways it's made it stronger, in some ways it kind of, you know, for like 5-6 months not being able to go to the mosque or go to Friday prayer, it kind of like, it kind of like, how do I say it, it kind of made some distance. Right?

I: Yeah. I think that's definitely understandable. I think, you know, obviously in your perspective it's from your own religion, but I think too there's some semblance of that, distance kind of affects your relationship with anything.

R: Exactly.

I: So this next set of questions has to do with some of the social movements that have been going on. Specifically this one is going to be social justice issues that are kind of coming up as a result of like Black Lives Matters protests in 2020.

R: Hey, can I give you a call back in 1 minute?

I: Oh, yeah, totally fine.

R: I'm gonna call you right back in 1 minute. Sorry.

\*Waiting while interviewee was off the phone.\*

R: Hey, I didn't ruin your recording did I?

I: Oh no, you're totally fine.

R: Alright, let's do this, sorry.

I: No, no worries.

R: Social justice.

I: Yeah, so I'll just repeat what I was saying before. It focuses on the Muslim communities' engagement with social justice issues as a result of the some of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020.

R: Yup.

I: How have your mosque and/or the Islamic centers in your community responded to the calls for social justice raised by the Black Lives Matters movements.

R: Right, right, so, so you gotta remember so, so Islam is the most diverse religion. If you pull it back and you see the Malcolm X's, you see the Muhammed Ali's, you even see the, what's his name, Steven Jackson, he just converted right? The biggest thing is, you know George Floyd, right? Steven Jackson is his best friend; they were childhood friends. So after all this that happened over the summer he said he wants to convert to Islam. Because he saw how it was supposed to be man, it doesn't matter man, if you're white, black, orange, green, purple, we're all one in God's eyes. So how are mosques and all that responding? You know, release statements right, but for, it was kind of tough because everything was closed. Right? But for me personally, you know, even with things going on we still, we still went and participated as much as we can right? We post stuff on social media, remember that Black Out Tuesday, volunteering, one of my friends put together the protest in [city] here, right, it had thousands of people and hey, volunteering to talk to that group of people putting that protest together and just saying hey we'll tell you more about the Muslim community. But here, the community here we have a big center and for them they just did like little education classes for kids and news articles, but they didn't really do too much because of everything we're going through right now.

I: Yeah. Definitely, and that actually got a little bit into, actually a fair amount into the next question that we have on here too so I appreciate you kind of openly discussing that. I know that this topic for some people can be controversial, so I was definitely curious to hear what the response was gonna be.

R: Absolutely man, this is, this is a topic that I'm very passionate about and I feel like, I feel like there is... and I hope I don't offend you, but I feel like...

I: No worries.

R: There are different privileges in different groups, right? You're telling me for example that guy from Wisconsin that went to Chicago and you know killed, shot two people that young kid. The 17-year-old, 18-year-old. How he was able to hit bail, go on bail, but an African American who stole a backpack, I don't know if you saw that documentary, he had to spend 4 years until his trial and he couldn't even get bail for stealing a backpack. Right? That's one example, right? You see these other videos where, even if, let's take it back to the Capital Building that just happened. These guys are attacking with the flags and with you know sticks and pepper spray. You didn't see, even the African American officers, you didn't see anybody pull out a gun. But if the roles were flipped, you know the guns would have been, you know people would have had guns. You saw what happened at the church in D.C. in front of the White House. They flew the helicopters low. I feel like we're supposed to be a first world country, but with everything that's going on, we still act worse than a third world country. Okay? You go to Palestine and you don't really see black, white. You, it's just hey, you're a good person, you're not a good person, right? It's not about color. So I feel like, in Islam, this goes back to being Muslim and my teachings. The first person to call prayer was African American. Okay? So that alone shows you like, hey in our religion you're not supposed to be like that. But in every group, white, Middle Eastern, Asian, there's always a group of people that are racist, right?

I: Yeah

R: But you can't judge the whole race by one or two people.

I: Thank you for sharing that, I appreciate that perspective.

R: Yeah, and it's just like, Islam, hey, hey, hey, wait, how are you gonna be racist or discriminate against this when the person that first, you know, the call to prayer, the first person to do the call to prayer, one of the prophet's best friends, companions, was you know, is, was African America, not African American, African. Black. And then, another thing is, you know, they used to go free slaves, or when one of the, have you ever watched, what was that movie called, Kingdom of Heaven? I'm forgetting his name, but one of the big leaders, he was like the big warrior back then, like for the battles. He used to take turns, he used to let his slave ride the horse, and he walked, vice versa. He used to treat people equally. So for me, about the Black Lives Matters movement, I think yeah, it's a movement that is needed. I think it's sad that there has to be a movement like this. You would think in 2021 that people wouldn't be racist, but hey, there's a lot of racism going on.

I: Yeah. From your own perspective what do you think that Muslim communities in the U.S. should be doing with regards to social justice?

R: You know, speaking out and comforting the people that are getting discriminated against. Because you remember after September 11<sup>th</sup>, Muslims, it's a circle man, people sit back and they watch, right? When it was happening during the Holocaust what did people say? Aww man that's not affecting us, so oh, why should we care. And then when it started happening to Muslims people are like, ahhh, that's not us it's them, why should we worry about it? It's been happening to African Americans for hundreds, for over a hundred years and people are like oh, it's not really impacting us. Happened to Asians, people from Japan, when they put them in the concentration camps for, not concentration camps, the camps here in American for, you remember? When that war was going on, and people just sit back and go oh that wasn't us so why should I worry?

I: Yeah.

R: So I think knowledge man, knowledge and teaching, teaching the younger generation how important it is to judge somebody by their heart and not by their religion or race.

I: Yeah. Thank you. So there's one more section here for the questions and it's generally like, titled "Inspiration and Hope". So it kind of looks the difficulties that you've been, obviously everyone's been going through, and the ways that you know, you know, the next steps and expectations for the future. So the first question in this section is: What was your most uplifting experience since the outbreak of COVID-19 – something that inspired hope or happiness?

R: Uh, hope or happiness, let's see... that's a good question. Something that's happened in the last year?

I: So, yeah, since the outbreak of COVID-19, so it's going on a little bit over a year at this point. But yeah, just kind of anything that you can think of there.

R: Ummm, I think that, knowing that there's an end at sight. Right? Knowing that hey, like, you know, not to try and be political, hey Trump is out of office, that's, that's something that's positive, right? Like, hey, okay there's hope in this society, even though he got 72 million votes, but there's, there's hope right? So I, I think that, I don't know man, I would say human kindness but you saw people being selfish, hoarding toilet paper and doing some of this stuff. You didn't see people being too kind to one another during this time, right?

I: Yeah.

R: Sometimes you did, but umm, I'd just say that hey, we're at, we're coming, there's light at the end of the tunnel.

I: Yeah, definitely. Uhh, what is it that you are looking most forward to doing once COVID-19 is kind of, a little bit more out of sight?

R: Traveling man. Getting on the flight. Going somewhere. Going. My biggest thing is hopefully by summertime maybe being able to go and visit somewhere like Palestine.

I: Okay. Yeah, would you be interested in taking your kid with you then?

R: Oh yeah, absolutely man. When I was younger that's how I learned our ways and traditions. My parents used to take me there every summer.

I: Oh wow.

R: It's just getting to see your people. Seeing, it's a humbling experience, man. I tell people, like friends and all that, travel the world man, go to a place that's less fortunate than us and see how these people that are, you know, living in these refugee camps or living in areas that they don't have anything but their so happy. Right? We get so carried away in this like, aww man they're out of steak and I can't get shrimp tonight. These guys are a family of 5 eating 3 eggs, 4 eggs and they're the happiest people in the world. So it's always a humbling experience.

I: The last question we have for you today is just, is there anything that you know, you thought of during this time you'd like to tell us about or anything that came up.

R: Yeah, it's just that, at the end of the day man, every, every, every human being is the same. And we choose the path that we wanna take, so you could choose the path of being ugly to others and being negative, or you could choose the path of being positive and loving others. So it's just, and like I told you earlier in every religion, every, you know, in, if you look at all religious books, Christianity and all that, it's all about how you treat others, right? And it's, it's, it's you shouldn't judge anybody. God is the one that judges at the end of the day.

I: Yeah. Anything else that you think we missed in this, kind of, group of questions, anything that you think is important to talk about going forward?

R: Probably just, what's the Muslim community doing with the Christianity community, or the Jewish community? Like how are people working with one another? I think that's an important question, right?

I: Yeah.

R: We don't wanna have that divide of the Muslim community, Christianity community, and Jewish community. We wanna just all be one community, right? We're all one. We should, you know, like, we don't want labels.

I: Yeah. Alright, well I believe that wraps everything that we have for you today. I appreciate you taking the time out of your day to answer these questions and give us your perspective here. I will be sending on a copy of the questions, I won't have your answers recorded in there but it does have a little more information about anyone you might want to contact if you wanted to get additional information as well as a link for a survey just to kind of give us some information on what this experience was like for you. Umm, does that sound alright for you today?

R: Sounds perfect man, and if you need anything else let me know.

I: Yeah, thank you so much, I appreciate your time.

R: Alright, bro, cool man, have a good rest of the weekend.

I: You too.

R: Alright, buh-bye.

I: Bye.