

Duha Salim interview completed by Rawan Oudeh, transcription completed by Alex Groth

Date: January 4, 2017

Gender: Female

Name: Duha Salim

Birthday:

Country of Origin: Jordan/Palestine

Year of Immigration: 1996

Abstract:

Duha Salim was born in Jordan, but grew up in Puerto Rico before coming to the United States. She identifies as a Muslim American-Palestinian woman, and relates most strongly with Arab culture. Duha Salim considers herself an outsider, because she feels like she cannot advocate for herself, fearing that she will be viewed badly. She feels that she can express her true identity with friends and family. Duha Salim currently works as a DJ and is pursuing higher education at Cardinal Stritch University, where she is studying nursing.

I (interviewer): “Okay, my name is Rawan Oudeh and I’m conducting this interview on January 4, 2017. So first I’d like to start off by asking what your name, age and level of education is.”

R: (interviewee): “My name is Duha Salim. My age 21 and my level of education—I’m in college right now, nursing student.”

I: “And, where are you going to school?”

R: “I’m going to school in Cardinal Stritch University.”

I: “When you were growing up, where did you go to elementary or high school?”

R: “Elementary school, I was in Puerto Rico up until fourth grade, then we came here—my parents came here and I was in..”

I: “Salam School?”

R: “No, it was...”

I: “Garland?”

R: “First I was somewhere—else I forgot the name right now.”

I: “Was it public?”

R: “Yes, it was a public school named Garland, through fifth grade and then after that from sixth till high school I was in Salam school.”

I: “Okay, and was that a big transition for you to go from Puerto Rico to America?”

R: “Yes, it was. I was—first year I didn’t know any English and if I did know I had a huge accent and then I didn’t know I had an accent so people would be like, ‘you have an accent, what accent? Like, what are you talking about?’ and then I was in a ESL for three years. I probably took so long because I sat on my siblings and then up until seventh grade I was in ESL and they were still testing me to see how proficient my English was.”

I: “Were you born in Puerto Rico?”

R: “No, I was born in Jordan.”

I: “Okay, can you tell me about places in buildings where you spend a lot of time during your childhood? Like, where do you remember being the most?”

R: “At the beach in Puerto Rico—mostly at the beach going out. Ice cream—I remember ice cream a lot.”

I: "Can you tell me about your home, your school, or some places you remember fondly?"

R: "I remember Garland a lot, just because that was the first year I had fun here and that's Garland school, yeah. You know Salam School will always be in my heart."

I: "Can you tell me how you felt about being Muslim in these different places?"

R: "It didn't really affect me that much until I was, became hjaba when I was in seventh grade, I think I became al-hjaba. That's when I, like, felt a little bit different and it didn't, and it wasn't as much as when I was younger, as when I was older. When I started working, a lot of people kept asking me. Sometimes you got these people at work where they were mean to you right when they see you and you know why but you don't want to say anything and when they finally ask you why you wear the scarf, they're kind of nicer. They become more calm."

I: "Did you serve in the US military?"

R: "No."

I: "Are you currently employed?"

R: "Yes."

I: "What's your job?"

R: "I am a nursing assistant at Aurora St. Luke's."

I: "And how long have you been working there?"

R: "Two years."

I: "How did you get the job or what made you interested in having that the job?"

R: "Well I was at Marquette. I was going into psychology and I hated it. So then I decided to go into nursing because my parents kept nagging at me and then I decided, okay, I heard some people took the nursing assistant class over there so I did that and then I got in. I applied and got in and then I applied and I got the job. It was just that easy. I didn't really, it wasn't like, 'oh my god I have to get this done,' no."

I: "And are your parents encouraging of your work?"

R: "Yes they are very very encouraging."

I: "Would you say it was mainly your choice to go and get a job, or was it like?"

R: "It was mainly my choice and my parents always supported that and my parents always—my mom always encouraged us when we were younger to get a job, you know we started the DJ

when I was 16 and my brother always worked, so it was just a normal part, like, 'okay, now your going to work in a new job.' Just something normal."

I: "And are you currently married?"

R: "Yes."

I: "Was your marriage arranged?"

R: "No."

I: "Did you know your spouse before getting married?"

R: "What do you mean?"

I: "Like, did you know who he was? Did you talk to him before?"

R: "Before we got engaged?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "Well, he first asked my dad's permission and then my dad was like, 'okay.' He first had to come and meet and then we talk for two months and then we got engaged."

I: "In your culture is the tradition of dowry or mahr practiced?"

R: "Yes."

I: "Can you explain what you know about it?"

R: "Mahr is kind of a, it's, it's like a backup for the woman. It's something to fall on to if something were to happen. That's what I know."

I: "And did your husband agree to give you a dowry when got married?"

R: "Yes."

I: "And did he give it to you and money or gold or something else?"

R: "Gold."

I: "And what does the dowry mean to you?"

R: "It means that my husband loves me. It means that my husband, it was kind of a test for my husband to see if he was willing to give me the amount that I was going to ask. It was kind of a test for him and to see whether, if, I don't know—it was childish, but I was like, if he loves me

then he won't argue about it and he didn't. He was like, 'okay.' My dad put the mahr as one dinar, so for him that was a pain. Then he kind of gifted—gifted me my mahr.”

I: “Okay.”

R: “The rest of the money.”

I: “How was the value of the dowry determined?”

R: “Well, my dad determined it, and then I told him, ‘but baba, that’s not, like, that’s not for you. It’s for me,’ so then I kind of said that, ‘this is the amount that I want.’ Like, I want ten thousand, and then, yeah.”

I: “So did you make an agreement with your dad and then let your fiancé know what it was?”

R: “Well, it was in front of my dad and my fiancé. My dad was like, ‘okay we want one dinar, and I’m like woah, woah,’ but my dad on the marriage, on the marriage certificate it says one dinar. Yeah, but it was actually a lot more.”

I: “Yeah, yeah.”

R: “Yeah, it was all right there, so I was like, ‘no this is what I want,’ and he kind of knew what I want. We talked about it during our engagement, even though it wasn’t actually written that this is my mahr—we talked about it.”

I: “And is the same amount that is given to you before the marriage the same that would be given, like, god forbid, there was divorce?”

R: “It’s a little bit more. It was my muqaddam. I asked for ten thousand and my mahr is fifteen thousand.”

I: “Umm, when looking for a suitable husband did your family take into consideration the wealth of the man, or no?”

R: “Yes, they did. They actually looked at his job. They looked to see if he was able to support a family. My dad looked at was he, when we first started talking, he looked at, was he able to, is he able to do the things for the wedding? Can he afford the things for the wedding that I wanted? So he kind of asked him, ‘How much do you have saved?’ If you need help, I’ll help you. They kind of looked at it, but they weren’t, but that wasn’t like, ‘Ohh, if he’s rich than we’re not marrying him. He’s not rich at all, so.’”

I: “And did that also determine the amount of the dowry that he would give you, or no? Like, his wealth?”

R: "Yeah, it kind of, later on, when we agreed on how much, it kind of, how much he was making kind of determined how much I would get for the muqaddam. Let's see if, yeah."

I: "Umm, and what is the money from the dowry typically used for?"

R: "Well, I have it in safe locking, so it's not used for anything right now. And I told my husband if there were anything, like, if something were to happen, or he lost his job, or we needed to start a business, or something than I would sell my gold and, you know, help him out."

I: "And do you think that's an important tradition to keep going?"

R: "Yes, I do."

I: "When you're looking for a potential husband for your daughter would it be something that you would consider? Like, the dowry?"

R: "Yes, I would, just because, it would, it's not only for the woman, it's for the both of them. It's for the family and it's something to rely on in the future if something were to happen, so yes."

I: "Do you have any children?"

R: "No."

I: "Okay, so the next set of questions are about your culture and how you define yourself. How would you identify yourself?"

R: "Like, can you give me an example?"

I: "Like, often women identify themselves, like, by their religion, by their, like, national identity."

R: "Okay."

I: "So like, how do you think you'd identify yourself?"

R: "I'd identify myself as a Muslim American-Palestinian woman."

I: "Which culture do you think you identify the most with?"

R: "Arab culture."

I: "Even living in America?"

R: "Even living in America, yeah."

I: "Do you feel that the way that you identify yourself changes with where you are and the places that you are?"

R: "The way I identify myself is due to the fact that I still feel like an outsider here. Like, I can't, if someone were to get my order wrong, for example, I can't tell them, 'hey, you got my order wrong.' I'd just be like, 'okay, I'm just going to keep it.' I'm not going to argue. I'm not going to fight just because if I say anything, they're going to look at me like a crazy Muslim, or something. So I just, that's kind of like how I've gone through here in America."

I: "Yeah."

R: "But if I were to go to Jordan, I'd see myself as an American just because there's always, I'm always put on the side, like I'm not the same. I wasn't raised the same as them, yeah."

I: "So do you think that you kind of change your actions dependent on where you are, because you don't want people to judge you?"

R: "Yes, like I don't want them to label me."

I: "Okay."

R: "As the crazy Muslim. 'She's the terrorist,' or something."

I: "Umm, are there places where you feel your best and can most successfully express yourself? Or, like your identity? Like, because when you say that you go to Jordan you identify yourself as an American."

R: "Probably around my family and my friends here. Yeah, that's because they know I'm both American, Muslim and Palestinian. So they know, and they kind of lived through the same things I've lived through."

I: "So they kind of understand where you're coming from?"

R: "Yeah, so it's mostly like my Arab friends where I can truly express myself. I can tell them, we can joke around about anything and everything."

I: "There's no judgment?"

R: "Even in our circumstances, there's no judgment. No one is like, 'Oh my God, I can't believe you said that to a guy,' or something, no. There's isn't anything like that."

I: "Umm, what traditions of your religion or culture do you practice? Like, is there any particular food recipes that you make that remind you of your culture?"

R: "I cook all Arabi food ninety-percent of the time."

I: “And where did you learn how to cook it?”

R: “I learned it by myself after I got married. A little bit from my mom and mostly from YouTube. So, if I see something on YouTube, or I don’t remember what she would put on the food, I would call her, ‘mama, did you put this on food?’ She’ll either say ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or ‘do this differently than what they say.’ So I kind of learned on my own and now I think I know good enough Arabi food. Yeah, sometimes I’ll put in a little bit, like I’ll do spaghetti or lasagna–stuff like that.”

I: “Do you follow any food restrictions?”

R: “No pork and no gelatin.”

I: “And do you typically eat only halal meat, or does it not matter?”

R: “Yeah, mostly halal meat. We get our meat from the Arabi store. I don’t get, if I were to get a T-bone steak, I’ll get it either from Sam’s or Woodman’s, but mostly from the Arabi store, like halal.”

I: “And what’s your favorite food?”

R: “My favorite food? Oh shit, I don’t know. I like soups, so.”

I: “Like any kind of soup?”

R: “Yeah. Chocolate is really good.”

I: “Umm, and where do you find the necessary ingredients, for like the Arabic foods that you cook?”

R: “I go to the Arabic store. I bought almost every single spice, because Arabi food needs a lot of spice, so I do that and rice for me to cook Arabi food, I get basmati rice from the Arabi store, so yeah.”

I: “So do you expect your children to learn these recipes in the future?”

R: “Yeah, after they get married.”

I: “In what ways, if any, do you participate in cultural or religious community activities?”

R: “Like, are you talking about activities ISM holds?”

I: “Yeah.”

R: “What ways?”

I: "Yeah, like do you participate in them at all?"

R: "Yeah."

I: "How so?"

R: "I go and I attend them. I don't like to volunteer over there."

I: "How would you describe your religious life? Like, do you attend the mosque on a regular basis?"

R: "I try to go almost every Friday, or at least once a month, like once a Friday a month. So, I'll go there. Umm, yeah, but during school I don't really have time to go over there and when I'm working."

I: "Yeah, and where do you typically pray? Like on a daily basis, or weekly basis?"

R: "At home, or sometimes at work, if I'm at work I'll into, like, the meeting room and pray over there."

I: "And when you're at school do you find it hard to find a place to pray or do you just wait until you come home?"

R: "No, there's a praying area. They have a praying room for us, so it's not hard at all. They have a sajdah and a waed sal saebna, so it's not hard at all."

I: "Who mostly does the cooking in your household?"

R: "Me."

I: "Does your husband help you at all?"

R: "No. I'm just kidding. He helps every couple months he'll do something, or if I'm working he'll clean or something. If he sees me and I'm tired, then he'll do the dishes and then yesterday I was at work, I told him to do vacuum, he did vacuum, and that's about it. Unless I tell him, he doesn't do anything."

I: "I mean, it's better than nothing. Can you describe your kitchen and how does your kitchen feel different than your friend's kitchens, for example? Or like, do you have any particular spices that your friends wouldn't normally have? Or any typical ingredients that they wouldn't use in their cooking?"

R: "My kitchen I feel like is a lot more crowded than anybody I've seen. A couple of my friends came and were like, 'oh, my kitchen's not this crowded.' My husband likes to buy a lot of stuff, so he just, he likes, everything he buys has to be displayed. He likes to remember that he has the

stuff. So if I put it away, he'll forget, so that's why kitchen is a lot more crowded. I have, like, a toaster. I have a microwave. I have, I have those grilled cheese toasters. It's all over there."

I: "And what languages do you speak?"

R: "I speak Arabic and English."

I: "And did you pick up any Spanish when you lived in Puerto Rico?"

R: "I did. I was speaking fluent Spanish and reading, talking and, you know, understanding Spanish fully until I was in 7th grade, then I forgot it all, but now I understand it. I still understand if someone comes in and speaks Spanish. Like, I won't be able to talk to them, but I'll be able to get them what they want or tell the nurse, 'oh, she hurts over here or this is what she's asking for,' so I still understand it, but not so much talk."

I: "What are your connections to your parents or grandparent's homeland?"

R: "What are my connections, like?"

I: "Yeah, like you said..."

R: "Do I go visit?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "I don't go visit. To Palestine? No, we can't. I haven't been able to try yet."

I: "Have you ever been there before?"

R: "No, none of us have. We go to Jordan."

I: "And why can't you go to Palestine?"

R: "Umm, because of my parents. Well, my grandparents migrated from there when, you know, shit blew up then, you know. So, that's main why, because they left and they never came back, so we never came back. My dad only went back out of his 7 brothers, he's the only one that went back and that's because he has American citizenship."

I: "And do you have any other relatives that still live over there, or no?"

R: "My dad's cousins, some of them still do and some of his uncles from his dad's side still do. So, he'll go visit them and his aunts, because they were married—they couldn't leave and my grandpa was one of the few people that left, yeah him and his other friend and they're still best friends in Jordan, but we don't go back to Palestine, we go back to Jordan. We have a fil in Jordan, but I want to go back. I really want to try to go back, but now that I'm married I have to wait for my husband to get citizenship."

I: "Do you think it would be something that you can do in the future?"

R: "I think so, yeah, with an American passport."

I: "Do you read the daily newspaper?"

R: "No."

I: "How do you get your news?"

R: "I get it from Facebook and on my phone. That's how I—and my husband. He likes to watch the news, so I get it from him too."

I: "In what ways, if any have your parents or grandparent's homeland affected you?"

R: "It affected us, because we can't go back to Palestine, like we can't. My mom hasn't tried yet. My grandparents, they can't, you know, they can't. I wasn't able to go just because I was born in Jordan and they still consider me as a..."

I: "Jordanian citizen?"

R: "Jordanian, yeah."

I: "Okay."

R: "So, and they know that I left—that my grandparents left Palestine and it's all over there, so they won't."

I: "And have you ever taken any action for these situations? Like, have you tried to, like, do something to change it?"

R: "No."

I: "And where do you get most of your information about your homeland?"

R: "From, sometimes if something happens, I'll see it on ABC news, on my phone I'll see it, or I'll see it on Jazeera. Mama always has al-Jazeera on. From my husband, he hears a lot of things and his family tells him more, and he'll go search it up to see if it's true. You know, things that happen like that, he'll mostly find out about it, or my parents will find out something happened in Palestine and they'll tell us. Yeah, it's mostly like word of mouth, and on the phone."

I: "Yeah, how would you describe your political participation in the US? Like, do you vote regularly?"

R: "I only voted for Hillary this past election, but before that I really didn't vote, even though I could have voted, I didn't vote."

I: "And how did this past election kind of shape your ideals about America, or about society? Or what do you think about the new presidential election?"

R: "I feel that the fact that, okay people, people said that they didn't vote for him because they said he was racist, but that amount of people that voted for him even though he was racist kind of tells us, like, what, how, what the population here is—how they think and it kind of changed my view. I can't even, I can't, hell no, I would never say at work I voted for Hillary just because I don't know who voted for Trump and a lot of people at my school they voted for Trump—the same class. It kind of changed my views of like, okay, he kept saying all these..."

I: "Racial..."

R: "Yeah, racial stuff against us and you guys still voted for him even though we're your friends. It kind of changed my view of them. I don't really talk to them as much anymore, and yeah. I don't talk about the election at all, just because."

I: "Did you ever get into any arguments with people over the...?"

R: "I did. I did. The first, first, not last year, but the year before, I used to, when Bernie was still running I used to argue why Bernie is a good candidate, how he's different than everybody else and one of my friends—she's really republican and she's like, 'No, he wants free college.' Okay, so what's, okay, what are you saying?—this is a good thing. You're in twenty thousand dollars in student debt already and you're only two years in. What are you saying, that makes no sense, but then I just stopped arguing, just because we stopped talking for a while, because we kept getting on each others nerves. That, I stopped talking about politics, except with my Arab friends—then I would because I know they understand, most of them."

I: "Were you in the United States on September 11th 2001?"

R: "No."

I: "Okay, so now I'd like to switch topics and talk about marriage. So, in your culture how are women typically viewed? Like, what's their role and what's the man's role?"

R: "The man's role..."

I: "Yeah."

R: "...is to...in our culture?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "...is to provide for the family, whereas the women's role is typically to take care of the house, but you kind of..."

I: "Switch the roles?"

R: "Reversed it, yeah. Whereas now, especially in America, both husband and wife have to work to provide for the family, and yeah."

I: "What are some ways that you balance your faith and your American identity? Like, living in America, do you find it hard to practice being Muslim while still being an American?"

R: "It's hard to find when I'm outside, especially when I'm at school some of my classes and to find out what salah times, so it's hard to find times to pray. I feel like it's a hard to remember to make duha—sometimes I find it hard. Sometimes I'll make duha on the way to school, because I know that this is the only time I'll be able to, or that night—that's it and I don't really read Qur'an as much since I left Salam School, which is really bad, but that's the truth."

I: "And what does marriage mean to you?"

R: "Marriage? Can I get a minute?"

I: "Yeah, go ahead."

R: "It kind of means working together, having each other here in this life. Just, especially since Salma doesn't have any family, I'm his only family, so I always, every single time we plan on something I don't really hang out with my friends as much just because when he's off we like to go out. We like to do stuff, because I'm his only family, so he can't really go out and, you know, see his mom or his dad."

I: "And what factors play a role in marriage for you? Like, what are some of the first characteristics that you looked for when you were looking for a husband?"

R: "His personality and also I was looking at whether he knows, like, the traditions, the Arabic traditions. I didn't want someone who was born and raised here, just because they usually digress from the traditions I've seen, like my brother and his friends, and I wanted someone who was born, who at least lived in Jordan or lived in Palestine and came here. That he knows how to, that he has to stand up with his dad when his dad has guests, that he has to provide tea, stuff like that. He has to, in his mind, when is the right time for us to get married, or that he can't date. I wanted someone who knows the traditions. I wanted someone who knows the religion, who prays—that was kind of my thing. I didn't really look at money and then I looked at his personality. Was he nice? Did he look at women? Was he, the first day he was really shy, so he didn't really look at me and I felt that was really cute, so that was when I was like open to talking to him again, and you know."

I: "Yeah, do you think education, income or social class contributed to your decision, or your parent's decision for marriage?"

R: "I felt like if my parents, if my parents made a lot more money and, or we were looking at people who made a lot more money, then I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have married my husband, just because our standards would be, way, like for income, would be way too high and we wouldn't have been able, like my parents wouldn't have agreed to that and, you know, my parents they both, they both are educated and they know how hard living in America is and establishing yourself, so they, so I felt that kind of played a role, whereas some of my mom's friends would be like, 'How did you say yes to Omar?' and my mom was like, 'Well, we didn't, because especially because he wasn't a citizen.' So everybody looked at him like, 'Why? She's a citizen and she goes to school and she works, why would you except him?' but my dad, my mom, my parents were like 'We don't look at that, we looked at what his personality was and what his values were. I think that their situation now, or their life kind of, their life situations made them more lenient toward Omar, more accepting of him."

I: "How did your religious and ethnic upbringing contribute to who you are today? Like, do you think that you learned a lot when you were younger about your religion or your traditions that kind of stayed with you?"

R: "Yeah, I learned a lot about my traditions through my parents and through Salam School. Salam School was a big part of my religion and traditions and going to school with a whole bunch of other Arabs was really the best thing ever, just because that's when we kind of learned about things from Palestine from our teachers, from the students there and my parents would sometimes be shocked, like 'How do you guys know this?' That contributed to what my views are about our religion. It made me see that we're not the only ones here that go through everything."

I: "Would you move because of marriage or relocate for it, or is it something that you wouldn't consider?"

R: "I didn't consider it when we got, when we got engaged. It was kind of, like, one of my things, like, 'Oh, I'm not going to move out of Milwaukee, especially now since I go to school.' I told him, 'No, I'm not moving,' so he had to come. He moved from Virginia to here, because I still go to school. That was kind of a big thing for me."

I: "And do you think if you had finished school at that time you probably would have relocated somewhere else or you would still want him to come here?"

R: "I would still want him to come here, but in the future if he were to get a better job then I won't have a problem with relocating as long as I were to get a job. If I can't get a job, then I would stay here—that's kind of my thing. 90% that I would stay here, 10% that I would maybe go."

I: "And what factors would play a role in your decision to relocate? Like, do you think that type of city or town matters? I mean, I know you said your job would matter."

R: "My job would matter. My family is a big factor in that. I wouldn't move unless my parents moved too, you know. The type of city I don't care as long as my parents are there and my family is there. You know, if I were to have a family in the future I know they would help me. I wouldn't be able to do it on my own."

I: "Can you tell me about the wedding and the ceremonies that you went through that led up to the wedding ceremony?"

R: "So like, all the parties that we did?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "Okay, so we had the engagement party. Do you want me to describe it?"

I: "Yeah, like what typically goes on and who's involved?"

R: "So, at our engagement party is was our Katb el-Kitab too. So it took us, in the beginning he wouldn't hold my hand. He wouldn't look at me without my scarf on, so then we had the Katb el-Kitab and the tulba too for the men that was a really big deal. My dad almost cried and then, so after the tulba we had the Katb el-Kitab. The Katb el-Kitab was very serious. It was a surreal moment. It was like, 'Holy shit, I'm getting married now. This is crazy.'"

I: "Yeah."

R: "And my dad had tears in his eyes. Yeah, it was really, really intense moment. Everybody just sat there silently and nobody said anything until it was over and then my dad gave me a hug and kiss and then me and Omar were getting ready to walk into the hall, you know, where the party was. That was the first time with him touching me and it was kind of weird. It was like, 'Ew, get off of me,' umm yeah, that was the engagement and then we had a bridal shower, which was like normal. It wasn't really a big deal, except my dad wanted to drop me off. He wouldn't let Umma drop me off. I don't know why, but it was, he was, 'I'm the father, I should drop her off.' So he dropped me off and then for the Henna same thing, my dad dropped me off even though Omar was driving there at the same time. My dad wouldn't let him drop me off, yeah, and then the wedding was a big deal just because my whole, my aunts were here, my uncles were here. It kind of brought the whole family together, plus his cousins came from out of state. Some came from New York. Some came from Virginia, from Saint Louis. So they all came to support him and his sister came from Jordan. His parents weren't there, just because they couldn't get a VISA and it was a big deal for us, just because everybody was there."

I: "Yeah."

R: "And we were able to see everybody, party with everybody since it was mixed."

I: "And going back to the Henna ceremony, what typically goes on during the Henna?"

R: "During the Henna, we, well the two biggest events is when he gives me the gold and when, when he does the Henna, yeah—the two biggest things."

I: "And so how many days to you guys typically celebrate? Like, would it be just one day of celebration like for the wedding ceremony or is it multiple?"

R: "For my, for my wedding we did the Henna. Then after the Henna we did, like, a big dinner. Then before the wedding that day we did another massif dinner and then that's when all the ladies came and we had our own party and then the men were invited back and they were just eating and drinking coffee, yeah, that was that, and then there was the wedding. There was four different times where...it was a big gathering."

I: "And which one would you think is the most important for you?"

R: "The wedding."

I: "And why is that?"

R: "Because that's when your whole life changes. That's when you go home with your husband. You don't go home with your dad. It was a big deal."

I: "And how was your marriage ceremony similar to other ones in your culture? Would you think that there typically the same, or are they any different?"

R: "They were typically the same then any other Arab wedding, yeah."

I: "Do you have any pictures that you think will help you remember?"

R: "Yeah, a lot of pictures."

I: "Would you share some of these so that we could use them for educational purposes?"

R: "Yeah, sure."

I: "How open are your parents when it comes to marriage outside the religious and national group?"

R: "They're not really open."

I: "Do you know of anyone that was involved in intermarriage, like, marrying someone from outside their national or religious group?"

R: "Yeah, I do."

I: "And do you find that they may have faced, like, problems, like with intermarriage?"

R: "Yeah, definitely, because everybody kind of questioned them, like, 'Was he really Muslim when you married him or is he still Christian?' Yeah, I even have a cousin who got married to, like, a white guy, a white American and some people to this day believe he's Christian, not Muslim. So just a lot of things people face."

I: "Who among your parents do you think would have the hardest time accepting marriage from outside the religious or national group?"

R: "I don't know. I can't choose. Both my parents would have it, would have a hard time."

I: "Who influenced your decision to get engaged or married to your now husband?"

R: "Like, for my parents?"

I: "Like, anyone. Like, out of your family, your friends."

R: "Nobody influenced me. My parents were actually discouraging me from getting engaged. They were saying that I was too young and I still could have waited for someone else, or like, you never know what's out there. I was kind of like, 'No,' you know, I knew I had a feeling. I trusted him right off the bat, so it was a big deal for him."

I: "Umm, and what are some...hold on. Did the possibility of having children influence your choice of college major or career?"

R: "No, because nursing is a really time consuming, so if I really choose something that influenced my choice of having children I would have chosen something that becoming a teacher just because nursing, I've seen the nurses on our floor—they barely have time for their family. It's really time consuming. It's a lot of hours, really bad hours too. So no, I don't think so."

I: "Is there a major or career that you wouldn't choose because you think it might reduce your chances of marriage opportunities?"

R: "No. I don't know, I'm really, my parents are really open minded. They want me to either become a pharmacist or a doctor, so that never, I don't think education never stops you from, you know, having a marriage life or having children, so no. I think everything's possible."

I: "Would you consider marrying a person that is younger than you? Or, like, what's a good age difference that would be good between the husband and wife?"

R: "I don't know. I might consider someone who was younger than me if they looked older or if they looked my age. I might consider it, but for me I would marry someone who's younger than me, but for my brother, if he were to marry someone who's older than him, I don't know how I would feel about that. Do you see how I have that double standard?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "I don't know the years. Maybe five years is good, but, I mean, but my brother, I'm telling you, me I'd be okay with me marrying or my sister marrying someone younger, but my brother hell no. That girl's going to take charge. No, I wouldn't."

I: "When it comes to marriage who makes most of the decisions in your household? Like, who do you think has the final word, you or your husband?"

R: "I think I like to give my husband the power of saying yes or no, but I know, like I'll give him, I'll give him a reason why I want something a certain way and he'll do it. So, it's kind of like a give and take, yeah."

I: "Let's see. When you did your Katb el-Kitab where was it conducted and who was typically in the room when you guys did it?"

(41:52) R: "So when we did the Katb el-Kitab it was at the same place where we had the engagement party. It was at the hotel, and in the room there was Sheikh Ziad. There was my dad. There was Omar. There was Omar's, like a family member, an older family member who took the place of his dad and then there were two witnesses, so both of them were from my dad's like, one of them was my dad's cousin, one of them was my dad's friend, so yeah."

I: "And did you guys get both religious and civil contracts? Like, one in the American court system and the Islamic?"

R: "Yes."

I: "Where both contracts made on the same day? Or was one made, or completed before the other? Like did you do the Katb el-Kitab before the court house?"

R: "Yeah, we did the Katb el-Kitab before we did the court house, but don't tell anybody, but Sheikh Ziad he didn't let us have the Islamic marriage contract until we got the one from the court house."

I: "Okay."

R: "So, we had to show him proof that we got it. That we were able to legally get married and then he gave us the marriage contract."

I: "So, you weren't officially Islamically married when you did the Katb el-Kitab?"

R: "We were. He did the, he wrote it out. We signed everything, but we weren't able to take it home—the certificate, you know, the marriage certificate. We weren't able to the Islamic one home, yeah, until we showed him the legal one."

I: "Okay, and who usually made these arrangements? Like, was it your father?"

R: "My dad did."

I: "Okay, and what value do you find in each contract? Do you believe that one is more important than the other?"

R: "I believe that they're both equally important, just because for legal documents we'd have to rely on the court house ones and for religious and if anything were to happen between us we'd have to rely on the Islamic one."

I: "If there was ever a problem with your marriage, who do you go to for advice, or does it depend on the problem?"

R: "It depends on the problem. Mostly my mom would try to give me advice if something, like Omar, he thinks he can always complain to my mom about me, so my mom would be like, 'Why do you do this? This is all your fault,' so then my mom kind of tells me, like, what I should do, yeah."

I: "And what's your stance on dating? What do you think about it?"

R: "It depends on what your doing while your dating. So if you're just talking and getting to know each other and just going out the okay, but if you're making out and touching then no. I don't believe that's right."

I: "Do you think that the internet and Facebook and other social media sites are good places for Arab and Muslim-Americans to meet their future spouse?"

R: "Yeah, why not? I've seen people work it out. They've met really successful people online, whereas they wouldn't meet them here in the city, you know?"

I: "Do you also think that communication types, such as cell phones and texting made it easier for males and females to get to know each other?"

R: "Yes, I do."

I: "Do you think community events, weddings are places where people tend to see their potential spouses and proceed from there?"

R: "Sometimes, yes."

I: "How was marriage in America different than your parent's way of marriage? Would you think that they're typically similar, or any major differences?"

R: "My mom kind of told me the major difference between when she got married and when I got married was that my husband's more open to, like, 'Oh, let's go out. Let's go to a two-day trip. Let's go travel.' Like, he's more open to that, whereas my dad wasn't really. He'd be like, 'No, let's save money and let's not forget we need to buy a house,' like he was kind of that. He was always thinking about the future, whereas my husband thinks about the now."

I: “Yeah, yeah, and what do you think of, what’s your stance on it? Do you think about having fun right now, or do you also think about the future?”

R: “I think about the future more than I think about fun now. I’m more the, I’m the one who saves the money in this house, whereas my husband’s the one who spends the money, so I thought it was going to be the other way around, but no I have to tell him, like, ‘No, we need to be on budget, like we need to figure out how much we’re going to spend this month, like how much our bills are going to be, yeah.’”

I: “Okay, okay now the next set of questions are about your life growing up. What aspects of your parent’s homeland or culture did they keep as you were growing up? Like, did they implement any traditional things, like during your childhood that you remember now or that attributed to...?”

R: “They implemented to have family is important. Family comes first. If we were to have, like, any special events first invite family and then anybody extra would be friends. They kind of made sure that we knew Araby. That we knew how to read and write Araby. Yeah, even in the house we weren’t allowed to talk English. We were supposed to talk Araby, so that was a big thing.”

I: “Yeah, and what languages did they speak?”

R: “Araby, mostly.”

I: “And is that what is spoken at home?”

R: “Yeah, but now, no. Now, it’s more English than Araby. When I was younger it was more Araby than English, but now it’s more English more.”

I: “And why do you think that is?”

R: “Probably because my siblings, the two youngest, they go to school and they know more English than Araby, whereas my parents will talk to them in Araby, but then they’ll answer back in English—so I think that’s why.”

I: “So earlier you said that your parents encouraged you to work. Did you ever work for your parents or with them?”

R: “Yes, I still do. I work with my mom.”

I: “And what do you guys do?”

R: “The DJ. We DJ in Milwaukee.”

I: “And how is working with your mom? Would you, like do you typically like working with family members or would you like working with strangers better? I mean, because you worked as a CNA, so which job do you prefer?”

R: “So, what the bad thing is, working for your parents is that you can never get away from them, you know? So, everything single time they see you, like, ‘Oh, did you see this? How about we do this?’ There’s always ideas and sometimes I’m like, ‘Mom, it’s not time for work right now,’ like I want to just, really just chill and I don’t want to think about work and then she’ll like, ‘No,’ and then she’ll get mad and then we’re forced to talk about work and plan things for work. As when, I’m a CAN everything at work I just leave at work. I don’t have to worry about it at home, whereas no for my mom, no—my mom’s the worse boss ever.”

I: “Umm, when did you first start to drive?”

R: “I started to drive at 15. I learned how to drive at 15 and a half, and at 16 I got my driver’s license.”

I: “And how did that change your family’s dynamic at home? Like, were you helpful for your parents?”

R: “Yes, I was. That’s why my mom kind of encouraged me to get my license, just because she was working. My dad was working and we’d have a lot of after school events, so she really needed the help, my help for, like, picking up the kids, dropping them off at sports events, anything like that. So, I did all of the extra stuff, and then my mom would kind of, if I needed, if she needed groceries I would go get it before she would come home.”

I: “Yeah.”

R: “And then she would find everything, like, done.”

I: “And how would you describe your parent’s involvement in your education?”

R: “Oh, my parent’s for my parent’s education is the most important thing. So my dad was willing to give us all his money to go study, just go to school and I see that more with my brother. I always wanted to go to school. I always wanted to get an education, but my brother’s kind of, like, lazy, so I see that more with my dad, my dad, with my brother and my dad is always, ‘Here’s a check, go pay your tuition. Here’s another check, and just go, go learn,’ and yeah. My parents were really, really love education and that’s the biggest thing for them.”

I: “Yeah, in what ways, if any, did your parents influence your choice of career in college?”

R: “My parents, so they always saw me as a nurse. They always wanted me to work in the medical field and I kept that option open until after the first year, and then—the first year of college— and then I was like, ‘Okay, maybe nursing is for me,’ so yeah, your parents’ kind of know you better than you know yourself, so I went into nursing and I loved it and then I started working at the hospital and I loved it even more.”

I: "Umm, were you involved in any religious or cultural organizations on campus?"

R: "I was in SJP for a little bit—at Marquette I was, but then at Cardinal Stritch it's not that big. It really sucks there, so."

I: "Did religion or culture influence your choice of friends?"

R: "Yes, it did."

I: "Umm, did you make a point to have friends from the same culture or religion as yours?"

R: "Mostly, yes, or someone who's not, who's ethnically diverse, like I like to hang out with Hispanics a lot or, you know."

I: "And why do you think that is?"

R: "Because we kind of bond through the same things living here, yeah."

I: "When choosing your marriage partner, what's the importance of religion and culture?"

R: "Umm, he has to be religious. He has to know how to pray and do, actually pray and fast—that was a big thing for me, yeah."

I: "So the next set of questions are about your parents. Who are your parents?"

R: "Like, their names?"

I: "Like, what do they do?"

R: "Oh, so my dad is a taxi driver and my mom, she is a teacher for kids, like K5, K3."

I: "And what's their current status? Are they still working?"

R: "My dad, yes. My mom, she's part-time mostly. She doesn't really work as much anymore."

I: "From where did they immigrate?"

R: "From Jordan."

I: "And when was that?"

R: "That was 20 years ago, 21 years ago. It was 1996."

I: "Okay."

R: "I remember that."

I: "And how did they make a living in the US when they came here?"

R: "Umm, well my dad, my mom didn't work when they first came here and my dad worked at gas stations for Arab guys, yeah."

I: "And what's their level of education?"

R: "My dad finished bachelor's in accounting when he was in Jordan and my mom, did she finish? No, she didn't. She finished here. She got her daycare license and then she did two years at MATC. She got her associate's and something, yeah, so she kind of continued her education here after we all grew up."

I: "And has your dad considered working in his major here?"

R: "No, I don't think so, no. I don't know why."

I: "How do you think they identify themselves?"

R: "Umm, in what way?"

I: "Like, based in their religion, or national identity."

R: "Based on, okay my dad, my dad, he doesn't see himself as like a Jordanian. He sees himself as full American, and he'll sit there and, like, argue and he doesn't care because he's an American citizen now. Like, he doesn't care, and my mom sees herself as, like, an Arab Palestinian-Muslim—my dad, kind of the same thing, but my dad sees himself more as an American."

I: "So you say he doesn't see himself as Jordanian do you think that's because he's truly Palestinian? Like, does he identify with the Palestinian culture or the nationality?"

R: "Mostly, Jordanian culture."

I: "Okay."

R: "With the Palestinian culture, but Jordanian ethnicity."

I: "Okay, do they participate in any cultural or religious activities or organizations?"

R: "My mom, yes. She likes to go to conventions here, like mass or Ismah—stuff like that. She loves to go to that. My dad, not so much."

I: "Do they often mention their homeland?"

R: "Palestine?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "No, just because they, my dad did a couple times, but not, he wasn't raised there and my mom when they left she was 7 years old, so she doesn't remember it at all, so she doesn't bring it up."

I: "Umm, do you remember specific historic events, such as, like, any wars that happened in the middle east or, like, how your parents responded to them?"

R: "The Iraqi, are you talking about, like, the war in Iraq?"

I: "Like, any, or even like anything that happened—the Palestine, I mean, they had to move from there."

R: "Yeah."

I: "Right? So, do you think that greatly affected their lives? Do you think it would have been different?"

R: "That affected their lives, but not, it wasn't such a, they kind of accommodated and they were able to..."

I: "Like, live through it?"

R: "Yeah, they were able to live through it, but to change their lives."

I: "Like, adapted?"

R: "Yeah, so they adapted and it kind of made their, in Jordan they were able to get an education, work and, it didn't—if they weren't able to do that I think it would have affected them a lot more, but the fact that they were able to do that and get a Jordanian citizenship, then it, they kind of just adapted to that."

I: "Yeah."

R: "And especially since they were, it's so many people who got affected by that, that people had to change their lives and they don't see themselves as, 'Oh my god, we lost our house,' you know? They just, and it's not just them, it's more like hundreds of thousands of people that they whenever you, whenever they went to college over there, they knew which ones were Palestinian and which ones were Jordanian—it split. They live together and they were fine."

I: "Umm, did any of your grandparents immigrate to the US?"

R: "Yeah, my grandpa did—my grandpa from my mom's side."

I: "And what are the names of your grandparents that immigrated here?"

R: "Muhammad Darhamed"

I: "Where did they immigrate from?"

R: "From Jordan."

I: "And what kinds of jobs did your grandparents have before immigration?"

R: "Umm, well my grandpa was in the army in Jordan and that's how after awhile he was going to retire from there and then he came here and he, I don't remember him having any other job, honestly, and then when he came here he built businesses in America and that's when he was able to go back home and visit a lot more after he built his businesses here."

I: "And do you know how he paid for his trip fare here?"

R: "From his money. From the government, from the army. It's all I know, sorry."

I: "What was the reason for his immigration?"

R: "For money."

I: "And did he immigrate by himself, or with other family members?"

R: "By himself. Actually, in the, his brother followed him afterwards."

I: "Okay."

R: "But, by himself."

I: "Was he married before he immigrated?"

R: "Yes."

I: "And was it an arranged marriage or do you know how they met?"

R: "I think it was arranged. I think, I'm not sure."

I: "And where did they settle in the US?"

R: "They lived, after awhile, they stayed in Puerto Rico and then they went back to Jordan. They didn't stay here much. Once they got older, they retired in Jordan."

I: "And what kinds of jobs did he have after immigration?"

R: "He was a business owner, so he had three stores open—clothes, and then he died recently so his businesses went to my uncles and then my uncles grew from there. They opened up their own stores, their own hair salon, nail salon and stuff like that."

I: "Do you have any traditional or cultural clothing?"

R: "Yes, a whole bunch."

I: "And where, when and where do you wear them?"

R: "I like to wear them at weddings, any, like the Henna parties—more traditional. I love traditional clothing, so yeah."

I: "And how does it make you feel when you wear them?"

R: "Like a princess."

I: "And what does the traditional cultural clothing mean to you?"

R: "It means, it kind of shows where I'm from. I like the Palestinian cultural clothing more than the Jordanian, so I like to get from al-Daffah, like I like to order stuff from there and have them ship, just because they're more beautiful than anything else and it kind of shows where I'm from."

I: "Does religion play a role in your choice of clothing?"

R: "Yes, it does."

I: "How so?"

R: "I need to wear things that are long-sleeved and longer pants and the shirt always has to be a little bit longer just to cover my bottom, and yeah. So, it kind of does. Whenever I go shopping I can't just get stuff that is see-through and cut and short dresses."

I: "And who influenced you to continue to wear your traditional and cultural clothing?"

R: "Who influenced me?"

I: "Yeah."

R: "Well, my hijab influenced me more than anybody can influence me and then my parents supported me through that. They supported me when I wore my hijab and my choices afterwards."

I: "Did your mother wear the traditional dresses?"

R: "Not as much when I was younger, but when I was older, yes."

I: "And did you pass any down to you?"

R: "No."

I: "Have you purchased any of them on your own?"

R: "Yes, she bought me some, but she didn't pass down anything from hers, no."

I: "Okay, and do the ones that you wear look a lot like the ones she wore?"

R: "Some of them, yes. I guess the style never goes, but the materials that you use is different than, yeah."

I: "And where do you typically get your dresses from?"

R: "I like to go down to Chicago and get some, or my mom will go down to, she'll go to Jordan and whenever she's there I don't buy anything else but traditional clothing and I'll send money with her and she'll get them for me."

I: "Would you pass any down to your children?"

R: "I mean if it was still in style, yes."

I: "Umm, okay, so they next questions about about your beliefs toward disability. Do you think people with disabilities can lead lives as fulfilling as without?"

R: "Yeah."

I: "Umm, do you think there's prejudice toward people with disabilities in your community?"

R: "Yes."

I: "How so?"

R: "Umm, they think that they--anybody with a disability--they'll believe their not able to do as much as people without disability and I don't think that's true. They're able to do. They're able to live their life and work, but just with some accommodations and that's it, whereas I feel like in the Arab culture it's a big thing if you have a disability. They'll see it as something so weird."

I: "Yeah."

R: "And I see how my husband reacts to that, too, and their family, like, freaks out if they find out that a baby is going to have a disability, which I don't think should be a big deal. You just have to live through it."

I: "In your community do you feel like most families who have members who have disabilities or mental illnesses are secretive about it? Like, do you feel like they don't really want to share that with other people, or they try to hide it?"

R: "Not here in America, I don't see that as much, just because I have a cousin who has a disability and they don't try to hide her from anybody. They'll take her places. She knows how to Salam, she knows how to give shay, when people come over how to act, how to, what are the traditional stuff that you have to do. Yeah, I don't think so here, but maybe I feel like yes in Jordan there are people who are like that. There are families who are like that."

I: "Yeah."

R: "Whereas, like, people would be like, 'Oh, she has a child with a disability, but what, we've never seen him before,' so."

I: "And do you think that people are more open about it now than they were before?"

R: "Yes, definitely."

I: "Do you feel like some of the topics are taboo to talk about in most Arab and Muslim families? Like, they don't really want to discuss their child's disability?"

R: "Yeah, because they'll feel like, 'Oh, it's weird.' They'll feel like someone's going to pity them or their not going to be seen."

I: "Is there anything else about your history that you'd like to tell me?"

R: "Like what?"

I: "Like anything that we missed."

R: "No."

I: "Are there any particular services or resources that you think that the Arab and Muslim Women's Resource and Research Institute should provide to meet the needs of community?"

R: "Probably helping with the Syrian refugees now, helping them getting their licenses here. Learning how to read and write, apply for jobs, stuff that they are able to do. I'm pretty sure some of them can get a job at Salam School, but they just don't know the resources that are out there. Providing them with those resources, mostly for the woman who come here, just because the woman who live here, they know what's out there."

I: "Yeah."

R: "But the women who come here, they're kind of, there's closed doors around them. They don't much. They can't—there's a barrier—they can't talk English, so.

I: "Do you think that there's any family or friends that we should interview?"

R: "If you want to interview my mom, go ahead."

I: "And lastly, do you have any letters or old photographs or notes or any kind of documents that you think will help us understand your family history better?"

R: "Umm, maybe, yeah."

I: "If so, can we borrow it, or have a copy of it?"

R: "Yeah."

I: "Okay, thank you for your time and energy."