



Oral History Project Interview

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

Number of Interview: RJ 2.00

Date of Interview: 8/5/2015

Name: "Amani"

Gender: Female

Country of Origin: Palestine

Date of Birth: Unknown

Year of Immigration: Born in U.S.

Abstract: Amani (name changed for confidentiality reasons) identifies herself as a second-generation Muslim American of Palestinian descent. Amani remembers spending most of her childhood with her cousins and seven siblings. She graduated from Marquette University in 2007 with a degree in Clinical Laboratory Science and currently works at a hospital. As a child, Amani knew being Muslim meant there were restrictions on things she could and could not do, and as she became older, she understood the importance of religion in her daily life. Religion is an important part of her daily life, and she hopes to instill this within her daughter as well. Growing up, Amani found that culture sometimes use to override religion, and found that to be a result of being raised by first generation parents. Amani resides in Milwaukee and is married to a Moroccan Muslim and has a daughter.

Key Themes: Muslim, Religion, Culture

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

(Baby in background while the interview is taking place)

I: This interview is taking place August 5th, 2015. I'd like to start the interview by asking some general questions about your background. What is your name, age, and level of education?

R: My name is (name omitted for interviewee confidentiality) I'm 31 years old and I graduated with a bachelor's degree.

I: When and where was it completed?

R: I graduated from Marquette in Clinical Laboratory Science, and I graduated in May of 2007.

I: When you were growing up where did you go to school?

R: For elementary and middle school I went to Cast Street School it's on the east side off of Brady Street, for high school I went to Riverside and then my senior year we moved, and I went to Franklin High School.

I: Tell me about places and buildings where you spent a lot of time during your childhood?

R: During my childhood I spent a lot of time with my uncle's kids and at the masjid like Sunday schools and summer schools umm I spent a lot of time just with my cousins and my siblings.

I: Tell me more about your home, school or some such building that you remember fondly. Like describe the various rooms: who lived there; who shared these spaces, what activities happened here?

R: I remember my house, our house a lot on the east side. I have 7 siblings, most of the time I spent with my sisters and my brothers playing around outside. I remember the school playground, more playing outside a lot, the kids. Other than that, I remember the old masjid and going to Sunday schools and being picked up in a van and being taken to the masjid and playing outside, lunchtime. I don't really remember anything else, it's pretty vague, but I just remember it was like something fun to do and it was like Arabic school, and you got to meet all your other cousins there and I don't really remember how much we learned (interviewer laughs), but I just remembered we always went, and it was before any of the remodel.

I: Tell me how you felt about being Muslim in these different spaces. How did you feel like you expressed your Muslim identity differently in these different places?

R: I think it was hard, but not knowing it was hard I guess when I was younger. So, we went to – we lived on the east side our entire life which is now considered River west area and the only Muslims that were in the school were my siblings. So I just remembered the little things, like I remember always having to like the cafeteria always knowing that we don't eat pork and then always having that little slight difference and then I remember it was fine like in school like I mean cause I didn't wear hijab or anything but I remember them making fun about my nose, they use to think that my nose was big because I did look different, but I went to a school where it was very diverse. You know so we had like I think it was like a third of African Americans, a third Asians, Hispanics and white were the minority. I think in middle school or more actually

like – middle school is when people would sneak and make out and you know that is when I knew this is stuff, I couldn't do it and then I think in high school it was more of why don't you date. Even in middle school too there was kids having babies and having at like age 13, you

know what I mean? So, it was always like we couldn't do these things you know what I mean? And you know at that age you don't really understand why and now I know why; you know what I mean, but it was like the dating, the not eating pork, and not knowing like the extreme differences your always like told, I mean we never hung out with our friends at school. I mean our friends at school were only school friends and we didn't spend time with them at all like after school so I think I only really hung out with until college with my siblings, with my sisters and stuff just because our parents they didn't tru – I mean we did play a lot with our neighbors, but like in terms of going out with our friends after school we didn't, just because it's a different culture, different religion and because they are the first generation they don't trust other people. So, we didn't interact at all with our friends from school, after school.

I: Okay, that's interesting. Did you serve in the U.S. military and, if so, when?

R: No.

I: Are you currently employed, which includes working outside the home? If so, what's your job?

R: I work at a hospital, Columbia St Mary's, I work four days a week and I'm a clinical laboratory scientist, so I do testing on all body fluids and specimens from patients.

I: Are you married?

R: Yes.

I: Was your marriage arranged?

R: No.

I: Do you have any children?

R: Yes.

I: If so, what are their names and ages?

R: Lila and she's 16 months.

I: The next questions are about your culture and how you define yourself. How do you define or identify yourself?

R: I define myself as a Muslim American of Palestinian descent.

I: Which culture or cultures do you most identify with?

R: So just culture not religion?

I: Yeah.

R: My American and Palestinian cultures.

I: Do you feel that the way you identify yourself changes with where you are, the place where you are?

R: I think for sure. So, the last question is?

I: Would you like me to repeat it?

R: Yeah.

I: So, do you feel that the way you identify yourself changes with where you are, the place where you are?

R: Like right now like present?

I: You can answer as you like. It doesn't have to be specifically...

R: I think like in high school like when I was in Riverside it was a very diverse school and it was in the inner city, so I felt like I didn't have to identify myself, everybody was different. And so yeah when I was a student at Marquette – Riverside I never had a problem with anybody at all, it was so diverse there was never an issue of like who you are and just because there was a combination of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and whites were the minority. Yeah, but my senior year we moved to Franklin and I hated it, one it was my senior year and Franklin is a very very white homogenous school, everyone tries to be the same and at Franklin everybody was the same and it was very difficult and that it didn't get better at Marquette. I hated Marquette.

I: Why is that?

R: Riverside, Franklin, or Marquette?

I: Marquette, as you got older?

R: Because again Marquette was the same situation when I was there from 2002 to 2007 it was very white minorities, I mean there was a very small amount of minorities, I think I faced the most discrimination from the teachers that I had, they didn't know anything outside of the university. On numerous occasions I had a professor who would always more than once ask me where I was from and didn't understand that I was from here and it wasn't just her it was other people. I mean I hated my experience at Marquette, I received a very good education, but I told the provost I mean I told people that it's just very very uncomfortable. It was just very white, and it didn't help that the professors were all white and then they had no idea of the outside world and that as like they just assumed because I wore a scarf in college, they just assumed that I wasn't from here,

I: You didn't wear a scarf during college?

R: I did, I put it on my junior year at Riverside.

I: Oh, junior year, so when you were going to Marquette you were already wearing the scarf?

R: I mean I had no problem at Marquette. At Riverside I mean at Franklin I had a problem just because it was the whole issue again of not never seeing someone wearing a hijab at school and never knowing never having a neighbor or not knowing that I can still be American and you know Muslim American it's just stupidity I mean there not very educated even at Marquette my professor in clinical lab who had a PhD in clinical lab and education didn't understand that I can wear hijab and still be from here. I mean they constantly attributed me to like the Arab khalejee people who are like going to, when I'm on like before we go on break, "Oh so you're going to go

home to see your family", like no I'm from Franklin, my parents live in Franklin you know what I mean, so that was like so odd to them.

I: So, they always thought you were that international student?

R: Yes because – I'm sure Marquette is different right now, these are older white people who do not know Muslims and do not know that there is a Muslim community in Milwaukee and they don't and they don't understand you know that there are Muslim Americans going to school there and they don't understand I mean I remember having my bio my physiology teacher like when I was struggling in the class because I had to take anatomy, saying if it was a language

barrier, or people complimenting me that my English was so good and it was just because I wore a scarf.

I: Wow.

R: And I was in a science field, so I don't know I'm sure it would have been different if I did like political science or some liberal arts degree, but overall like I mean I don't look like other people at Marquette I mean we have friends like friends of mine, but there was not that many hijabees friends and other people would say hello to us because they thought we were the other person and we look nothing alike.

I: Wow.

R: Yeah.

I: Can you list some places where you feel you best and most successfully express your identity?

R: I mean I'm fine at work you know. It does take people awhile to break the ice, but after that it's fine. And you are still going to face people who ask like the stupid questions, but it's so much more mild and once they know you for who you are they can see past the hijab, and I can tell, but like in new situations that I guess my experiences are very different than friends on mine because where their –I specifically don't work with the public. I mean I work in a hospital in a laboratory, I have almost zero patient interaction, so that the people that I work with every day they know me and they know who I am and they know my personality, where I'm not facing the public every day and I didn't want to go in a field that I'm facing the public every day because there's a lot of uneducated people for whatever reason or people who are educated, but are racist and I don't have to deal with them on a daily basis. But when I am in situations where I am interacting with the public, you do get that.

I: Are there any traditions of your religion or culture that you practice?

R: Umm.

I: This is a broad question, but you can answer as you like. If there is any specific tradition of religion or culture that you specifically practice yourself.

R: I pray, I fast, we try to follow the Sunnah as best as we can, I try to follow like a modest appearance in terms of like clothing and I mean we grew up in a Muslim family, so we follow all the cultural aspects of the religion too I mean.

I: Is that all?

R: Yeah, I think so.

I: Do you use food recipes' that you learned from your parents or grandparents?

R: Yeah most of the food we cook is Arab food I mean we do cook some American food, but most of it is like at least from what I learned from my mom and from my health conscious standpoint I just like, I'll make Arabic food, but I'll make it more healthy, so I'll make maklouba, but I won't fry anything I'll bake it or I'll use brown rice versus white rice or won't use rice at all. But I'll still make bamia, I'll still make the traditional Palestinian dishes that I grew up with, but I just I take away like the kharouf and I take away the frying because one it is too complicated and it's not healthy. I just think that even though our food has good intentions we tend to fry or overcook the vegetables way too much, from I mean just from my experience.

I: Do you follow any food restrictions, for example halal meat?

R: We don't do all halal meat we do try to do more seafood because we don't have to worry about halal and try to do more like organic food. And to be honest we don't eat a lot of meat.

I: (Laughs) What is your favorite food?

R: Like dish or just food in general?

I: Does not specify, so I would say...

R: I think I like vegetables the most.

I: What kind of food do you or your spouse cook at home? So, you were saying Arabee food, is it just the Arabee food?

R: We cook a lot of Palestinian food and a lot of Moroccan food since my husband is from Morocco.

I: What's it like, finding the necessary ingredients?

R: It's fine I mean Cermak has all the Arabic stuff, I use to before when I lived on the east side, I use to like specifically go to the Arabic stores like maybe go once or twice a month, but now I don't even go to the Arabic stores, just because stuff has begun so widely available, like I buy hummus from Aldi or Pick 'N Save, I mean I don't I don't go to any Arabic stores anymore and a lot of the other stuff is like available at Cermak.

I: Okay, so where do you shop for groceries for this food like besides, like if you need something like specifically?

R: I usually find it at Cermak

I: Okay.

R: I probably haven't been to the Arabic store in a long time. I mean I don't feel like I need to go anymore (interviewer laughs) just because unfortunately the prices are a lot cheaper at Cermak and you find like better expiration dates, and you don't have to deal with like buying stuff without dates at Arabic stores.

I: Do you expect your child or children to learn these recipes? (Laughs)

R: They're going to learn a version of them, yeah, an adopted version of them. I mean I adopted my mom's cooking, but there's like traditional vegetables that I would say that we use that you won't find in any cuisine like bamia or we use a lot of bitinjaan, and so there are things that are or spices in in the you just don't use in like American cooking.

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

R: Hmm (pause). I don't feel like I participate too much after my daughter was born just because one, I use to go – try to go to Friday – to be off on Fridays and go to Friday prayer but to be honest like the imams they don't really relate to Arab Americans or I mean Muslim Americans, they don't at all. So, I don't go anymore I'd rather read stuff online or watch YouTube videos of Muslim American scholars versus people from overseas, so I mean other than going to like Eid salat or yeah I mean I have Arab friends, I have Arab relatives here that I spend time with, I have Muslim friends that are Arab, but in terms of like going to the masjid I don't really go.

I: How would you describe your religious life?

R: I feel like (pause) I'm a moderate.

I: Where do you pray usually?

R: At I pray at home or like I was saying, it's, I have no problem at work I do have an area I can pray when I'm at work umm during the day.

I: Who mostly does the cooking in your household?

R: I feel like it's half and half because me and my husband work, so it's kind of whoever has time and we don't cook every day, we cook like once or twice a week, we are not very picky

I: Can you describe your kitchen? How does your kitchen feel different from your friends' kitchens?

R: Well, I thought when I got married that the kitchen would be mine and that was not true, my husband is a better cook than me and he took over the kitchen basically. He's an amazing cook and he knows how to make a lot of Moroccan food and he's a baker and he makes bread and makes Arabic desserts, and so I mean it was very different because I learned a lot from him because just different techniques that I won't use or that I will, our foods are completely different. A lot of Palestinian cooking is like rice based with like a soup or meat and vegetables with rice and theirs is slow cooked in a tajeen and there is a maraca and there is meat and vegetable, there is no rice, just bread. It's different spices, so I just feel like...I forgot what the question was?

I: No, that's fine! The question was how does your kitchen feel different from your friends' kitchens?

R: Oh yeah, because my friends, because my family, I mean their husbands don't help at all, my Moroccan – I mean my Muslim American or just American friends who are married to Moroccans theirs is the same way like mine is, where the husbands are the ones cooking for azayem and not them, so I think a lot of – our biggest issue is when we would have our azooma, you know I would want to make my Palestinian dishes and he would want to make his Moroccan dishes and we'd both be in the kitchen and there would be way too much food. So we kind of have to try to like limit it because I always want like my family to try all these things that I like that are Moroccan, but then they don't like them because it's just that they are not use to the different flavors. But my husband definitely has a big part of my kitchen or our kitchen together.

I: (Laughs) What language or languages do you speak?

R: In the house English and Arabic.

I: What are your connections with your parents' or grandparents' homeland?

R: I have been there a few times to Falasteen. All my grandparents are deceased, and I only met one grandmother, but because my parents live here and a lot of my relatives live here and my husband's family other than his sister-in-law, my husband's family lives in Morocco and they can't come here so the last two overseas trip were to Morocco and not to Falasteen. And we are going to be going in a few days but my husband would like to go to Falasteen, but to be honest when you're working and you probably have like two and half weeks off you don't really, you can't really go to two different places, it's just too difficult.

I: Like when did you last visit Falasteen?

R: 2010, I think.

I: Do you have relatives there that you are in contact with?

R: In Falasteen?

I: Yeah.

R: No. I have a few cousins like a cousin in Kuwait were friends on Facebook and stuff, but you know we comment on each other's pictures, but in terms of like cousins that I'm in contact with, nobody.

I: Have you encouraged anyone there to visit or come live here?

R: In Falasteen? No.

I: Do you read the daily newspaper?

R: I try to listen to NPR sometimes like their news briefs when I am driving to work, I try to watch the local news and the world news every day.

I: In what ways, if any, have political events in your parents' or grandparents' homeland affected you?

R: Well, I think it affects you all the time with everything that goes on in Falasteen. You can't escape it, I mean we faced in college, we faced it at work, sometimes it's easier not to even talk about politics, just because every time something happens whether it's in Falasteen or happens in the United States. I mean because at any way related to being a Muslim or an Arab, you are like the only representation, I mean I'm happy at where I work, you know there are two pathologists that are Arab, one is Muslim, and one is not Muslim. I have another, there's another two Arabs who work in the same lab as I do but then again you then have to explain that you guys are not all the same.

I: Have you ever taken action on any of these situations? If yes, what are some examples?

R: Nothing major, if people ask me questions at work, I answer them. (Pause). I mean I've only had one issue when I was working at Mequon at Columbia St. Mary's at Ozaukee, I didn't know at the time that this lady was Jewish and like a strong Jew, an orthodox Jew and she was asking me like where I was from and I was telling her, "You know I'm from Palestine" and she was

like, “Oh I don’t know where that is,” I’m like Palestine you know I was like telling her all the names of neighboring Arab countries and stuff and she still didn’t get it. So, then I was like, “We live in the West Bank and we live in a” – and she was like, “Oh the West Bank” because she just didn’t want to recognize Palestine, she only wanted to recognize Israel. I mean from then I was like okay, so I knew where she stood and I mean she’s very smart, so it’s not that she didn’t know where Falasteen was, she didn’t recognize it. But I was never like where I felt like – I mean I guess I speak my mind, so I never if somebody says something I don’t, like either I don’t, like I am, it’s when people don’t know you, they do these things, it’s not when they know you. I had a another lady where I work now, this was when I first started about four years ago I just felt like, I don’t want to say she didn’t trust me, but she didn’t know how smart I was and she was – and I’m smarter than her, like I have a higher degree than her and I just remember her always kind of watching over my shoulder, like she was very self-conscious of her own work. And I use to remember one time out of the blue, she asked me if I was a U.S. citizen and I think I was caught off guard so much that I just responded yes, but I just kept my distance from her for like the last couple of years and she has apologized because she wanted to know why if there was anything between us and I didn’t tell her why, but now she’s fine, but it’s just like in the beginning you know a lot of times it’s kind of like you get two kinds of people, people who ask you the questions and people that are scared to ask you the questions or people they don’t even know how to be nice without being – because they’re just don’t know anything about Islam or about Arab that they don’t even know how to ask something and it comes off as being rude because they’re not educated.

I: Where do you get your information about Palestine of your homeland?

R: I guess I go to a variety of sources because I can’t trust just one. I would read Al Jazeera in English a lot, I would watch like world news, I’d look at that, I watch the local news, just because everybody has a different twist on things, and you can’t just trust one source.

I: How would you describe your political participation in the U.S.? Do you regularly vote?

R: I vote, yeah.

I: What elections?

R: I voted in the presidential election and the smaller elections like things for governor or mayor. I’ve made calls like during the last intifada and like to our representatives, that’s about it.

I: When it comes to candidates who are from your own culture or religion, in what ways, if any, does that affect your voting behavior?

R: I've still hadn't had anybody, or I don't know anybody who is Muslim or Arab voting, who is running locally or within Wisconsin. I would hope that it would be representing Islam or representing like Arab people if they did run and I would definitely vote for them, if that were the case.

I: Were you in the United States during the Gulf War?

R: Yeah, but I was too small to even, to even really know about what was going on.

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

R: I was in school.

I: How did you feel at the time of 9/11 and the days/months that followed?

R: I mean I didn't like in school I didn't have no issues because people were too stupid to even know anything about, I did have my English teacher come up to me and tell me if I felt safe and if I would have any trouble to come talk to her, but I didn't have any problems, what was unfortunate is that like at that time like before that, before September 11, like me and my sister we were coaching soccer for the Muslim girls – for the Muslim Arab girls in Milwaukee through Sanabel Al Quds, but so we use to just volunteer and we would teach them a little basic soccer for like little girls you know and they stopped it because they were afraid for their kids, so I mean they, it was really stupid because we use to do it on the south side and it was near an airport, I mean it's not like it's next to an airport, but it was just like this open field and after September 11th they decided not to do it any longer.

I: How old were these girls that you were coaching?

R: Six, seven, eight.

I: Oh, wow they were young. Since 9/11, in what ways, if any, has your life or interactions with others changed? How have your interactions with non-Arab/Muslim friends, neighbors, teachers, coworkers, been?

R: (Pause) I think in general everything has been fine, but there is always going to be those instances of people saying things that are stupid. I remember when they killed is when they

killed, I think it's when they killed Osama bin Laden, I remember so I was working with women, white women mostly, I worked with almost all white women ages 50-65, so I mean those people they weren't exposed to, they don't have Arab friends, they didn't go to school with Arabs, I don't know what they learned in history class when they took it – so they're, these are the most uneducated people about Arab or about Muslimeen they – anybody would come across them, but we don't talk about politics, they talk about their dogs, they talk about the weather, but I do remember the day that Osama bin Laden was killed, I remember one of the ladies came up to me and she said and she wanted my reaction she said, "were you were you guys celebrating when they killed him?" And I just didn't even say anything, just because I'm not going to celebrate the killing of anybody, but she was testing me because she wanted to see if I am like for it or against it. I work with a lady, she's not on my shift, she worked in Saudia for maybe like 15 years as an American, she was working there and stuff in a lab and so she has a very warped perspective of Islam and like I was talking to my husband about this and he was like, "Well, she was in an Arab country where they don't treat women well." You know what I mean, so even like little things that she says, she thinks I am oppressed, you know what I mean, so it's like completely untrue, but you know she's basing it on her experience and she's married to an Arab, she's married to an Arab Christian, but she has such a bad experience there, where that's where she is coming from, but (pause) I think people are more, so most of the people that I interact with are people I see all the time, so I have no problem. After my daughter was born, maybe a couple of months ago I started taking her to baby groups, with all the other moms, so I did notice that people are, they're not as friendly, I mean not everybody, so it's just like one or two, and then you might find out on Facebook that they are also Jewish, or they are just stand offish because they don't know. But I feel like those instances are so small that it's not going to take into my experience as a mom, but I do notice that I was hesitant to move to Brookfield, but I'm not going to limit to my daughter or limit to myself to live in an area with all white people because they're all white, I'm going to put her in the best schools, I'm going to work where I can find a good job, regardless, because I'm hoping that in a couple years, Muslims and Arab will be educated and put kids in the same schools and she won't have a problem when she is in school.

I: Okay, thank you for sharing your experiences. I'd like to switch topics to marriage. What are some common cultural understandings of Muslim women and men?

R: By who? By the family or by who?

I: In general.

R: (Pause) I think of like my sister's group of people, like so my sister's in her 40s, so I think of like my sister of her, like people her age when they got married, they got married very young because they parents didn't know how to raise their kids in the United States, so to deal with problems that their kids had facing issues in America, they got their kids very young like right

out of high school or before high school and then they got married usually to people from overseas and they had kids and were stay at home moms. The Arabs and Muslims around my age it's completely different; one a lot of them are still not married, the few that are married do work and they do have kids, but it's like one so it's changed because I think the – it depends on how long the parents have been in the United States and have adapted to American culture, it depends on where their kids will be, I mean it's unfortunate, but there's still Arabs who have only been here for long getting their kids married out of high school and I mean I don't think that is right. Where my parents and my uncles get – I mean they are getting married a couple years after college, after their independent, and it all depends upon parent's fears of Americans and American culture and adulterating their kids and stuff and without realize that it's you can take the good out of both cultures, about you can take the good out of the American culture, you can take the good out of the Arab culture, and just leave all the bad and focus on the religion.

I: So, my next question is culture and religion are intertwined. What are some ways in which you balance faith and the American identity?

R: I think it was very confusing growing up because you have to understand to and I mean a lot of this, I'm sure when you're going to be interviewing other people like Falasteeniya have very different points of view than a Syrian American or a Lebanese American. Falasteeniya, because of the occupation my parents left Falasteen. They didn't finish high school, so they are not educated, they are not educated in Islam, they are not educated in just a field, I mean they didn't finish schooling, so they came here uneducated because of a political situation in Falasteen, so that is going to affect how they raise us because kids raising kids is not a good idea. I just remember growing up, I remember everything was always haram that we couldn't do anything we wanted to do and as we got older, we realized that then haram was just this word that they used but haram was used to like to prevent us from doing things that were just culturally taboo and not religiously taboo. And I think I feel like only I feel like I only started knowing this stuff in high school because I started – in high school I do go to Sunday schools and summer schools, they weren't at the ISM south, they were on at the Da'wa center which is on the North side and the classes were geared towards Muslim Americans and we discussed current issues, so and then I felt like when I started seeking out knowledge of Islam on my own, I realized that there was so much we could do it's just our parents didn't let us do it because of culture.

I: How did your religious or ethnic upbringing contribute to who you are today?

R: I think Islam is more of a way of life, so everything that we do is somehow related to the Sunnah and we don't even know the difference, but other people like people at work would notice it that I'm different and I think that if you try to be a good Muslim, then you will stand out.

I: What does marriage mean to you?

R: I think marriage is a very big thing because in our culture I mean marriage is the next step because you don't really leave your parent's house until you're married and then marriage is half of your deen and I feel like being married has helped me so much because my husband is a lot more educated in Islam than I am and I mean he grew up in the Muslim world, he was very religious in his country and even though he is more fluent than me in another language, just by practicing differently than us he has a different approach to religion than what I grew up with.

I: What factors play a role in marriage? What are the first characteristics you look for in a husband? So, is it like the homeland, nationality, village, or Arab and Muslim?

R: Well when I was looking for someone to marry, I mean I wanted somebody who first of all had a fear in God because I know if they had a fear in God, then because if they don't know anything about Islam they're not going to realize their obligations to their wife and they're not going to respect you because they don't even know what the consequences are of like cheating or backbiting, but only if they are a good Muslim will they know these things and they will treat you right. So I wanted somebody who feared God, because if you don't fear God then you don't fear the punishment of anything you do to your spouse, or to your parents, and then I did want somebody who was a good friend, I wanted somebody who spoke Arabic because being second generation even though I understand Arabic very good and I speak Arabic, it's still harder to pass on Arabic because I'm not very good I'm probably elementary level for reading and writing, so I wanted somebody who had a strong background in Arabic. And I did not want somebody that's from the same culture. I feel like the Palestinian culture is probably not the best culture and it has nothing to do with like Palestinians, but you have to realize Falasteen is very small and most of the Falasteeniya come from these small villages and the smaller the village, the smaller the mindset and you don't get people that are that educated and they tend to intermarry and so it just gets getting smaller and smaller, where, and those habits, those culture habits are not good and they are not important to Islam. There are different gender roles of what their daughters should do versus their men, um and I wanted to specifically marry a person who wasn't Palestinian and my husband comes from a completely different culture, almost opposite where he comes from a family where there's four boys and two girls and the boys did the cooking and the boys did the cleaning and they had a completely different idea and once you marry someone from another culture, who's also Muslim you realize that all this stuff has nothing to do with Islam and just has to do with your small Palestinian culture from your small village it has nothing to do with and I mean it's not like I just learned that, I mean when I was in college I learned that stuff because I met Syrian American Muslims and Lebanese American Muslims and Kuwaiti American Muslims and I mean they didn't carry any of those same things that the small group of people from Falasteen, from Atara, from the same family. You know what I mean? So, I think a lot of times you have to you have to know where the origins are and

those things and I mean your parents do the best that they can with their education level, they do the best that they can even though know you realize that it's not what you want for your kids.

I: Would education, income, social class contribute to your paren – to your decision or your parent's decision?

R: Well of course (laughs), I mean like decision for what?

I: To get married. So, would you look into the education, income, social class of your spo – future spouse's background? So, when you were getting married...

R: Oh, I just wanted someone who was educated and I wanted somebody who was using his education, I didn't want to marry a storeowner with a PhD (laughs), I wanted somebody who was educated and who was accustomed to American culture, my husband comes from the same type of economic status as me, money was never the issue, it was just about finding somebody who was good.

I: Would you move because of marriage or relocate because of marriage? Or is this something you will not consider?

R: We've thought about that, but um I'm very concerned about education and healthcare and those are just two things that are not good in Morocco and I think Falasteen is really not an option because me and my husband are U.S. citizens, we can't live in Falasteen, and I do feel that we do more here than there, just because we have more opportunities here.

I: Tell me about your wedding and the ceremonies you went through. How many days did you celebrate? Would these be the same ceremonies your siblings would go through?

R: So, unfortunately, so marrying someone who is not from your Palestinian culture, you know where it's normal in Morocco for you not to have a wedding, for you just to do your kitaab and you're married. Unfortunately, the less educated you are and the more you are concerned with appearance and publicity and big – you know? That's Falasteeniya and they want a big wedding, and they want to show off and they want to invite all these people. So, we ended up having a wedding, there was just my family – my husband's family wasn't here they were in Morocco, and it was a nice wedding, I mean I'm not going to regret having a wedding, but I just feel like the wedding was just for my parents.

I: Are there any marriage ceremonies and rituals important to you?

R: We had a henna, and we just had the wedding reception.

I: Is there anything you would have changed?

R: I think I would have put my foot down, not having the wedding. I mean my husband was a student and is still a student and it's not common in their culture to have weddings, they don't do any of the things that Palestinians do, they don't do the gold, they don't do the big wedding. My

husband is bur bur, but he's still an Arab because he speaks Arabic and that's the definition in Islam, but it's a different culture, burbur culture is different than Arab culture and he does always

talk about the Palestinian culture because for him it's culture shock. I didn't know what the question was! (Laughs)

I: So, I will just go on to the next one because it's intertwined. Marriage ceremonies vary from culture to culture as you said, so how did that impact you choosing which ceremony to have? So, like saying in Morocco, it's not something to have the wedding ceremony, so how did that impact the decision?

R: Well, my husband agreed to have a ceremony because he was just pleasing my father, we had a wedding that I felt like was too big, but it was a separate wedding, because of the dancing and of the music and taking off of the hijab and stuff. In Morocco, it's not every, in Morocco it's a huge country, it's like bigger than Texas, so you know from his family they don't do the big wedding, they don't do music, they don't do that kind of stuff. You can even find more extravagant weddings in Morocco, but that's not his family, so it's based on the family and my parents are conservative and they don't like the mixing of dancing and yeah, which is why we had a separate wedding.

I: Okay, so do you think – do you have pictures that you think will help you remember? And if so, would you share some of these with us so we can use for educational purposes?

R: Sure! The only regret I have I guess is that like I wore my scarf for part of the wedding and then I took it off for the part that was just women and I think I just would have never taken it off. I think that Palestinian culture is so warped of what beauty is and that beauty is somebody who has a revealing wedding dress and full make up and her hair done, where as they don't – like I, for me this is what I grew up thinking this is a bride, where now I see more people keeping on the hijab during the whole wedding and not doing any type of separation, I wish I would of done that though throughout the whole wedding you know? It's just that I think that the concept of beauty is changing among people, and I think it's for the better of what beauty is.

I: How open were your parents when it came to marriage outside the national group?

R: Not very at all.

I: Why?

R: I had my oldest sister married somebody from our village and somebody that was from the family, my second sister married somebody from Falasteen, but from Gaza and that was a big

deal, because you have to understand that, people don't understand, I was trying to explain to somebody before because in Falasteen you can't get from point A to point B, you can't get to Gaza, and like my mom believes that everyone is going to go back to their area and Gaza is some place you can't reach, so I mean like for her, somebody from Gaza is very different than somebody from the dif'fa, and you know back in the day when my mom and dad were neighbors, but you marry somebody close to you because how are you going to come visit them? Would you be able to visit your kids if they are not close, so you can't marry somebody from the

Bireh, if you live in Atara, so it's this idea of somebody who is very close, and they think that they can literally just pick one from the family. So, you know that was a little rough for my sister, she still got married and everything and then my third sister married somebody from Jordan and that was a big thing because they are not Falasteeniya and they are Jordanian and Jordanian are different and that was very hard. And then I married a Moroccan, who turns out to not even be Arab and who has a different dialect, that the Arabs, the Falasteeniya, believe that is not Arabic, except it's more Moroccan Arabic and it is closer to fusha than Palestinian Arabic. So I think that it was very hard for my mom because it's not the same way, you don't go through the same history checks that you would if you married a Falasteeni, where you go and ask family to check up on that family, where my husband was Moroccan and my parents couldn't understand his parents, so it's not like they could talk to them or they couldn't do reference checks like they do and that's where I don't believe that's important, but it was very hard just because it's a completely different culture and you Falasteeniya are pretty secluded in Falasteen, they don't know about other Arab. I mean you only learn about other Arab here, but somebody who is living in Palestine does not know a Moroccan.

I: Would it be a problem if someone from outside your ethnic or religious group, someone with less education or a lower social status, asked for your daughter when she is older?

R: My daughter?

I: Ehm.

R: What's the question again?

I: So, like if someone from outside the ethnic or religious group, or someone with less education or a lower social status, would it be a problem for you?

R: I think that for me it's important education, it's important religion and I think that we have to give her some freedom to marry somebody who she wants, but it's still going to be somebody that we get an input in. I would feel like that they would have to be compatible and a good

Muslim, that comes in so many different shades these days, and it's not always somebody who comes from your background.

I: Who among your parents (mother or father) would have – had – so you were saying like it was completely different for you to marry a Moroccan, so who had a hard time dealing with that, was it your mother or father or was it both?

R: It was only my mother. My father had no problem with it because he was Muslim and he was Arab, my mom was very concerned that he wasn't Palestinian. It's just because they didn't really, it's because they don't know, we don't know any Moroccans at that time, so the only myths she had about Moroccans were Moroccans who do sihr or – so she didn't have, she didn't know any Moroccans and she didn't know any Moroccans and I think that the fact there's stereotypes of Moroccans in the Arab world and my dad had no problem because my dad knew

that it was friends of ours had known him and the fact that he was a good Muslim, but after my mom met him and after he sat down and talked to her and stuff, I mean everything was fine, it was just because, I mean my mom likes him now the best it was just the initial because you don't know, and it was very opposite because I met my husband's family, they didn't know any Palestinians and they only had good things to say about Palestinians, so yeah Morocco is a lot more diverse and Morocco is more common to marry outside of your nationality, where with Palestinians it's still something new.

I: So, in addition to that, what obstacles did you face, other than that, before marriage?

R: It was just the fact that they didn't, the whole thing is with this Palestinian culture from a village I mean they need to talk to people, and they weren't able to do that and the only people that they can talk to were people that had known them in Milwaukee, they weren't able to talk to his parents. I mean it's a different dialect and his parents don't speak fusha, so if you are not if yours is not accustomed to dirajawee, which is the Moroccan dialect, you're not going to understand them, so they were not able to understand them on the phone and they are too old to travel, and that is hard because Arabs like to get references, even though that the – you need to know people that know the person right now how their living or their friends finding out, oh it's this obsession with reputation, like the Falasteeniya have were they feel that you are judged by almost like what your uncles did in Falasteen and that doesn't necessarily represent you who you are now. So it's it's the obsession with reputation and reputation is very very strong in village like situations where these people are coming from, where they are not educated and they feel like your reputation is your life, where Morocco is a lot bigger, my husband is from a bigger city, it's huge, nothing like our biggest city is Ramallah, so that idea of like reputation and needing to get references it's just not, it's just not common I mean it's not as – I mean his parents didn't do a reference check on us, I mean me (laughs).

I: So, who influenced your decision to get married to his specific person, your husband?

R: I mean I met him through friends, and we had no intention of getting married to each other whatsoever, we didn't know each other's backgrounds, we didn't know each other's like statuses like what, you know, it was just like it was mainly just through our friendship that developed into something more through some colleagues of his and through mutual friends on mine. And I based my decision on first person meeting him and I had known his friends and I knew he was a good person, and I knew that he was mature, he was religious, he was kind he didn't lie, I mean and I think everything stood back from him having a very good understanding of deen. And then, that's really the only thing because it doesn't matter if they don't have money, I mean if they had a good understanding of religion then everything will be okay.

I: So, you were saying in addition to the, was it the language barrier? What are some cultural barriers that you have faced or someone you know faced because of his or her decision to marry from outside his or her the ethnic group?

R: I think it's very hard in our community unfortunately because of the way that Palestinians raise their kids, there's these very big differences in gender roles in what their daughters and sons can do and as a result that leads a lot of where you don't find educated men in Milwaukee, where there's many educated Palestinian women in Milwaukee, so as a result the women have to seek spouses elsewhere, not within Falasteeniya because they're just not available, so I do have a friend who married a Pakistani and that was very hard for her family and it just takes longer, it will take maybe a year whereas things, the parents would have been on board right away. And then after the fact I mean they realize that this is a good person and they and that it was a good decision, but they were just so resistant because it's different. I have a relative who married a convert, and that was very hard and know the parents love him, so it just it just takes time and they have and through divorce do they realize that they are not the matchmakers for their kids, three of my siblings have gotten a divorce. Yeah, but the siblings who completely found their own spouse and it was –and I mean it was none of the – who completely on their own just through friendship or school met their own people we are the only ones who are married. But because you have to, there's a lot of stake when you marry somebody, although we are Muslim and although we are Palestinian we were born in the United States and our parents sent us to public schools and whether they realized it or not, we have another culture that they don't know about and they can't suppress it and you can't marry somebody from a completely different culture and expect to get along with each other, so I think it is a big deal. Marriage is a huge deal and I don't think it's wise and I don't think it's safe just to marry somebody blindly just because

they share the same faith and they share the same language, if they were from another country, you really have to have an understanding of something and a lot of the times if religion is not there, a lot of times most Falasteeniya and they are not religious people, they're liberal they are political people. So, a lot of times when um religion is not there, those rules that that revolve around marriage are not there, then you do get divorced.

I: So, what is your major and why did you choose it?

R: I majored in Clinical Lab Science and I chose it because I had an internship at a place, The Blood Center of Wisconsin, where people were clinical lab scientists because I had no idea what it was, I did want to do something in science because I like science, I didn't want to be dealing with the public, which is why I didn't want to be a nurse, I like my major, I don't like the situation of healthcare but I like what I do.

I: So, did the possibility of having children influence your decision to pursue this major?

R: I don't think kids were a factor, I mean if I really wanted to have the ideal job, I probably would've become a teacher (laughs), but I didn't think about that before when I was working on my career and stuff, I am going to try to work part time because I feel like it's very hard to work full time and have a baby.

I: Is there a major or career that you would not choose because it might reduce your marriage opportunities? Like some cultures if they see that the woman's a lawyer, they feel like it's if a woman is a lawyer, then like she's powerful or she will be the dominant one in the marriage.

R: No, I never thought that.

I: I've heard it from people.

R: No, I mean...

I: No?

R: No, I just chose my major truly on what I wanted to do, I did try to go back and do like a master's program after I graduated, it was like I started it before I got married and continued after, but I wasn't able to finish because it was just too hard with working full time and going to school and being married.

I: So, when you were getting married did you consider marrying a person older than you?

R: Yeah because of maturity.

I: So, if yes, so how many years do you think should be the ideal, should be between you and your partner, ideally?

R: I think less than 10.

I: Less than 10?

R: But more than 4.

I: Would you consider marrying a mate who was born and raised outside the United States? If so, why?

R: Well, I did marry somebody who was born and raised outside the United States. I just, I don't think it's that common to find a good Muslim man who was born and raised in the United States, and it all depends on how the parents raised him, there are but there's not a lot.

I: When it comes to marriage who would play the major role in the decision making? Who would have the final word: mother, father, or both?

R: I mean I ultimately have the final decision because I mean even if my parents refused I would still would of done it, I mean my mom even though she was resisting the idea, she could never say, "No, you cannot marry this person," it was more she doesn't like the idea and this is even before she met him, so I think a lot of times you need to cut down all of those divisions and just meet the person and base it on a person versus a nationality.

I: What do you think about dating?

R: Well I know that its haram, I think that when you are to get married and you meet somebody who like and who you want to get to know them and your intention is to marry them, I think that every family goes about it differently and a lot it has to do with culture and not religion, but I mean I have met my husband maybe like twice with like a group setting and maybe after those times we did feel like there was some chemistry between us and then we after that we like became friends on Facebook and we talked online a little bit and then when we felt like oh we really want to do this, then we got my parents involved.

I: Do you think the Internet and Facebook/social media has made it easier for Arab and Muslim Americans to meet their future mates?

R: Oh of course! Because it takes away that, I mean you definitely have a bigger pool to choose from and I feel like it's more okay to talk to somebody in an online setting or become friends with them online, it's less awkward to end meeting them.

I: Do you think communication types such as cell phones, texting, and Skype made it easier for males and females to get to know each other before making the decision to marry?

R: I believe so. I mean I think it does not replace in person because you don't know, even in person maybe or online may be very awkward, just not as social and friendly and you can't, I mean I mean I was lucky enough that my husband lived in Milwaukee, so I got to meet him and got to see how he was in a public situation, in a public environment, where a lot of times if your just solely meeting somebody online and basing that on whether you are going to marry them or not, that's not good I still believe you need to meet somebody in person.

I: Do you think community events, centers, weddings are places where people tend to see future mates and proceed from there?

R: I think it is, but I don't think it's right. I think it's truly based on looks and that's not going to make a happy marriage and um it's just very stupid to fall for. I think that they need to have more things than that, you are should actually talk to people and you are not just marrying somebody based on how they look.

I: What things made marriage in America different than your parent's way of marriage?

R: Well I think we got to talk more about, about things before we got married and we were, my parents didn't and when you are that young and getting married, that's not a decision you make on your own, I honestly felt like in school, when we were out of college we were, until you are out and making your own money or have some type of independence can you make an educated guess on whether somebody's a mate for you, but before that you're just trying to escape your parents or you're so dependent on others that you're just going to be dependent on your husband. Only when you're independent, do I feel like your decision is more free.

I: Would you think in a family of more than one daughter, marriage restrictions and processes would differ from the oldest daughter to the youngest daughter?

R: Greatly. I mean just with my family, every family because you know the parents came here so long ago and they haven't adapted to American culture and they only learn through trial and error with their kids and every child breaks their parents a little bit more to become more open, so then like with the youngest child, they probably have the most freedom in the decision to marry whom they want.

I: Now let's discuss parenting. In what ways, if any, do you think boys should be raised different from girls?

R: (Pause).

I: It would be a hard question since you don't have boys.

R: Well, I think that it's a very important question, in Islam men and women are not created equally. Physically they are not equal and not treated equal, but that does not equate to somebody cleaning and somebody not cleaning because it has nothing to do with Islam, it has completely to do with culture, I think that I will treat my daughter the same way I would treat my son in terms of like what they can and cannot do, if something – the thing is in Islam it's not like, your son will go out and not let your daughter because that's truly culture. I think that whatever Islam restricts for a child or an adult, I mean I think that you would enforce those regardless of cultural norms and I think it's easier when you come from – when you don't share the same culture and you just share the same religion.

I: What are the major issue that concern you when raising your children?

R: I just want them to be strong Muslims in the United States and be very confident and be able to combat questions that they might have, to be able to hold their head up high and not be ashamed or not know and I think that growing up, my experience was very different because we weren't able to go to our parents with these issues that we had growing up in school or you know when people would say things, they didn't have the right tools or resources or language was a barrier to explain to us the things because one they don't know the religion, I mean they were not formally educated like we were, like I wasn't formally educated I was just through Sunday schools and summer schools and (Leaves room to bring a bottle for her daughter). I forgot what the question was.

I: That's fine. So, it was... I think you answered it, so what are the major issues that concern you when raising your children?

R: Oh yeah! I just felt like all of all the issues that we had growing up, whether it's because we're Muslim, I could never talk to my parents and tell them because they just didn't understand, I mean even today my husband can understand my parents more than I can, just because they don't understand us and we don't understand them because of culture and I think my parents forget that we're that we think this way because were educated here and they can't suppress us of this American idea that we have, and they are not bad ideas you know what I mean? And it's just

different and yeah, we were never able to have an understanding with my parents because of you know it's just you come from a culture that you don't discuss dictatorship.

I: Are these the same issues that mainly concern your husband as well?

R: In what sense? What do you mean?

I: Like in raising your child?

R: No, not at all. I mean my husband is... he has a PhD, it all has to do with education, it has to do with education and the environment that you grew up in.

I: The next questions are about your life growing up. What aspects of your parents' homeland culture did you keep as you were growing up?

R: They kept the food, and they kept the culture of like the gender roles.

I: What languages did they speak?

R: They only speak to us in Arabic, but because we're 8 kids, so as soon as my oldest sister started school and started speaking English, then we all spoke English, so we've always spoke to them in English, and they would reply to us in Arabic. But my husband, I speak to him in Arabic because I want to retain the Arabic, he speaks to my daughter in the Moroccan dialect, but he doesn't speak to me in Moroccan dialect.

I: Did your parents encourage you to work (in their stores or elsewhere) or did they discourage you from working?

R: Oh, we were forced to work in their stores (both laugh). And they encouraged us to get a college degree, so that we can get a real job and health insurance and stuff.

I: When did you first start to drive?

R: I mean I got my driver's license when I was 18, when I started to drive like regularly, my last year of college just because my older sister, who is a year and half older than me, she's the one who drove, I couldn't – they wouldn't let us both drive one car and they wouldn't put both of us on the insurance, so it wasn't a matter of like gender, age it was a matter of insurance and money and stuff.

I: How did your parents feel about your driving? Were they encouraging or discouraging?

R: Well, they knew it was a necessity because they couldn't because they couldn't drive us around. But I think they, it was my mom I felt like she just felt like it was like the more educated, the more educated you are the more freedom you have, which is not good (both laugh).

I: How would you describe your parent's involvement in your education (e.g., helping with homework, being part of parent-teacher organizations, helping with after school activities)?

R: Nothing. And it's because of it's because of you know they weren't educated, so they ended up, they didn't understand. I mean I never got help with my homework, I never got help with college applications, I mean I never got any involvement from them and it's not because they refused, it's because they don't know. My mom didn't like that I spent so much time at school

when I was doing my master's program, I did it for about a year, she didn't understand why I needed to go back to for school, like I already had a degree, what do I need to do for school more? My dad, I don't think he really ever had an opinion about it, I just think that my mom comes from culture, where the more you question, the more educated you are the more qawiya you are and it's not something good, instead of something that should be sought after, but it they do the best that they can with the limited resources that they that they were raised with. But you know my mom's father was a teacher, but that just goes back to depending on the situation in Falasteen, influences what kind of education you had. I mean my parents are more educated than my husband's parents and a Morocco doesn't have a war right now and his siblings don't like – my parents are more educated than my husband's parents.

I: In what ways, if any, did your parents influence your choice of a career or major in college?

R: Nothing. I chose my own school, I picked my major, I participated in organizations against their will. I mean I just did what I want because unfortunately if I would have listened to my parents I wouldn't be where I am today.

I: So, in school or college, were you involved in religious or culture organizations?

R: I was involved in both.

I: In what ways, if any, did religion or culture influence your choice of friends?

R: Well, I think if you go to a university and majority of people are white, I mean you tend to find people of likeness. And I joined the Arab organization, I joined the Muslim organization, and I met a lot of minorities and the first Arab friends I had were in college, you know my friends were only my sisters.

I: The next questions are about your parents. Who are your parents? That's a very broad question, but you can answer however you'd like.

R: I mean, they're Palestinians. They immigrated here about 45 years ago, they're from a very small village, they came here with no money and not knowing English they immigrated to Milwaukee because somebody else from the village was here that was related, and they worked. My dad worked in a factory for a little bit and when him and his brother got enough money, they

opened their own store, but that was like sure I know that they had a couple factory jobs and they worked in a restaurant before him, and his brother opened a grocery store on the south side, and I think that they never had any formal schooling here. My mom maybe she - I don't know how she learned English, but she did. She got married when she was 16, my grandma was she learned the city buses, she learned to speak English, she was definitely a working mom, I don't really remember her around when I was growing up, she was always helping my dad and now they're in Falasteen, well they're visiting.

I: What's their current status? Still working, retired?

R: They're retired.

I: From where did they immigrate and about when did they immigrate?

R: So, about 45 years ago from Atara, it's a small village near Beir Zeit, in the West Bank. They've been retired for about maybe 3 or 4 years.

I: What is their level of education?

R: My mom I think did a year of high school and my dad - I don't know, so he came here when he was 21. I don't know if he finished high school, but...

I: How do you think they defined themselves?

R: They just defined themselves as Palestinians.

I: Did they used to mention their homeland when you were younger? If so, in what ways?

R: All the time, I mean to be honest I was even confused growing up. I mean I was like - I feel like when people ask me where I'm from I never told people I'm from - I always told people I was from Palestine, and then once I was doing the summer program and he asked me where I was from and I said from Palestine and he said, but where were you born? And I said I was born here, and he was like then you're not Palestinian - you know? Because this whole time we're thinking, when we go back home, we're going back home, even though we were born here, so I think we've never had a distinction that just because were born here, we're not Palestinian and I think other people do.

I: Do you remember specific historic events (such as the Great Depression, major wars in the Middle, etc.) and how your parents responded to them?

R: Well, I remember the intifadas, I just remember when I was really young, when the intifadas happened, I remember always going to political events like at the university with my parents and I just remember nasheed and I remember like protests and I remember in our house like my siblings – they had wrote.... I mean I remember the politics of every intifada when I was young and that's before internet and before satellite. I just remember watching a lot of TV and watching a lot of news. My sisters were in Falasteen during the 2nd intifada I remember, I remember them telling us stuff about what they experienced there. I did go to Falasteen when I was like a baby, but I think the earliest I can remember is when I was 12, that's the most I can remember when I was 12 because I was old enough to remember the situation.

I: Okay. The next questions are about your grandparents. Did any of your grandparents immigrate to the U.S.?

R: So, the only grandparent that I remember is my father's mom and she did visit the United States a couple times and we visited her in Falasteen.

I: What are the name/s of your grandparents who immigrated to the U.S.?

R: Well, she just visited she didn't stay. Her name was Aamna.

I: Next, I'd like to switch topics and discuss cultural clothing. Do you have any traditional or cultural clothing?

R: I have a lot and every time I go to Morocco, or Falasteen I always buy stuff, just because we can't get it here and I like to wear traditional stuff like for occasions here.

I: How do you feel when you wear them?

R: I mean I feel really proud I try – my husband is in Jordan, and I wanted him to buy me a real thobe, but then they are like more than 500 bucks to get something that's real and stitched and has been made, so I don't think I got a real one, but eventually I do want to get a real one from Falasteen. I wish I'd like to learn how to tatreez and I think it's beautiful.

I: Does religion play a role?

R: In clothing? Well, a lot of the cultural clothing is already emsater and its already conservative because most people are Muslim, so it's just easier to wear those things.

I: Who influenced you to continue to wear the traditional or cultural clothing?

R: I just think that we were proud of it, which is why we wear it – nobody told us to wear it and ironically people who are from Jordan from Falasteen, they are not as proud as we are and I think it's because they think it's something more backwards or I mean they don't, I mean I remember convincing my husband to wear traditional clothes just to Eid Salat and he didn't feel comfortable because he didn't want people to look at him, so it's different from when you are born and raised here, you realize you have all those freedoms to do what you want and dress the way you want, where somebody from overseas they try to hide that because they're afraid.

I: Did your mother wear the traditional dresses?

R: No, not in public.

I: Have you purchased any on your own?

R: A lot.

I: Where did you get your dresses from?

R: I get them every time I go on trips and stuff to Jordan or Falasteen.

I: Would you pass them to your children?

R: Well, we bought her some, my husband did buy her some, but if they would fit her yeah (both laugh).

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

R: Umm...

I: I think you covered a lot of it.

R: Yeah, my husband he calls me a hybrid. (Both laugh).

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

R: I don't know exactly what Enaya's organization like what research they are doing, I know with the last one that they had an exhibit, but I don't really know. I think in general our

community doesn't do a good job of having things available to people like us who are Muslim Americans, I think it's very lacking, I don't think they're doing a good job educating our generation, I don't feel it's fair that the khutbas are done by people who aren't born here, they're not providing a transition for somebody to take over, who was born and raised here and who can relate to people who are here and the topics that they discuss are not relevant, they don't they never talk about Muslim Americans working, things that need to be discussed like work environments, they don't even – the people that are they've never worked in with the public here, so they don't know the kind of issues Muslim Americans are facing, they don't address those in their khutbas, they have dialects that are very strong and their accents are very strong, they don't address us at all, I mean that's very unfortunate. I mean the whole Shura council doesn't represent us, I mean I just don't feel connected at all, it's sad because other communities are more fortunate to have Muslim Americans who are educated and who can give the khutbas, who have worked in the public, who know how to talk about issues that were facing and are better at educating us about Islam and dealing with issues that we are facing currently, instead of abstract things that have nothing to do with our daily lives.

I: Do you have any other family or friends you think we should interview?

R: This is about marriage?

I: Just the interview in general.

R: I can recommend other people. Is it people that are married or does it have to be people that are still married?

I: No, not still married. (Laughs)

R: I mean I can give you names.

I: Lastly, do you have any letters, old photographs, notes, or any kind of documents (awards, certificates, diplomas) that you think will help us understand your family history? If so, can we borrow it or have a copy of it? You don't have to decide now.

R: Yeah, I'll think about it.

I: Okay! Thank you for your time and energy and for sharing your experiences with me.