



Oral History Project Interview

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

Number of Interview: SMG 1.00

Date of Interview: 11/2/2012

Gender: Female

Name: Naziha Asad

Date of Birth: March 10th, 1952

Country of Origin: Palestine

Year of Immigration: September 1968

Abstract: Mrs. Naziha Asad is a first-generation immigrant from Palestine. She immigrated when she was 14 years old and she focuses a lot on the differences between “back home” and the “old ways” and the U.S and the “younger generation”, especially how this has impacted raising her six children. Mrs. Asad defines herself as an Arab- American. She recently started wearing the scarf every day in the U.S, after she felt shame walking around in Palestine without it. When she wears cultural clothing, mostly at weddings, she feels beautiful, elegant, and as if she “just came from that country”. She wears it to preserve the traditions which she doesn't want to die out.

Key Themes: Immigration, cultural differences, religion, cultural clothing, marriage

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

I: So, my name is Sarah Marie Gresser and I'm a researcher with the Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute and this is an interview on November 2nd, 2012, with Mrs. Naziha Asad. I'm going to start the interview by asking you some general questions about your background.

R: No problem.

I: Alright. So, where is your homeland?

R: It's in Palestine.

I: Okay, and the city, specific village?

R: The city, sure, the city I would call it El-Bireh. A-l or E-l B-i-r-e-h, it doesn't matter.

I: Okay, and the town? Is that the name of the town?

R: That's the name of the town, and the state is Palestine.

I: Okay.

R: And slash, you could put, they call it West Bank, now, because of the Israeli-situation. Oh everybody's-

I: Yeah. Is this where you were born?

R: Yes.

I: When were you born, what year?

R: March 10, 1952.

I: So, tell me about the places and buildings of your town? What do you remember from your childhood?

R: Sure, I came here in 1968, and I went back recently which was few months ago and there's a complete difference between then and now. A lot of people used to have those old houses, there's no water in there, no heat, no everything you do is local, you do it local on your own, gather some wood and stuff like that. But now it's changed because, it's really very well developed, they have everything you could ask for, there is nothing missing at all, you go in supermarkets, you go in groceries, corner stores, everything, it's always there. They have malls which we didn't have that before. Shopping area, there's a full, maybe 10 blocks radius of just-just walking shopping. It's a bazaar-like a bazaar kind of shopping. It's very nice, very elegant. It's got everything you could ask for, there's nothing missing like they say from the needle to the match. There's nothing missing, so. But when I lived really, before I came we only had one room maybe bigger than this kitchen a little bit and that was going to be my living room, my dining

room my kitchen, my almost bathroom, and it's bedrooms, but then everybody started immigrating from that area a lot more than before, and more now I 'spose, and they change it again for having a little extra money that they used to send and spend here, some of it, and now they're started building it. I've seen like changes in, you might be seeing, no, there is that, they are finishing that now it's a difference of top tall towers, high rise buildings, apartments, condominiums, villas, whatever, it's really getting to be very well developed before, right now,

better than the old days, but I still like the old fashioned stuff too, it's just taking a bath in a tub, you know, an outside tub or, you know, not just a bucket water, hot water you heat it still in the old days, again on a wood fire grill or anything like that the thing is when you notice between now and then, you can tell the difference. But there are still some people actually living that way too. There is no local, you have to go pick up the water from someplace else and bring it and then heat it and then there's no running water in the house. But I would say that it's, more...its less than 50% that's living like that, and the rest are, the rest are still doing very well.

I: So, you prefer the old way?

R: I like both and I like to you go to some villages now too, that, you visit some older friends, you go to their village, some of them still they have the same thing and there is outside bathrooms there's things like that, but I like to just, because you can't always find everything running in the U.S. there's some areas there is no electricity, some areas I'm not saying all, so they still using the local kerosene lamps or stuff like that. But as I said, I rather be comfortable with both. That way, cuz I, I took my kids, when I take my kids or grandchildren went with us this year, they wouldn't have lived like that way, no way they would. If the water's not hot, actually they heat the water from the solar system they wait until like noon or something until the water's hot. They would not go out, they'd stay in their pajamas until (chuckles) you try to tell them, "Let me heat the water" and "Oh no, we have to get it out of the shower." So, the water scares a little bit sometimes because it comes in, almost like once a week. So, everybody has tanks on the top of their buildings to fill it with water, to, for the usage of during that week, until they fill it before they finish it. Some people are building wells with the new buildings, under the house. And they fill it in the winter from rainwater. And then they pump it out electronically to the top of the building, 'cuz the water is piped to the house, but it's not the way we have it here. The heater is on the top of the house, so you have to send the water over there. But as I said, I like both. I don't mind. I can live both ways (chuckles).

I: So, what do you like about the old way?

R: I like the old ways. I tell you what I like about the old ways. The washing was by hand, it really comes out better than when you wash in these washers (chuckles). The dishes, you know

they're still by hands, most of them, most places anyway. And people are better those days too, it was more...

I: How so?

R: You know what? Before you used to see, just like here now, my neighbor maybe I will see her 6, every 6 months, 5 months, 4 months, or more summer than in the winter. Over there because

you used to walk down the streets in the old days and, you know everybody in the city, and you can stop and talk to everybody about everything you wanna talk. But right now, you see, more stranger people coming from a different city, immigrated to our city. Cuz it's supposed to be almost like the capital of that area because it's very modern right now. So, in the old days, think it's a lot better because the people were more friendly, and there are no gossip columns (chuckles) in the old days. You'll see the women, when they used to make a living on sewing, embroideries and stuff. So, they used to sit like in the front of the house, on a porch, or something like that. And there'll be 20 of them sitting in the front of the house and just talking and sewing and you don't see than no more. The old-fashioned bakeries, the old-fashioned ovens, the old fashioned everything, as I said 50% of it, or even, yeah, I would say 50% is not there. But I like both. I really do. But sometimes I really do go back to some of the old houses and visit the old ladies and some of them they're living, even the smell of that house, it's just, you know it's the old days. They don't bake like they used to (chuckles). But I enjoy both sides, I like to be on either side. But I can live with both sides to, so that doesn't bother me at all. Not at all.

I: So, what did your parents, what was your, what did your dad do? What was...

R: My father, God rest his soul, he has a little small coffee shop for the men only, no women (chuckles), now there is different restaurants and stuff like that. My mom used to farm, and my father and she used to do embroideries, and she used to grow like tomatoes, okras, cucumbers, all whatever people, black eyed peas. I remember those things, we all survived on that, and we were living better than what we were living now on thousands of dollars, it was more healthier, and you work hard, and you earn your money, it wasn't that much, but it was enough just to keep everybody going. With my family's size, my mom, my dad, and I only have two sisters and a brother. So that would make us a family of 5, but it was really that's what she did mostly: embroideries, farming. And my dad used to actually he worked three jobs, small coffeehouse that he used to shift with my other uncle, and the second one, in the old days, they used to collect those cement bags, with the paper on the outside, actually some people used to come from Pakistan to pick it up from what we used to collect like a full house. And they used to come with a truck and pick it up. And they make bag-paper bags outta 'em. But they used to take 'em to

Pakistan, Afghanistan, they used to drive trucks between counties, these days, those days. And then he worked as a night guard, actually with a civil night guard. In the city with the police department.

I: Okay.

R: So that, those, as I said, 3 jobs and my mom 2 jobs- 5 jobs and it was fine (laughs).

I: So, did your mom, the crops that she grew, were they mostly just for your family, or?

R: No, we were selling them, we were selling them.

I: Same thing with the embroidery?

R: Yes, she was not-- I mean people bring her, I'll show you later the cultural dresses that they make.

I: That'd be great.

R: She used to do that for them, and you know, she gets paid for it, and there was a deadline just like anything else, and there is this wedding, and there's this, and there's that, so she had to finish it on a certain time. So, she used to kina just between the two jobs, she had. But she, God rest her soul too, she did a good job you know, as a mom of the old days. You'll try to do the same thing, I hope? That's the thing.

I: So, when did you leave Palestine?

R: It was in September of 1968, honey. After the war, 1967.

I: And did you come to America right away?

R: I came with my father, cuz he didn't know how to read and write in those days, and the American consulate they would not give him a visa unless somebody knew how to write and read, cuz, the signature on the papers. So, he brought me with him, and I was only 14 at that time. And we came directly to Milwaukee, because my uncle is the one who made the papers, and the immigration papers that is, and we came over here, and he was over here, so we all stayed. There is a whole clan here of family, of the last name Jaber, which was my maiden name. So, we all kinda, got to here around that time. Everybody left almost after the war, cuz there was... in every country I think when there's a war, there is always less jobs, and less you know things like that. So, everybody almost immigrated around that time.

I: So, what were the main reasons for immigrating to America?

R: Actually we were looking for opportunities, jobs, education, everybody thought this is the promised land at that time. And I remember those days people we used to come, and they stay for 20 years sometimes without going home. Because they did collect enough to buy plane ticket, but they used to send their families some spending money, they never leave without that. But now, it's different. Now everybody has, the jobs are better, the income is better, so a lot of people go every year. Almost and they want to go back and so they will see the home and 75%

of them they'll take their children, they'll take their grandchildren, so that they'll know where they came from. Which is very nice for everybody to go where they came from, no matter what.

I: Were you excited to come to America? What were your...

R: At that age, I really used- actually I loved the English language from the beginning and they only taught us that, at 5th grade, and I was in 9th grade- so I had it for 4 years. And that was my very favorite subject, so when I got an opportunity, yes, I was. I have to admit, I was very very 'cuz you hear from some other, at that time, that there's opportunities. But in those days, again the women did not have too many, even over here from our culture. Because if there is a job in New York, my father would not allow me to go. If there is a school in Detroit, he wouldn't, not even in Madison. He'd say, "Okay you gonna sleep outside of the house," they don't like that. But today we're a little bit more flexible, as long as within boundaries as they say. Yes, I was very excited to come and I did good too [chuckles].

I: Did any of your other siblings come? Or was it just...

R: It was me first because I was the oldest and then my brother came after, there's 7 years between me and him, so he came after me. And my other 2 sisters, not until they got married. To whoever got married to, they had a way of coming here and they came with their husbands. But otherwise, I was the only one that came single (chuckles). Yes, I was the only one.

I: So, you said, your brother was 7 years younger than you?

R: Yes, but he came, and the [?] and he came to work because he was just 18 or so. So, he didn't go to school like I did, but he started working right away and helping his father out. And that's another cultural thing a lot of, a lot of our kids would really help their parents out no matter what. I mean, I would put that on 85%-90% that they know. Because we helped our parents, and the parents help the grandparents, you know, and it went back to generations, so it's something that they put in our heads that you always have to take care of your elderly, and which, again, everybody consider that a lot, really, they do. They do, most people do.

I: So, when you first came to America, what was your experience?

R: Right away I went to school because I was in 9th grade, and I went to Bayview High School and I graduated out of Bayview, and as I said, the subject of English was my main and very, very likeable subject to me. So actually, it took me maybe about 5, I would say half a- half a year, and I blended in and kept going. And just remember that everything was in English too, the math, the geography. 'Cuz we didn't have all that, we only had English as a second language. But I kept it

pretty good, and I came out of Bayview, and I went to actually I like business after that, so I went to Bryant and Stratton, for 2 years, and...

I: What year did you go?

R: '72, '73- I graduated in '72 and in '74. Yeah, '74, yeah 2 years it was an associate degree.

I: Was that your highest level of education?

R: For that, yes, cuz I got married! (chuckles)

I: So yes, when did you get married?

R: We got married in April of '72.

I: Okay, was your marriage arranged?

R: We it was actually I wouldn't call it arranged, but it was, again it's not, you can't date, you can't go out with a man. So, I was at my cousin's engagement. And I remember it was a cold day that day, so I went, and she lived around the airport, and it was her engagement, so my husband, at that time he came for his cousin's engagement. Because the groom was his cousin, and the bride was my cousin. So, he came, with that side of the family, with the man's side of the family. And then he saw me, I think, that day and since then, we got (laughs). He called my dad on the phone, he didn't tell me about it, so he had to call my dad and tell him, "I'm interested in so and so..." And my father asked me and I was only about maybe 19, yeah maybe 19-20, around that time. And dad, when he called dad, actually I answered the phone and he called, and I said, I said, "Who's this?", he said, "This is so and so", he said, "Lemme talk with your father" and he asked, like they say, for the hand at that time. And he told him, "Let me ask her, and her mom", because my mom wasn't here at that time, she was overseas. And then, he called my mom and she said, "Well it's a good family", they always look for the root of the family too, that's very important. And as I said, small city, so everybody knew who he is. And it went on from there and we got married like in April, it was in June, and April of the next year, yeah, we got married actually before they got married, that one that he came to their engagement, yes.

I: Where did you get married?

R: In Milwaukee, no, actually he was in Detroit, he came from Detroit that's why. And we went, I went to Detroit, I had an uncle there, and we got married in Detroit.

I: Did your mom come?

R: No actually only his father, and my father was here, and we had family, my uncles, their kids, my uncle's wives, and it was more of a family orientated wedding, but it was a full wedding.

I: Yeah, were you disappointed your mom couldn't come?

R: Oh yes, I was but she had no papers at that time to come, it takes... it's not like today sometimes you go for the consulate and ask for the visa, or a just for a visitor's visa, it takes so long, there was no way waiting for something like that.

I: And what's your husband's name?

R: Its spelled: L.U.G.M.A.N, Lugman

I: Asad.

R: Yes.

I: Okay, and do you have any children?

R: Yes, I have 6!

I: Oh!

R: (Laughs) We have four boys and two girls.

I: Would you mind writing down?

R: No, not at all.

Name	Male/Female	Age	Location	Highest Level of Education	Number of Children
Sara	Female	35	Milwaukee, WI	B.A at Marquette in History and Psychology	2 (1 boy, 1 girl)

Wisam	Male	34	Milwaukee, WI	Marine for 4 years- then went to IT Technical College. Left to work as co-owner of night club with Samer	
Samer	Male	30	Milwaukee, WI	B.A in accounting: works with Wisam as co-owner of night club	
Amani	Female	24	Milwaukee, WI	Education at Alverno	
Asad	Male	23-twin of Amjad	Boston	B.A at UW-Madison: currently at Harvard for Ph.D in Sociology	
Amjad	Male	23-twin of Asad	San Francisco	B.A- UW- Madison: Employed at Google	

R: (As she filled out information about children, Naziha tells a story about Sara.) Sara as I said, she went to Marquette, she got married after she finished her four years of college, she took a double major in history and psychology, but she chose psychology as a major, and after got married, on her wedding, on her engagement day, she got called from Marquette, and picked up a scholarship for \$80,000 at that time.

I: Woah!

R: In psychology, but guess what? She decided to get married and she moved to New York for a while. And when the professor called her, she was kinda, she shut the phone back. And then he called back and said, “Sara what’s wrong? I’m trying to give you the good news.” And she just, she didn’t know, she said, “I don’t know if I made the...I don’t know what to do now. I gotta get married or go do...”, cuz Marquette scholarship would not transfer to New York, so she gotta stay here, but she wouldn’t.

I: Yeah, so she chose to?

R: She chose to get married, yeah. Yes, and give it to the next person. (Interview continues after finishing filling out information about children).

R: (Referring to the twins, Asad and Amjad). They’re very good boys. I had ‘em like when I was 37 and people thought that there would be something wrong with ‘em, but they came out to be the smartest one of them all. They’re all smart, but they came smart too, so. They are all good, actually we, you know what? This is why, why the education is here because when I was growing up I didn’t have the opportunity, or the money, or the freedom to go anywhere that I wanted, like I wanted to be a translator with TWAM airline, at those days, and it was in New

York, so my father wouldn't even allow me to go to training for 6 months. So that, because I lost, I lost so many opportunities and their dad too, because he used to go to college and then he stopped because he wanted to work and then he got married and all that. So, whatever we couldn't have, we tried to support them with that, and education is my number 1. And then I

have a daughter-in-law too, she finished master in T.A.C.S. Accounting, so everybody came out to be just fine, thank God for that.

I: So, were you really disappointed when your dad wouldn't let you?

R: Yes, I was, and I still never forgot it, never (laughs). No, I never, I actually wanted to go to Alverno too, I couldn't afford it at that time, and that's why, I think, I sent my daughter to Alverno, the one who's a teacher, she went to Alverno. I tried to push em into what I wanted to be. Like Sara woulda been a good doctor, but she said, "Mom, that's not me". So, I tried to put some kind of jobs, but no everybody went where they wanna be (chuckles). I even wanted a hairstylist, but they wouldn't do it! But no, their father and myself, we kept going and we tried our best so that they wouldn't even have loans at the rest of the school year. Because we wanted them to worry about just the education, not the money, so we said we're not gonna retire until the 2 boys who went to UM-Madison graduate, and we did retire after that. Because we said, "Now you're on your own, you do what you wanna do." And we still will be happy to support them too, if they needed any kind of support, but as I said, Asad got plenty of scholarships, not even just that. He was so good in school that he got plenty of em. And the other one was good too, but he didn't want to go, he said, "I wanna wait and make sure exactly what I want, I don't want to read books for 8 years and not knowing exactly what I want. So, I am going to make sure to be waiting and seeing what I want," and then he wants to go back.

I: Well, I mean he works for google so it sounds like he's succeeding.

R: Yeah, but I dunno how he jumped from political science to computers, because that area is a computer, over there, but he's enjoying it so far. It's been two years, he picked up the job right after graduation actually. Yes, so they're all, we wanted, as I said, my, education to me no matter who it is, a female or a male, that's number 1 and I think they all were very good.

I: So, after you got your associates degree, where did you end up working in Milwaukee?

R: I worked in Milwaukee because in those days it was like a secretarial job the typewriters were those big ones, the old-fashioned ones, and I got to a point where I got used to the electronic ones too, and then down the line, we actually opened our own business and that helped, with me, to help my husband. Because of the, it was a grocery store and then you order, like just Pick 'N Save, you order some stuffs, so you have to scan it, you have to put it on the shelf, so it helped a

lot with that. But I worked with my diploma for about a year maybe? And I worked with those days there were yellow pages, you call, and you ask for the number, it was more than now, because of the computers now everybody gets the numbers of a company, or real faster than when today.

I: Oh, like the operator?

R: Yes, yeah like just helping out with the numbers to, mostly business numbers. Then I worked as a (keeper?) operator because in the old days they used to have the phone bills on a card that have wholes on it and that's how the computer read it; how much is your bill. It's not like those paper bill, it was a card, that if you put it in there it registers the numbers and everything. So that was nice of those days, I mean, today they're more advanced and now I'm keeping up with that at least, going a little bit on the computer here and there. But yes, it did help me down the line, I would say very much so. And school is running too at that time, they still have Bryant Stratton downtown and different places. Yeah, it's a good school, it was very nice.

I: So, did you, how long did you stay in jobs?

R: In those jobs? After we opened our own business it was in '79 and I had Wisam, Sam was born in '78, '79, and then we started, first I had to take care of the kids, because it was, I had Asad and Amjad later in life and Amani was a year before them, it's like they were triplets, and it took me a while before I can go out and be on my own to work, until they, everybody went to school at least 5, 5-6 years after they were born. So, I would say, I really went into the job world, maybe in '95. After I got married, I stopped, and then I had the kids and I stopped, so I worked with my husband, and my kids at that time too.

I: So, I'm gonna back-track a little to when you first came-

R: No problem.

I: To Milwaukee. So, why specifically did you come to Milwaukee?

R: To Milwaukee? Just because my uncle was here and then after we came and my hus- my father got a job at the (Jaeger?) bakery, right downtown, on vilet there. And that was a big company those days, everybody was going, you could find a lot of Palestinians in there too, there was like maybe 100 workers from our city. And everybody just started knowing everybody and they gave him the job. And after that, we got used to it, and I really didn't wanna leave, it's a very nice city. I lived here for 24 years actually. Then I was with my father I lived on 1st and Lincoln and my uncle used to live by the airport, and we usually didn't have cars in those days. Everybody was going using public transportation, either a taxi or a bus. The cars were not that

much in, as much as today. The kids now when they're 14 they wanna a car at that time, at this time. But not the old days, no, not everybody had a car, honey. We used to go to school with buses and taxi cabs.

I: So, when did you learn how to drive?

R: Actually, I learned it at Bayview when I was in high school. And I took my license around '71 or so. Yes, yes.

I: Did you--were you the first in your family then, to learn how to drive?

R: Yes, yes, my dad never did. My dad never did, I was the first one to get a license, yes. And I was happy with that. Didn't have a car but I had a license (chuckles).

I: (Laughs).

R: But that made me very proud of myself.

I: So, when you first came to the U.S., when you were 14, what were some of the obstacles that you faced, right away when you first came?

R: It was a completely, the first thing it was different culture then us, first of all I wasn't used to school with boys and girls together. That was the first, very very big obstacle. And I used to go inside the classroom and, the boys will wanna talk, and those days, it's just I was so shy that I wouldn't say anything. I might ask for some help, nothing more than that. No basketball games, no homecoming, no this, no that. I never did go to anything like that. Any parties at school, anything like that. Because of the mixture and I was kinda scared away from that.

I: Why were you scared?

R: Because we never, for us, right now there is some schools overseas that's mixed, but they still have that original, of the boys alone, and girls alone, they have even, little part distance between them and they used to let the girls get out before the boys, or the boys before, so they wouldn't meet on the street and have problems. Well, I'm sure everybody, teenagers are teenagers, and I'm not saying nobody talks to anybody, but you try not to because, they think it's bad. And we tried to even teach our daughters here this way too, if we could. But you can't, you tried to keep em as far away from problems as you can, but you can't stop anybody from talking to anybody, male to female or anything like that. But that was really the main obstacle. It was very hard to get used to.

I: Did you, were you able to meet any girlfriends?

R: Well, I had some of my own city friends, who came from there, but we did, and I met some nice teachers and uh they used to help me out a lot and the principle even helped me out, but I never got, in a relationship with the boys at all, no, never, no, no, no.

I: So how, how did you deal with your shyness at your-

R: Actually, I used to go, I just deal with it, with my own homework and stick to that, and just go home right after school and go exactly the same time as the school opens. And I never got into the interaction, unless somebody that knew, maybe to speak my language. Maybe I'll say hi, no more, no less. So, that's all it was, yes.

I: So, when you talked about your children, what are your different views about raising children?

R: Well, it's so hard to raise the kids in this country, maybe even girls more than boys, because with us sometimes, we don't like to have bad boys either, they have to be both good. But if my boy went out, I wouldn't be as worried as much, as if the girl went out. Maybe I'll be calling her every hour or 20 minutes or whatever. Usually, they'll tell you where they are going, but you still have to keep tracking. And this one I always have problem with the girls when they are living in the same house as the boys. I might allow the boy to go to the cinema but not the girl. Or maybe stay out late the boys, but not the girls. So, we always have that interaction and cultural fighting over that, "Why can he go but I can't?" But that's the way it is, we never changed it. But raising them, I think with the education they were doing so good in schools, I never worried about them. Especially the twins, and the other one went to the marine when he was only 17, the other young man he was on his own too. Especially the boys, the twin boys, they had more opportunity than their younger/older brothers because their older brothers supported them too, because they started working and making some money. But the older ones we only had so much to give, even up to now they say, "Oh, you gave that one more than this one! You gave that..." I said, "You know what, we give you what we had, but now you guys have it, the older ones, and you're giving the younger generation, so." They're living, they might gotta better chance, but the education never changed, it's the same, you wann go to school, yes we'll support you with that.

I: So, were you really concerned about your girls?

R: Yes, very much so, and I'm still I am. But the one that's a teacher, she's still single, but she has her own car, so goes to school in the morning. Let's say she's about, look being a teacher I understand that you don't just the bell rings and you leave, there is certain things, and you go to the store and the classroom. You might see the kids after school, so maybe after 4:30 or 5:00 your heart start, you know, pumping. And say, "You gotta call and", you make it sound like you're checking on them, but you have to do it in a way that, you just not asking them, how, why

are they late or what are you doing, or just to kinda, be a step ahead of them, that's about it. So just know what's going on.

I: Why are you concerned?

R: Well...

I: Why so more than your boys?

R: Why so more than my- oh okay, well, I'll tell you the honest way too, when our girls get married, if she's not a virgin they're not going to take her. It'll be a shame to the family, it'll be a disgrace, and as I said, it's a small town, maybe here you can get lost but not over there. If the news travels, forget it. You can't walk in the street with your head high, and you try to keep that from every generation down the line. Because if she's not a virgin they will send her right back to you the next day, 'cuz the man has to show. I mean they actually have to show the virginity to the families, so. Today they are a little less, but in the old days, yeah. They used to, you have to, if she's not, she's gonna say no to marriage period 'cuz that would be a disgrace to the family, and nobody wants that. But the boys, what are you gonna do? If they go out, I wouldn't even like them to taking advantage of, like I don't like that for my daughters, I wouldn't want them to do anything bad to anybody else's daughters, doesn't matter. We tried to keep that, even boys or girls, but I can't guarantee the boys, but the girls it has to be, otherwise I keep telling them, if you think, god forbid if something wrong, don't even say I'm gonna get married, especially for our culture. And then we can't marry somebody out of our religion. And out of our language. And out of our--well it doesn't have to be Palestinian, let's say Jordanian, you know somebody that's close to the area where we are, he could be from the different city, but not the different state mostly. That's what they like to do. And that's how we teach our girls, and I'm not the only one I'm sure, every mom likes to be proud of their girls. And boys at the same time. But the girls are more, we're a little more strict on them then the boys, I have to admit that. We shouldn't be that way but you gotta go with the flow, you really have to do it, because it's better for them, and for you. For both of us, for daughters and the moms, and for the dad. Because if the dad is working all day and I am at the house, God forbid if something happens to one of the girls, who's he gonna blame? Me. Because, "Oh I'm working, you should be knowing where the girls are, or the boys are, what they're doing." So usually, they blame it on the moms more than anything else. Yes, they do. Not everybody is that way. That's who they blame it on and being a Muslim too, not everybody follows the dress code, there's nobody that force anybody, I started just wearing last year actually (refers to the veil she is wearing).

I: Why?

R: Because when I went overseas last year, and I looked and I found younger girls wearing and I'll be walking in the street I did not like that, so, I started just, putting scarves last year. Because you feel, when you see the younger girls, the younger generation, and you go into the town, the shopping center area, you, there is, maybe 10% that is not wearing and it have to be maybe a Christian people, not Muslim. A lot of them, when they're over 14, 15 they start wearing on their head. So, I felt like the odd one. So, I, it just didn't feel right. I mean I wasn't sleeveless or

anything like that, usually my clothes are always conservative, but the head, I only did it last year, but you don't have to, nobody tells you what to do, but when it gets to my age, it would be a shame to walk in the street without having anything on your head. Yeah, I wouldn't do it. I go out sometimes with a half or something, but no, over there you have to have all, cuz it...

I: When you were raising your daughters did you make them wear the scarf?

R: No, now she actually works at Salam school and that's an Islamic school so she has to wear it when she's in the classrooms, but she, the moment she gets in the car, she takes it off, but no and the other daughter does not wear. That is, if you don't believe in it, you can't wear it. The thing is you can't put it on and off, it doesn't work like that. Either you do, or you don't. Nobody forces you, no.

I: So, your only daughter that's married is Sara?

R: Sara, yeah.

I: So, when she got married, were you relieved, kind of, that you didn't have to take care of her anymore? Or what was your experience of that?

R: Well, you like them to get married to sometimes with this culture, the age is always, if you're over 25 you think your over the hill, that's how they do it. And a lot of our men likes a younger generation, lets say, they go from 18 to 25. And then it depends on the man, how old he is, so if he's 30, he has to get somebody at least 25 cuz he's not gonna go for a baby, no. I know some girls get married at 16, honey. So, it depends on the situation. But it's not that you don't want to take care of them, it makes you feel less worried about them. Yes, less worried because when she's by her husband, if he allows her to you know run all over we not gonna stop her, or stop him from that matter. Cuz you trust that there's a man there, and she's, he knows that she's not gonna go fool around or anything like that, so the trust is there, that's it. Then you really feel- then you- then you feel relaxed but worried if she got the right person too (chuckles). So, either way, you still gotta worry about these girls no matter what. But sometimes they work, sometimes it doesn't. But thank God up to now, it's not too bad. Like the other girl, the younger one, she got engaged, but it just, didn't work out so, so they had, we rather split up before marriage, we don't

like divorces, if you can, we don't like them. We try to avoid them as much as we can. But it'll be, it's always easier before you get married. Cuz sometimes a girl if she gets married, she gets a divorce after that, a lotta men don't want a divorcee, so either way you're damned, so you don't know what to do anymore. But it depends on the situation again, not always, not always the same.

I: So, what kind of husband or wife would you think is perfect, or, for your children?

R: Well like my son said, "I want one like my mom" (laughs). No, the thing is, I like a very, first of all, I don't like to be, to get into their business, it doesn't matter what they do in their houses or whatever, but if I can find, I have three of them to get married now, the boys, I like a girl who's educated and if she wasn't and she like to go to school we wouldn't mind, you know, sending her to school. Not to be, just to be a very well educated, knowledgeable, take care of her husband no more than anything else and take care of each other and get along. That's the main thing, happiness. For them to be happy, yeah. That's all I'm looking for, no more, no less, really.

I: Did you what was your involvement in Sara's?

R: In Sara's wedding?

I: Yeah, in her marriage.

R: In her marriage?

I: Was it arranged, or?

R: Well actually, I would call it arranged but not arranged, but I, its, what it is, is somebody see her somewhere, and or the picture, or on the Facebook and then they just send their mom or let her call and see if the daughter is interested in getting married, then they offer them a few days to talk to each other, today now they talk on the computers, but I mean, Sara's [word?] was all on the phone, and, first of all, nobody forces anybody. So, they sit like, you and I now, talking, and if something clicks, somehow they'll know that's the right guy. They ask each other questions, A to A. and then everybody goes on their own way, and you wait a few days and if the girl says no, you gotta call that family and say you know, "I'm sorry there is no chance, for this one." Or sometimes it's the man that calls and says you know, this is no. So, nobody gets mad at anybody that's the way it is. Maybe a second one will come along, maybe a third one, God knows they stop. But usually about, maybe either men talk to 2-3 women, or women talk to 2-3 men. And then they kinda decide. But I would say 75% of the times it works and 15 and 25 it doesn't. If there's a crack somewhere in it just...

I: And Sara's marriage, was her husband the first person who called her?

R: Actually, that was not the first call. Because as I said, she was in school, she graduated, and she got engaged. Somebody actually saw her at the graduation party and that's how it went to New York and New Yorkers came to the house and they talk to each other, and I don't know, he was the first, but there were other people that asked but they never got to the house because she refused the idea of getting married at that time. But that was the first one that she agreed to, yes, that was the first one.

I: So, what were some of the major issues or instances of conflict that you had with your children when you were raising them?

R: When your raising them, you give them religion, the customs, let's say, the jobs sometimes you don't like, let's say with the alcohol, because we are Muslim and we don't, supposedly, we don't drink alcohol, but when you work in a grocery store, you sell alcohol, but when you work in the club, you're seeing, its open, because when you buy it from me, it was a can, it was closed, but when you go, it's an open bar, so you're seeing them, its, its, but you can't stop that, if they want to work in that bar, what can you do? Nothing about it, but you just wish to God that they would not come around and touch it, or drink it, or become addicted to it, or anything like that. We tried to keep the drinking, the smoking, but you try to raise them to be good kids, and I think I did a very well-done job. Because when you hear about stories from outside, you say, that God my kids are like that. You know what I mean? You think you know you done something right in raising them and you keep saying to them every day, "Oh mom I heard the story, a lot" you know, you keep pushing and pushing and pushing, so you might get em to agree on certain cultural things or certain religious things, but not everything. You can't put everything on them, unless they want to.

I: So, have your children resisted a lot of?

R: I would say, most, again I like to use percentages, I think some, the older girl, maybe it's a different time too, she's more of an old-fashioned girl than the younger one. The older boy he's more, he can adjust to both sections, the American and the-- But the 30-year-old, he can adjust, but he's more of the Americanized way than that. But the twins are really good too, they can flex in between, they can deal with both, they can deal with both.

I: What are some of the specific things that they have rejected? Or accepted?

R: Uh....

I: And what kinds of conflict did that cause?

R: The thing that they don't accept, I go back to religion, let's say, they don't pray, they don't, they fast, they choose one thing, but they don't choose the other. The girls, again, that's a situation which I don't, I never seen with my own eyes, but I guarantee that they do go out with, I mean, he's in college, I don't know what he does, but I'm sure, but I know he has some, girlfriends, but I don't know how far, I don't ask, because I don't want to know (chuckles). But they reject that one. They reject going out at night. They reject going to let's say a night club, a bar, but it be a bar/restaurant but that doesn't mean they'll drink. But you try to even tell them, not to go in restaurant that has a bar in it, or, because if somebody sees you, coming and sitting

into the bar, they'll go, even if you not drinking, your drinking coke, they'll say, "Oh, we saw so and so at the bar last—" but it's, you don't want to hear anything bad about them, you try, but as I said they resist mostly going out at night. They don't like this arranged marriage; I think they reject maybe 40% of what we tell em. But they try, let's say if they go overseas, they try to act to adjust to that to, so no matter what. They know that they're not supposed to kiss the girl or when they shake their hands, they shake hands, here we believe in the hug a lot but over there, they kinda look into it a little different sometimes. So, they do the shake, the handshake. They, as I said, they kind of adjusting between. But to me, right now, I think whatever they got taught it's already in their head, I don't know if I can change anything though. But they gonna go with what they believe too, yes, they gonna go with what they believe. But Sara got married to someone who's from our own city. Samir, he got married to a girl from his, from ours. I tried to keep it from the city itself, at least somebody you know. That way you don't want to teach yourself how to act with a stranger. So that way I rather have somebody who's local and then I know their mom, their dad, that way it a lot easier. You'll be more comfortable let's say you want to go visit your daughter, you'll be more comfortable with that kind, then somebody else that you never met before or anything, I'm talking about the family too, yes.

(Break in Interview and New File)

Part II:

I: This is part 2 of a recording with Mrs. Asad, my name is Sarah Gresser and this is November 2nd, 2012. So, how do you define or identify yourself?

R: As of, in which way honey?

I: So, how like do you call yourself? American? Do you call yourself Palestinian? Do you define yourself by your religion?

R: No, I call myself an Arab-American.

I: Arab-American?

R: Yes, because no matter where you come from, if you speak the language then you're considered as an Arab-American. So, you could be Egypt, from Palestine, Jordan, any country, so you're, but I would still, after somebody asks then I usually say, "an Arab-American" and then after they ask, "From what country?" you specify it. But sometimes I am really surprised, that some Americans, they don't know where the countries are when we, learned geography, we knew where the U.S. was, but nobody knows where, sometimes I have to define it by the holy land, maybe? Jerusalem? Like Bethlehem, you have to define the country, I'm not to go into

political here, everyone knows Israel, they don't know, you know the other part, but...which I... they don't understand, not everybody, no, not everybody. But I'm proud of it, and I like to know, tell 'em exactly, sometimes I get a map and show exactly where, where you are, because it takes you a long time to get there and some people might not, been never on a plane, so they ask how many hours and stuff like that, then you have to show them exactly where the country is. But I notice with the younger generation here, they don't care. They don't know where this country is, or where that country is, they might hear it on the news, but they just, not everybody's interested to know the difference between you and me, or between other country. They get me mixed up with Pakistan, but there's a difference, a big difference between Pakistan and Palestine (small chuckle) so, they're both beautiful countries, but they're not the same. And the location is even kind of far off from each other. But I like to always know, the country, the continent, I even picture it in my head because I can tell where that even east and west, but the younger generation these days, I'm sorry to say even the U.S. too, but if you go the- let's say over there, to Palestine- they'll know where the U.S. is, they'll know where Russia is, everybody's very well, because they like to know what's going on in the world. And here sometimes not everybody cares, but you try to give them an idea though, no matter what, yes, you try.

I: So, you said that you identify as Arab-American?

R: Yes.

I: Do you identify more with the Arab culture, or the American culture?

R: I identify with the Arab culture more. I like to take from the Amer-- okay, this is the land of opportunity, it's like you go to school, if you're going to college to play around and making your parents pay for it, why are you in college? So, I take the...like, my kids now the twins, if they were not smart, or not good in school, they would not be where they are right now. So, this is one thing you take from the Americans side, there is opportunities, they're open. If you knock on those doors, you'll find it. But if you're sitting home and doing nothing about it, nobody's gonna

finding an opportunity. You have to look for it and there's a lot. So, I would take any opportunities, good opportunities in the U.S. as a job, or education, or anything that I would never let my kids, or I wouldn't allow my kids to look for the bad, things. And don't take me wrong, every culture has bad- things, but if you go some other country, and you're trying to make it over there, look for the good stuff that they have, and you can- and I found out that being good in school, everybody looks for you. Some people out there is nice generous people, rich, they like to educate, funds or anything like that. They actually look for the good and the smart kids, and the educated kids and they wanted to be educated more, they'll find them, they'll look for them, there's people out there. But they are not gonna look for the bad ones, so if you're a bad one, then no, that's not it.

I: So, what languages or language do you speak at home?

R: Arabic.

I: Arabic?

R: Yes, hon.

I: How do you describe your religious life?

R: Muslim, I would think, not think, I know, that even to be a lawyer in that country, in Palestine, or the middle east, or anybody that speaks Arabic, it's all taken from the Koran and it explains everything, everything's in there, it's already telling you what to do with the land, too, if you go by that book, you would never have a problem. It doesn't matter what it is: being a mom, a dad, a woman, actually woman's rights are in the Koran, before even anybody came with the woman's rights movement or anything like that. Cuz it tells exactly what your limits are, what you can do, what you can't do, even education, it takes education, it takes marriage, it takes divorces, it takes everything. Anything you wanna look for, you'll find it in there and I would open a page and just read it and it tells me what I have to do. So, I would think religion is, very, I deal with it, it's very good.

I: Now how do you describe your religious involvement in America vs. when you were in Palestine? Did it differ?

R: Well, I, okay here now there is opportunity to go to mosque, there is plenty of mosques built around this area. No matter where you go, there is a mosque. But there is no law in the Koran that says you have to go and pray in the mosque. I can pray here and its, the same thing. But if you get involved with those things, it's very nice, you'll learn, you'll hear from somebody who's more experienced, that way you'll learn lessons from them, and they explain things better, so I

go but not too much. But I rather pray at home, I rather fast at home, I rather do all this stuff at home.

I: How often would you say you go to the mosque?

R: Maybe unless there is a- today's Friday, I think you'll find everybody there mostly, but I didn't go, not because you're here, I don't go because I like to pray at home. So, I would, I only go when there is a function or volunteers or things like that. I don't go there every day.

I: So how would you describe your political participation?

R: Actually, I like to know what's going on, with the U.S., and election with the candidates, are in for, but I'm a democrat. (Laughs) Now you know who I'm gonna vote for, huh? Yeah, I really care. I vote. I like to divide my time, I watch the news in Arabic, I find the paper on the internet, I like to read the paper that comes from home, to see what's going on over there too. And we have a dish network that we like to see what's going on in the Middle East, so I like to watch American news, local news, and international news, that way it'll keep you posted on everything. I like to keep that.

I: So, when you first came to America, and I am assuming you came over, on the visa? Or the green card?

R: A green card.

I: A green card?

R: Yes.

I: So how long did it take you to get your American citizenship?

R: Five years honey. You have to have five years and they give you a test in the American history. And I studied that U.S. history in high school, so from 80- 68, like 73, 71, or I had that going. And I took a test, they do ask questions. And if you don't know the judicial system or who was the president at that time, or they actually, because the examiner will just, he has no list in front of him, he'll just whatever question pops into his head. So, you really have to go there and be alert, to what he's gonna ask. If I didn't know any of the questions, then he wouldn't of, he wouldn't have passed me. I would have had to do it again, but willingly, I knew what I was doing. I read the U.S. history book to just know how the system works too, that's-- oh no, I'm

very good at that too. I like that. And the kids are thankfully they'll read, and they'll know what's going on. You have to be, otherwise you don't know what you're doing.

I: So as soon as you got your U.S. citizenship, did you start getting involved in politics right away? Did you vote right away?

R: Sure, after I got the citizenship, because you have to be an American citizen to vote, yes. I started voting from since then. And if I had opinions, I wouldn't mind giving it out to anybody if they ask about it.

I: So, what the main reason that you decided to become an American citizen versus just having a green card?

R: Its actually, sometimes with being an American citizen, you get more, actually, no, not even, they have no discrimination between the card and the American citizen, but actually the passport is the main thing too, you can travel all over the world, there is no restrictions and I mean I never take with me as an identification, except when I travel, otherwise the driver's license is just fine. But it's very better to say I'm an American citizen then an alien (laughs). But if you go to, I never apply for these things, but I know it's easier for somebody if they want to apply for welfare, or health or anything like that. But other than traveling, I don't think there is no discrimination with that, no. In the U.S. at least, no.

I: So, what are your connections with Palestine?

R: Going and coming back? It's always open. We actually started installing vonage, which you can call through your cell phone anytime, and you talk, it'll be just like calling regular phone here. So that one is going and now with the internet and Facebook, and I mean you can be talking to somebody on skype, you always keep in touch, that's for sure. Yes.

I: Does that make it easier?

R: A lot easier, but I noticed just after my mom and dad passed away, and then my sisters are here, my brothers are here, I only have, one of my in-laws, and two sisters in laws there, I have the groups more here, than there. So, I really, even if I go there for three months, I still have that urge to come back. They always say the water's heavy here, (laughs) so you, no, I would not, since we retire now, we have more time to stay, but in Israel, they don't allow you 'cept three months, even being an American citizen, that doesn't make a difference to them. And then you have to renew another three months, but they don't give you more that. So, you really have to leave after 6 months anyway, but we have our own house there. We don't go to a hotel or

anything but, after you stay there for three months, then you worry about the kids that's over, it's really broken homes like, you feel like: "oh no what did I do? No, I gotta go back". But one day I'm really hoping to stay for a long time, maybe a year, because it's not easy to just keep packing and leaving and all that. But it's gonna take time before we get that yet. It's not on the agenda, like they say, no. Three months is three months, they don't even allow you a ticket for six months, you have to have a ticket for, only for three months. Cuz they see the ticket at the airport, to see how, three months.

I: So how often do you travel, back?

R: Since I haven't, actually the last three years, I went three consecutive years, one after the other, this year we took the, Sara and her kids, and Amani, and my son, Samer he hasn't been there for 17 years. And this is again, with the U.S. you work, and you can't leave, if your self-

employed or if your off, I mean a company employee, you need somebody to take care where what you leave, so he only stayed for 10 days, and we came back together. He got the ticket for, to come back together. But he actually because he was only maybe 12 when he left, not the last time he went, but he was born there by the way, he was-- what they call them? American born abroad? American citizen born abroad. He saw the difference, because of 17 years that makes a lot of difference, I mean when he took the car, he used to go around so he wouldn't get lost or anything, just to venture in the city, because so much development that you forget where you live, if you don't know the city. Cuz it's an urban, kind of, so many streets going around like that. So no, he enjoyed it, he really did, and he wants to go back, after that. But the boys are, the twins, I took em before that, together, it costs so much money, honey, if you gosh if you take a family of six, oh my god, \$1500 almost the average of the ticket, that's just the tickets alone, and you're gonna need your spending money. But you know it's worth it, every penny of it. It's really worth it, to go and, to eat over there, and drink and you pick the plums, the figs, the everything off the tree, right there. And we have like a vine tree, it's like in a driveway and its covering all over the driveway, I mean you can see just like the vines coming down. It's really beautiful, it's really beautiful.

I: So how have the political events over in Palestine affected you?

R: It affected us a lot in a bad ways, more than good ways, but you sit here and you say, "What am I gonna do?", but you try to send your comments to senators, to president, like one of my boys he studied political science, he wants to change the world, I keep saying, "You're not gonna make a lot of money in this". He says, "Yes, I know that, I just wanna change the world, so." Because when you see what's happening to the other side, you really think you wanna change something because there is a lot of the U.S. policies in that area specially, in that area, they really

don't show the right picture or the true picture, or be a least even or equal or anything, no, its always different. Always the wrong, they pick the wrong side, sometimes. But when you go there and see the political ways, it's crazy, it's not, you don't like it. No. You be walking the middle of Jerusalem and the army is carrying their guns and their hand is on the trigger. You don't even know if it's gonna go off one day or, you'll be behind em, closer than you and I. And you can't stop that, cuz their ready to shoot. So, everybody'll be worried, and especially in Jerusalem, the streets are narrow, and everybody's very crowded, especially on Fridays, or Sundays, or Saturday. Cuz Friday is for the Muslims, Saturdays is for the Jews, and Sunday is for the Christians, but it's a beautiful city to see though in those days, yes. It's very, very nice.

I: So even though you're an American citizen, when you go over there, are you afraid?

R: Of course, you have to be, you don't know who's behind you, or next to you, you don't know your friend from your enemy. You don't know. Mmmnm, no. You always have to be one the lookout.

I: Has it always been like this?

R: Actually, yeah mostly for the, maybe since 1968, '67, it got more.

I: The war.

R: Yeah. But before that they had the '38, the '46, which I wasn't around these two, but when you hear from the grandparents, they'll tell you, I know a grandma she used to be in the Turkish war, round the Turks, they were, and she used to tell us the stories about those eras. So, it's very, very, difficult situation. And you know what, I hope one day, it'll be resolved. But it looks like it's not gonna happen anytime soon. It's very difficult situation. Cuz when you go into the airport, in the Israeli airport, in Tel Aviv, being again American citizen, when you get to the where they stamp the passport, right away they collect all the Arab-Americans and take em to the side and there's a special room and special investigators, whatever. Each of em come and pick one of two, they'll keep you sometimes for some 2-3 hours in there for nothing. "What's your name, where you going, why you coming, why your-?" And then they have to have all your family members names on a computer, and they keep asking the same questions, so they'll see if you make a mistake by answering one, sometimes they ship you back. They ship some people back. Cuz when we went there, there was this young man, he's gotta beard, he's a very kinda, a little, not extreme, but more of a Muslim than anybody else, I would call him, and they asked him, so many questions, the guy told him, finally he said, "Sir, if you, you just ask me so many questions and you repeated the same questions again and again, if your gonna ask me some

more, I don't have any more answers to give you, either you let me go in or send me back on the plane that I came out of." So, the guy told him, "You know what, just one more question!" (Laughs) And he did! Asked the same questions! That's all they ask, "What's your name? Where are you going? How, what are you, who paid your tickets? Who gives anybody tickets to pay for?" They think of another political group maybe they gave the tickets, and there's some original like they call em, Americans, they, there, that country has a hundred, and eighty-five countries in their units, from people, different cultures, different, but they'll watch every place where you go, you'll be watched. And sometimes, if as you can see, I wasn't wearing on my head (indicates to the scarf she is wearing), you stand out, if you go in Israel, there is some from the '48, 1948, but if you stand out on the beach or something like that, then they'll be really running around you to see what is going on. Do it'll be, you'll be -your, there is a little prejudice in there, a profiling of things like that. But if you're going normal, like what you're wearing,

(points to me) and you're not drawing any attention, you just blend in. But if you go in like this (points to head) they'll still kinda get iffy about it. Yeah.

I: So, when you go, do you wear the scarf?

R: I have to, yes, yes. I do, I do.

I: Even though you know that you won't blend in?

R: Yes, you have to, that's it. But-

I: What do you mean, you have to?

R: You can't take it off because you're in Israel. Either they take you like that or forget it. That's the way it is. Either they'll turn you back, but I'm not saying that they do a lot, but they do it sometimes, they don't allow it. Or you, as I said, if you stand out, then you'll be watched, more than a regular somebody. If you go in the mall, one of their malls, let's say, and they see, or at the airport! Anywhere! It doesn't matter, they, they'll be a security around you, a lot.

I: So, you, I mean you wear it, even though it causes problems?

R: Yes.

I: But if it causes such problems?

R: Well you know, they're used to it, let's say at the airports here, when I go I used to go without this, and without the long, long, skirts, even after September 11th, they just pass you by like anybody else, they search you, well you know, they pick randomly sometimes somebody to

search, body search but when one time we flocked outta here to New York for a wedding, I think I this guys' wedding, my sister, my other cousins, they were wearing on their (indicates to scarf), they passed me and they searched them. So, you can tell. With this here, they go, they think something's in there, or if you're wearing your hair long and you got a little bump or something like that. So now I have my son here, Asad, the one at Harvard, when he goes through airports, he goes, he doesn't go through the machine that takes a...

I: The full body scanner?

R: Picture, yeah. He likes a body search, and they keep asking him, "Why do you do this?" He said, "I just don't, I like it, I like to be, but, search hand, hand search better than the, first of all its my right to do that, second I don't wanna go through that machine. Maybe I don't know its gonna harm me or not, I don't wanna." And he would never, never, go through any of those.

I: So, where you in the United States for the Gulf War?

R: Yes, actually my son just finished the marine, and they asked him to reenlist, but he wouldn't, he used his religious right, because actually they wanted him as a translator, in Iraq, but he said, "No, I can't". First of all, they'll consider him as a traitor if he, was there as a translator. And second, he wouldn't go as a marine, he said, "No, I'm not going to start killing my own people." So, you know, see you always have that kinda cultural, or brotherly, same people I mean there is no way, that when the Iraqi guess speak, or the Kuwati or whatever, speak in front of you and you just shoot at them, for what? They, you can't, I don't think, he couldn't do it, he wouldn't go.

I: So, did your, how did your life change in America? As a result of the Gulf War?

R: As a result? Actually, the interaction in the Gulf war, I again I take it to some knowledge, actually we were bothered with September 11th more than the Gulf War. September 11th was, even in the business Milwaukee here, because they'll take the word Arabs or whatever, that's if they think somebody did this, that means everybody is, I mean we used to get into a lot of fights with the neighbors, the customers. If they get mad at something.

I: In the gulf war, or September 11th?

R: Both of them.

I: Both?

R: Both, but September 11th was more.

I: Mmm.

R: Yes, it was more. I remember-- I mean, I wasn't wearing on my head at that time, but if somebody ask me, "Where are you from?" I might lie, I'd say somewhere else. Because there was a lot of incidents that somebody got hurt from that. Especially in the area where New York, there's a big population, or they'll target the mosques where people coming out prayer, or things like that. Because they just associated it with somebody who's wearing it on their head, that's Muslim. Just to be a Muslim, so sometimes you might even have to hide that.

I: So how did you feel with your non-Muslim friends, or non-Arab friends? How did that affect your interactions with them?

R: With the non-Arab friends. You know what, politically, I'll choose who I talk to with, because I can tell your, I can tell their ideas right away, they don't wanna listen, they just have what they

have in their head, and they wanna agree with that. They don't wanna listen to reason, or at least hear my side of the story, so I try to be away from that. But I know who to talk to. I know who some friends I go with, some friends I wouldn't. It depends on how knowledgeable they are too-yes. But it did affect a lot, yes it did. It did affect a lot.

I: Are there any specific stories that you wanna tell me?

R: Sure, I was walking by myself in, where were we going? The mall, and a lady, and her husband, they were walking towards us, and we were wearing on our-- I was with another woman that was wearing on her head, she goes, "Here comes the terrorist." And that was not...

I: Was this after September 11th?

R: Yes, yes, yes, that was. You hear comments like, and then some people use the word: A-rab. I mean with the not bad way, there is no such as the Arab. There is only an Arab-American, or the Arabic language, because we all come from different countries. So, they connect it all together. And then, you can see they make a difference, they couldn't tell the difference between the Indian Sikh, that they have that, kufiya on their head, and the regular, I mean, come you start just by noticing people what their wearing, and associating, with terrorism or anything? That doesn't mean, that's not right, no. So, most of the time I really don't see it before I start wearing it on my head, I used, 'specially around September 11th, I didn't used to say where I was from. I used to say Greece or different country. Cuz if you say Spanish then they want you to speak Spanish to them, or they know how to speak Spanish, so I just don't, I used to lie. Yes, I used to lie about that.

I: When you were lying, how did that make you feel?

R: Disgusting! But it's safer (laughs). You don't wanna hear anything.

I: So, how was September 11th different from the Gulf War?

R: Because September 11th, I think to me, when it, a war is a war, because a bomb is not gonna know where the American from the Iraqi, from the Kuwaiti, if it's gonna come down, God knows where it's gonna go. So, it's not gonna go: "No, a child" but the September 11th, I did not like that at all. It was, it was just intentional, that they were hurting some people. They knew what they were doing. It doesn't matter who did it, there is a lot of conflicts about it, but I really don't like anybody hurting anybody in the human, humanly way like they say. But with that one, that was a mistake, that was wrong, that was not the right, no. Any war is wrong, don't take me, but I keep saying a war is a war, but those incidences are, they were meant to be that place. They were meant to be that building, they were meant to be- and you knew who's in it. There're only

human beings like you and me, there was no reason for that, no. But that day was, it scared everybody who's, before they even knew who it was anyway, but they just put it on the Muslims. They didn't use, where he came from, where did he do it, or whatever, okay, the Muslim religion is, it's open, its peaceful, but there are people who use religion sometimes as a bait to anything else and that was wrong, that was not right, no. I didn't agree with that one, no.

I: How did you feel on that day?

R: I was crying, and I was watching television, and seeing these people jumping, and, and I was really feeling frustrated. Then I could have had my kid in there, I could have had my husband in there, I could have had my family members in there, and there's a lot of people in New York that works downtown that's related, and we kept calling everybody to see who's good and who's not. And, no, no, it affected me really, I was crying like a baby with that. I didn't like that.

I: How long did it affect you afterwards?

R: My god, I think up to today. Actually, its up today. Actually, we go to New York a lot and when you see that emptiness there, when I went the last time, there was a bike that still tied up to a light pole, and its, the owner must of never came back, and they still kept it there. And nothing happened to it either. Isn't that something, and it wasn't too far from the ground. And every time you're going there, you're driving by Manhattan, it's just, you say, "Where those buildings go?" and whatever happened, they didn't get everybody out. They got some human out, but not everybody no. So, that ground is. you know, it's funny, I think I could smell it still, there too. Have you been to New York, to there?

I: I didn't go to ground zero, but I saw the emptiness.

R: The emptiness, yes, yes.

I: I saw it from afar.

R: Yes, we went actually after maybe a year or less. They didn't even clean up yet, you could smell that area.

I: I really had no desire to see.

R: No, it was terrible, terrible.

I: When I saw the emptiness, I didn't want to go closer.

R: It hurts, yes. Yeah, and you don't, yeah because when you see it there, it just comes to your head: "Oh my god, these things just came down and there were human beings in there." Doesn't

matter even the property damage you don't worry about it, as long as there is no human, okay do, if you wanna do something or show a political statement do in a not, in a civil way, not this way. That was wrong. That was very wrong. It's still affecting me up to now, I swear. And in the wars, like what happened in Iraq, it could have been dealt with different way too. Really, that didn't need it they opened a can of worm, on us, on the U.S., that is. Because those days, I think Saddam was the best thing for Iraq, not because of his views, the way he was holding all these people down, nobody could say anything in his ruling, and look what happened after the Americans, poor soul, went in- you see how many fractions there are? There were changed to thousands, this is from this section, this is from that section, and they started hitting each other, and killing each other, and bombing the Americans, bombing themselves, it was a disaster. I don't think we accomplished anything in there. I don't think so. The reason for going in, it's not, there was nothing, it was all lies.

I: Did you think there was a good reason to go in at the time?

R: I don't think so, no, no.

I: Not at the time?

R: Not at the time, not today, look at it, now they're stopped, they're finished with Iraq, they're almost finishing with Afghanistan, look at Syria now. And look at Libya, if you notice, Egypt, if you notice one spot after another, there must be somebody making a bad flickering the lighter like they say, somebody wants to see that area that way. And I think, they're not succeeding either, it's not working. We be better off without that. Look at Iran, Iran, uh, comparing Israel to Iran, Israel has a nuclear, nobody can ask them where it is, or tell them what it is, but look, for

Iran, I think it is for, I am not sure about these things, but peaceful way of doing it, but they are trying to keep saying Iran, Iran, until, so what?-- okay the U.S. will go and hit, Iran. And I, we think, we think in our countries, most of the Middle East, we think that Israel provokes it and the American politician agree with it and then they do all of that just for that small little state. Save that little state and that state, if you go to their country, in Israel, which we went. We went as far as down south, because we have a car, and we drove if you have a yellow plate you can go through Israel. And it was myself, we went to a city called Illit, and it's like a fork, Illit is in the middle and then you have Aquaba, which is Jordan, and then you have Taba, which is Egypt. I mean it's like a fork, and you can cross either one, but you can't guarantee yourself coming back. Can you imagine? So, we were trying to go through to the Egyptian side, but that week, when we were in there, there was a little problem in Sinai, so the guy said, if we let you through, but if something happens Israeli's gonna shut the border. So, my God, we gonna have to go through all the way up to Jordan and then come back? We decided, we just turned around, it was only maybe less than a mile between, less than a mile. We said no, so you even get scared to go another

country because Israel border Syria, and Lebanon, and Egypt, and Jordan, and oh my God, and you can go through, it's a hassle to go through all of em. But if it was a peace world, you can just drive your car and go in. But there is nothing like that. You should see the security, the ships and the, the red sea, the army. You think it's gonna be a war, when it's just look at those ships in the dead-- the red sea. Because three countries and each one of them scared form the other, so they're, I mean the machine guns are literally aimed on each other, in a way, that. You say, "Well no, you can't go in, I might not be able to come back." Or you gonna fly out of there to the U.S.? That means you're gonna throw your tickets away, and everything, you just have to and if you don't have your passport with you, that a problem, then you gonna have to make a passport, so there, I mean the water honey is even divided between the country. I say the waters belong to the- the sea belongs to everybody, "That's my water, that's your water.' There's only an inch between, it's crazy.

I: So, when you were experiencing 9/11, and the Gulf War, where did you get support from?

R: We used to call each other.

I: Back home?

R: Back home and just over here. And the girls I used to talk with Amani and Sara, and we mostly, agreed the same say, that it shouldn't have been there, or shouldn't have been done. Honestly, I think it wasn't three separate areas, it mostly.

I: So, you got most of your support from family?

R: Yes, yes, from family. Because the news is already firing up about Middle Eastern people and you wouldn't wanna even show yourself in front of the cameras or anything like that. Actually, I kept a magazine from that day too, every time I look at it, I just, the time magazine it was an insert that they had, close pictures with the people jumping out of the-- I just hid it in there, it just every time I look at it, I say, "Why?" There's no, there was no reason for that. At all.

I: Thanks for sharing your experiences.

R: Not at all, honey, that's no problem.

I: So now I'm gonna ask you about cultural clothing.

R: No problem, I'm gonna get you the one that looks like this, there's one here.

(Rushes off to go get cultural clothing, quite excited)

I: (Interrupts) I have some questions first.

R: Sure.

I: Alright, so do you have any traditional or cultural clothing?

R: Yes, yes.

I: What are the names of them in Arabic?

R: We call it "Thob," and then, and then the wedding ones we have the original ones, it's called "Malecka," because we were this only for the closest member of the family, it has to be a young man that is getting married. Otherwise, we go to other weddings, like friends maybe or something, we don't go all out. But in a close family relative, you can tell, that's the immediate family. They'll be wearing all-- sometimes the moms like to keep it all one color, if they can. And they'll be wearing all of them like this, and a lot of jewelry and gold and you can tell who's who. Because they'll be in the middle of the wedding and the guests are a little bit on the outskirts.

I: So, when do you wear them? Just at weddings?

R: The cultural ones? Yes, but as I said in the city, of our city, they'll be wearing, I show you something simpler that some of the women wear daily. They wear it daily; they don't go out without it. It has to be, something like that dress, that, with a belt and whatever's on their head. But there is, you know, daily thing is not as fancy as the, but the wedding ones you can always

tell that they're very elegant. Better than finding a dress (laughs). It costs more than a dress, but it doesn't get old. You can re-wear it and it will never get old. It's always there.

I: So, when do you wear them, now?

R: Myself, I don't wear them except for weddings. But my mom used to wear it daily, my mother-in-law she wears it daily, they will never go out of the house without it.

I: How do you feel when you wear them?

R: Actually, you feel like you're on the top of the mountain, you're really, it just gives you, because you don't wear it every day, it's just gives you a beautiful, a beautiful feeling, a beautiful look, a beautiful feeling, it's all over, it's just you feel like you just came from that country, or you came from. Mostly everybody wears it from a little different, from a different city to different city, but they all look beautiful. And I feel great when I wear one, I feel very great and elegant with it.

I: So, what does it, what does it mean to you?

R: To wear that?

I: Yeah. Why is it important?

R: It's very important, because it keeps, if I don't wear it and then my daughters don't wear it and then that cultural stuff is gonna die. So we try to keep it at least going for weddings and big, like on holidays, like we had a holiday just recently, it's called Eid, after the pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, so people wear, it's like Christmas, so you know that it's that day, everybody will be wearing different new dresses and they go and to their family members and gather together and eat dinner and so without these cultural things, if I let that culture thing die and my daughters let it die, and then my daughter's daughter one day we gonna pass each other by and we not gonna know who we are. So it, my generation is still good, my mom's and then we have, my daughters still, but you know what- I can't even guarantee that its gonna stay but without the older generation, we gotta keep it going, we gotta press it to make sure when we go home I buy her some of those dresses, so now she knows that when we go to wedding to wear some still picks a dress, but she might use it for the engagement day or the wedding day, but either way, she'll be wearing one day at least with the cultural dresses. You'll see a lot of younger generation now they're wearing them. You just don't wanna let it die, you wanna keep it as long as we can. If my mom kept it for 80 years let's say, and my grandmother for 100, its gonna keep going, but if we let it fade, you'll never see it again. And we still do our wedding the old fashioned ways too, they

still wearing these dresses you can tell who's the mom, the photographer will know who's the mom, who's the dad, who's the sister, who's the-- he can tell.

I: Does religion play a role in your wearing of them?

R: Not the cultural wedding, no. Sometimes they're not religious but they'll wear them.

I: Do you wear the, do you wear the scarf?

R: Yes, this is my-- and you can tell it was here. Where was it? I must have taken it off. (Indicates to scarf). Another piece, oh there it is! (Finds it).

I: So, what influenced, so you said, when you started wearing the scarf, it was because you saw the younger generation?

R: Yes, I felt very outcast without it. Oh, and you should see the styles they have, the colors, usually, I like black as you can see but you can do a different color and it just goes like.

I: How do you feel when you wear the scarf?

R: Very comfortable, see that? (Puts scarf on) Yeah, it's very comfortable. I mean there is okay now there is a thing when Muslim girls get married, okay now, we have this thing about mixed weddings, male and female, the guests. But some woman would not allow it, they have to have a separate hall for the man, and a separate hall for the woman. So right-

I: Was your wedding mixed?

R: Yeah it was, and my son's was, and daughter's was, but I went to a wedding for my niece, she doesn't like to--her father's religious and her mom a little bit, but she was wearing on her head. So, they got a mixed wedding, mixed with women and men together, but what she did was, she had a very long sleeve, and then she had a piece made for her head, so beautiful, that she didn't need to take, you know, and it was covering just like that, and they hooked it up to the dress, it came out so beautiful and she didn't have to worry about getting two halls. That's a lot, I mean it's not even the money, it's just, it seems odd because on the table, on the tables you only find women. And usually, our men, when they go dance on the, if they're not related, they wouldn't go dance on the floor, they'll stay sitting the guests. There'll be no mixed anyway. But with the cultural dresses to show anyway and most of them, as I said, they put on their head. But the brides now, they're having a hard time, poor soul, either she makes her husband rent two halls,

or she has to do it with the white dress. But that, it came out beautiful though, I don't have a picture to show you, but it came out really beautiful though that day.

I: So, who influenced you to wear cultural clothing?

R: Who influenced me? My mom and then in the beginning I wasn't, but then I started noticing there is more and more so now you start feeling odd if you got to a wedding with a dress, being this age, so you just had to mix with the crowd, and had to start getting that. That's another, you just have to go shopping for that stuff too and it'll be another wardrobe, as they say. (Laughs)

I: So, do the dresses that you wear, do they look like the one's your mama wore?

R: You know what, they're coming back with the old-fashioned ones, yes. They might add a little more to it, but they're coming in to, I've seen some ones like from 50-60 years ago, and they're re-sewing them now. They're remaking them.

I: Where do you get your dresses from?

R: We have some seamstress here in Chicago, but mostly we get em from there. From, when anybody goes, you send them the measurements, actually now they even dealing with computers, you go online, and you talk to the guy who's over there, and give the measurements and they send it by mail. But I rather see that in person though, touch the stuff, the material, yeah.

I: Will you pass them on to your children?

R: I will, I sure will yes, definitely, as long as I'm living, yes.

I: Why will, why?

R: Because I like to, after I go, I like to see my kids saying, "My mom kept us doing this," and then their kids and their kids, and it will keep going, no matter what. We don't wanna see it disappearing, that's for sure. I sure don't.

(Interview moves into picture taking and getting contact names)