



Oral History Project Interview

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

Number of Interview: MM 1.00

Date: 2/24/2021

Gender: Male

Name: Mohd Abuayyash

Country of Origin: United Arab Emirates/Palestine

Year of Immigration: 2012

Abstract: Mohd Abuayyash is a 22-year-old male from the United Arab Emirates – whose family is originally from Palestine. In this interview, Mohd details the story of his immigration to the United States and travels throughout other nations. He also describes the struggles he faced upon his immigration to the United States, including racism and discrimination. Additionally, Mohd comments on gendered differences in Arab culture and Islam.

Key Themes: Religion, gender, marriage, culture, immigration, travel, hardship, racism

Note: In the transcript, “I” refers to Interviewer, and “R” refers to Respondent/Interviewee. “G” refers to the interviewee’s friend – a Guest.

I: Alright, can you just say your name and age?

R: Okay, my name is Mohd Abuayyash and I, I'm 22 years old.

I: Ok, um, what is your homeland country, city, town, village?

R: Uh, homeland, originally, Palestine. I was never, I was never, I have never been there. But, I was born in Dubai, United Arabic Emirates. And, yeah.

I: Pretty cool. Um, tell me about some places and buildings you spent a lot of time during your childhood.

R: Um, places, as um, so I was born like I said in Dubai, I was raised there. A um places, I'm pretty sure you guys like know Dubai, it's like pretty much skyscrapers, a rich country, a that's pretty much about it, you know.

I: Um, how does like, how do the schools work there? Is it like grammar school, then middle school, or is it like?

R: It's pretty much like uh United States, like um you know how they have the elementary school from first grade to fourth, or fourth grade right? Then, like that's elementary school, no fifth grade right?

G: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

R: Then middle school from sixth grade to eighth grade, then high school which is 9 freshmen all the way to senior.

I: Okay

R: Just like United States

I: Mhm. Alright, um. Alright you already answered that, did you live in any other countries before coming to the U.S. So, you went from Dubai to Palestine?

R: No, Palestine is the homeland, originally. My grand, grandparents lived there.

I: Ohh, okay.

I: My dad was born there, so um originally we were from there which is Jerusalem. But I've never been there, I'm actually trying to go there soon. Um, but it was the pandemic, hopefully after the pandemic. A um, I've been to like Saudi Arabia, I've been to Syria, lived there for like a little bit one time when we were trying to see how it is there we didn't like it. And um, we went back to Dubai, stayed there, then we came to the United States. So pretty much you could say Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United States.

R: Okay

I: And Jordan, too.

R: Jordan too?

I: Jordan too.

R: Okay

I: So that's five countries I have been to. When did you immigrate to the U.S?

R: I immigrated to the U.S. in 2012.

I: Okay

R: 2012

I: Were you the first in your family to immigrate?

R: No

I: Who else immigrated before you?

R: Uh, no. My family, like big big family or just like you know parents and grandparents?

I: No, like parents

R: We all came together

I: Okay

R: Yep, all together

I: After you came, did any of your other family members start to immigrate, too? Er, well that would just be your immediate family all came at once, right?

R: Yeah, came at once.

I: Um, are you married?

R: No

I: Do you have any children

R: Yes I do

I: Okay, um what are their names and ages.

R: Uh, her name is Lina Rose Abuayyash, her age is 3 years old.

I: Okay

G: She's so cute

I: Does she live with you?

R: Um, she is with her mom at the moment. She lives with her mom.

I: Okay

I: Uh, what, oh education levels she is so young. Um, do you know what time we started at? It was 12:45 or something? That's alright. [pause] Some of these, like if you don't answer one then it doesn't apply to a couple so I'm just checking through. Some of them you have answered already [pause]. This one's what, what was your level of education before immigration, but you were pretty young when you immigrated, right?

R: Yeah, I was like um 6th grade.

I: Oh, okay

G: It was 1

I: What?

G: It was 1, 1 o'clock when you started.

I: Ohh, okay

R: Yeah it was.

I: Oh, Okay

R: It's only been like five minutes, yeah.

I: Umm, have you received any formal education since you immigrated?

R: No

I: Okay [pause]

I: Are you currently working outside of the home.

R: Yes

I: If so, what is your job?

R: A, salesman.

I: What's up? No, yeah you can say that.

R: Oh okay, well I'm a salesman at a vape shop, smoke shop. And manager you could say that too.

I: Um, these questions are like who shares these spaces and what activities happen inside, but it's pretty self-explanatory. You just-

R: What, like what happens inside of the store?

I: What is your position?

R: My position is the manager. I am a manager and I sell, I mean I sell. Pretty much that's it. You know it's a vape shop, pretty much a family owned business you know, corporate. So, I

mean, it's a family owned business. So, you know, it's like I manage the store, I try to sell as much as I can and that's it.

I: Um, alright so these are some of, some questions about your decision to immigrate, which I know probably wasn't entirely your decision, but um so what were the main reasons for immigrating?

R: Um, the main reason I come here, honestly, for us, uh, just for a better future, for like me and my siblings. Better school, just a better country and um this is the main reason why you came here. Or you could say like, the main reason for school. That's the main reason.

I: School? Okay.

R: I came here, even tho like I finished school, but I'm still going back to school.

I: Mhm [pause]

R: I didn't complete high school but I'm still gonna go back and do like my high school diploma and go back to college for sure. Hopefully by next year. [pause]

I: How was the immigration process? Was it difficult?

R: How much, you mean time? Or...

I: Like, yeah was it, did you have to go through a lot of loops to like-

R: I had to go through a lot of stuff, yes. My uncle, who was the one who pretty much filed for us, filed for my grandparents, and my grandparents filed for their, for example, kids like my dad, my aunts, my uncles. And they filed for their children which is me and my siblings, you know. And the same with my uncles. They started, they did that, they filed immigration in 1995 before I was born. I was born in 1998 and they filed immigration in 1995 before all of us was born. And, we got approved in 2012, so it took us about 15 years almost.

G: Holy crap

I: Wow.

R: Yep, I wasn't even born. My uncle, the way he thought about it was, you know, and even back in the days it was still like America is one of the greatest countries in the world, you know. And even though like after the economy dropped its like so good its a good country. But like, back in the day, whenever my uncle thought about, he was like um by the time you guys are like

going to college, which is us and his kids and my cousins, by the time we were going to college we will have a papers to come to the United States so we could go to college in the United States because it's better school like I said. And better like country, so this is how he thought about it and it went like how he planned on. You know like he filed it and like literally by the time we were going to high school and college, we came to the United States so we could go to college and high school. So yep.

I: It must have taken a lot of foresight to like plan.

R: 15 years, yeah. My uncle, this guy here from one person. Literally, once person, he got, he brought I would say about like 46 people from overseas. 46 people. Just one person. He filed for all those people and they all came to United States because of him. And It's so hard to get to, you know, coming to the United States is not easy. Like, even whenever Trump was like, it was not easy at all, you know. But, um, it just like I said even, it's been literally like 15 years. My uncle filed for us in 1995 I wasn't even born. Like I was, I was, like shit, and then um after 15 years it worked out. Sorry

I: What's up? Yeah, you're good. Oh either way it's fine.

R: I totally forgot [referring to swearing]

I: It's college, college is so like lax with everything.

G: And you're 22 so like

I: Yeah, you're gonna talk like. What are they gonna do, give you a detention? Um... so this question is originally like how long did you plan on staying in the U.S. but or was this like a permanent change.

R: Oh, how long am I gonna stay in the United States? Well the United States is pretty much my country now I am a U.S. citizen. I have my passport, everything, I can vote, I can do anything and um I'm not planning on leaving the United States. If I go, I go visit but this is pretty much I'm gonna die here, I guess. Yep [laughter]. Yeah I cannot go back there just cause like I cam here young and I got used to it. Even like whenever I go there to visit, just to like visit, like last time I have been there was about 6 years ago. I went there I was supposed to stay there for about like a month and a half, a month and 25 days exactly, that's how long I was supposed to stay there, but first two weeks I was ready to go back.

I: Really?

R: Literally, I um was uh like I put like two ways back and forth and then I called them and um I just like stayed two weeks there and came even though I had to pay the difference. I literally just two weeks, I was supposed to stay there for a month and 25 days almost two months. I couldn't do it, just like I'm not used to it so like pretty much cause I came here young but now I just can't live there, I just can't I'm not, it's gonna take me a long time, and it's gonna be different. Cause I was young and I just got used to it here, I got used to the people, I got used to you know like laws and everything you know it's just hard to go there and just like do it all over again. You know, with the law and all that stuff even there, like it just other than that, I don't want to go back. You guys just have no idea how, no idea what you guys are in. Like, we have rights here, you know, like you know overseas, it is so different than here bro like it's so so different to the point like for example, let me give you an example bro. If you got pulled over, a cop is gonna come to you. Overseas, you're gonna have to go to the cop and the cop can beat you literally they can beat you and there is nothing you can do about it overseas. Yes, like there is no seatbelt, they don't know how to drive a um it's especially, I'm not talking about Dubai, Jordan, I would definitely go to Dubai no problem. Like I still can't live there. But just like Jordan, uts a poor country and Palestine, I've never been to Palestine. Saudi Arabia, I have lived there for little bit. Syria, I was there for about a month and we just couldn't do it we came back and um it just like it's different than here. Laws different like you don't have rights, even though like you have right, like constitution, but it's not like there ya know what I mean. Pretty much it's there, but it's not there at the same time so they can do whatever. Just like the law there is crazy, they literally can do whatever they want to the point where like they can beat you and you know if you like raise your voice at a cop they could literally beat you down and there is nothing you can do about it. Here, that is freedom of speech like for example if I cuss the president of the united states there's nothing they can do about it. If I cuss the president of, or the king of Jordan, I would literally like you will never see me ever again. I will, they will vanish me. I would disappear. Cause the like, what do you call it the kind of, if I just called him a bad word in front of a cop or something I would literally vanish, I would disappear you know like don't have rights they don't let you do whatever you want. No, there is definitely. Here, other than like the tax you get, extra charge and all of that, there, you don't get none of that, you literally don't get none of that. There is not that much, it is a poor country like I said a poor country, like a month there average, the average they get paid there I would say they get paid monthly there, and the average we'll say about 300 to 400 jd, which is would be about I'd say 700 dollars a month, that's how much they get paid there. 700 dollars a month. Yeah, it's a poor, poor country. I just, I couldn't do it there. I lived in Jordan for a really long time but my Dad, we were in Dubai first and then we went there to Jordan, but my Dad, he was in Dubai so he had like money, you know. He had, so we were living good and like I said I mean Jordan, it's everywhere, literally all countries there's like there's poor and there's rich. So um, pretty much like I just said Jordan, I wouldn't, I definitely wouldn't go there, but Dubai is literally you could say just like the United States. All the streets, everything, everything it's just like the United States.

I: Is that because it's like newer and it's like more like recently developed?

R: Um, yeah. Dubai, 10 years ago, it was completely desert. It was like just desert, there was nothing. There was like a few buildings. Whenever my dad went there, whenever my dad moved to Dubai, it was only, the tallest building in Dubai was only about like 10 stories, 10 story building. Now the tallest building, which is in Dubai, it has the tallest building in the world you know what I mean. And it just like you know it's beautiful there man and I don't know hahaha. Shit, I miss it now that we're talking about it I just want to go there. Dubai is beautiful. I love Dubai.

G: Do you parents still visit?

R: My parents, yeah my parents go there all the time, I am the one that doesn't go there cause I mean yeah I stay ya know , it just I got used to it here. And it is just hard for me to go. And even like last year, I was planning on going to Dubai and go to Jordan but um I literally paid for the tickets and everything but the pandemic happened so the stay at home order and uh they literally refunded me my money for the tickets and all that so I couldn't go but I am planning on going next year well see if everything works out I'm just gonna go there for like a month I would stat in Dubai for two weeks and Jordan and then come back to the united states.

G: Are you parents in Chicago?

R: My parents are overseas they come back and forth they go back and forth like um the united states, they go to Jordan, they go to Dubai, yeah my mom and dad are divorced so pretty much you could said my dad is the one who goes to Dubai. My mom, she goes to Dubai too. I have family there that are on my mom's side so she still go there. And um, yeah and my dad too. So even though my dad and mom aren't together and my dad is not on good terms with my uncle, my mom's brother, they're not on good terms, so they just don't talk, ya know they, she still go to Dubai to see her brothers and my dad too because he lived there for 36 years. They lived there for a long time. [pause]

I: So different from our life, we just grew up 20 minutes away.

R: Yeah I have been through a lot in life and everything. I have been through like a lot, a lot God knows stuff that I have been through here and like it made me more mature, it made me more like to know what to do. Even like my mom, my dad going through a divorce, whenever like my mom, my dad they went through a divorce when we first came to the United States. My uncles, they came out with some stuff, talking about my mom, saying that she's doing bad stuff, she's doing this, or that with this guy, which she wasn't. But the reason they did that was my Dad before we even came to the United States, we started our paperwork in like I told you 1995 and

my dad had money. And my uncle, even though he had money, he pretty much lost all of his money. And because he's rich, you can't just go like that and you go down, go broke, you can't live that lifestyle, yeah. Cause like you were rich and now you're poor all of the sudden. So pretty much he called my dad and he said like pretty much send me your money we will open a business and move to the united states you will have your own businesses blah blah blah. He was like we will be partners you know I will do the work and you have the money. And even all of my uncles were saying don't pay him, don't give him your money, blah blah blah. Well anyway he did, so making sure when we came here pretty much they started coming out with stuff about my mom just because like they want my dad to focus on my mom's situations and just to talk about this about his money, not ask about, so he doesn't ask for his money. And he started to come out with a lot of stuff and my dad like almost stayed here for 2 months when we first came to the united states stayed 2 months then we went back overseas. We stayed there for about 6 months, my brother stayed here and um my mom and my dad got divorced. After another 4 months me and my sister came to the united states. I have been here since then.

I: Okay [pause]. How was life like when you first got here I know you like left and came back but when you settled how was it?

R: Honestly, It was hard, really really hard. I was crying pretty much everyday like every night. I did not know English, that was one of the hardest parts like not understanding or being able to talk you know anything like that. My cousin talked to his friends, other than that just like you know they were like, my cousins, they were talking in English together so i did not understand you know I speak Arabic, and they speak English, or better than me. And even not being able to go out and explain and tell people what I really feel it really hurt. It is because I was holding it inside like for a really really long time and just like when I try and talk to somebody when I try and get it out I just like I won't be able to word it out for them you know what I mean so it was really really hard for me keeping it inside and just like holding it you know. It was just like stacking up and stacking up, and even like my mom's situation and my dad's situation, like all of that was literally just adding up, adding up, and this is what made me more mature and what made me know about life you know stuff that I have been through. Living with my uncle, I know he loved me but I was still not like his son and even though he wouldn't show that he likes his son more than me, obviously he loves his son more than me, but he wasn't showing me that but like you could still see it you know like every time they joking around it used to make me feel some type of way like why don't I have my dad with me? You know like my mom and dad went through a divorce but when I hear them say like "mom" it was to the point where I was missing literally calling, just like saying "hey mom, I'm hungry" you know I missed saying that literally at this point and its just like living there I was staying in my room pretty much the whole time, not leaving. Uh, just because you know like my religion, we're Muslim, so my cousin had to wear a hijab in front of me, it's like a hassle keeping it on. Imagine having something around your head in your house, and this is their house and want to be comfortable, so I try to keep

myself in my room. If I wanted to go outside, I would literally go outside for 5 minutes, I would try to stay outside for 20 minutes so I don't have to come back and knock on the door to tell the girls to put on their hijab. So first couple years it was like really really hard like I said not speaking English, all of the stuff I was going through, I was 13 years old not being with my mom, not being with my dad. Whenever me and my sister used to see them like that its not like they are treating their kids better than us, no they weren't. Everything they were getting for me cousins they were getting for me, everything they were getting for my cousin they would get for my sister too. But, I still felt some type of way you know. This is their mom, this is their family we are not. Me and my sister and my only brother we used to go to like go sit in our room and just cry you know. Like we need our parents to be with us. You know it was really hard.

G: It is like you are missing a piece of a puzzle, without your parents being there.

I: Yeah, so young too like that makes it very challenging. Even like as an 18 year old that would be very hard. [pause, interviewee became very emotional when reflecting on the hardships faced after immigration]

G: Take your time

R: I am sorry

I: You're fine

R: I appreciate you talking to us.

I: What is the next question?

R: [Discussed multiple possible questions] Did you have any other jobs?

I: Yes, I was selling 4 wheelers. I was still like a salesman, I did phones. I did actually work at, I was a cook. All of those businesses pretty much you could say family owned businesses. I was just working for my family, my dad's money, the money that my uncle took from my dad pretty much. Yeah I was working for family for a long time, I was pretty much a cook. For 9 months straight, I did not have any days off. I worked from 10 am to 11 pm every single day for 9 months I'm gonna be honest with you i only took 2 days off. It wasn't like back to back, but a um pretty much I only took 2 says off i was saving a lot of money and I was gonna open my own business. So yeah I was a cook, selling 4 wheelers, selling phones, working at a vape shop pretty much all of that. Helping people quit smoke cigarettes.

G: How did you become a salesman without any like, you just became a salesman cause you didn't have any college experience or anything?

R: Like I said, I didn't go to college, but just like I started after hip hop, hip hop is the restaurant I worked at, after working there for nine months, I saved a lot of money and this was when like I couldn't go outside. Literally every single day I would wake up at 10 take a shower and everything, get ready, go to work, and when i get off, we close at 11, by the time i got off it was almost 12. I go home take a shower. By the time I go to bed it is almost 1 and it would just be like that, literally that was every single day. Then, after that, I was like I'm trying to do something different. So like working with my uncle at the shop and seeing how they sell and i just became a good salesman. I was watching YouTube videos, I was watching like reading books, and all that, and I was like pretty much taught myself how to sell. Not bragging about myself, but I know how to sell. Thank God for that, learning, but I know how to sell.

G: When you were working that much was your family forcing you to work that much or were you just trying to save up?

R: No, I was, the way we were taught, I was just like why would I just go spend money and just like you know keep spending money. Why wouldn't I just save up and just be like the first few years of my life like the first 10 years after you turn 18 I had to like work hard, save up money. So after those 10 years, 32, 32, 35 I am set. I don't have, I could do whatever I want so I don't have to be like working hard and this and that this is the way I thought about it. So by the time I am 30, 35, you know my body is not going to be how it is now. So I would pretty much like work and work hard so by the time I am 35 I am set. I am sitting with my daughter, I can go on vacation wherever I want, I can have my own business and my own income whenever I want. This is how I thought about it cause I am not trying to only live day by day i am trying to plan for the future for my daughter. I will save up ahead of time so I do not have to keep working when I am older you know. Work when you are young, so when you are older, you are not working hard. Not like busting your ass.

R: Was that like a value of your family that kinda came down to you too.

I: Yes, all of us are like that, this is how all of us started. I know my dad had money and this and that but my dad is not the type of way where if he has money he will pass it to you. No, he wants me to work like he did when he was young so i could pretty much have taste with my money, know what to do with my money. Whenever that money is given to you, when you work hard for that money you know how to spend it. No work hard for your car, I paid for my car. Even though my dad had so much money in his bank account he never bought me a car. I paid for it. Going back and forth overseas, I paid for that. I wasn't even 18 I still worked. I was hustling. I was taking vapes and selling them and all that pretty much trying to make money.

R: Okay, so these are more about culture in general, so these are about marriage. In your culture, how are women viewed and what is their typical role?

I: In my culture bro, women have more rights than the men. In the religion I would say. They have to be treated more than the way men are treated. Honestly people look at Arabs and they think we are controlling our women, you have to wear a hijab, you have to do this. No, this is all up to you [the woman]. Like whenever we want to get married and we fall in love with somebody, we don't just go like you know take them and start dating and having sex. No, we date them, we love them and they love us, no we just wait for that day to marry the woman we love. We have never dated or had sex. When that day comes, I am able to marry her I would ask her parents and ask for her hand in marriage. The women has to be covered. Look at it this way. Get two suckers, take the wrapper off of one sucker and leave the other one closed. You will see the bugs going to the one that is unwrapped because they can see everything which is inside. So whenever it is covered and all that, no one is going to eat something from it. So, whenever the woman is covered up all her body parts is for her husband. Like, all her body parts the woman saves for her husband. Like whenever she is not covered everybody is gonna try to come to her everybody is gonna try to like take something from her, try to talk to her you know what I mean. So, and this is all up to her. We do not force our women to wear a hijab. We do not force our women to do this no this is all up to you. Like i said woman has more rights than the men does because of like you know the hijab they have to wear and all that stuff they have to do you know, and it just like um you know um in our culture there is some ignorant people that are making all Arab look bad just because the way they are just like forces them, some people like yeah they force them to do it. Some people, they beat their women, like literally I have seen that happen. And I've, its stupid, its crazy but um, those type of people make all of us look bad, and it's not really like that. But, like I said women have their rights, a lot of rights, more than men in our culture. It's all up to them if they want to wear a hijab, if they want to like you know pray to god or not, this is all up to you. Um, I can only think a woman cannot marry a non-Muslim guy.

I: Okay

R: Yeah, a woman cannot marry a non-Muslim guy, but a guy can marry a non-Muslim woman. Why is it like that? It's just because like women, they usually not religious as much as men are like Noah. Even though like you know when Eve was looking for Noah, and Noah was looking for him too, you know the story. Like, she find him in India, no they find each other in Saudi Arabia um she, pretty much that, she lied to him. She lied to him saying like I've been waiting for you the whole time, which she wasn't, she was looking for him. Other than that, like you know Adam's apple.

I: Oh, like Adam and Eve

R: Umm I forgot that word.

I: That's okay

R: The devil you know like told them to take the apple from that tree even though God told them not to take from that tree. So, the devil did know it was like a you know Eve was like take it take it. So Eve was the one who pressured who put pressure on Adam.

I: Mhm

R: So like this is how in my religion Eve was putting pressure on Adam and Adam went and take that apple like I know devil did tell Adam but pretty much in no one was like just take from it. And this is when God sent them to Earth you guys have read the bible. I have read the Bible too, like I've read the Bible so close like I'm dead-ass they are really close to each other like Quran and Bible are very close to each other. And even like the story we believe in we believe it, like we believe in Jesus. The only thing is just like I would say he is a prophet. We love Jesus, we believe in Jesus, but we also believe he is coming back, but we believe that he is a prophet he is not God. This is the only thing. We know that there is always one God. He created everything, all of the Prophets, he created all of earth, pretty much everything in six days. And um, going back to like what I was saying yeah, woman have more rights than men, just because like you know the stuff they go through and then they have to wear a hijab and all that. But like what I'm trying to tell you that we don't, we don't have to we don't have to pressure them mhm. But there is some ignorant people that are like they like pressure them I don't know they put pressure on their wife some people like I've seen woman was getting beaten by their husbands just because they're ignorant and they're old school they don't know how to think. But yeah. Did I answer it correctly?

I: Yeah yeah yeah, I'm just checking these questions.

R: So how do you balance your faith and your American Identity? I know it's kind of an obscure question, but

I: Well I'm not that religious that much honestly, so like I have to pray five times a day and I don't do that. So I do believe in God, I just don't pray that much but I do believe in and respect all religions. Yep

R: Okay

I: What factors play a role in marriage in your culture? Like I know you said like people don't really have sex before they get married so like on what basis do you pick a wife?

R: Like if I want to pick out a wife?

I: Yeah, well I'm not gonna go like just you know if i see somebody. No, I have to know this person that I want to marry I have to talk to her. Some people like you know marry through a relationship through love or you could just like you know, when I say some people look at it stupid, some people ask their mom, mom I want to get married you know you don't have a woman in your head or you're not in a relationship or anything you just want to get settled down you wanna marry. Your mom, she obviously you know has friends and all that so she pretty much tries to get you the right one, tryna get you the most beautiful one, trying to get you the one that cooks that cleans. You know, this is how it goes. So you pretty much tell your mom and your mom goes and starts looking around for you. And then shell find somebody for you. For a specific example, she find that one person for you and you guys will like your mom will go to them and like hey I want your daughter for my son, you know married and all that. So now, you go to see that woman. Pretty much you'll see after a little bit if she likes you and he likes her, then for example I would say okay we could get like um started with it. Pretty much you can start with it. Then what most people do, say about a year, sometimes two years to see if you really like that person or not. You do not have sex with them, nothing bro, like nothing. Just talking and all that and then after that, after like some people said they take one year some people take two years, they get engaged. And then they'll wait 1 or 2 years to see if they really like each other.

I: Okay

R: So pretty much you can give yourself time and giver her time to see if you really like each other. Some people will just do love, they love that person and start talking to them even though some people like don't want their sister to be talking to some guy, they don't want that they be doing it behind their back. So when that day comes, they'll come to my parents for example ask for my sister for example they will go to your parents and ask for your sister. Or go to somebody's daughter and they will so you know they would like to marry you. This is how it goes overseas.

I: Okay

R: So you pretty much go to them and ask for, we call it ask for their hand. So you can put the finger, put the ring on their finger. [pause]

G: And its not the same if you marry like non-Arabic? Like you just, like a catholic or something?

R: Yeah a Muslim could marry another Christian.

G: But you don't have to ask for their hand in marriage?

R: No, I mean you do it, like you know if I want to marry a Christian I still have to marry her through Islamic way. Like Islamic way you don't have to go to court you don't have to do all of that. If you wanna get married you just have to have 3 witnesses, you know you have to have like the guy from the church that marries you guys

G: Oh, the pastor

R: Pastor, yeah and we have the same exact thing we call them [unintelligible]. Yeah he has to be there and 3 witnesses. The court is only there for you rights and all that, this is the court stuff for. But actually a religious man has to marry you. And even here in Christianity and Islamic way. This court stuff is just for the record, you know what I mean, if you guys have a divorce. And you have properties and you have to split it this is why you have to go through all of that. But really, it has to be from a pastor.

I: Alright so we are like halfway through the questions, but we are at 40 minutes so I will just pick a couple more and then well be good.

R: Can you give me a second [takes from interview for 10 minutes]

I: So next, is like racism you have faced in America.

R: [Chuckles] There is a lot, a lot a lot. Um, can I say what happened exactly?

I: Yeah

R: Okay, so first thing that had ever happened to me or I would kinda say I went off on him. Which I think was kinda bad but at the same time it was at the store too. It was in Florida and I had a lot of customers, too and they all stood with me. It was the guys fault. I had an African American come to me at the store and I was trying to sell him, i don't know exactly what he was trying to get but we were getting in an argument and he was talking crap and stuff and it came to the point where he said you need to go back to our country, go back to where you're from, you don't belong here, calling me stupid, calling me racist, and a terrorist and all that stuff. I was like now, you're in my store, you come in telling me saying that so pretty much i stopped him i said listen bro, I know he was saying go back to your country go bomb people there that is what he was saying, so okay if you want to take it that way I can take it that way to you so pretty much

what I told him listen man I came to this country I paid for my own ticket, you were on a ship, chains around your neck, like I had to say it I'm sorry about it like he pissed me off I was like chain around your neck, I cam on my own, I pay taxes I'm a U.S. citizen, I have a passport here, so dont be saying like go back to your country, I paid for my own ticket you had chains around your neck you came here as a slave as soon as he heard that he walked out. I apologized to my customers and said i just had to do it the way he was talking to me. They were like no man you're good, I know it was harsh of me but why would you come up to me saying I'm going to bomb and everything? America is not anyone's land. Over 50% of people in America are immigrants, literally foreigners. Back in the day you know who is the real people? Native American. Even like you guys you were not originally from here you guys already know that. This is pretty much everyone's country. There is like a lot it's not just based in America. And this is the stuff that's happened to me, and this is kind of you know the harshest way taken care of and that many really really pissed me off that I was gonna bomb, that I bomb people and I should go back to my country. And when he said that I just had to say it to him. I know it was harsh but like I said I had to say it to him. He just pissed me off. And I honestly thought he was gonna beat me up but he turned around and left. Even the customers were yelling at him. I've experienced more crazy people but I don't know why. First slavery went away in the north and then after in five years it went away down south. So there is more racism down south. A lot of stuff happened but that was the harshest one. I just had to say something to him. Idk if you want me to say something else beside that I've just had a lot of people who have called me a bomber, telling me to go back to my country. When i first came to America I did not know English well so people would just make fun of me to the point where like my cousins were making fun of me not being able to speak English. I'm still not perfect, I'm still practicing, sometimes when i piss my baby mama off you know she tries to correct me and make fun of me and then like ill be like well how many languages do you speak? Well I speak English, I speak Arabic, I know a little bit of Indian, you know and I'm working on my Spanish so shut the fuck up. Like I'm definitely smarter, well not really, but I know more than one language. She got pissed as fuck but I don't know man when it comes to that, when I want to talk to somebody that way I'm gonna think about it. Like this person could be way smarter than you, this person could be intelligent, Before you say something to somebody you should count to ten, you could hurt somebody really bad by just saying one word. Like one time it happened here [referring to current place of work] this homeless guy was telling me to go back to my country you bomb people and all of that.

G: Was that the guy who-

R: The homeless guy who broke the window, mhm.

I: They're coming for your service, and then they are saying these things to you

R: Exactly they come saying all of these things. I was like man this is my country im not going back to my country. I've been here for a long time. The only thing is I wasn't born here, the only thing is that I cant be president. [laughter]

I: Do you think it was 9/11 that spurred on most of the racism in America?

R: I would say kind of, yes... In my religion it says I have to respect your religion. It says you have your own religion and I have my own religion. This is how you guys want to do it, this is how we do it in the Quran. I just want you guys to respect my religion. I respect your opinion that Jesus is god, this is how we were taught. I respect their opinions no matter who they are.

G: It just gives you guys a bad rep.

R: A bad rep?

I: Reputation, short for reputation

R: Just say reputation!

[Discussion continues about past experience moving to Georgia and then to Florida, but interviewee was not comfortable sharing some of the details surrounding this experience]

