

Interview (Part 1) with Taqi Daryabi on March 26, 2023

0:00:02.000,0:00:06.000

Hello! Good afternoon, hi, Taqi. It's so nice to see you!

0:00:06.000,0:00:09.000

Good afternoon, Professor. Nice to see you, too!

0:00:09.000,0:00:14.000

Thank you so much for taking the time to tell me your story.

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My name is Heather Bruce Satrom. I teach in the English Language for Academic Purposes program at Montgomery College.

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As you know, this project is called History In the Making: Documenting Stories of Immigrant and Refugee students at MC.

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The goal is to help others better understand the experiences of immigrants and refugees in Montgomery County, Maryland. Telling your story

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will enable others to better understand the challenges that immigrants and refugees face, and better appreciate the resilience and perseverance of people in your community.

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I am grateful for your participation.

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Thank you so much.

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Today is Sunday, March 26, 2023.

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This is the first of two interviews. This first interview will be related to your experiences growing up in Afghanistan,

0:01:06.000,0:01:14.000

your country of origin. And then next week we will meet again and talk more about your experiences here in the United States.

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You had a chance to read the interview questions in advance.

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But please note that all of these questions are optional.

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Feel free to let me know if you want to skip a question, or if you need to take a break, just let me know. And this will take about one hour.

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I'm going to set my timer right now.

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Here we go for one hour.

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Alright. So my first question for you is, could you tell me your full name and spell it for me,

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please?

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My full name is Mohammad Taqi Daryabi. It's m, o, h, a, m, m, a, d,

0:01:53.000,0:02:00.000

space, t, a, q, i, and space d, a, r, y, a, b, i.

0:02:00.000,0:02:03.000

And do I have permission to record this interview?

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Of course, you do.

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Alright, so do people in the United States have trouble saying or pronouncing your first name?

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Yeah, most of the people who cannot talk in Persian, pronounce my

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first name "Taqi." My first name is "Mohammed Taqi," but I would like others to call me "Taqi," and they're calling me "Taqi." But in Persian,

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actually, it is Tati. People have trouble with pronouncing "T."

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I don't know if it is hard for them, or..

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I even have trouble, when you say that it sounds different, the way that you're saying it,

0:02:51.000,0:02:58.000

it sounds the same to me. And you were saying earlier before I started recording, that your first name has a meaning.

0:02:58.000,0:03:00.000

Do you want to talk about that?

0:03:00.000,0:03:11.000

-Yeah. "Taqi" means patient.

-Patient.

0:03:11.000,0:03:26.000

And I don't know how much it could be true about me, but..

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The meaning of my name is "precious."

0:03:30.000,0:03:31.000

I mean that

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the meaning of my name reminds me of my father who is patient, the most patient person in the world I know, is my father.

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I lived with him for a long time, and I know him.

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And yeah, that's the meaning of "Taqi."

-Can you give an example of how your father is patient?

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I remember the days that we were in Jaghori Ghazni, Afghanistan, and the situation

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in our family was not really good, our economy was not very good, but my father was..

0:04:18.000,0:04:38.000

his patience helped him pass those days, and make solutions for the problems that we had in Afghanistan.

0:04:38.000,0:04:42.000

In those hard days, my father didn't give up.

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I mean, his patience helped him to just think very well, and helped him to make a way for all of us to get out of that situation, and you know that my first 10 years of my life,

0:05:00.000,0:05:09.000

it was not that much good, but it became after that, so.. My father was there.

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I mean, I was a boy, a small boy. I couldn't help him, but he did all of the things that we needed for the whole family.

0:05:22.000,0:05:38.000

We are.. My family is a big family, but my father's patience those days. I will never forget

0:05:38.000,0:05:42.000

those days, and I will never forget my father's patience.

0:05:42.000,0:05:47.000

Thank you so much for sharing that. So tell me, where do you live now?

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Are you in Silver Spring?

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Yes, I live in Silver Spring.

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And you work at the Cultural Arts Center at Montgomery College?

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Yes, as a theatre technician, I work there.

0:05:59.000,0:06:02.000

As a.. say again?

0:06:02.000,0:06:03.000

Theatre technician.

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Tell me a little bit about

0:06:04.000,0:06:07.000

your work as a technician there.

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It's more like having fun. I mean, I work there, but not a lot. Most of the time it's two days a week, or there we can..

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It's mostly on weekends. And our day is with the cameras, I mean setting up the cameras with the white balance and settings of the camera.

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And also I work on audio board, soundboard, I mean.. and also on lightboard.

0:06:42.000,0:06:43.000

Interesting!

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So, right.. I'm not a professional at lightboard and soundboard too much.

0:06:48.000,0:06:59.000

But I'm professional about the cameras. The manager that always helped me to learn something new.

0:06:59.000,0:07:19.000

He's always telling me that "you're good with cameras," and he's always asking for my help to do.. to work on the cameras and setting them up, to record any program that we have and any event that is happening there.

0:07:19.000,0:07:21.000

So, yeah..

0:07:21.000,0:07:24.000

And you also work in journalism. Is that right?

0:07:24.000,0:07:32.000

Yes, I work at Etilaatroz, as a video editor, photographer and videographer.

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I don't write any reports. I mean, I don't make any interviews, but these are the teams that I'm doing here. And right now I'm at the office of Etilaatroz making this interview from the video room.

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So the can you tell us

0:07:51.000,0:08:02.000

a little bit more about this news organization, that's here, but it's gathering information to send to people back in Afghanistan?

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geared more towards the Afghan community here in the United States.

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Okay. Etilaatroz was founded in 2012. My brother, my oldest brother, Zaqi, is the founder of Etilaatroz.

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He did a lot to make

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Etilaatroz as a popular news organization in Afghanistan. In the past 10 years, Etilaatroz has a lot of achievements.

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It was started with four or five, or maybe seven people.

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But right now there are more than 50 people working for Etilaatroz.

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All around in Afghanistan and all around the world, from Spain to Turkey and to Canada and the United States.

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So..

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Yeah, it was founded in 2012. And I started working

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with Etilaatroz from 2019. It's about four years that I'm working for Etilaatroz as a video editor and photographer and videographer.

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This for people who are watching this, then the organization means Etilaatroz, I don't think I'm pronouncing that right. "Etilaatroz,"

0:09:35.000,0:09:38.000

is that right? It means "daily information."

-Yeah.

0:09:38.000,0:09:43.000

Right. And also we have the English version. We just started

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the English version. It's "Kabul Now." It is under the Etilaatroz

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programs and it's publishing the news from Afghanistan and the stories out of Afghanistan in English

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version. That is "Kabul Now" and it is a part of Etilaatroz.

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We just started that to make some foreign audience, and those who are interested with Afghanistan issues, they could find

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the information they need from there. So, our colleagues from Canada

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and here, they are working every week, every day to publish the news stories

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and everything that is happening in Afghanistan and giving information about the conditions and the situation in Afghanistan.. What's happening there..

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And what's going on. And sometimes some articles that talk about the future that, what will happen in the future if this goes this way and that way..

0:10:54.000,0:11:07.000
So, yeah, it is Kabul Now. So if anyone wants to follow Afghanistan's stories, they can follow Kabul Now and read these stories.

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Got it. Okay, great. Thank you. I'll have to check that out.

0:11:11.000,0:11:19.000
I want to go back in time and we'll come back to your work as a journalist later.

0:11:19.000,0:11:26.000
But let's start right from the beginning. Where and when were you born?

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I was born in 2000 in Ghazni, my birthplace is Ghazni, in a village called Jaghori.

0:11:37.000,0:11:43.000
It was 2000. Yeah. December 19, 2000.

0:11:43.000,0:11:46.000
I was born in Jaghori, Ghazni, Afghanistan.

0:11:46.000,0:11:51.000
And can you tell me a little bit about your family? You mentioned that you have a big family?

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Yes, I do. My parents and.. I have four brothers and three sisters. Two of my brothers are here with me, and one of my sister also.

0:12:04.000,0:12:10.000
Others are in Pakistan and in Afghanistan.

0:12:10.000,0:12:19.000
My parents, and one of my sister and two of my brothers are in Pakistan, and one of my sisters, who got married,

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20 years ago, she lives in Afghanistan with her family.

0:12:27.000,0:12:31.000
And yeah..

0:12:31.000,0:12:36.000
That's all. Yeah, two of my brothers got married as well.

0:12:36.000,0:12:49.000
Both of them have their children and their kids. The oldest brother has three kids and..

0:12:49.000,0:12:53.000
The youngest.. the other one was younger than him. He has two kids.

0:12:53.000,0:12:56.000
And in the order of the family, with your siblings,

0:12:56.000,0:12:59.000
where do you come? Are you the youngest? in the middle?

0:12:59.000,0:13:01.000
Where do you fall?

0:13:01.000,0:13:08.000
I'm not the youngest. I have a sister who is younger than me, but after her,

0:13:08.000,0:13:10.000
it's me. I'm the youngest brother.

0:13:10.000,0:13:14.000
I'm the younger brother, but not the youngest.

0:13:14.000,0:13:17.000
So you're six of seven. Is that right?

0:13:17.000,0:13:21.000
I'm seven of eight.

0:13:21.000,0:13:27.000
Seven of eight, okay. And did you like growing up in a big family and being the youngest brother?

0:13:27.000,0:13:32.000
Of course, especially now. It is..

0:13:32.000,0:13:41.000
It's a luck. If you are the youngest, because the oldest one have always to work, have always to feed others.

0:13:41.000,0:13:52.000
First, your father, after your father, once your brother got old he has to help your father, and so on.

0:13:52.000,0:13:55.000
A lot of responsibilities for the oldest ones.

0:13:55.000,0:14:03.000
Right, right. I didn't have a lot of responsibilities in Afghanistan. But I had in the home, but not outside of the home.

0:14:03.000,0:14:09.000
I mean, I didn't work a lot in Afghanistan, and I didn't help..

0:14:09.000,0:14:16.000
I didn't have to help my family making money, or something like that, or..

0:14:16.000,0:14:19.000
So you feel lucky to be the youngest brother.

0:14:19.000,0:14:21.000
Of course.

0:14:21.000,0:14:22.000
Can you tell me

0:14:22.000,0:14:30.000
a little bit about your neighborhood and community? You said it's a village where you grew up. Can you tell me how big it was?

0:14:30.000,0:14:34.000

What it was like? Describe it to me a little bit

0:14:34.000,0:14:39.000

your neighborhood and community.

0:14:39.000,0:14:49.000

The place I was born in is Jaghori, but if you make it smaller it's going to be "Hotqool.. "

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If you make it also smaller, it is "Kolay." I was born in Kolay and the community that I grow up in is Kolay and Hotqool. And there, people used to know each other a lot.

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I mean most of the people there know me right now, but I didn't know them.

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The community there.. I mean, it's the way that people are seeing each other a lot, meeting each other a lot, and they have parties and programs that they can meet each other in those parties and programs. And they always make that practice, for example, once a month.

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About how many people live there?

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I'm not sure, but if I tell Kolay, it is about 200-300 people.

0:15:53.000,0:15:54.000

Oh! So very small.

0:15:54.000,0:16:03.000

-It goes to, Hotqool is thousands, I mean, there's a lot.
-So very rural, like in the countryside.

0:16:03.000,0:16:04.000

Right, right.

0:16:04.000,0:16:05.000

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Can you describe a little bit your home growing up, what your house was like?

0:16:10.000,0:16:17.000

It was not a modern house. It was an old house that my father built.

0:16:17.000,0:16:31.000

And the house that I grow up in is made by, what do you call it.. it's not modern.

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It does not have, for example, bathrooms, toilets, and so on.

0:16:38.000,0:16:45.000

It was.. it is an old house. Where you..

0:16:45.000,0:16:50.000

Where you don't have a lot of..

0:16:50.000,0:16:56.000

What should I say? What can I say?

0:16:56.000,0:17:04.000

-Did you have electricity in the house?
-We had, but for three hours in 24 hours.

0:17:04.000,0:17:05.000

Wow!

0:17:05.000,0:17:14.000

Just for three hours, and it was.. we had a machine..

0:17:14.000,0:17:15.000

A generator?

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Yeah, generator, right. We had a generator, a big generator, and it was spreading the electricity to all the village.

0:17:22.000,0:17:26.000

I mean, it was not our own generator.

0:17:26.000,0:17:39.000

It was in the mosque and it was giving the electricity to more than 25 or 30 home, 30 houses.

0:17:39.000,0:17:49.000

But it was for three hours. We couldn't, for example, we couldn't use the refrigerator and something that needs more power.

0:17:49.000,0:17:53.000

Only lights and nothing else. Only lights and television, right.

0:17:53.000,0:18:00.000

We had a television in Jaghori. I remember that television.

0:18:00.000,0:18:08.000

And we were one of the first families that could have a television.

0:18:08.000,0:18:17.000

I remember the days that my uncle's family, their children,

0:18:17.000,0:18:28.000

were coming to our home during the night to watch movies and TV shows into that small screen of television that we had.

0:18:28.000,0:18:40.000

It was a 14 inch television, but we were gathering to watch different kinds of movies, different kinds of series.

0:18:40.000,0:18:41.000

0:18:41.000,0:18:45.000

-What kind of movies did you watch?

-Sorry?

0:18:45.000,0:18:50.000

What kind of movies and series did you watch?

0:18:50.000,0:18:59.000

Different kind of movies. I mean, most of the time.. mostly series, TV shows.

0:18:59.000,0:19:01.000

Were they made in Afghanistan?

0:19:01.000,0:19:08.000

No, no, they were for young service like, I remember, a service named...

0:19:08.000,0:19:15.000

It was about a horse and a horse rider.

0:19:15.000,0:19:18.000

I think it was made in Poland.

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Interesting.

0:19:19.000,0:19:42.000

Yeah, it was made in Poland. The whole service was about a horse that was so strong, and it was that the horse rider always participated in races, and the horse always won the race.

0:19:42.000,0:19:45.000

Interesting how these memories stay with us from when we were..

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Yeah, because of that service

0:19:48.000,0:20:15.000

we had goat. I mean, in our family, in our village, every family has their own goat and sheep. And to make yogurt at the end of the year, having meat, and something like that. We had 45

0:20:15.000,0:20:18.000

goats and sheep.

0:20:18.000,0:20:19.000

45 goats and sheep?

0:20:19.000,0:20:26.000

Yeah. Goats and sheep, and one of those goats got a baby.

0:20:26.000,0:20:27.000

Had a baby.

0:20:27.000,0:20:35.000

Yeah. I named that baby Mishkin. And I grew that..

0:20:35.000,0:20:50.000

And he.. that baby became my friend, I mean, whenever I called "Mishkin," come in, he was coming, really.

0:20:50.000,0:21:08.000

-That's a really great story.

-This series was affecting me a lot. And that was the the most beautiful series that I watched in my childhood and I cannot forget those days.

0:21:08.000,0:21:09.000

And it must have been..

0:21:09.000,0:21:16.000

especially the gathering, because you know that 10 to 15 kids are gathering

0:21:16.000,0:21:28.000

and watching it. Series like that. That was amazing. And tomorrow, the day after that night, when we were getting out of home and meeting our friends in the village,

0:21:28.000,0:21:35.000

we used to talk about that series.

"What happened last night? What happened in that episode?"

0:21:35.000,0:21:51.000

-I love that! Thar's a really good memory. And you had to watch it late at night, because that's when the generator would come on?

-The generator was turning on about seven.

0:21:51.000,0:21:52.000

We had electricity from 7-9.

0:21:52.000,0:21:53.000

0:21:53.000,0:22:02.000

Sometimes from 7 to 10. The series was published at around that time.

0:22:02.000,0:22:07.000

About how many people would gather in your house to watch this show?

0:22:07.000,0:22:23.000

Sometimes 10, sometimes 15. It was.. It depends on their existence in their apartment, because sometimes they were going to their friends house and they couldn't join us.

0:22:23.000,0:22:24.000

0:22:24.000,0:22:28.000

About how old were you when you would have these parties?

0:22:28.000,0:22:33.000

About.. I was about six or seven years old.

0:22:33.000,0:22:41.000

That's a very sweet memory. I like that. You mentioned that your family had goats and sheep.

0:22:41.000,0:22:45.000

Was it your responsibility to help out with that?

0:22:45.000,0:22:48.000

Can you describe some of your responsibilities growing up?

0:22:48.000,0:23:00.000

Yeah, I don't remember the responsibilities for these goats and sheep, because we had to take them out to the mountains everyday.

0:23:00.000,0:23:10.000

-Okay.

-For one, two, or three hours sometimes. And I every day took the sheep and goats out to the mountains, to feed them.

0:23:10.000,0:23:11.000

0:23:11.000,0:23:16.000

We couldn't feed them at the house completely.

0:23:16.000,0:23:28.000

I mean, we didn't have enough food for them, and we were getting them out to the mountains to eat whatever was growing up in the mountains.

0:23:28.000,0:23:32.000

So, it was my responsibility, because I was the smallest one.

0:23:32.000,0:23:38.000

A small boy, and that was my responsibility to take them out and feed them and

0:23:38.000,0:23:55.000

get them back to home. Mostly it was during the evening, I mean, in the evening, I used to take the goats and sheep out and feed them, and get them back.

0:23:55.000,0:23:58.000

And you would be gone for.. you said about three hours at a time,

0:23:58.000,0:23:59.000

while you would do this?

0:23:59.000,0:24:04.000

Yeah. It was two hours, three hours.

0:24:04.000,0:24:06.000

Would you go by yourself, or with a brother?

0:24:06.000,0:24:20.000

No, with other.. with my friends around the village, because every boy, every small boy has the responsibility to take their sheep and goats to the mountains, and we were going together.

0:24:20.000,0:24:27.000

I mean 5 to 10 friends. We are going together

0:24:27.000,0:24:32.000

and we were spending our time together.

0:24:32.000,0:24:38.000

Once we got to the mountains, we were leaving the sheep and goats to their own.

0:24:38.000,0:24:42.000

We were playing with each other, playing football, playing volleyball

0:24:42.000,0:24:57.000
because we have the playground. We made the playground in the mountains, you found the places,
and make that ground to play football or volleyball, and sometimes cricket.

0:24:57.000,0:25:03.000
Yeah, we had our fun, our time,

0:25:03.000,0:25:08.000
and the goats and sheep had their own.

0:25:08.000,0:25:15.000
Do you think about these experiences sometimes now, when you're going for long walks?

0:25:15.000,0:25:25.000
You mentioned that you like to walk in Rock Creek Park. You probably pass by soccer fields and
see children playing. Does it remind you of your experiences?

0:25:25.000,0:25:34.000
Yeah, experiences are always with me, and especially beautiful experiences like this, because
maybe it was..

0:25:34.000,0:25:42.000
It looks like..

0:25:42.000,0:25:46.000
That it's not good for someone.. for a kid like me to have

0:25:46.000,0:25:51.000
these responsibilities at that age. But, those were beautiful.

0:25:51.000,0:25:55.000
Yeah, those were beautiful. We had our time, we had our fun,

0:25:55.000,0:26:01.000
we had our friends, and we are helping our parent and family.

0:26:01.000,0:26:02.000
Definitely.

0:26:02.000,0:26:08.000
That's nice that I could help them. And whenever I'm going to Rock Creek..

0:26:08.000,0:26:13.000
Rock creek is not reminding me of those experience, those memories,

0:26:13.000,0:26:20.000
because Rock Creek is not the same as those places, because the mountains were out of tree.

0:26:20.000,0:26:33.000
There was no tree, there was no grass, it was a different place, and Rock Creek is a different
place.

0:26:33.000,0:26:34.000
So.. But if I go to a mountain around Maryland or the United States, of course, it will remind
me

0:26:34.000,0:26:47.000
of those days. Mountains are reminding me. Yeah.

0:26:47.000,0:26:56.000
Mountains. Yes. Do you ever go to Shenandoah to the mountains out in Virginia?

0:26:56.000,0:27:00.000
No! I didn't have the chance.

0:27:00.000,0:27:01.000

0:27:01.000,0:27:02.000
I'm always.. yeah..

0:27:02.000,0:27:13.000

So you mentioned that, if we go back to when you were a child, that you would.. your family kept the sheep and the goats for milk, and to make cheese.

0:27:13.000,0:27:19.000

Can you talk a little bit about traditional foods that you ate when you were growing up?

0:27:19.000,0:27:24.000

As I said before, my family was not a rich family.

0:27:24.000,0:27:31.000

We were poor, at those first 10 years. 10 years, or 15 years!

0:27:31.000,0:27:39.000

The foods that we were eating,

0:27:39.000,0:27:43.000

is not good enough, I mean..

0:27:43.000,0:27:50.000

Every lunch, we have just one food, the same thing, every lunch. But during the night we could have something different.

0:27:50.000,0:28:03.000

For example, you're not frequently eating meat or something that had a good.. not a good meal.

0:28:03.000,0:28:12.000

We couldn't have a good meal, because we were not able to have it. The foods that we were eating was made by..

0:28:12.000,0:28:19.000

I don't know the word, but let me search it.

0:28:19.000,0:28:26.000

For example, can I have just..

0:28:26.000,0:28:35.000

Yeah, sure. Take your time. That's fine.

0:28:35.000,0:28:40.000

Most of the food that we were eating was made it wheat.

0:28:40.000,0:28:45.000

I mean, most of the times, we had bread, just bread.

0:28:45.000,0:28:48.000

Yeah, with a cup of tea and some sugar, something like that.

0:28:48.000,0:29:07.000

That was the breakfast that we had. For lunch, we had dried bread. I mean, the dry bread that was sliced up very small in small pieces, and was mixed by..

0:29:07.000,0:29:18.000

We were mixing that sliced pieces of bread with some yogurt and eat that.

0:29:18.000,0:29:27.000

That was out lunch. A mix of bread and yogurt.

0:29:27.000,0:29:39.000

Most of the time, that was our lunch. And for dinner we usually heated beans, and sometime rice.

0:29:39.000,0:29:52.000

I don't.. I cannot forget this, how much I loved to eat rice every day, because it was a rare food for us in those times.

0:29:52.000,0:29:54.000

Interesting!

0:29:54.000,0:30:00.000

Yeah, and..

0:30:00.000,0:30:08.000
Like spagette sometimes, and something different.

0:30:08.000,0:30:14.000
Was it your mother and sisters who were responsible for preparing the food?

0:30:14.000,0:30:23.000
Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Others couldn't cook. Only my sister. Not the oldest one because she got married.

0:30:23.000,0:30:24.000
Her husband home..

0:30:24.000,0:30:36.000
And the younger than that one, she was always cooking, or my mother. My mother was old at those years, but she was helping with cooking

0:30:36.000,0:30:45.000
the foods and preparing the bread. The bread was prepared by my mother.

0:30:45.000,0:30:48.000
It was a delicious bread.

0:30:48.000,0:31:05.000
One thing that I cannot forget about Afghanistan is the bread that we used to eat with every meal in Afghanistan. If you saw a person somewhere that is eating bread with rice or something else, believe that is an Afghan.

0:31:05.000,0:31:10.000
You can understand that that person is an Afghan, because Afghans

0:31:10.000,0:31:15.000
love to eat bread with every meal.

0:31:15.000,0:31:22.000
Did she cook.. Did your sister or mother cook the bread outside?

0:31:22.000,0:31:29.000
No. We had a small room. My father that built that building..

0:31:29.000,0:31:30.000
Yeah.

0:31:30.000,0:31:37.000
He built a room for doing cooking stuff and making bread, and something like that.

0:31:37.000,0:31:41.000
We had..

0:31:41.000,0:31:44.000
the microwave.. not a microwave..

0:31:44.000,0:31:56.000
Let me search for it. It was like an oven,

0:31:56.000,0:31:57.000
Okay.

0:31:57.000,0:32:01.000
but it was not an electric oven. It was built by my father.

0:32:01.000,0:32:13.000
And we used to burn some woods and something like that to make the bread, so.. I'll send you a picture

0:32:13.000,0:32:14.000
if I could find..

0:32:14.000,0:32:17.000
That'll be great. Yeah, I'm sure we would love to see that.

0:32:17.000,0:32:20.000
I'll send it, right.

0:32:20.000,0:32:22.000
You mentioned

0:32:22.000,0:32:35.000
earlier in the conversation, that sometimes in your community, there would be parties or gatherings. Can you talk about any memories you have about special holidays,

0:32:35.000,0:32:42.000
or parties that you remember, or weddings? Do you have any memories of that from when you were a child?

0:32:42.000,0:32:55.000
Yes, when I was a child, we had holidays every year for three times. Special holidays were Nowruz.

0:32:55.000,0:32:56.000
Nowruz.

0:32:56.000,0:33:00.000
Nowruz, the first day of the year

0:33:00.000,0:33:01.000
in Afghanistan.

0:33:01.000,0:33:04.000
-Is it the celebration of spring? Yes!

0:33:04.000,0:33:11.000
Yes, yes, it's the first day of the spring. We call it Nowruz, and also the Eid.

0:33:11.000,0:33:16.000
Eid days. We have Eid for two times,

0:33:16.000,0:33:24.000
and we call the first Eid, it is after..

0:33:24.000,0:33:25.000
Ramadan?

0:33:25.000,0:33:37.000
Ramadan, yes, it is after Ramadan. The second one is called Eid al-Qurban, that people go to Mecca and Arabistan and coming back, and that's for that.

0:33:37.000,0:33:41.000
And for each Eid, or Nowruz,

0:33:41.000,0:33:46.000
we had three holidays and three days to be free.

0:33:46.000,0:33:54.000
Can you describe, since it's springtime now, can you tell me a little bit about Nowruz? How you celebrated it?

0:33:54.000,0:34:00.000
When I was a child, the most beautiful thing,

0:34:00.000,0:34:19.000
that was beautiful for me in those days, was to get money from others. As in Nowruz, the older ones used to give the small, or the kids, like me..

0:34:19.000,0:34:25.000
They used to give some money to them as a gift or like that. We loved to get money.

0:34:25.000,0:34:30.000
I, especially me, in each Eid,

0:34:30.000,0:34:36.000
or Nowruz,

0:34:36.000,0:34:40.000

I was collecting, for example, like \$2.. In Afghani,

0:34:40.000,0:34:50.000

it's about hundred Afghani. And I was happy for that, because I could have.. I could buy with that money toys.

0:34:50.000,0:34:51.000

0:34:51.000,0:34:53.000

What kind of toys would you buy?

0:34:53.000,0:34:58.000

Cars. I loved to get cars.

0:34:58.000,0:35:00.000

Like the matchbox cars?

0:35:00.000,0:35:07.000

Yes, matchbox, kind of.

0:35:07.000,0:35:14.000

Once I got bigger, I mean, once I was 9 years, or 10 years old, I used to buy guns.

0:35:14.000,0:35:26.000

I mean gun toys, something like that, to play with others in the village. It was just a toy, but it was in the market and we used to buy them.

0:35:26.000,0:35:31.000

Can you talk a little bit about Eid at the end of Ramadan?

0:35:31.000,0:35:32.000

What that kind of celebration was like when you were growing up?

0:35:32.000,0:35:39.000

0:35:39.000,0:35:46.000

After.. we call it..

0:35:46.000,0:35:56.000

People in Afghanistan are fasting for one month. They don't eat during the day, just

0:35:56.000,0:36:05.000

they are allowed to eat during the night after the Mulla is singing the prayer.. started the prayer.

0:36:05.000,0:36:10.000

After that, they could eat.

0:36:10.000,0:36:18.000

And it's about a month that people are fasting, and after a month, they have a celebration day for that month.

0:36:18.000,0:36:23.000

I mean, it's a religious party.

0:36:23.000,0:36:28.000

It is in Afghanistan. It is in our culture in Afghanistan.

0:36:28.000,0:36:32.000

I didn't..

0:36:32.000,0:36:36.000

I was not at the age to fast, because I was a kid.

0:36:36.000,0:36:40.000

There is a special age for that that you're required

0:36:40.000,0:36:54.000
to fast in Afghanistan, and that is.. It's different for boys and girls. Girls should pass the age of 9 or 10, but boys are.. boys are boys!

0:36:54.000,0:37:01.000
That's the difference between boys and girls in Afghanistan, and I'm sad for that.

0:37:01.000,0:37:05.000
Boys are..

0:37:05.000,0:37:26.000
Boys have to fast at the age of 14, I think, or 16, but girls are at the age of 9. So I was not at the age to fast. But yeah, young people, and old people were fasting, and after one month

0:37:26.000,0:37:31.000
they celebrate for that. This is the way that they pray. I mean..

0:37:31.000,0:37:35.000
This is a praying way that they're fasting.

0:37:35.000,0:37:44.000
You mentioned.. I think anybody who's interested in learning about Afghanistan probably has questions about how..

0:37:44.000,0:37:53.000
about differences between how girls and boys are raised, or about how men and women are treated? Do you want to talk a little bit about that? Any memories of that

0:37:53.000,0:38:06.000
when you were growing up, when you first became aware of these differences? For example, you mentioned girls having to do the fast at age 9 but boy, not until age 14.

0:38:06.000,0:38:18.000
-Did you notice those kind of differences early on?
-Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I noticed this difference when I was 11 or 12, I think.

0:38:18.000,0:38:19.000

0:38:19.000,0:38:20.000
My parents told me that,

0:38:20.000,0:38:30.000
be prepared to get fast in the next two years, or three years make your body ready for that.

0:38:30.000,0:38:31.000
Yeah.

0:38:31.000,0:38:37.000
I didn't fast more than 15 years in my whole life.

0:38:37.000,0:38:54.000
I cheat my family, and I cheat everyone. I was not a religious person, believe me, because I didn't believe in those thoughts and beliefs that others had.

0:38:54.000,0:38:55.000

0:38:55.000,0:38:57.000
So, I just fast for 15 years.

0:38:57.000,0:39:07.000
But yeah, I realized this difference at the age of 11 or 12, that some of my friends they were girls,

0:39:07.000,0:39:08.000
but they were fasting.

0:39:08.000,0:39:25.000
They were 10 years and they were fasting. They had to fast, because there was an obligation from the parents that they couldn't eat during Ramadan and they had fast.

0:39:25.000,0:39:34.000

0:39:34.000,0:39:43.000

But other differences for the boys and girls in Afghanistan, in how they are growing up..

0:39:43.000,0:39:50.000

There are a lot. There are a lot.

0:39:50.000,0:39:52.000

I mean..

0:39:52.000,0:39:57.000

Depends on what we are talking. I mean..

0:39:57.000,0:40:01.000

Would you like to talk about, maybe about education?

0:40:01.000,0:40:23.000

Right now, as you can see, maybe you're reading the stories and articles that girls are not allowed to educate. But on those times, they were allowed. I mean, there was no difference between girls and boys. Before we start the school, we used to go to the mosque and start

0:40:23.000,0:40:43.000

the religious education that the Mullas were teaching in the mosques. I myself, I started reading and writing even before going to mosque, because my father was a good man.

0:40:43.000,0:40:56.000

He was working with Americans, and with the projects that were given by American NGOs.

0:40:56.000,0:41:02.000

-What kind of work did your father do?

-My father studied gardening.

0:41:02.000,0:41:03.000

0:41:03.000,0:41:11.000

He used to go out of the village and other provinces. He was working with companies..

0:41:11.000,0:41:18.000

Let me see..

0:41:18.000,0:41:23.000

He was working with gardening and institutes.

0:41:23.000,0:41:28.000

And yeah, his job was gardening.

0:41:28.000,0:41:34.000

He was a lucky man and he could study in Kabul University.

0:41:34.000,0:41:38.000

His major was gardening.

0:41:38.000,0:41:40.000

Agriculture work?

0:41:40.000,0:41:41.000

Yeah.

0:41:41.000,0:41:45.000

So your father encouraged you to

0:41:45.000,0:41:50.000

read in an early age.

-Yeah. He taught me how to write and how to read.

0:41:50.000,0:41:59.000

He was out for three months, and sometimes for one year. I couldn't see him for one year

0:41:59.000,0:42:00.000
in my childhood.

0:42:00.000,0:42:10.000
And once he was coming back, he always brought me some gifts, like notebooks, new books,

0:42:10.000,0:42:14.000
a bag and pen and pencils.

0:42:14.000,0:42:24.000
Also apples, food, something like that. He always bring me.. brought me notebooks and books, as well. And he taught me how to write and how to read.

0:42:24.000,0:42:25.000
Wow!

0:42:25.000,0:42:30.000
After I started my education at the mosque and I was..

0:42:30.000,0:42:59.000
I was an excellent student of the Mulla. I started up to.. there are some religious books that the Mullas are teaching in mosques in Afghanistan. For example, I remember a book in Arabic and translated in Persian,

0:42:59.000,0:43:00.000
Okay.

0:43:00.000,0:43:08.000
That was the last book that I studied there at the mosque. After that book,

0:43:08.000,0:43:16.000
there are other books. There are some difficult books, as well.

0:43:16.000,0:43:17.000
Can you tell me about

0:43:17.000,0:43:27.000
other aspects of your education, not with the Mullas, but did you go to a small school in your village, or did you have to go farther away?

0:43:27.000,0:43:34.000
In our village there was one school, and..

0:43:34.000,0:43:38.000
It was called (name in Persian).

0:43:38.000,0:43:45.000
It means.. means teacher.

0:43:45.000,0:43:46.000

0:43:46.000,0:43:53.000
The name of the person who built that school. It was a high school. It was far away from our home.

0:43:53.000,0:44:01.000
I had to walk, for example, about 45 to an hour.

0:44:01.000,0:44:02.000
45 minutes to an hour.

0:44:02.000,0:44:07.000
Yeah, 45 to one hour walk to there.

0:44:07.000,0:44:20.000
And it was far and I used to go there for one hour, and walked for one hour, and came back for one hour or two. And I studied there up to fourth grade.

0:44:20.000,0:44:24.000

Because after that we moved to Kabul, at the age of 11.

0:44:24.000,0:44:25.000
Okay.

0:44:25.000,0:44:29.000
Yeah, I was 10 or 11, I don't remember. But, we moved to Kabul after that

0:44:29.000,0:44:33.000
and I started my school in Kabul from sixth grade.

0:44:33.000,0:44:38.000
That must have been a big change for you. Moving to Kabul from a small village.

0:44:38.000,0:44:41.000
A lot, a lot, a lot, because..

0:44:41.000,0:44:45.000
Could you describe what that was like when you made that move?

0:44:45.000,0:44:57.000
Yeah. I haven't traveled.. I traveled once.. when I was seven, I traveled to Pakistan, but that was for one week not too much.

0:44:57.000,0:44:58.000

0:44:58.000,0:45:03.000
But I didn't have

0:45:03.000,0:45:10.000
for example, lived in cities before age 11, but once we moved to Kabul,

0:45:10.000,0:45:19.000
I was looking at the buildings, and that was, for example, 10 floors and 9 floors,

0:45:19.000,0:45:20.000
something like that,

0:45:20.000,0:45:27.000
or bigger than that. And I was amazed by that. Oh, my God! What a nice place! There was a lot of cars!

0:45:27.000,0:45:37.000
The streets were concrete. In Jaghori,

0:45:37.000,0:45:41.000
there was no buildings like that, or there was no streets like that.

0:45:41.000,0:45:49.000
Jaghori is village, a poor village, that some of the people had cars and motorcycles, and something like that.

0:45:49.000,0:46:09.000
But in Kabul, when I traveled to.. when I moved to Kabul, and the first buildings that were popping in, and I was in the car, but I was looking into the buildings, and I was amazed by those buildings. But when we get to

0:46:09.000,0:46:16.000
the new home in Kabul, and I started the new journey in Kabul,

0:46:16.000,0:46:35.000
day by ay, I was seeing, the differences between Jaghori and Kabul. There was a big difference, from the people, from building, and from the culture, and everything was different from Jaghori.

0:46:35.000,0:46:38.000

0:46:38.000,0:46:43.000
For example, the way that we were talking in Jaghori,

0:46:43.000,0:46:49.000
it's Hazaragi, it's the pure Hazaragi, I mean, it's part of Dari, but it is not a language.

0:46:49.000,0:47:13.000
It is a way that people talk in Jaghori. And when I was talking with other kids in Kabul with that language, they were laughing at me. Because some of the words that I used, they didn't hear about those words their whole life. The language were different, the culture, and the kids,

0:47:13.000,0:47:19.000
the way they were dressing.

0:47:19.000,0:47:22.000
That must have been a very challenging time for you.

0:47:22.000,0:47:30.000
Yeah, it was. And I felt the same here right now, I mean, here it is challenging for me, too.

0:47:30.000,0:47:39.000
I cannot communicate with others. And for the first one or two years in Kabul, I couldn't

0:47:39.000,0:47:43.000
communicate with others too, because I didn't know the people,

0:47:43.000,0:47:55.000
I didn't know the way that they are communicating with each other, especially the boys and the kids that were playing in the area.

0:47:55.000,0:48:09.000
But day by day, time by time, I get familiar with Kabul and right now, I love Kabul more than Jaghori, because most of my memories are from Kabul.

0:48:09.000,0:48:16.000
Most of the beautiful, and most of the biggest memories and experiences..

0:48:16.000,0:48:23.000
Was it your father's work that allowed your family to move to Kabul?

0:48:23.000,0:48:31.000
It was my brother's decision, actually, because he.. my oldest brother..

0:48:31.000,0:48:49.000
We moved to the Kabul because he was getting married, and we moved to Kabul to get a party, a wedding party for him. And also, he asked my father that "all of you come to Kabul and live here.

0:48:49.000,0:48:52.000
I can feed you and I can support you.

0:48:52.000,0:49:05.000
I can help you." But the cost of the life in Kabul.. it was expensive there, but he asked to get us in Kabul.

0:49:05.000,0:49:09.000
He was a studying in Kabul, in Kabul University.

0:49:09.000,0:49:20.000
When I was, for example, when I was seven, or six, two of my brothers went to Kabul. And after that, the other one went to Kabul, just

0:49:20.000,0:49:42.000
we were remaining in Jaghori. My father was in Ghazni at that time, because he was working for..

0:49:42.000,0:49:43.000
He was a.. of the provincial council in Ghazni.

0:49:43.000,0:49:44.000

0:49:44.000,0:49:49.000
And my brother asked to get us in Kabul.

0:49:49.000,0:49:50.000

0:49:50.000,0:49:54.000

So that meant more opportunities for you in terms of education.

0:49:54.000,0:50:07.000

Of course, when I moved to Kabul, I started school in one of the governments schools.

0:50:07.000,0:50:18.000

-Was that hard to.. Did you find it challenging, because you had come from a smaller, rural school?

-No, no. The books were the same.

0:50:18.000,0:50:19.000

Interesting.

0:50:19.000,0:50:20.000

The books were the same

0:50:20.000,0:50:24.000

as the books that we used to study in Jaghori.

0:50:24.000,0:50:35.000

All of them were the same, but it got challenging when I was at the 11 grade.

0:50:35.000,0:50:36.000

0:50:36.000,0:50:37.000

Tell me about that!

0:50:37.000,0:50:46.000

Yeah. When I was at 10th grade,

0:50:46.000,0:50:49.000

I transferred to a private school.

0:50:49.000,0:50:52.000

In Afghanistan, the government schools

0:50:52.000,0:51:11.000

are not very good. They cannot teach you very well, and they don't have, for example, a good educational system, or teachers or books. But I transferred to a private school, and I started education there.

0:51:11.000,0:51:17.000

And that was challenging for me. That was the most challenging move for me..

0:51:17.000,0:51:26.000

Educational move. Because there, the teachers were very serious.

0:51:26.000,0:51:31.000

They were not taking it easy on us.

0:51:31.000,0:51:34.000

And taught us

0:51:34.000,0:51:49.000

in more difficult ways. I mean, the books were looking to me more difficult than before.

0:51:49.000,0:51:59.000

That's why I took some extra classes and courses. I mean, there was educational courses around the city that were helping students to get..

0:51:59.000,0:52:06.000

To learn, especially the math and the physics, and something..

0:52:06.000,0:52:10.000

math, physics and chemical.

0:52:10.000,0:52:14.000
When did you first start studying English?

0:52:14.000,0:52:21.000
I started when I was at the 9th grade.

0:52:21.000,0:52:25.000
Okay, interesting! Did you enjoy that English class in 9th grade?

0:52:25.000,0:52:31.000
Actually, in our school, teaching English wasn't

0:52:31.000,0:52:47.000
the most basic English that you can find in Afghanistan. The books were so easy. But I start.. I took some classes and educational course that were teaching more professional English.

0:52:47.000,0:52:55.000
I mean, some of those courses were teaching academic English.

0:52:55.000,0:53:03.000
And I started English.. I took those classes when I was at 9th grade.

0:53:03.000,0:53:09.000
And so, did you graduate from high school in Kabul, from the private high school?

0:53:09.000,0:53:13.000
Yes, I graduated from

0:53:13.000,0:53:31.000
the school that I started, I mean, in Jaghori. Because in 12th grade, we have 12 grades in Afghanistan for the school, and after that we have a final exam, and I went to Jaghori,

0:53:31.000,0:53:40.000
I transferred back to Jaghori to have some more time to study and to practice on what we have learned

0:53:40.000,0:53:48.000
in the whole school classes. So to prepare for that exam.

0:53:48.000,0:53:54.000
So I graduated from there, but I didn't..

0:53:54.000,0:53:59.000
I haven't took the final exam.

0:53:59.000,0:54:01.000
You didn't take the final exam?

0:54:01.000,0:54:07.000
Yeah, because I was interested in scholarships.

0:54:07.000,0:54:14.000
I mean, I was looking for scholarships to get out of Afghanistan and study in a different country.

0:54:14.000,0:54:18.000
And I applied for couple of scholarships,

0:54:18.000,0:54:29.000
and I have been.. I have received the.. I applied for a scholarship in Japan..

0:54:29.000,0:54:30.000
In Japan?

0:54:30.000,0:54:37.000
Yeah, in Japan. And they were giving that scholarship every year for one time to Afghanistan. It was special for Afghanistan.

0:54:37.000,0:54:38.000
Interesting!

0:54:38.000,0:54:42.000
I applied and I received the confirmation email.

0:54:42.000,0:54:52.000
But at that time, I was poor. I didn't have money to get a phone or a laptop to check my laptop and see their emails.

0:54:52.000,0:55:02.000
I checked out my email after three months, after that email has been sent to me.

0:55:02.000,0:55:06.000
And I missed that. I missed that opportunity, and after that

0:55:06.000,0:55:24.000
I have tried a lot to apply for the scholarships that were given by the United States, or Canada and other countries. And that's why I didn't participate on that final exam, because I wasn't interested to study in Kabul University.

0:55:24.000,0:55:31.000
So you had an opportunity to go to Japan, but because you didn't check.. you weren't able to check your email,

0:55:31.000,0:55:37.000
you missed that opportunity?
-Yes. I missed that opportunity.

0:55:37.000,0:55:38.000
You must..

0:55:38.000,0:55:42.000
How did you feel when that happened? I can only imagine how frustrating that must have been for you.

0:55:42.000,0:55:54.000
I felt so sorry. I felt so sorry. I mean, I was sad after that, and..

0:55:54.000,0:55:55.000
And I was angry on

0:55:55.000,0:56:03.000
my family members that why you are not helping me to get a smartphone to check my email.

0:56:03.000,0:56:04.000
Well, it's..

0:56:04.000,0:56:07.000

0:56:07.000,0:56:08.000
It's interesting

0:56:08.000,0:56:15.000
to think about how important a smartphone.. what an impact a smartphone would have had for you, at that time, that's interesting.

0:56:15.000,0:56:21.000
Yeah, yeah.

0:56:21.000,0:56:28.000
So what happened after that? Where did you go? How did you continue your education at that point?

0:56:28.000,0:56:46.000
I graduated from school, I mean, before I graduated the school, I applied for that scholarship in Japan, and I received that confirmation email at the 11th grade, when I was at 11th grade.

0:56:46.000,0:57:01.000
I received that. And when I missed that, I looked at other scholarships, but they were not for a level that I was on at that time.

0:57:01.000,0:57:08.000

But when I graduated school,

0:57:08.000,0:57:14.000

after a while, I applied for many scholarships. Especially, I was looking for.. I got a scholarship

0:57:14.000,0:57:23.000

that was given by Toronto University in Canada.

0:57:23.000,0:57:28.000

And that was the biggest goal that I had to get that scholarship.

0:57:28.000,0:57:33.000

And I had to write a lot every year. For two years I had to write a lot, but I was not..

0:57:33.000,0:57:55.000

I was not accepted for that scholarship, because some of the requirements.. I didn't have some of the requirements that they needed, so I was disappointed for that, and.. I was depressed for a long time.

0:57:55.000,0:57:56.000

I can imagine!

0:57:56.000,0:58:06.000

Yeah, not because of the opportunities that I missed, but because of the living conditions that I had in those days.

0:58:06.000,0:58:20.000

Those days I was in love with someone, and I think it all ended. We couldn't continue dating, or something like that.

0:58:20.000,0:58:28.000

And that made me so much depressed. And that's why I..

0:58:28.000,0:58:35.000

-That made a big distance between me and the education.

-You fell in love with a girl, and what happened?

0:58:35.000,0:58:36.000

Yeah.

0:58:36.000,0:58:38.000

And what happened?

0:58:38.000,0:58:48.000

Her family noticed that we are dating each other and we're in love, and..

0:58:48.000,0:58:52.000

it's not

0:58:52.000,0:59:09.000

good in our culture to have a relationship before marriage or before engagement.

0:59:09.000,0:59:10.000

Right.

0:59:10.000,0:59:32.000

they didn't allow us to meet each other, or to date each other anymore, and to see each other. They asked me to stop calling that girl, and to stop talking to her, and just let her learn and get out of her life, something like that.

0:59:32.000,0:59:36.000

How old were you? You were 17, 18 at this time?

0:59:36.000,0:59:47.000

No, I was 19. We had our relationship continued for almost one and a half year

0:59:47.000,0:59:53.000

after that, her family noticed, and we couldn't go on anymore.

0:59:53.000,1:00:14.000

And that made me so depressed, and the depression made a distance between me and education, and I couldn't think.. and I couldn't think wisely about the future, or what's going on, and I couldn't..

1:00:14.000,1:00:19.000

I wasn't interested to study anymore. I mean..

1:00:19.000,1:00:23.000

Some very, very challenging time in your life.

1:00:23.000,1:00:36.000

Right, but finally, after six months, or seven months, I accepted what happened to our relationship, and I started..

1:00:36.000,1:00:52.000

The pandemic came. Yeah, yeah, yeah. When the pandemic came, I don't remember that month. My family went to Jaghori, my whole family, just me and one of my brothers stayed in Kabul.

1:00:52.000,1:01:03.000

The others went to Jaghori to pass the pandemic for three months and stay there to be safe, because Kabul is a big city.

1:01:03.000,1:01:18.000

The population was a lot. People were getting sick with the Corona a lot. So that's why my parents and other family members went to Jaghori. But we stayed in Kabul.

1:01:18.000,1:01:26.000

Those were the end of those hard days of the depression. One month.. for one month, I was alone at home, not completely,

1:01:26.000,1:01:27.000

but my brother.. My brother was there, but he was working during the day.

1:01:27.000,1:01:36.000

He is going to his office, and I was sitting at home and just thinking about what happened to me there.

1:01:36.000,1:01:43.000

And finally, I had some money and I knew someone that has..

1:01:43.000,1:01:45.000

1:01:45.000,1:01:51.000

That was selling alcohol, whiskey.

1:01:51.000,1:01:59.000

I call him that, "please bring me two bottles of Red Label."

1:01:59.000,1:02:04.000

It was available in a religious country like Afghanistan.

1:02:04.000,1:02:09.000

And I bought two Red Level. But I couldn't drink a lot, because I was afraid of..

1:02:09.000,1:02:14.000

I know that.. I knew that how it affects our body.

1:02:14.000,1:02:29.000

That's why I was so careful about that. And I was just drinking two, or three shots a day, in the evening, and I was just sitting and thinking,

1:02:29.000,1:02:34.000

what should I do with what happened, with the thoughts that I had in my mind for that girl?

1:02:34.000,1:02:38.000

1:02:38.000,1:02:49.000

And finally, those two bottles of Red Label helped me to get her out of my mind

1:02:49.000,1:02:51.000
and start a new journey,

1:02:51.000,1:03:00.000
and forget about her. And I just learned how to edit videos, from that month..

1:03:00.000,1:03:08.000
After that month, I started learning how to edit graphic designing on my own. Because,

1:03:08.000,1:03:14.000
we are not allowed to go to the cities alone, and I was just sitting at home.

1:03:14.000,1:03:26.000
I opened my laptop, and.. I had a laptop that was given to me by my brother. It was my brother's laptop, but he was in India, and he gave that to me, to use it.

1:03:26.000,1:03:28.000

1:03:28.000,1:03:36.000
So I learned the Photoshop, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Premier in just two months.

1:03:36.000,1:03:39.000
You taught yourself?

1:03:39.000,1:03:40.000
Sorry?

1:03:40.000,1:03:42.000
You taught yourself how to..

1:03:42.000,1:03:50.000
Yeah, I used some CDs. I mean, some educational CDs.

1:03:50.000,1:03:53.000
-Interesting!
-YouTube.

1:03:53.000,1:04:01.000
They are the sources that I used to learn Photoshop and some of Adobe software.

1:04:01.000,1:04:02.000
Wow!

1:04:02.000,1:04:09.000
Once I learned those software, how to edit a video, how to make graphics, or how to

1:04:09.000,1:04:13.000
edit photos in Adobe photoshop, I started a job at..

1:04:13.000,1:04:19.000
I started my job at Etilaatroz that year. Once I started my job at Etilaatroz,

1:04:19.000,1:04:24.000
the people that were working there,

1:04:24.000,1:04:26.000
they became my friend, day by day.

1:04:26.000,1:04:35.000
And they were affecting me. They were affecting my mind. I changed a lot at Etilaatroz. I changed a lot.

1:04:35.000,1:04:46.000
My whole life changed at Etilaatroz. Before that, I was just a kid, I mean, I was thinking, I was acting like a kid, and something like that.

1:04:46.000,1:04:51.000
But once I..

1:04:51.000,1:05:04.000
Started my job at Etilaatroz and met people, new people, younger people, and those who were someone for themselves, talking to them,

1:05:04.000,1:05:12.000
and meeting them, and listening to them, changed me a lot.
-So this is when you first started becoming a journalist?

1:05:12.000,1:05:13.000
Yes.

1:05:13.000,1:05:18.000
And you started to meet other journalists and you started..

1:05:18.000,1:05:19.000
Right.

1:05:19.000,1:05:26.000
Did you start learning about the political situation, then? Did you become more of an activist

1:05:26.000,1:05:29.000
in some way, at this point in your life?

1:05:29.000,1:05:32.000
I..

1:05:32.000,1:05:42.000
I was not interested in some of the programs that people were taking in Kabul.

1:05:42.000,1:05:53.000
But I.. with the public skill situation, it was not Etilaatroz.. It was Etilaatroz, but before that I studied.. I read a lot of books.

1:05:53.000,1:05:55.000
What helped me to make sense with the political situation was

1:05:55.000,1:06:00.000
the books that I read,

1:06:00.000,1:06:14.000
and also the people that were in Etilaatroz. But I mean, my mind was opened by books, not by the people. I used to read a lot of both sides, two or three books a week.

1:06:14.000,1:06:15.000

1:06:15.000,1:06:16.000
Did you get these books from the library?

1:06:16.000,1:06:23.000
- How did you get the books?
-Yeah, yeah, yeah, from the libraries. Also, I had a library in my own home.

1:06:23.000,1:06:28.000
My brothers, who took.. my brothers, who studied at Kabul University,

1:06:28.000,1:06:32.000
they bought a lot of books, and they were all for me.

1:06:32.000,1:06:33.000

1:06:33.000,1:06:51.000
-Which books and authors were important to you?
-The most important author for me until now, there's two, one is Tolstoy.

1:06:51.000,1:06:52.000

1:06:52.000,1:07:00.000
I can't remember.. I read this book named "Anna Karenina."

-Anna Karenina, yes!

1:07:00.000,1:07:07.000

That's a lovely book, and I read completely. I remember.. and I watched the movie.

1:07:07.000,1:07:08.000

1:07:08.000,1:07:12.000

There is a movie about it, too. And also, Gibran Khalil Gibran.

1:07:12.000,1:07:13.000

1:07:13.000,1:07:17.000

Yeah, there's a monument here in DC to him. Have you been there?

1:07:17.000,1:07:19.000

Really no, I haven't, but I..

1:07:19.000,1:07:22.000

After the interview. I'll send you a link.

1:07:22.000,1:07:26.000

So you read Khalil Gibran and Tolstoy. They had a big impact on you.

1:07:26.000,1:07:27.000

Wow!

1:07:27.000,1:07:36.000

Yup! I admit my..

1:07:36.000,1:07:40.000

My literature is very good impression, I mean,

1:07:40.000,1:07:44.000

It helped me a lot to have a good literature impression.

1:07:44.000,1:07:51.000

Were these books, the two that you mentioned, did your brothers buy those books for you, or did you get those out of the library.

1:07:51.000,1:07:57.000

The "Anna Karenina".. the Tolstoy books,

1:07:57.000,1:08:07.000

I borrowed that book from one of my friends, that he had a library in Kabul, and I borrowed that book for three months from him.

1:08:07.000,1:08:10.000

That I will read this, and I'll bring it back to you.

1:08:10.000,1:08:14.000

And I read that and took that book back to her.

1:08:14.000,1:08:20.000

Gibran Khalil Gibran,

1:08:20.000,1:08:27.000

there was a package of his books, I think 13 books in a package.

1:08:27.000,1:08:33.000

I bought that book by my own. I made money. I collect some money, I save some money to buy that book.

1:08:33.000,1:08:43.000

It was expensive. So that's why I saved some money and bought that book on my own, and I read all of those 13 books.

1:08:43.000,1:08:48.000

Yeah, and there are also other

1:08:48.000,1:08:55.000
authors that I love. For example..

1:08:55.000,1:08:59.000
I don't remember.

1:08:59.000,1:09:02.000
What was his name?

1:09:02.000,1:09:05.000
Gabriel García Márquez.

1:09:05.000,1:09:09.000
Gabriel García Márquez. Yes.

1:09:09.000,1:09:10.000
"One Hundred Years of Solitude."

1:09:10.000,1:09:11.000
Right.

1:09:11.000,1:09:18.000
That's a lovely book. And also there's another book, "Love in the Time of Cholera."

1:09:18.000,1:09:22.000
Right. These two books are very lovely to me.

1:09:22.000,1:09:33.000
Also, there was another book from Charles Dickens.

1:09:33.000,1:09:35.000
A Dickens book? Yeah, which one?

1:09:35.000,1:09:40.000
Yeah Dickens. I don't remember his book.

1:09:40.000,1:09:49.000
It was the first books that I read. It was one of those first books that I read, and it was a long time ago.

1:09:49.000,1:09:57.000
I was at the age of 16, I think, or 15. Something like that.

1:09:57.000,1:10:06.000
So we have gone over our hour. I've so enjoyed this conversation, and I want to continue talking to you about books and about how your

1:10:06.000,1:10:07.000
world opened up.

1:10:07.000,1:10:14.000
So I think this might be a good time to pause right now. I want to ask you one last question for today.

1:10:14.000,1:10:20.000
How do you feel about sharing your story today? What are you feeling?

1:10:20.000,1:10:31.000
I forget.. especially people will know me, and the subjects that we talk about.

1:10:31.000,1:10:40.000
I mean my family, my village, Kabul, my journey to.. my educational journey,

1:10:40.000,1:11:04.000
and the way that people are getting educated in Afghanistan. I think this.. I wish these talks could be helpful to all others who are interested in Afghanistan, and I wish we could have more time, because.. yeah, there is a lot to say, but there is no time to say it. I understand that.

1:11:04.000,1:11:05.000
Thank you so much.

1:11:05.000,1:11:09.000

I definitely.. I am so grateful that you shared this with us,

1:11:09.000,1:11:16.000

and I definitely want to continue talking with you next week. I'm going to.. thank you so much. I'm going to pause

1:11:16.000,1:11:17.000

the recording now.

-Okay.

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Interview (Part 2) with Taqi Daryabi on April 2, 2023.

0:00:03.000,0:00:07.000

Hello! Good afternoon, Taqi! How are you today?

0:00:07.000,0:00:09.000

Hi Professor, I'm good. How are you?

0:00:09.000,0:00:11.000

I'm doing well. It's so nice to see you.

0:00:11.000,0:00:15.000

Thank you so much for agreeing to continue our conversation that we started last week.

0:00:15.000,0:00:25.000

Today is Sunday, April 2nd. It's about 3:30 in the afternoon,

0:00:25.000,0:00:28.000

and we'll take about an hour. I'll set my timer here, so we don't go over.

0:00:28.000,0:00:40.000

I feel like I could talk to you for hours and hours about your experiences. But we'll limit it to about one hour, and I thought we could begin where we left off in the last interview.

0:00:40.000,0:00:57.000

But just to give a quick overview, a beginning.. an introduction here to anyone who's pulling up this interview and watching it I'll introduce you. Taqi Daryabi is originally from Ghazni Afghanistan and now lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He moved to the United States in 2021,

0:00:57.000,0:01:00.000

he speaks Dari, Persian, and English.

0:01:00.000,0:01:11.000

He was a student at MC, in the spring of 2022, and today lives with his brother and works as a journalist at an Afghan news organization.

0:01:11.000,0:01:17.000

He also works at The Cultural Arts Center of Montgomery College, on the Takoma Park, Silver Spring campus.

0:01:17.000,0:01:23.000

And in his spare time enjoys taking long walks in Rock Creek Park and taking photographs.

0:01:23.000,0:01:29.000

We were just talking about the cherry blossoms, and so I'm excited to see the photographs you took.

0:01:29.000,0:01:38.000

-So let me start at the beginning. Could you please tell me your full name?

-My full name is Mohammed Taqi Daryabi.

0:01:38.000,0:01:39.000

Great.

0:01:39.000,0:01:44.000

-And do I have permission to record this interview?

-Sure, sure, you do.

0:01:44.000,0:02:11.000

Thank you. So, in our last conversation we left off talking about one of my favorite topics, which is literature, and you were telling me that you discovered the library in Kabul, and that you began reading books by Tolstoy, by Gabrielle Garcia Marquez, and by other writers from around the world. Were you reading those books in Persian?

0:02:11.000,0:02:12.000

Yes, yes.

0:02:12.000,0:02:16.000

Okay. I was really struck by that.

0:02:16.000,0:02:22.000

It made me want to know more about the library there. Is the library free to anyone.

0:02:22.000,0:02:25.000

How does it work there?

0:02:25.000,0:02:26.000

Actually,

0:02:26.000,0:02:38.000

I started reading books. It was not a public library. It was at the school that I transferred from, the governmental school to the private school.

0:02:38.000,0:02:40.000

It was the library of the private school.

0:02:40.000,0:02:42.000

I see.

0:02:42.000,0:02:53.000

There, once I moved there, I realized that other students are reading, studying books, and they were so much active.

0:02:53.000,0:03:15.000

So, that affected me. The environment affected me and I started reading, too. At first I was reading short stories. There was a collection of, I don't remember the author of that collection, but it was about 60 books.

0:03:15.000,0:03:16.000

0:03:16.000,0:03:20.000

60 books, and I started with that.

0:03:20.000,0:03:31.000

So it was...

-Could you.. I was struck by your specific mention of the book Anna Karenina,

0:03:31.000,0:03:32.000

which is a book

0:03:32.000,0:03:33.000

that I love, too.

0:03:33.000,0:03:47.000

Could you tell me what you found particularly interesting, or meaningful about this particular book?

0:03:47.000,0:03:51.000

Actually, I'm not that kind of.. in Afghanistan,

0:03:51.000,0:04:05.000

most of the people that are reading or studying books, they are remembering some of the quotes from the books, but this is not how I.. when I'm reading a book that affects my life.

0:04:05.000,0:04:13.000

When I read Anna Karenina, it is with a long story. It tells you about the

0:04:13.000,0:04:36.000

society of.. a different society, different people. How they communicate, how they interact with each other, and the way that they are talking to each other, the way that they're communicating with each other, the society, how it's going.. what's going on in the society.

0:04:36.000,0:04:40.000

How is the situation of the people? That's a..

0:04:40.000,0:04:46.000

But in.. the story of people.

0:04:46.000,0:04:51.000

It's author is telling the story of a society and people.

0:04:51.000,0:04:55.000

Yeah, study of a society, of a particular culture and time.

0:04:55.000,0:05:04.000

Yeah, the way that the people in that book communicate with each other, that affected me the most.

0:05:04.000,0:05:08.000

The way that people were communicating with each other? Interesting!

0:05:08.000,0:05:15.000

Yes. The the book is talking.. Anna Karenina is a lady, the character.

0:05:15.000,0:05:19.000

She's a character, and she's in love with someone, I don't remember..

0:05:19.000,0:05:21.000

Count Vronsky.

0:05:21.000,0:05:26.000

Right, right. Count Vronsky. So she's in love with him.

0:05:26.000,0:05:30.000

0:05:30.000,0:05:44.000

In the book, they love each other so much, but they have other businesses in their life that they cannot forget them, and just stuck to be in love.

0:05:44.000,0:05:55.000

So, I was too young, I think that that book was too early for me to read, but I read it.

0:05:55.000,0:05:58.000

Maybe you will reread it in English, now.

0:05:58.000,0:06:03.000

I will, I will! I love that book. I love to read it for a couple of times again.

0:06:03.000,0:06:13.000

So.. because I thought that book was lovely and so good, because the author tells the story. He's my..

0:06:13.000,0:06:17.000

what should I say?

0:06:17.000,0:06:26.000

He's a beautiful person. He's a good person to me, so I'll have to read his books again and again, especially there is another book that I didn't read yet.

0:06:26.000,0:06:32.000

It's about.. its name is "War and Peace."

0:06:32.000,0:06:33.000

Oh yes!

0:06:33.000,0:06:38.000

I haven't read that book, but I'll read that in English, first.

0:06:38.000,0:06:43.000

After that, I will read Anna Karenina again.

0:06:43.000,0:06:44.000

0:06:44.000,0:06:50.000

"War and Peace" is very ambitious. That's a long one. So, you'll learn a lot when you read that one.

0:06:50.000,0:06:53.000

You also mentioned really

0:06:53.000,0:07:01.000

being moved by the works of Gabrielle Garcia Marquez. You mentioned, I remember, "Love in the Time of Cholera."

0:07:01.000,0:07:15.000

So it seems like at this time in your life, you are really attracted to these love stories, and I wonder if that connected in a way to your situation and your relationship, at that time.

0:07:15.000,0:07:21.000

Yeah, of course, that affected myself as well.

0:07:21.000,0:07:28.000

I mean connected to my own life, as well. For example, "One Hundred Years of Loneliness"..

0:07:28.000,0:07:31.000

"One Hundred Years of Solitude," is the title in English. Yes.

0:07:31.000,0:07:34.000

Yeah. Oh, sorry.

0:07:34.000,0:07:35.000

That's okay.

0:07:35.000,0:07:41.000

When I read that book, at that time, I felt the same.

0:07:41.000,0:07:43.000

I mean, I was..

0:07:43.000,0:07:50.000

I'm still alone. I'm not that kind of person to communicate with other people very well.

0:07:50.000,0:07:56.000

I can communicate, but I spend most of my time alone.

0:07:56.000,0:07:58.000

So, that book..

0:07:58.000,0:08:01.000

So, the idea of solitude spoke to you.

0:08:01.000,0:08:10.000

Right, yeah. That book spoke to me a lot.

0:08:10.000,0:08:11.000

That's why I bring that book

0:08:11.000,0:08:20.000

with me here. Oh, sorry! I forgot.. I forgot, last week you told me if I could bring books my books here and show you, but I forgot.

0:08:20.000,0:08:36.000

No, no, that's okay, no worries. But I think it's really beautiful that when you are faced with this very difficult time in your life, and you had to choose what to bring, I find it very interesting that you chose to bring that book with you. Because I imagine you had to

0:08:36.000,0:08:40.000

very quickly decide what to bring, and you had a limited amount of things

0:08:40.000,0:08:46.000
you could bring. The fact that you chose to bring books says a lot,

0:08:46.000,0:08:57.000
I think, about your love of literature. Tell me more about that, how you had to choose which books to bring with you.

0:08:57.000,0:09:04.000
One of the books is Rumi's book.

0:09:04.000,0:09:08.000
I'm in love with Rumi's prayers.

0:09:08.000,0:09:11.000
Rumi's poetry is amazing. Yes.

0:09:11.000,0:09:18.000
Yeah, that's one of those books that I brought, and the other one is, Gabriel Garcia's books.

0:09:18.000,0:09:27.000
and the other one is.. I don't remember the name of the author.

0:09:27.000,0:09:35.000
It's called "Nation of Love," something like that in English.

0:09:35.000,0:09:38.000
-I'm not sure.
-I'm not sure about that, but it's, in Persian it's

0:09:38.000,0:09:47.000
"Melat Eshq." It talks about love and relationships.

0:09:47.000,0:09:49.000

0:09:49.000,0:10:00.000
And the other book I brought. I think, I brought four or five. I couldn't bring all of those books that I had. I had a lot of books in Kabul. I had my own library.

0:10:00.000,0:10:01.000

0:10:01.000,0:10:08.000
That was a lot for me to bring here, but I brought four to five Persian books.

0:10:08.000,0:10:19.000
Why I decided to bring those books is that books are always precious to me.

0:10:19.000,0:10:35.000
One of my best hobbies in Afghanistan was reading books and literature and Romance.

0:10:35.000,0:10:44.000
Some of those books that affected my life. That's why there were precious to me, and I brought them with me

0:10:44.000,0:10:46.000
and kept them.

0:10:46.000,0:10:59.000
Sometimes when we're facing difficult experiences, and we read about other people and other times in places who have had the same difficult experiences.

0:10:59.000,0:11:00.000
It's somehow helpful

0:11:00.000,0:11:20.000
to know that.
-Exactly. Exactly. Reading books can help you. For example, when you read literature, it talks about different situations, difficult situation from difficult to happy situations,

0:11:20.000,0:11:31.000
and how people are finding solutions for some of their problems in society, or maybe in their own life, in their personal life.

0:11:31.000,0:11:38.000
So it can help you to learn something from those stories, and I learned a lot.

0:11:38.000,0:11:47.000
It helped me to grow up more than my age. Most of the people are saying that you're older

0:11:47.000,0:11:50.000
than what you're looking.

0:11:50.000,0:11:51.000
Interesting. Yeah.

0:11:51.000,0:11:59.000
I hope that you will have a chance to go to the library at Montgomery College and continue your love of reading.

0:11:59.000,0:12:00.000
There's..

0:12:00.000,0:12:10.000
I went there for for two or three times. I took some books, but when I brought them to home

0:12:10.000,0:12:20.000
and I started to read them, I just read 3-5 pages, because I..

0:12:20.000,0:12:29.000
It is the first years of living in the United States, and you know that it's hard for me

0:12:29.000,0:12:30.000
to handle everything and find more time to read.

0:12:30.000,0:12:34.000

0:12:34.000,0:12:41.000
I understand that. I think it's really hard to read in a second language, as well.

0:12:41.000,0:12:42.000
Right.

0:12:42.000,0:12:44.000
It's not the same experience of reading in the first language.

0:12:44.000,0:12:46.000
It's really challenging.

0:12:46.000,0:12:52.000
Right it needs more time, that..

0:12:52.000,0:12:53.000
-But you will. You will get there, I have no doubt.
-I hope.

0:12:53.000,0:13:06.000
-I know, that you worked and work in journalism, and I understand that when you were working as a journalist in Afghanistan,

0:13:06.000,0:13:12.000
you covered a demonstration related to women's rights.

0:13:12.000,0:13:20.000
Was it a demonstration by women in reaction to what was happening with the Taliban?

0:13:20.000,0:13:25.000
Yeah, that was a demonstration by women.

0:13:25.000,0:13:29.000

-What year was that?

-Sorry?

-What year was that?

0:13:29.000,0:13:36.000

I was 2021 after Kabul fall. It was in September.

0:13:36.000,0:13:43.000

September 8th. Kabul fell

0:13:43.000,0:13:54.000

in August 15th, and after Kabul fall, we stayed

0:13:54.000,0:14:06.000

at our office without doing anything special for a long time. That made me tired, and I was thinking that we are journalists and we are the media.

0:14:06.000,0:14:18.000

We are a news organization. Why should we stay here and not do anything about what's happening outside the office

0:14:18.000,0:14:19.000

0:14:19.000,0:14:20.000

in the city, with the people, all of us?

0:14:20.000,0:14:30.000

This was the time for us to work, and we shouldn't fear what is the behavior of the Taliban,

0:14:30.000,0:14:35.000

what will they do with us if we go out and work?

0:14:35.000,0:14:38.000

Maybe they're now..

0:14:38.000,0:14:43.000

Maybe the government was collapsing, but it was not..

0:14:43.000,0:14:46.000

We were not the government, we were the people, we were the media,

0:14:46.000,0:14:57.000

we were the news organization, and our job.. In my heart I felt that we should continue. Whatever happens, we continue.

0:14:57.000,0:15:00.000

And I, on that day on September 8th,

0:15:00.000,0:15:04.000

I told my colleague, (Nemat ElNakhli)

0:15:04.000,0:15:11.000

that, let's go. There's a demonstration in all over the city, and we can cover this part of the city.

0:15:11.000,0:15:17.000

So let's take the camera and other materials that we needed.

0:15:17.000,0:15:23.000

And let's go to one of those places that women are demonstrating.

0:15:23.000,0:15:30.000

He was not agreeing with me, he was afraid, and he was saying that no, no,

0:15:30.000,0:15:32.000

let's stay at the office, and I told him that,

0:15:32.000,0:15:35.000

"okay, if you don't want, I can go."

0:15:35.000,0:15:39.000
But he came with me, and we went to to the Kart-e-Char, Kabul.

0:15:39.000,0:15:50.000
There was.. women were demonstrating. One of the places that women decided to demonstrate was there because there was a police station.

0:15:50.000,0:15:53.000
Could you repeat the name of the place in Kabul where you went?

0:15:53.000,0:15:57.000
-I didn't catch that. I'm sorry.
-Kart-e-Char.

0:15:57.000,0:15:59.000
Okay, is this a square?

0:15:59.000,0:16:08.000
No, it's not a square. It's the name of the place, like Silver Spring, something like that.

0:16:08.000,0:16:10.000
Okay, like a neighborhood?

0:16:10.000,0:16:15.000
Yeah, so we went there and the women decided

0:16:15.000,0:16:23.000
to demonstrate in front of the police station. That was taken by the Taliban and their army. Their armies were there.

0:16:23.000,0:16:38.000
A lot of them were there, and we went there, and once the demonstration started, we took our camera and started to make some photos and took some videos.

0:16:38.000,0:17:04.000
For the report that we were thinking to make it. But unfortunately, after two or three, five minutes, one of the Taliban members, their army, came to me and asked me to turn off the camera, and not film the demonstration, they were telling me that "you're not allowed to

0:17:04.000,0:17:09.000
film this, you should not do this," and I and I asked them that

0:17:09.000,0:17:10.000
"why?

0:17:10.000,0:17:16.000
this is my job. I'm a journalist, and I should. This is, what you are looking?

0:17:16.000,0:17:22.000
For how long should we stay in our office and not filming what's going on in in the city?"

0:17:22.000,0:17:27.000
And they took me to the police station.

0:17:27.000,0:17:44.000
When they took me to the police station. On the way I was thinking that they might want to talk with me, or they might want to just keep me there for some time until the demonstration ended.

0:17:44.000,0:17:59.000
But when I.. when we get in with one of those Taliban members, I saw that they are torturing someone in a room, and I got afraid.

0:17:59.000,0:18:05.000
I got shocked, and I thought that this is going to happen to me as well.

0:18:05.000,0:18:11.000
And it happened.

0:18:11.000,0:18:18.000
8-10 people, 8-10 members of the Taliban,

0:18:18.000,0:18:27.000
they surrounded me and started hitting me with whatever they had in their hand.

0:18:27.000,0:18:32.000
And.. they tortured me for 15 minutes

0:18:32.000,0:18:39.000
like that, until I lost.. What do you say?

0:18:39.000,0:18:44.000
Consciousness?
-Yeah, I lost my Consciousness.

0:18:44.000,0:18:45.000

0:18:45.000,0:19:03.000
Yeah, yeah, yeah. And after that they took me to the room where they were keeping other people who were arrested by them.

0:19:03.000,0:19:15.000
I spent three hours, I think, more than three hours in that room, and I can't forget

0:19:15.000,0:19:18.000
that day, especially

0:19:18.000,0:19:25.000
those three to four hours, because

0:19:25.000,0:19:30.000
I can't explain. I was my situation that

0:19:30.000,0:19:39.000
I was close to die. It was close to, maybe they were..

0:19:39.000,0:19:48.000
I was just feeling happy that I was not shot by them. I was not..

0:19:48.000,0:19:49.000
Thank you.

0:19:49.000,0:19:50.000
Thank you for sharing that.

0:19:50.000,0:19:51.000
I know that was very hard

0:19:51.000,0:20:00.000
to talk about. And I'm just so grateful that you told me about that experience. I'm very sorry for what you went through. After that happened,

0:20:00.000,0:20:10.000
you must have realized that life would be completely different for you. After the Taliban returned.

0:20:10.000,0:20:16.000
Exactly. It was my first time that it..

0:20:16.000,0:20:25.000
I lived under the the Taliban Government, I mean the Taliban was the governor.

0:20:25.000,0:20:29.000
In a way, you lived in.. when you were growing up and the Taliban..

0:20:29.000,0:20:35.000
Sorry, you were growing up in a time after the Taliban, and then before the Taliban.

0:20:35.000,0:20:45.000
It was this period of time that was unique, in a way, I think, in Afghanistan. And to see the Taliban return,

0:20:45.000,0:20:55.000
it was a shock to us in America. It must have been a great shock to you, and your world must have changed completely.

0:20:55.000,0:21:04.000
Exactly. I was hopeful before that event. I was hopeful before that day.

0:21:04.000,0:21:13.000
We can still continue our job, we can still work, we can still live in the society and we are free to do whatever we want.

0:21:13.000,0:21:27.000
But on that day, on those three to four hours, I was just shocked, and I lost

0:21:27.000,0:21:35.000
all the hopes that I had in my heart, all the thoughts that I had in my mind. They were lost.

0:21:35.000,0:21:44.000
How did you then.. What happened that led you to come to the United States after that day? How much time passed?

0:21:44.000,0:21:50.000
And how did you get here?

0:21:50.000,0:22:03.000
It took about one month. Yeah, close to one month. I left Kabul on October 3rd, a month later

0:22:03.000,0:22:09.000
after that event.

0:22:09.000,0:22:22.000
But before coming to the United States, we went to Qatar. We spent 40 days, I think, 40 days there, we stayed in an army camp called (CAS)

0:22:22.000,0:22:26.000
I don't know what's that.

0:22:26.000,0:22:40.000
It was the American military camp in Qatar, and we spent all 40 days there, and after that we

0:22:40.000,0:22:57.000
came to the United States on November 14th. We arrived in Philadelphia airport, and we moved to one of the army camps in Virginia, called Fort Pickett camp.

0:22:57.000,0:23:07.000
Yeah, and we spent about two weeks there. And we left the camp on December 2nd.

0:23:07.000,0:23:15.000
Yeah. On December 2nd we left the camp, and we went to one of our friends' home here in Virginia.

0:23:15.000,0:23:22.000
And we were there for 3-5 days, I think. Yeah, I don't remember exactly.

0:23:22.000,0:23:30.000
Something like that. And we came to Maryland on December 8th, I'm not sure.

0:23:30.000,0:23:39.000
We came to Maryland in Silver Spring, in our friends' apartment before we left the camp.

0:23:39.000,0:23:51.000
Our friends in Maryland they found an apartment for us, and they rented it and we came here.

0:23:51.000,0:24:01.000
Which organization helped you get to the United States?

0:24:01.000,0:24:09.000
-USAIP,

0:24:09.000,0:24:16.000
United States Institute of peace, something like that, yeah.

0:24:16.000,0:24:21.000

Were you able to come with some of your brothers, some of your family members?

0:24:21.000,0:24:23.000

Did they come with you?

0:24:23.000,0:24:35.000

Yeah. Two of my brothers. One of them is married, and has a family. He has three children, and his wife.

0:24:35.000,0:24:38.000

We came here together.

0:24:38.000,0:24:42.000

And so you had to very quickly say goodbye to some family members

0:24:42.000,0:24:45.000

there. You come from a very big family.

0:24:45.000,0:24:57.000

Yeah, I just hear about that.. It was on the night of October 2nd,

0:24:57.000,0:25:01.000

and I just heard that we are going to..

0:25:01.000,0:25:04.000

Our flight is tomorrow.

0:25:04.000,0:25:05.000

Wow!

0:25:05.000,0:25:16.000

We only had 10 to 12 hours to spend time with our family members and say goodbye, and all our family members are in Pakistan right now, and I hope we could

0:25:16.000,0:25:20.000

find a way to bring them here, too, because, you know.

0:25:20.000,0:25:31.000

I hope so, too. When you only have 10 hours to prepare to leave your country, I can only imagine how we incredibly stressful that must have been for you.

0:25:31.000,0:25:39.000

How did you decide what to bring with you, and what thoughts were going through your mind as you thought

0:25:39.000,0:25:46.000

"I have 10 hours to prepare for this trip." What was going through your mind?

0:25:46.000,0:25:58.000

All the important documents that I had, and those 3-4 books and some clothes, and my laptop, as well.

0:25:58.000,0:26:11.000

Also a camera. The camera that I was filming the protests on that day is with me right now. It's right here.

0:26:11.000,0:26:12.000

Well!

0:26:12.000,0:26:16.000

0:26:16.000,0:26:22.000

Those things that were important. Those things that were important, and other things

0:26:22.000,0:26:30.000

I just told my family that you can throw them out, or give them to others that need them.

0:26:30.000,0:26:39.000

Or there were other things that I wanted them to burn, because I thought that

0:26:39.000,0:26:45.000
I won't need them in the United States,

0:26:45.000,0:26:49.000
and they will be dangerous to my family. They will make their

0:26:49.000,0:27:13.000
safety.. They'll make them unsafe if they don't burn them or throw them out so..
Yeah, some clothes, books, camera, laptop and the documents, the educational documents, like the
document that the certificate of school graduation, and..

0:27:13.000,0:27:14.000
Right!

0:27:14.000,0:27:15.000

0:27:15.000,0:27:24.000
Before you got here, I imagine you had some ideas in your head about what the United States was
like,

0:27:24.000,0:27:32.000
and then you got here, and I imagine, it might have been different than what you had thought it
would be.

0:27:32.000,0:27:40.000
Is that safe to say, that your experience here has been different than what you imagined life in
America be like, or was it similar?

0:27:40.000,0:27:47.000
No. It is different, but..

0:27:47.000,0:28:07.000
Some of the problems that other people have, I don't have, because, most of the Afghans that
arrived to the United States they're not familiar with the culture of the United States and the
people and the way people live here.

0:28:07.000,0:28:16.000
But I was familiar with the culture of the United States or other countries.

0:28:16.000,0:28:24.000
It's not so hard for me to understand what's going on here. The only problem that I have is that
I cannot communicate with the people so much.

0:28:24.000,0:28:32.000
It's because of the languages. English is not that much perfect

0:28:32.000,0:28:35.000
to talk very well with others.

0:28:35.000,0:28:38.000
But you're improving. You're improving.

0:28:38.000,0:28:51.000
Make friends, or make some communications here. I just have a few friends that I know here that
they're not a lot.

0:28:51.000,0:29:01.000
And those friends are older than me. They are 40, 50, or 60. The people who came to our
apartment to help us,

0:29:01.000,0:29:21.000
and we're in contact, somehow we're talking sometimes, and like that, but I don't have friends
at the age of myself, because, you know, the problem is with the language and I'm trying to fix
that as soon as possible.

0:29:21.000,0:29:26.000
Right now, I'm trying to communicate with others.

0:29:26.000,0:29:43.000

For example, I take my camera every weekend and go to some nice places and take portraits of people, asking them "can I take a photo of you?" And they say, "yes, you can do that."

0:29:43.000,0:29:53.000

And I make some portraits, and they like it, and they want me to send them, and we are becoming friends on Instagram or WhatsApp...

0:29:53.000,0:29:54.000

Yeah.

0:29:54.000,0:29:55.000

0:29:55.000,0:30:04.000

Tell me about the photographs you took today. You went to take pictures of the cherry blossoms down by the monuments?

0:30:04.000,0:30:11.000

Yeah, the monuments. I don't know that place, the name of that place, but the river, are around the river.

0:30:11.000,0:30:15.000

At the Tidal Basin? Were you at the Tidal Basin?

0:30:15.000,0:30:16.000

Yeah.

0:30:16.000,0:30:29.000

Right. Yeah. I was there today, and I took some portraits of people, some landscape footage, some photo of the monument, or the Lincoln monument.

0:30:29.000,0:30:41.000

-Lincoln Memorial. Yeah, good. Maybe you can share some of the photographs you took, and we can post them along with this interview. It'd be nice to share some of your work.

0:30:41.000,0:30:44.000

0:30:44.000,0:30:49.000

I thought that you will be able to meet more young people through Montgomery College.

0:30:49.000,0:30:50.000

I know that you met

0:30:50.000,0:30:54.000

a few friends in the class you took with me.

0:30:54.000,0:31:11.000

One thing I remember was that one of your classmates created a digital story, and he mentioned you specifically in that story because he was talking about his

0:31:11.000,0:31:28.000

feelings for the Hazara people in Afghanistan, and I think that a lot of Americans don't know anything, or very little about the Hazara culture, and this ethnic group

0:31:28.000,0:31:33.000

in Afghanistan. And I was wondering for those people who will watch this video,

0:31:33.000,0:31:40.000

could you tell me a little bit about the Hazara community and the problems you have faced in Afghanistan?

0:31:40.000,0:31:46.000

And I think in Iran as well. That there has been discrimination shown against people in your community.

0:31:46.000,0:31:49.000

Could you talk a little bit about that?

0:31:49.000,0:31:56.000

Hazaras are an ethnic group in Afghanistan.

0:31:56.000,0:32:08.000

And as you said that one of my our classmates mentioned me and talked about the Hazara people. He was talking about the Hazara

0:32:08.000,0:32:11.000

genocide. There was a demonstration in Washington, DC

0:32:11.000,0:32:16.000

and all over the world, on October 8th, last year.

0:32:16.000,0:32:23.000

So, and that is true. There is

0:32:23.000,0:32:46.000

this group of people in Afghanistan, they live in Central Afghanistan. Most of them live in Central of Afghanistan, and they have been facing discrimination from a long time ago, and for the last decade.

0:32:46.000,0:32:52.000

They have been killed by Terrorist group and other groups in Afghanistan.

0:32:52.000,0:33:00.000

For a lot of time, there were attacks, targeted attacks against these people

0:33:00.000,0:33:07.000

in mosque, in a school, in a street, in a hospital, and everywhere.

0:33:07.000,0:33:19.000

And this group of people.. I'm a Hazara, and I lived in Afghanistan for two decades.

0:33:19.000,0:33:26.000

The memories that I have from Afghanistan, and the experiences I have,

0:33:26.000,0:33:32.000

all I know is that this group of people,

0:33:32.000,0:33:40.000

has no right in Afghanistan. Others are trying to

0:33:40.000,0:33:47.000

take them down from anything. For example, in in the last two decades they were not

0:33:47.000,0:33:53.000

in the government, there were not

0:33:53.000,0:34:04.000

in high positions of the Government, or other companies.

0:34:04.000,0:34:11.000

And those who lived in Afghanistan, other than Hazaras,

0:34:11.000,0:34:17.000

they have always showed us that..

0:34:17.000,0:34:26.000

What do you say, "hateness"?

0:34:26.000,0:34:27.000

0:34:27.000,0:34:28.000

-They always showed us that we are hated by them.

-Oh, hatred.

-Hatred, yeah.

0:34:28.000,0:34:43.000

I remember you created a beautiful digital story in my class. After we went to the National Museum of African American History and Culture. You mentioned that you identified with a piece of art

0:34:43.000,0:34:50.000

in the exhibit, related to discrimination against African American men, in particular,

0:34:50.000,0:35:13.000

young men, and I remember really being struck by your insight into what it feels like to be a member of an ethnic minority in a country where the power is held by a different group. And I was really struck by how you were able to make that connection so beautifully in

0:35:13.000,0:35:17.000

your story. Do you want to talk a little bit about that,

0:35:17.000,0:35:22.000

your experience at the Museum, or the parallels that you saw?

0:35:22.000,0:35:28.000

Yeah, we went to the

0:35:28.000,0:35:48.000

exhibition protest to find some results, and there was a lot of pieces of arts that connected me to my own experiences, because most of the arts there talk about the discrimination against the black community in the United States.

0:35:48.000,0:35:49.000

Yes.

0:35:49.000,0:36:10.000

There was some pieces of art like footage of the demonstrations and protests. And I just.. one of those digital images that was taken by.. I don't remember. I always forget things.

0:36:10.000,0:36:12.000

That's okay. I can't remember either, right now, but I can look it up.

0:36:12.000,0:36:20.000

But you chose one of the photographs that was taken of a demonstration related to Black Lives Matter, if I remember correctly.

0:36:20.000,0:36:27.000

Yes. a demonstration of Black Lives Matter, and it connected me to those demonstrations and protests we had in Afghanistan,

0:36:27.000,0:36:32.000

also in Washington, DC. I covered one of the..

0:36:32.000,0:36:41.000

a big demonstration in Washington DC that, more than, I think 5,000 people participated in that demonstration.

0:36:41.000,0:36:45.000

I covered that, and it was about the Hazara community,

0:36:45.000,0:36:59.000

the ethnic group of Afghanistan who was targeted, who had been killed in Afghanistan in the last decade, I mean, targeted against the Hazaras.

0:36:59.000,0:37:10.000

The protesters call to stop these kind of attacks against the Hazara community and protect the Hazara community in Afghanistan.

0:37:10.000,0:37:23.000

So.. also there was other demonstrations in Afghanistan, for example, the biggest demonstrations in the history of Afghanistan was about the Hazara community.

0:37:23.000,0:37:29.000

That was in 2016. It's called Junbesh-e Roshnayi.

0:37:29.000,0:37:33.000

Enlightenment Movement in English.

0:37:33.000,0:37:35.000

Interesting!

0:37:35.000,0:37:36.000

Yeah!

0:37:36.000,0:37:55.000

It was the biggest demonstration in the history of Afghanistan. It was about the discrimination against the Hazara. The government at that time..

0:37:55.000,0:38:00.000

How can I say this in English?

0:38:00.000,0:38:05.000

They bought electricity from Uzbekistan,

0:38:05.000,0:38:09.000

and they changed the way that it should have transferred to Kabul,

0:38:09.000,0:38:19.000

I mean the electricity. The people who were demonstrating..

0:38:19.000,0:38:23.000

The demonstrators were asking to transfer that electricity from Central of Afghanistan.

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It was easier, it was shorter, but the government

0:38:35.000,0:39:03.000

denied that. They chose another way that was longer, harder, and it was costing more money to transfer electricity that way. And also, because in the central of Afghanistan, Hazara people, as I said earlier, most of the Hazaras are living in Central of Afghanistan.

0:39:03.000,0:39:04.000

Right!

0:39:04.000,0:39:08.000

That's why the government didn't transfer that

0:39:08.000,0:39:12.000

electricity to Kabul, to Afghanistan that way.

0:39:12.000,0:39:15.000

They chose another way, because they were discriminated..

0:39:15.000,0:39:19.000

It was discrimination for the people.

0:39:19.000,0:39:24.000

We realized that why the government should do this? We are part of this country, too.

0:39:24.000,0:39:27.000

Hazaras are part of this country, too.

0:39:27.000,0:39:38.000

So prevented people in the central part of Afghanistan from having access to electricity and power that would have made their lives easier.

0:39:38.000,0:39:39.000

Yeah, in central of Afghanistan, people do not have access to electricity.

0:39:39.000,0:39:54.000

In the last interview that we had, I told you, that right now it's them, that people have 3-4 hours during the night, not during the day.

0:39:54.000,0:39:57.000

It's hard to even imagine that. Yeah.

0:39:57.000,0:40:01.000

0:40:01.000,0:40:06.000

Why others are afraid of Hazaras to be improved?

0:40:06.000,0:40:07.000

0:40:07.000,0:40:15.000

If that electricity was transferred from Central of Afghanistan. Believe me, the Hazara people are educated people.

0:40:15.000,0:40:24.000

They could use that electricity in a good way, but the government that was.. the power was held by others,

0:40:24.000,0:40:29.000

it was the people who were in the top positions of the government, they denied that,

0:40:29.000,0:40:40.000

especially the previous.. the former President, Ashraf Ghani. He was..

0:40:40.000,0:40:43.000

I'm sorry. Go ahead. Finish your thought.

0:40:43.000,0:40:49.000

He was the source of discrimination against Hazaras.

0:40:49.000,0:40:52.000

0:40:52.000,0:41:05.000

The thing that I remember about having you in class was that you were trying to adapt to a new life here, you were working two jobs,

0:41:05.000,0:41:16.000

you were trying to do all your homework, and you also had in your mind what was happening to your family and to your community,

0:41:16.000,0:41:40.000

and to your people, and I think a lot of people may not understand how hard it is to learn to have enough energy and strength to take college classes when you have all these worries and all these really difficult experiences that you described.

0:41:40.000,0:41:51.000

And I just want to acknowledge that. I think that a lot of people may not understand how hard it is to be a refugee,

0:41:51.000,0:41:52.000

and to be a college student

0:41:52.000,0:42:21.000

at the same time. And I wanted to ask you if you were to give advice to a new students at Montgomery College, who is just coming here from, either Afghanistan, or from any other country dealing with all these issues, what advice would you give him or her?

0:42:21.000,0:42:26.000

A person who has a lot of problems,

0:42:26.000,0:42:33.000

how can he give advice? If that advice could be helpful, why is it not helping me?

0:42:33.000,0:42:58.000

So.. But, from my experience at Montgomery College, you know that I was good at first, but what happened later in the class, in Afghanistan, I mean what happened in Afghanistan, the educational center had affected me a lot.

0:42:58.000,0:43:05.000

Since I'm working in a news organization, watching videos and pictures

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and making video reports, that makes it much, much harder.

0:43:16.000,0:43:19.000

Yeah, that's very hard to be seeing those images all the time.

0:43:19.000,0:43:32.000

Yeah, and I, after that.. after what happened in the educational center, I lost my strength completely and I couldn't focus on my education.

0:43:32.000,0:43:40.000

-And class and assignments, and I..

-Because there were students who were killed, right?

0:43:40.000,0:43:41.000

At the time.

0:43:41.000,0:43:47.000

-Yeah, the same age as me.

-Yeah. I remember that.

0:43:47.000,0:43:50.000

So..

0:43:50.000,0:43:56.000

So let me ask you this.. Let me ask you this, when things get really hard for you,

0:43:56.000,0:44:03.000

what do you do to keep going? You mentioned photography, and you mentioned being in nature.

0:44:03.000,0:44:10.000

Are those two things that help you cope when you're having a really hard time?

0:44:10.000,0:44:16.000

After that class I felt.. I just thought about..

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I just thought that I should not

0:44:23.000,0:44:31.000

keep like before. I mean, just get out of.. let's get my mind out of Afghanistan

0:44:31.000,0:44:37.000

for a long time. At least, I should graduate from the University

0:44:37.000,0:45:06.000

when I couldn't do something for those people. Right now, I cannot do anything. So after that class, I am trying to make some fun for me, going out, making photos, and trying to not think about Afghanistan, and to not spend time on social media and reading news and watching videos. Whenever I'm coming to the office and making reports,

0:45:06.000,0:45:19.000

I'm trying to keep myself.. how can I say..

0:45:19.000,0:45:23.000

To not think about what's going on in Afghanistan.

0:45:23.000,0:45:24.000

0:45:24.000,0:45:44.000

I think that what you said about constantly receiving news about violence, and constantly being inundated with information from social media, I think this is something that has impacted people's mental health a lot.

0:45:44.000,0:45:53.000

And I think that your, what you're talking about getting away from this constant barrage of information of negative news,

0:45:53.000,0:46:09.000

I think it's a really important strategy to turn it off, to step away from it, to go outside on a beautiful day like today, and go see the cherry blossoms.

0:46:09.000,0:46:12.000

I mean, those are things that..

0:46:12.000,0:46:15.000
being able to appreciate beauty like that,

0:46:15.000,0:46:22.000
and make connections with other people. I think what you're doing is really important.

0:46:22.000,0:46:27.000
Thank you. And I'm just.. I will start..

0:46:27.000,0:46:36.000
I will retake that English class again, and maybe

0:46:36.000,0:46:38.000
next semester?

0:46:38.000,0:46:41.000
I hope so. I hope so.

0:46:41.000,0:46:42.000
I am s bit ready, because I found that on that class that I'm not ready yet.

0:46:42.000,0:46:48.000
I should be ready for it.

0:46:48.000,0:46:56.000
I think, yeah, I think.. It takes a lot of energy to learn, a lot of focus.

0:46:56.000,0:47:00.000
Yeah, yeah.

0:47:00.000,0:47:07.000
And I'm trying to make that environment for myself in my mind. I mean,

0:47:07.000,0:47:27.000
I'm trying to make my mental health better, because you know, most of the times, during the week I have nightmares. So I'm trying to skip those nightmares and find a way to

0:47:27.000,0:47:30.000
have some happiness during the day, too, to not have nightmare.

0:47:30.000,0:47:33.000
So that's what I'm doing.

0:47:33.000,0:47:37.000
And once I could..

0:47:37.000,0:47:46.000
could be out of Afghanistan, could turn off those memories and experiences, and also

0:47:46.000,0:48:01.000
the negative news that are coming out of Afghanistan, I will restart studying at Montgomery College, and this time I will be preferred to it.

0:48:01.000,0:48:02.000
Can you tell me

0:48:02.000,0:48:18.000
what your hopes are? Where do you see yourself in five years? What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

0:48:18.000,0:48:26.000
To do at least something for the people in Afghanistan. I mean,

0:48:26.000,0:48:34.000
change even a small thing. If I could change a small thing, that's a lot for me.

0:48:34.000,0:48:37.000
For example, if I could

0:48:37.000,0:48:43.000
knock out the discrimination against the Hazara people or other people in Afghanistan,

0:48:43.000,0:48:46.000
That's not a small thing,

0:48:46.000,0:48:48.000
that's a lot.

0:48:48.000,0:48:55.000
But if I could, I will do that, maybe my major for the undergraduate is journalism.

0:48:55.000,0:49:08.000
But for a master degree, or the Ph.D., I might choose a different major, and I will study something different. Right now, I cannot decide

0:49:08.000,0:49:22.000
what to be in the future, because everything is changing every day, and I should keep going with what's going on,

0:49:22.000,0:49:27.000
with the situation. Keep updating myself. So..

0:49:27.000,0:49:31.000
Technology has changed a lot, and journalism has changed a lot over the past few years.

0:49:31.000,0:49:33.000
Right!

0:49:33.000,0:49:47.000
The past few decades. That's for sure. I love what you said about trying to help people back in Afghanistan, and I liked what you had to say, too, about thinking about your future and your education.

0:49:47.000,0:49:53.000
We started this conversation, talking about books and how they impacted us.

0:49:53.000,0:49:59.000
Can you imagine, perhaps writing books in the future? Do you see yourself,

0:49:59.000,0:50:02.000
maybe writing a novel?

0:50:02.000,0:50:28.000
That's why I chose to be a journalist. I mean, my undergraduate degree is going to be in journalism, and I want to learn as much as I could, and writing stories of the people, stories of the society, stories of my own experience.

0:50:28.000,0:50:37.000
I mean, writing my own experience and the experience of the people, and all other stories that are coming out of Afghanistan.

0:50:37.000,0:50:44.000
But maybe one day I will write a novel, or

0:50:44.000,0:50:58.000
literature, I don't know.. I don't know. Because writing a novel needs a lot of knowledge, needs and a lot of good literature, so..

0:50:58.000,0:51:02.000
If I could have that literature, I will write,

0:51:02.000,0:51:06.000
yeah, because I'm..

0:51:06.000,0:51:13.000
There are a lot of stories that need to be shared with others around the world.

0:51:13.000,0:51:19.000
-Yes.
-For example, students of Montgomery College. One day they

0:51:19.000,0:51:26.000

will be interested to read about Afghanistan and to know about Afghanistan.

0:51:26.000,0:51:34.000

And what if I could give that opportunity to them and give them the stories that they need?

0:51:34.000,0:51:40.000

That would be a great.. a great job for me to do.

0:51:40.000,0:51:49.000

This conversation may help people better understand the situation in Afghanistan a little bit, or spark their interest, perhaps, in knowing more.

0:51:49.000,0:51:57.000

How do you feel about talking today? What emotions are you experiencing now?

0:51:57.000,0:52:04.000

It was hard for me to talk about all those experiences that I talked here. Right now,

0:52:04.000,0:52:10.000

I was feeling good, but right now, I don't feel good. I need to spend some time outside.

0:52:10.000,0:52:13.000

My mind is now heavy.

0:52:13.000,0:52:18.000

I hope you can go outside and enjoy the sunshine today.

0:52:18.000,0:52:27.000

Of course, I already.. before the interview.. before this talk, I called my friends to come here,

0:52:27.000,0:52:33.000

hang out, and spend some time. Because I knew that it will be hard for me to talk about

0:52:33.000,0:52:34.000

some of the experiences.

0:52:34.000,0:52:41.000

Yeah, spending time with friends is so important, it's really important.

0:52:41.000,0:52:44.000

My friend is going to come at 6 p.m., so we're going out.

0:52:44.000,0:52:47.000

Good. What are you guys going to do tonight?

0:52:47.000,0:52:55.000

Nothing special. My brothers are on a vacation.

0:52:55.000,0:53:02.000

There went outside. I don't know where they have gone, all of them.. only me.

0:53:02.000,0:53:03.000

Only you left?

0:53:03.000,0:53:10.000

I'm here left behind. But, there are friends here.

0:53:10.000,0:53:22.000

Maybe we'll have dinner together, or something like that, or maybe we'll stay at home playing video games,

0:53:22.000,0:53:34.000

or editing the photos that I took yesterday, and posting them on Instagram. So I'll be back here.

0:53:34.000,0:53:35.000

Those sound like

0:53:35.000,0:53:44.000

good activities to do later today. Is there anything else that you would like to.. We're just about out of time, but we have a few more minutes.

0:53:44.000,0:53:53.000

Is there anything you would like to add about your experience at Montgomery College, or your experience here in Silver Spring, Maryland?

0:53:53.000,0:54:08.000

Your thoughts about living here, and how your life has changed?

0:54:08.000,0:54:21.000

Thanks to all those people who helped with me here, especially Kim McGettigan, who found the job at The Cultures and Arts Center for me.

0:54:21.000,0:54:27.000

And also made a scholarship at Montgomery College

0:54:27.000,0:54:36.000

for me to study. I'm sorry for failing that class, but I will restart the classes. I was not prepared, but, thanks to her, and also all those people,

0:54:36.000,0:54:45.000

thanks to you.. It is good to live here at Montgomery County, with the people here.

0:54:45.000,0:54:54.000

Maybe I'm not.. I cannot communicate with all of the community, all of the people here yet, but I will

0:54:54.000,0:54:57.000

make it happen one day. It's very nice to..

0:54:57.000,0:54:59.000

I'm glad that you mentioned Kim McGettigan again.

0:54:59.000,0:55:09.000

She does a lot to help students, and I think she cares very deeply about all the students at Montgomery College, but especially about the Afghan community.

0:55:09.000,0:55:14.000

So I'm really glad that you mentioned her. She does a lot of really important work at MC.

0:55:14.000,0:55:15.000

She's so lovely! I love her so much.

0:55:15.000,0:55:19.000

Believe me. She's very nice, and she

0:55:19.000,0:55:34.000

helped me a lot. I don't know who else she helped, but she helped me a lot, me and my brothers as well.

0:55:34.000,0:55:39.000

I will be sure to make sure that she gets a chance to watch this conversation.

0:55:39.000,0:55:57.000

I know it'll mean a lot to her to hear you say that, and I hope that, as time passes, that Silver Spring becomes a home here for you, that you feel like you're part of our community, and that you can rebuild a new life here.

0:55:57.000,0:56:02.000

Thank you so much. I hope that my family could come here too,

0:56:02.000,0:56:08.000

because they are the only thing that I don't have here.

0:56:08.000,0:56:30.000

I have a good community there. The people are nice, the city is nice, and I hope we could get my parents and other family members here, too, and they could see the beauty of this city and the people, and and nice people.

0:56:30.000,0:56:31.000

I hope so, too.

0:56:31.000,0:56:33.000

Yeah, thank you.

0:56:33.000,0:56:37.000

-Thank you so much for your time today. Thank you, Taqi!

-Thank you!

like you. And so, once again, let me say, thank you so much for sharing your story.

0:47:37.000,0:47:46.000

I know it will benefit others. So thank you so much for your time today, we're really grateful to have students like you in the MC community.

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Thank you.

0:47:47.000,0:47:50.000

I'm going to stop recording.