

Interview with Mansoureh ("Mansi") Amiri on April 26, 2023

0:00:02.280,0:00:09.540

Good afternoon Mansi! it's so nice to see you today! Good afternoon Professor. Nice to see

0:00:09.540,0:00:15.720

you again too. I'm so happy that you have some time to talk to me today. I know you're very very

0:00:15.720,0:00:22.560

busy and I'm really grateful I think you have a great story to tell about your life and I'm

0:00:22.560,0:00:27.420

just so glad that you're going to tell it today. So I'm going to begin by reading your bio and

0:00:27.420,0:00:33.240

giving a little introduction about the project and then we'll begin our conversation. Okay sure

0:00:33.240,0:00:42.480

All right great. So Mansi, Mansoureh Amiri was born in Tabriz, Iran near the Turkish border and

0:00:42.480,0:00:49.680

grew up in Tehran, Iran. She moved to the United States in 2014 and now lives with her husband

0:00:49.680,0:00:58.200

and two sons, ages eight and five, in Bethesda. She speaks Farsi, Turkish, German, and English.

0:00:59.040,0:01:04.920

Mansi studied at Montgomery College in the ELAP program English Language for Academic Purposes

0:01:04.920,0:01:11.580

with me. It was so fun to have you in class.

0:01:11.580,0:01:18.840

Today she works as an eighth grade

0:01:18.840,0:01:24.780

teacher, computer science and technology teacher, at Francis Scott Key Middle School in Silver

0:01:24.780,0:01:31.020

Spring, Maryland and in her spare time she enjoys listening to podcasts, looking at

0:01:31.020,0:01:38.100

photos of interior design magazines, and hiking. As you know my name is Heather Bruce Satrom.

0:01:38.100,0:01:44.460

I teach in ELAP, English Language for Academic Purposes at Montgomery College. This project is

0:01:45.000,0:01:51.300

called "History in the Making: Documenting Stories of Immigrant and Refugee Students at MC"

0:01:52.500,0:01:59.700

and the goal is to help others better understand the experiences of immigrants and refugees in the

0:01:59.700,0:02:05.580

United States, particularly here in Montgomery County. Telling your story will enable others to

0:02:05.580,0:02:11.340
better understand the challenges that immigrants
face and better appreciate the resilience and

0:02:11.340,0:02:15.180
perseverance of people in your community
so I'm very grateful for your participation.

0:02:15.900,0:02:21.000
You had a chance to read these questions in
advance but please note that all of the questions

0:02:21.000,0:02:26.340
are optional. If you want to skip a question at
any point, that's fine. If you need to take a break,

0:02:26.340,0:02:32.520
that is fine too. We'll take about an hour for the
conversation. Let's see what time is it? All right

0:02:32.520,0:02:40.740
keeping an eye on that, and today is Wednesday
April 26th. Could you please tell me your full name?

0:02:40.740,0:02:49.980
My name is Mansoureh Amiri, but I have a
nickname as Mansi. And do I have permission

0:02:49.980,0:02:58.920
to record this interview? Yes All right so
tell me where and when you were born and then a

0:02:58.920,0:03:12.060
little bit about the community that you grew
up in. I was born on November 10, 1976 in Tabriz,

0:03:13.320,0:03:22.620
It's location is in the northwest of
Iran and the people there are speaking Turkish.

0:03:23.820,0:03:34.380
As I (was) born, my father has started his
education always and he got admission from

0:03:34.380,0:03:42.120
the one of the best universities in Tehran
and we moved from Tabriz to Tehran.

0:03:42.960,0:03:52.320
I am coming from a little big family. I have
five siblings and I grew up in an educational

0:03:52.320,0:04:08.640
family too. My father has a PhD in architecture
and he's a political... (School announcement)

0:04:10.980,0:04:17.820

0:04:17.820,0:04:24.960
That's okay I know that you're at the school

0:04:24.960,0:04:29.880
where you teach so yes but you were saying...
Sorry about that, I hope that would be the last

0:04:29.880,0:04:39.900
and as I told my father was a
(political?) people and he

0:04:39.900,0:04:49.980
is educated and I have three sisters
two brothers and we grew up in Tehran.

0:04:50.700,0:05:02.880
Our house was in in the best place in the
Tehran. My father did all the things he could

0:05:03.420,0:05:13.500
to help us to improve our ability in different
ways but I come from the religious family too

0:05:14.460,0:05:31.200
and I remember I was five years old and my mom
started to wear us a hijab and we dressed the long

0:05:32.400,0:05:39.600
long dress all the time. We never
there as a girls we never dressed

0:05:39.600,0:05:51.900
up with the pants or other stuff like leggings
and we practiced our religion at home

0:05:51.900,0:05:58.440
most of the time with the community, with our
community, Turkish community and Persian community

0:05:59.580,0:06:07.020
and I think I have shared all the things about
my family. Can you tell me a little bit about

0:06:07.020,0:06:14.040
the house or apartment building that you grew
up in? Yes as I told we lived in the in almost

0:06:14.040,0:06:28.260
the best location in Tehran we had a big home
with four big bedrooms and living room we always

0:06:28.260,0:06:40.980
had someone to help my mom to clean up the
home or do the household chores (announcement)

0:06:43.380,0:06:50.640
that was a big apartment in the
big building in the north of Tehran.

0:06:51.840,0:07:01.560
And we changed it and we got a single home
at the at in other place of

0:07:01.560,0:07:06.300
Tehran that was a good place and my
family right now is living at this place

0:07:07.740,0:07:14.460
in a single home at the north of the
Tehran. So you still have family there? Yes

0:07:14.460,0:07:21.060
my mom and my dad are living there. And your
siblings are they still there or did they move?

0:07:21.060,0:07:27.300
No they get married all of them and they are
not living with my family but they are living

0:07:27.300,0:07:34.500
around my family because my mom and dad because
they are getting old and my my dad got a brain

0:07:34.500,0:07:42.720

stroke two years ago and always they should be near my family to get help them if they need.

0:07:43.800,0:07:51.660

I understand. Can you share some memories from your childhood related to special holidays?

0:07:52.500,0:08:00.840

Yes we have some events that are so important to Persian people like Nowruz

0:08:02.220,0:08:16.980

and Chaharshanbe Souri, Chelle Yalda. We always gathering as a whole family I mean with the Aunt, uncle, or Grandma

0:08:16.980,0:08:30.120

grandfather and celebrate these events we have another religious event after we fasted for

0:08:30.120,0:08:42.000

one month at the end of the past six months, we gather together and we make some delicious food

0:08:42.000,0:08:51.960

and share together and spend the time together that was hold back to my country in United States I

0:08:51.960,0:09:00.180

never find a place to gather and do the things here but I remember that was so nice time

0:09:00.900,0:09:11.220

as a child and as they used... we have spent too much time with my cousins going out laughing and

0:09:13.680,0:09:15.120

it was nice yes

0:09:18.660,0:09:27.240

I'm always interested in the holiday of Nowruz the celebration. Yes oh yes like rituals and traditions

0:09:27.240,0:09:32.940

could you describe that for people who don't know about Nowruz? Yes Nowruz is the beginning of

0:09:32.940,0:09:42.240

our new year. It's the at the first of the springtime we may we are getting prepared for

0:09:42.240,0:09:51.840

Nowruz about two weeks ago two weeks from the Nowruz we clean up the home and buy the newest

0:09:51.840,0:10:05.700

stuff and we are going to make a half scene it has a seven important items which of them introduce

0:10:05.700,0:10:16.740

something from my country or from the thought of the people in my country and we make a

0:10:16.740,0:10:26.640

"Haftsin" and before the time the new year begins we sit around the houses and make good

0:10:26.640,0:10:37.680

wishes for New Year and then we always wear a new dress with the rest of it with newer stuff and

0:10:39.060,0:10:48.360

and we put the Quran, a religious
book, and Hafez inside the

0:10:49.020,0:10:57.660

half scene and we put the money inside the Quran
or Hafez and give it them to the youngest

0:10:58.560,0:11:07.200

children it is so nice my sons always are
waiting for this time they never they never

0:11:07.200,0:11:18.840

visited Iran or Tehran just I do it to
teach them about holidays and how important

0:11:18.840,0:11:26.160

is Nowruz for us or Chaharshanbe Suri
or Shame Yalda. Can you just tell me a little bit

0:11:26.160,0:11:34.260

about those last two holidays? I'm not familiar
with those either. Shabe Yalda is the longest

0:11:35.160,0:11:46.260

night. We celebrate and gather together at
the night. I's like winter solstice?

0:11:46.260,0:12:02.820

yes okay and we can invite our friend and
we make a dinner and the we are they are

0:12:02.820,0:12:11.040

they are dancing I don't dance, they are singing
and at the end of this night, we are reading the

0:12:11.640,0:12:26.100

Hafez and making the wish for the New Year,
not new year but it's the new start of the end

0:12:28.080,0:12:36.900

we should have a special food for this
night we make something with the pomegranate

0:12:37.980,0:12:49.140

and we eat a pomegranate. ...Oh, I am
pronouncing in German some delicious and

0:12:50.820,0:12:59.160

something with the most sugar inside and yes
we just gather together and dance and read the

0:12:59.160,0:13:08.580

Hafez and wish the good things for each other
Hafez, the poet? Yes yes I admire the poetry of

0:13:08.580,0:13:15.300

Hafez very much. Do you have any favorite
poems of Hafez that maybe later you could

0:13:15.300,0:13:22.680

um send me a link and I could include? Yes That
would be lovely. Tell me a little bit about

0:13:23.820,0:13:29.340

your education growing up when you were
a child and then when you were a teenager?

0:13:30.960,0:13:40.080

In the high school I graduated in

mathematical branch and after I finish high

0:13:40.080,0:13:49.860
school we do an important exam in the
country based on our the branch we selected

0:13:50.880,0:14:01.020
and I wanted to be a architect because my
father is an architect. I remember as he

0:14:01.020,0:14:13.920
he was working on the architecture
I always wish if I were an architect too but based

0:14:13.920,0:14:24.420
on the exam, we couldn't decide which of those
subjects we should continue. I did select it for

0:14:24.420,0:14:35.280
computer engineering and I went to the university
but after a few months, my father a got a

0:14:35.280,0:14:47.940
chance to send me and my brother to Germany to
continue our education at one of

0:14:47.940,0:14:55.620
the best universities in the Dusseldorf and we went
there and after two that was just for two until

0:14:55.620,0:15:03.600
three years and we stayed there for three years
and after I got a bachelor's from this university,

0:15:03.600,0:15:17.460
I back to Iran and I did continue. I did
continue my study in MBA branch and I studied MBA

0:15:17.460,0:15:28.500
and after I got after I finished I started
my first job as a teacher as a computer teacher

0:15:28.500,0:15:39.000
in a middle school and high school in Iran and I
was a teacher there for two or three years, I don't

0:15:39.000,0:15:47.040
remember, but maybe three years and after
I got a good position in one of the companies

0:15:48.000,0:15:58.860
for programming and I left my job as a teacher and
I started my work as a programmer in this company

0:15:59.520,0:16:08.760
and I stayed at this position until I immigrated.
How old were you when you lived in Germany?

0:16:08.760,0:16:21.000
I was 18 years when we went to the
Germany and after I came back I was 21.

0:16:22.140,0:16:29.280
How did the experience of living in Germany affect
your outlook? Did it change your opinions about

0:16:30.780,0:16:38.160
thinking about women's roles in Iran
and women's roles in Germany? If

0:16:38.160,0:16:46.620

that affected you in any way? Definitely in
Iran women have so difficult time

0:16:46.620,0:16:54.180
with the regime and the whole...
but in the Germany in Germany women

0:16:54.900,0:17:07.560
got the chance based on their ability to find them
place for work and study and as I remember

0:17:08.580,0:17:16.440
the women in Germany, they are so strong
I don't know based on their culture they were

0:17:16.440,0:17:27.900
so independent, they were so strong and as I
lived there, I found that how they are

0:17:27.900,0:17:36.960
doing the whole, they are they are making the
whole life without help of their brother or

0:17:36.960,0:17:45.600
father or other members of the family and it was
interesting for me because the most of the time in

0:17:45.600,0:17:59.160
Iran, girls are growing up to always to be
dependent on their family and after and it's

0:18:00.480,0:18:12.360
it's like they like that they couldn't
find a way to get free from this

0:18:12.360,0:18:22.620
situation until they get married but after
when did life change I mean when they get

0:18:22.620,0:18:31.920
divorced and they came back to this family to
their family again they are at the same position

0:18:31.920,0:18:42.720
as before and they couldn't make a decision alone.
They couldn't live alone, they couldn't have their

0:18:42.720,0:18:50.760
life without their family, and it's really hard
for the women in Iran. It's really interesting

0:18:50.760,0:18:58.740
that at a young age you had this opportunity to
kind of see a different way of approaching women's

0:18:58.740,0:19:04.140
roles and I wonder if that how that affected
you later on? It sounds like it did affect you?

0:19:04.140,0:19:18.000
Yes definitely, it did because after I came back to
Iran, my mind was changed and I got I remember my

0:19:18.000,0:19:28.080
father told me you did change but you are thinking
like so, and I told because I saw how women are

0:19:28.080,0:19:36.420
different in other countries and how this regime
put the women in like a big jail and they couldn't

0:19:36.420,0:19:45.420
do anything, and my father was so surprised and
at this time we could negotiate about everything

0:19:45.420,0:19:53.400
that was belonging to women in Iran. That's very
interesting. This might be a good point in the

0:19:53.400,0:20:01.620
conversation to talk about when you met the man
who became your husband later? Yes so it led to....

0:20:03.660,0:20:20.460
After I came to Iran and I met
my husband's sister in the University as I

0:20:20.460,0:20:33.000
wanted to get a master's and I saw her brother and
and she told me my brother wants to learn

0:20:33.000,0:20:43.860
a little more about you and can you guys get
them get a chance to meet each other, and but in my

0:20:43.860,0:20:57.300
family it was a big red... I don't know red red point
to meet someone else without permission of my

0:20:57.300,0:21:11.340
father and I told my father about the Saids and
Said, and he told me no you stop to meet this guy

0:21:11.340,0:21:19.980
because he's not belonging...he won't belong
to our family because of his mind and his style

0:21:20.940,0:21:32.040
and but I continue to meet Said and I found
that the way we are thinking is the same

0:21:32.640,0:21:46.140
and my father told me if you continue, I
gave your car I gave anything I am doing for you

0:21:46.800,0:21:55.080
and I told you okay do it my father. I want just
if I want to (get) married, I want just to marry Said

0:21:55.080,0:22:06.780
I won't accept any other people. You can imagine
as a girl who is growing up in a in a famous family

0:22:07.800,0:22:15.960
she will have more more people who
want to (get) married with me and my

0:22:15.960,0:22:20.940
father always recommend the people
who they are thinking like my father

0:22:22.140,0:22:38.100
and that was a big challenge. It took
almost two years and after my father not accepted

0:22:38.100,0:22:51.360
but he noticed. I decided I won't give up my
decision. He would agree to (be) married with Said but

0:22:51.360,0:23:04.560
Said was arrested at this time, oh my God, and my
father started to say no no again and but I I

0:23:06.060,0:23:11.580
selected Said, and I waited
for Said for three years

0:23:13.200,0:23:17.400
and after Said got released from the prison

0:23:19.500,0:23:32.160
they came with his family and my
father decided to change their mind and allowed

0:23:32.160,0:23:43.500
me to marry Said, but he told me you broke
my heart and as a big child in the family that

0:23:43.500,0:23:52.080
was very hard for my father and but I did that.
It took a lot of courage. Yes and a lot of patience.

0:23:52.080,0:24:01.680
No, yes, three years he was in prison. Three years
I couldn't see Said. Three years I just went

0:24:02.460,0:24:12.420
and I sat near the door of the prison and maybe
someone come out and give me news about

0:24:12.420,0:24:20.100
Said. That was so hard. You couldn't see him at all
during that time? No Would you send him a letter?

0:24:21.240,0:24:35.280
I just gave them the rose red rose always with
with his mother they came from another city to

0:24:35.280,0:24:46.140
visit Said every two or three months and they
always told me when the next time for visit and

0:24:46.140,0:24:55.680
I bought something and not something I just one
rose one red rose and send it to Said and uh

0:24:55.680,0:25:07.980
Professor, after Said was released he brought all
the roses, oh God how many roses were there? That

0:25:07.980,0:25:19.080
was maybe 90 I I'm not sure 90 oh he kept all
of them. Yes that's beautiful that's a beautiful

0:25:19.080,0:25:29.340
story. That was...I left all of them in my...
after we decided to immigrate to the US, that was

0:25:30.420,0:25:40.080
I missed a lot for these roses and I gave it
to my mom and told them please watch us to

0:25:40.080,0:25:50.760
this rose maybe later if I got a chance and I can
visit Iran again, I will bring it with me to U.S.

0:25:52.080,0:25:57.660
So I just want to make sure that it's clear
for people watching the video that your father

0:25:58.440,0:26:05.040
is very conservative and religious and you grew up
in that background but the man that you chose to

0:26:05.040,0:26:13.200

marry was a political activist who opposed the regime. Yes. Can you tell me a little bit about

0:26:14.880,0:26:21.780

the work that your, the political activist work that your now-husband was doing?

0:26:22.680,0:26:30.120

What did he do that led to his arrest? What was he protesting? What was he trying to accomplish

0:26:30.120,0:26:43.320

at that time? He always fight for the democracy in Iran and he is trying, he was trying

0:26:43.320,0:26:55.500

to make a meeting for the people and to alert the people how this regime are doing in Iran and how

0:26:55.500,0:27:09.120

they they are putting the people in a in a very I don't know in not democratic situation and

0:27:11.100,0:27:23.520

he writes to bring down the regime with some political activ(ists) in Tehran and as he (was) arrested

0:27:23.520,0:27:34.200

the reason he was arrested he had a meeting in outside Iran and the regime

0:27:34.980,0:27:45.660

spied them outside the Iran and after he came back he was arrested at the airport

0:27:47.040,0:27:57.360

the meeting was about how they can make a meeting and have a lot of people

0:27:58.320,0:28:07.500

especially the young or the young people to alert them about the democracy in Iran.

0:28:09.300,0:28:18.840

So what year was he released from prison? The year he was released from prison that was three

0:28:18.840,0:28:32.460

years before we immigrated to U.S. That was 2010. And how old were you at that time? I was 36

0:28:34.020,0:28:41.820

no maybe 33. So you had to wait a long time to begin your life together? Yes

0:28:42.600,0:28:49.140

And I imagine it must have been very hard to start your relationship again after you had

0:28:49.140,0:28:56.940

been separated for so long. Yes definitely that was so hard because after he (was) released from

0:28:56.940,0:29:06.060

the prison he was not the same, the same as he was when he went to the prison. Two years it's a long time

0:29:06.900,0:29:19.140

and he was depressed he was after he (was) released he found that all the things so so bad in Tehran or

0:29:19.140,0:29:26.100
in Iran. He couldn't believe what was happening
in Tehran. During three years he was arrested,

0:29:27.180,0:29:35.220
everything is changing all the time in Tehran
or in Iran and it's not the same as your survey

0:29:37.260,0:29:43.860
Well and I'm thinking about what's happening
there now. Um can you describe a little bit about

0:29:43.860,0:29:50.820
the situation now? Do you feel... there's so many
demonstrations I see you know in social media

0:29:50.820,0:29:56.220
and in the news, women burning their headscarves,
and like women are out in the streets. Do you feel

0:29:56.220,0:30:02.520
a sense of hope for your country now? Do you
feel like maybe finally some change is coming?

0:30:04.680,0:30:14.400
The hope is always there it has started it
was started from the Mahsa Amini's death and that

0:30:14.400,0:30:24.060
was a big big protest. One of the biggest protests
in Tehran and all about the women and the rights

0:30:24.780,0:30:37.500
and but the regime did control this situation. They
killed the people on the street and what happened

0:30:37.500,0:30:49.080
people they are afraid of this
regime because they are killing people without

0:30:49.080,0:30:57.360
any reason they just want freedom they
want just to be free, want to be as a woman

0:30:58.560,0:31:08.040
select what they want to wear. That's the one
thing they wanted right now in Iran, but the regime

0:31:08.040,0:31:16.920
killed the people and it makes the people to be
afraid to come out again and protest again but

0:31:17.520,0:31:28.260
the hope is always there. There are a lot of
bad situations like economic situation or

0:31:28.260,0:31:37.140
other stuff it's really bad in Iran and maybe
in future they would hurt again to the people

0:31:37.140,0:31:49.200
to come out from their home from their
from their zone and start to protest again.

0:31:50.220,0:31:58.020
I hope so. Let's go back to the time where
Said was released from prison and

0:31:58.740,0:32:01.860
you did you get married in your home country?

0:32:03.060,0:32:09.000
We got married well we didn't have a big

0:32:10.200,0:32:21.000
ceremony yes wedding ceremony there and
because my father was against and said was in

0:32:21.000,0:32:30.660
bad situation he was so depressed we just
got married and we started the life together

0:32:31.500,0:32:41.820
but I just worked and we needed money we needed
something to continue to live there because

0:32:42.720,0:32:51.360
economic situation in Iran always
all the time the prices are changing in Iran

0:32:51.960,0:33:02.460
and we needed another way to manage the life
but Said couldn't find any job because he was in

0:33:02.460,0:33:18.180
prison and he couldn't find and after three years
this the life was so so stressful for me and Said

0:33:19.140,0:33:28.080
because not because of the economic that was
another reason, because the whole time they are

0:33:28.080,0:33:38.100
spying, the regime are spying (on) Said all the time
he couldn't do anything in Iran as a political

0:33:38.100,0:33:51.060
activist, they wanted to write they wanted to have
a meeting they wanted to be, to meet

0:33:51.060,0:33:58.920
someone to speak some with someone but he couldn't
have this chance and he was in prison at home

0:34:00.540,0:34:14.100
and we decided to immigrate to U.S and Said's
friends were immigrated before Said to the U.S. They

0:34:14.100,0:34:23.820
suggested to get a visa from one of the universities
and we got it and we immigrated to U.S What year

0:34:23.820,0:34:34.260
was that? That was 2013. That was April 2013. This
is almost 10 years. Did you immigrate first

0:34:34.260,0:34:45.660
to New York? Yeah we should (go) there
but we didn't because the class was online and

0:34:45.660,0:34:53.820
he could he could continue his studies at home
without going to the university in the location.

0:34:55.500,0:35:05.760
So did you come as a political asylee? Was it
through a program that was helping people who

0:35:05.760,0:35:11.580
were political dissidents, or did you come through
a university program or as students? How did you

0:35:12.780,0:35:26.040
After we got the visa, we came here and I
apply and Said applied for many years to get

0:35:26.040,0:35:38.160
a green card and we didn't find any way
and one of my one of our friends told

0:35:38.160,0:35:46.980
Said why you are not getting asylum? It's a
good a way to get a green card in the U.S

0:35:46.980,0:35:54.360
That was another another bad
situation for Said that was like

0:35:55.140,0:36:04.440
to being die because he wanted to be as asylum but
we didn't we didn't have any other way to say U.S.

0:36:05.940,0:36:16.500
and he got asylum after two years and because we
got a green card and right now I am a citizen but

0:36:16.500,0:36:25.080
Said decided don't be a citizen because you want
to be a citizen in Iran not in other country.

0:36:25.080,0:36:33.240
Oh interesting. Is that because he still has
hope for change? That's fascinating. Yes. So if

0:36:33.240,0:36:40.260
I understand correctly and correct me if I'm wrong
originally he was going to work at a university

0:36:40.260,0:36:47.820
in New York or teach there yes teach and what
was his profession or is his profession?

0:36:48.540,0:36:57.000
He's an industrial engineer and he decided to
teach that I don't know what what was the topic

0:36:58.260,0:37:04.380
that was something related to engineering
a staff there I don't remember

0:37:08.220,0:37:17.400
Crisis (?) in the industrial I don't
know something like that so did you move first

0:37:17.400,0:37:26.580
to New York or did you just arrived in Montgomery
here. Okay. I live because his best friend

0:37:26.580,0:37:38.640
is living here. Oh interesting. Yes and we
just arrived here and we visit the

0:37:38.640,0:37:50.580
university later but we never went there... in NY. He couldn't find work in his field here?

0:37:51.660,0:37:57.300
uh that was another story not really

0:37:59.100,0:38:09.660
and he started to u
because he has a good background how to

0:38:10.560,0:38:21.720
make your money in a stock market and
he decided to work at the stock at one

0:38:21.720,0:38:30.960
company who is doing the stock market. So he's
working in business or finance? Okay interesting so

0:38:32.520,0:38:37.620
you came to Montgomery County
and that was remind me what year that was?

0:38:37.620,0:38:47.700
That was 2013, April 2013. So right before
you came, what emotions were you feeling

0:38:47.700,0:38:55.260
about moving to the United States? What was... I
imagine you had a a mix of emotions about this.

0:38:58.800,0:39:09.000
The emotion... I left Iran for
the second time. That was easier for me

0:39:10.200,0:39:19.500
but for Said that was another story because
the reason was different. The first time I

0:39:19.500,0:39:28.740
left Iran to get the way to study and came back
to Iran with the bachelor degree but this time

0:39:30.600,0:39:39.540
as we decided to leave the country, we knew
that maybe we won't see the country again

0:39:40.920,0:39:49.380
and that was a very bad feeling because when you
knew you never see your family, you never see

0:39:49.380,0:39:58.020
your culture, you never see the all the things
they are belonging to you but no way to come

0:39:58.020,0:40:10.500
back again, that was horrible, but we had a hope to
come back again and Said is still hoping too

0:40:11.460,0:40:20.820
to come back to my country and build it
again but I don't know maybe later. What

0:40:20.820,0:40:25.920
were your impressions of Maryland when you
first came here? What did you think about it?

0:40:26.760,0:40:39.180
Oh Maryland at the first time Maryland is
so green. For the green place

0:40:40.080,0:40:49.440
we have like this place in the north
of the Iran and as I came here I found

0:40:49.440,0:41:01.140
that oh my God it's a so nice place to
live because just was I saw um but

0:41:03.000,0:41:13.740
the people as I met in the in the airport
or on the street they were so kind

0:41:14.820,0:41:22.620
they (were) always smiling and saying
good morning, hello, hi, to each other

0:41:23.220,0:41:32.520
and that was very interesting for me because I
lived in Germany but the people there were

0:41:32.520,0:41:44.280
totally different than in the United States. Interesting,
yes go ahead I'm sorry. I remember in the first

0:41:44.280,0:41:55.920
time at the first day we went out and oh my God
the weather was sunny and the people around

0:41:55.920,0:42:08.640
us just say good morning, hi, with a smiling face
that impressed me how they are so kind and yes

0:42:09.840,0:42:20.040
I found that very interesting. What is it like
to be a Muslim woman or an Iranian woman in

0:42:20.040,0:42:26.400
the United States? Do you feel like sometimes
people have stereotypes about you? Do they

0:42:26.400,0:42:37.080
make generalizations about you or assumptions
about you? Yes, definitely, I got this feeling

0:42:38.280,0:42:49.740
as my son was born, I decided to
match myself in a mom's group in U.S.

0:42:51.000,0:43:04.260
but I couldn't, that was so hard because at
that time I was wearing the hijab and I

0:43:04.260,0:43:12.300
at the beginning, I thought maybe I couldn't
speak good English or something like that, but

0:43:12.300,0:43:26.520
during this time I noticed it is a different
different reason and I never thought about

0:43:27.720,0:43:37.500
the women who wear the hijab and relation
between how (she) is wearing with the terrorism

0:43:39.120,0:43:48.960
but I found that after a few months they
are thinking the women with the hijab

0:43:49.740,0:44:01.800
they may belong to this thought of the terrorism,
and that was that was bad feeling for me because

0:44:02.940,0:44:12.060
I was wearing the hijab
because of my religious

0:44:12.900,0:44:23.820
thought, but that was hard to me to believe
they are they are pointing me as a terrorist.

0:44:26.280,0:44:32.040
so did you decide to stop wearing the

hijab? Yes but that was not this

0:44:32.040,0:44:45.420
reason because I found that
was another important reason. As an Iranian woman

0:44:46.680,0:44:59.040
who is wearing the hijab... coming
from this thought (she) is belonging to the regime

0:45:00.180,0:45:06.960
and I was not (brought) into the regime my
thought was a different and is different

0:45:06.960,0:45:15.720
and I couldn't find the place for me
as the Iranian woman in my community

0:45:17.400,0:45:29.100
and because if I wear hijab, I should belong
to the people who is agree(ing) with the regime

0:45:30.060,0:45:38.100
and if I (do) not agree with the regime, I should
make a decision and stop wearing hijab.

0:45:40.140,0:45:49.020
I remember a first time
there was a meeting

0:45:53.280,0:46:00.960
Said and I went there and
all the political people there were so

0:46:00.960,0:46:09.540
surprised, Said's wife is wearing the hijab,
and Said was so upset and he told me

0:46:09.540,0:46:14.040
stop wearing the hijab when you
are coming with me to this meeting

0:46:15.000,0:46:27.600
and I was so upset because I wear the
hijab because I found it so comfortable for me

0:46:28.380,0:46:41.820
and I believed as a religious people you should
cover your head with the scarf and Said told

0:46:41.820,0:46:52.320
me if you want to come with me in this place you
should not wear the hijab and I stopped to go

0:46:52.320,0:47:02.160
with Said to this place and I found myself so
lonely because I need someone. I am personally

0:47:03.720,0:47:12.000
want to be connected with the people,
I get energy from other people

0:47:12.000,0:47:19.860
and that was so hard to me because I
didn't have I didn't find any friend here

0:47:21.360,0:47:34.680
in Iranian community and in the American community
and that was the reason I stopped to wear hijab.

0:47:37.140,0:47:43.800

That sounds so hard. We have an expression
in English: you're damned if you do, damned

0:47:43.800,0:47:52.500
if you don't. What does it mean? It means that you
were judged by both communities yes for making

0:47:52.500,0:48:02.100
a decision and you were... no matter what you
did it was hard for you. Oh I always think

0:48:02.100,0:48:09.720
about the article we read in the class
together. That was about the elephant

0:48:10.860,0:48:22.920
the elephant in the room. That's right. Oh I'm glad you remember that. That was

0:48:22.920,0:48:32.700
an interesting story about a Syrian poet
and activist (Amal Kassir) and how she was always judged. Yeah

0:48:32.700,0:48:43.020
for covering her hair yeah. Do you feel now less lonely?
Have you been able to make friends? Yes yeah yes definitely

0:48:43.980,0:48:50.940
definitely I found that (I'm)
more comfortable without the hijab

0:48:51.900,0:49:00.660
and I am glad that I stopped wearing hijab
before this situation is still happening in Iran

0:49:01.500,0:49:14.940
Right now I have something to say but before if
I felt, if I go to the street and be one of

0:49:14.940,0:49:22.680
the protesters, they won't believe me that I am
fighting against this regime, but without

0:49:22.680,0:49:37.980
the hijab, they will believe I am. My thought
is, my thought is against this regime

0:49:39.780,0:49:50.460
but right now I have some friends in people
who are American or from other country and I have

0:49:50.460,0:49:58.380
two or three friends from my country, yes. Do
you have a mix of friends from your country

0:49:58.380,0:50:05.460
and from here? Have you been able to meet moms
in your neighborhood like you mentioned,

0:50:05.460,0:50:10.440
it was hard to meet moms, when your kids were
first born, do you feel like you have? Yes yes

0:50:12.780,0:50:21.900
yes I I got a chance to meet some of them.
We always meet each other in the park or

0:50:21.900,0:50:30.360
in the playground and get a chance to talk to
each other about the stuff around the kids and

0:50:31.560,0:50:39.840

the problems with the behavior and
like that. I'm glad that you were less lonely now

0:50:39.840,0:50:49.320
that you've had friends. It's hard. Yes it was
hard. So you had to also rebuild your career.

0:50:50.340,0:50:57.000
You have an MBA you said and
yes career in your home country but you had to

0:50:57.000,0:51:03.300
start all over again and that must have been
very hard. Can you talk a little bit about

0:51:04.920,0:51:13.140
how you decided to become a teacher again and
the journey to getting your certification? Yes

0:51:13.140,0:51:26.460
definitely. I was a teacher after I graduated
from my country in the computer engineering

0:51:27.600,0:51:37.260
I mean after I came from Germany and I got
my bachelor's. I started to get the master of the MBA

0:51:37.260,0:51:46.500
but I think that was at the end of this design.
I got a chance to be a teacher in the middle

0:51:46.500,0:51:56.220
school and high school as a computer teacher
and I had a good experience with the students

0:51:56.220,0:52:06.240
and I thought maybe that is the best job for me
but I don't know why I changed my job. Maybe

0:52:07.260,0:52:18.240
as an engineer in Iran, your income would be so
good, but teachers income are so in the middle in

0:52:18.240,0:52:30.540
the middle salary, and maybe the reason I changed
it, of the income and after I got my two sons

0:52:31.920,0:52:44.700
and I decided to find a job, I remember
during my pregnancy, and during I stayed at home,

0:52:44.700,0:52:54.000
I went to the Montgomery College and I got
two certificates in a programming computers

0:52:55.380,0:53:03.540
but after they grow up, and I decided to find a job,

0:53:06.000,0:53:18.780
I wanted to have this I don't know this
lovely experience again to be as a teacher

0:53:19.380,0:53:29.760
and I started my way to get a
certificate in the Montgomery County

0:53:29.760,0:53:40.680
College and I started during the pandemic time
and I got my certificate about eight years ago

0:53:41.280,0:53:56.280

and I started my job as a substitute teacher I was a substitute teacher for math and then I applied

0:53:57.060,0:54:09.420
to be a teacher not as a substitute teacher as a main teacher and I got this position in the

0:54:09.420,0:54:16.740
Francis Scott (Key)Middle school and I am teaching here technology and computer science right now.

0:54:18.180,0:54:23.100
Is it challenging to teach eighth grade here? Yes

0:54:24.420,0:54:31.380
I don't know everything is or was changed during the pandemic.

0:54:32.640,0:54:42.420
I have a conversation with other teachers and they told me they were not like so the

0:54:42.420,0:54:54.120
behaviors are so terrible and we are struggling with lots of behavior issues

0:54:55.140,0:55:04.680
in this school and especially at this age and the most of the time they are on their phone

0:55:04.680,0:55:12.600
they won't participate, they won't, they are off the task, I don't know everything is changing

0:55:13.200,0:55:24.360
and they are changing too. That sounds really hard. Yes. Do you hope to in the future teach at the high

0:55:24.360,0:55:31.380
school level instead or do you see making it some other kind of transition or do you...? Definitely that

0:55:31.380,0:55:42.060
is my first step. I want to continue I want to be... My hope (is) to be a math teacher in high

0:55:42.060,0:55:52.800
school. My top (most?)wish and I didn't start from here but I will continue maybe after two or three

0:55:52.800,0:56:04.200
years I after everything got a little comfy for me I will jump to high school and continue

0:56:05.220,0:56:11.940
to get my dream. I hope you can do that because I know that you love mathematics. yes You love

0:56:11.940,0:56:19.860
teaching so it would be great if you could find a context where you could and I know it's not

0:56:19.860,0:56:26.940
easy to get all of the right certifications to teach in Montgomery County Public Schools. I

0:56:26.940,0:56:33.060
know you're you took the Praxis but you have to take another Praxis exam. It's a lot! Yeah

0:56:35.040,0:56:44.340

Professor I don't have enough time myself for myself and that was my wish if I could just

0:56:44.340,0:56:54.960
just for half an hour I could relax and have my tea or coffee beside me and eat a little

0:56:54.960,0:57:06.540
cake and enjoy it. I am so busy after I I go home, I need to spend time with my sons

0:57:07.260,0:57:16.920
and we went out or they have a lot of things to do, three days they have they do some

0:57:17.640,0:57:27.480
swimming class, music class, or soccer class, it's a lot for me, I should manage all this stuff

0:57:27.480,0:57:39.480
by my own. It's really hard being a mom and working and it's very challenging

0:57:39.480,0:57:47.580
I think in the United States because for many families, extended family and relatives are not

0:57:47.580,0:57:53.640
there to help, like everyone is so busy. Yeah do you feel like being a mom in general

0:57:53.640,0:58:00.240
is easier in your home country because there's the help of aunts and others? Yes

0:58:01.260,0:58:08.640
and here do you feel like you're on your own? Yes I am singlehanded here. I don't have anyone to help

0:58:08.640,0:58:18.660
me. I remember I got a C-section for both of my sons and nobody here to help me, to just make me

0:58:18.660,0:58:29.640
a dinner or lunch. My husband should be at the work and I remember after we came home at the next day

0:58:29.640,0:58:39.480
I was at the at the kitchen to make something to eat, just to eat. That's too much, that is too much.

0:58:39.480,0:58:45.840
I really hope that you can get some more ease in your life soon. That's very challenging

0:58:45.840,0:58:53.580
yeah oh that was all the things that belonged to the past but I hope everything would be better.

0:58:55.320,0:59:03.780
I hope so too. I know that one of the things that you mentioned in your bio is that you enjoy

0:59:03.780,0:59:10.860
spending time outdoors yes as a way of relaxing. Are there any special places in Montgomery County

0:59:10.860,0:59:17.760
that you like to go? Like any gardens or parks or do you sometimes go to other places in the greater

0:59:17.760,0:59:27.480
Washington area to get outside and go hiking? No
I don't. I didn't get this chance because I am not

0:59:27.480,0:59:37.500
alone. I should take, I should bring both my sons
and the best thing for me (is) to pick the place they

0:59:37.500,0:59:47.280
want to play. They can enjoy and they can they
can play there. I understand that but maybe later

0:59:47.280,0:59:56.160
after 20 years after they grow up maybe less
than 20 years, I hope yes it's more independent.

0:59:57.240,1:00:02.040
Tell me if we could go back a little bit
to your experience at Montgomery College,

1:00:02.040,1:00:09.180
How did it help you prepare for your job or
what did you find useful about your classes?

1:00:09.780,1:00:19.380
Oh that was so helpful. I got a good
chance to meet some people from other countries

1:00:21.120,1:00:25.800
um I will connect with them if I needed help

1:00:27.120,1:00:34.260
and that was really helpful
to improve my English level

1:00:35.040,1:00:48.540
because as I came in the U.S my thoughts, my
language, all the things I could talk was in German

1:00:48.540,1:00:58.620
oh that was so horrible. Professor the people
that started to talk to me I could understand

1:00:58.620,1:01:10.260
but I started to answer in German, and that took
a long time, not long time, a year maybe that I

1:01:10.980,1:01:22.500
change the way in how I can answer in English.
I'm still practicing my English but that was

1:01:22.500,1:01:33.780
the big big challenge for me and Montgomery
College really helped me to improve my

1:01:34.740,1:01:43.320
education. I don't know - education - I
can't wait to improve my English in different way

1:01:44.100,1:01:52.500
as I write or I can talk or listening
and stuff, that was really helpful and I

1:01:52.500,1:02:01.320
got it too I got a chance to meet two lovely
Professors there and you were one of the best.

1:02:02.460,1:02:06.900
I was so happy to have you in my class.
You always had interesting things to say

1:02:06.900,1:02:12.060
and interesting things to write. I always
enjoyed reading your essays. Thank you so

1:02:12.060,1:02:18.180
much but you did help me a lot. Who was
the other Professor that helped you?

1:02:20.760,1:02:28.440
She was originally from the Russia the
last name was difficult to me but the first

1:02:28.440,1:02:37.080
name was that Dijana, we always called
her Dijana and she was a writing teacher.

1:02:40.020,1:02:44.580
In ELAP or after? No in elap, yes.

1:02:45.540,1:02:52.920
Was it Dijana Trajkovic? Yes yes!
I will have to let her know

1:02:55.080,1:03:03.300
She will be very happy to hear that. And
(her) story was I found that so close to

1:03:03.300,1:03:13.620
my history because (she) came from different country
(she) needed to build a start from the zero in the

1:03:13.620,1:03:24.060
U.S and that was ,I had a good chance to hear
about (her) story and that so impressed me

1:03:24.840,1:03:35.520
As a woman do my best and put me in the challenge
and fight and yes. She's I believe originally

1:03:35.520,1:03:42.360
from Sarajevo. Yes yes yes She has a
really interesting story too. I should interview

1:03:42.360,1:03:51.360
her for this project. Oh really yes definitely and
she knows. I'm glad that you felt like Montgomery

1:03:51.360,1:03:57.780
College helped you get on the right path
towards working on your career again

1:05:01.980,1:05:08.280
Since you were a teacher in Iran and a teacher
here, can you compare the experience? Well it's

1:05:08.280,1:05:22.560
really different. Why professor as I started my
work as to be a main teacher we should prepare the

1:05:22.560,1:05:35.400
class a week before starting the new year of
school and I didn't know we should decorate the

1:05:35.400,1:05:44.760
class or we should put something on the wall, we
should have slides for the Parents' Night, Oh I

1:05:44.760,1:05:57.240
did learn a lot and here it's totally different
than from my country and here really they want

1:05:57.240,1:06:06.300
the teacher should be perfect, should always
be done with the lesson plan, or all the things

1:06:06.300,1:06:14.280
but in my country, I don't know maybe they they
changed there, but they were so easy to teach

1:06:15.960,1:06:25.620
in terms of classroom behavior. Oh like for the
students better behaved? Yes I've been here

1:06:25.620,1:06:30.540
because here the students are
coming from different cultures

1:06:31.740,1:06:41.760
we they have in Iran one culture. We know each
other's culture, we can manage the issues further

1:06:41.760,1:06:50.640
down. Here in my class some students are
from Asia some Ethiopians, some of the

1:06:51.420,1:07:00.660
from American African family, some are
from America, there are so many cultures here and

1:07:01.860,1:07:10.260
they came from different families, it's really
hard to manage or figure out how to control

1:07:10.260,1:07:19.020
this behavior. I think being a public school
teacher is a very challenging job here. For

1:07:19.020,1:07:23.940
my experience, it's very challenging, but I
am not sure maybe I am from another country

1:07:23.940,1:07:31.320
but maybe I don't live in this country for a
long time, but for me it's really challenging.

1:07:33.240,1:07:37.860
Something you said earlier in the conversation
that I thought was really interesting was about

1:07:37.860,1:07:45.540
how you continue to have at home, with your
sons, traditions to remind them about their

1:07:46.500,1:07:53.280
Persian history and their traditions, and
I'm curious if you are raising your sons to

1:07:54.540,1:07:58.080
to be bilingual or trilingual.
Of course you speak four languages.

1:07:59.040,1:08:07.440
What language do you speak at home with your
sons? We always because Said just can't speak...

1:08:07.440,1:08:18.480
Farsi we are speaking with Said Farsi. I speak
with my family Turkish and my sons heard about

1:08:18.480,1:08:27.960
the Turkish, he can understand a little
but my sons together are talking in English

1:08:29.040,1:08:34.620
because it is easy for them to talk to
each other and play with each other in English.

1:08:36.240,1:08:44.040
It's interesting my older son always responds
to me in Farsi but my younger son never.

1:08:45.120,1:08:53.040
It's interesting yes but we are
keeping to have bilingual

1:08:54.540,1:09:07.020
child and I try my best. It must be hard to
continue some of the traditions from your heritage

1:09:07.020,1:09:16.800
and raise a family here. How do you, what do you do
to try to keep your culture alive with your sons?

1:09:18.900,1:09:30.480
I enrolled my oldest son in a
Persian school. It's not a school it's just

1:09:31.140,1:09:41.520
he just went there on Saturday morning from
9 to 12. And they teach a lot of from my

1:09:41.520,1:09:53.040
country about the city, about the culture this
song, the events. That was the one way

1:09:53.760,1:10:04.020
I try to keep them to be familiar with the
culture. Another thing I'll prepare them before the

1:10:04.920,1:10:15.720
a cultural event, like Nowruz or Chaharshanbe Suri
or Sizdeh Bedar. I told them they are

1:10:17.220,1:10:27.120
famous and biggest event and we need to
keep them. We need to learn about it and I

1:10:27.120,1:10:39.600
try my best to do it. They love this events more
than another events like Christmas or other stuff.

1:10:40.380,1:10:51.480
They are so excited to have a "Haftsin" or
make dishes for Chaharshanbe Suri or Hafez.

1:10:52.680,1:10:58.920
Thank you for sharing that. Those are lovely
stories. I had another question about

1:10:59.940,1:11:06.180
the concept of "home." A lot of the students I'm
interviewing for this project have talked about

1:11:06.180,1:11:12.960
the idea of "home" and what it means for them.
Is "home" back in your home country? Is home

1:11:12.960,1:11:19.080
where you are now? Is home wherever your
family is? When you think of the word "home,"

1:11:20.100,1:11:25.440
what do you think of? Like what is home for you? Oh

1:11:28.800,1:11:38.040
home for me means where I am belong. I belong to my

1:11:41.580,1:11:42.360
or my

1:11:44.820,1:11:52.620
parents' home, I always think and get
if I get a chance to go back and see my

1:11:52.620,1:12:00.540
parents, to visit my country, my home. I
left my home in Iran. I wanted to say

1:12:03.900,1:12:11.220
here I have I have home. Here I have
my sons, my husband, but I (am) always

1:12:11.220,1:12:15.300
missing something. It's not the real home for me.

1:12:17.460,1:12:25.860
I like to be back and live in
Iran, in Tehran, near my parents

1:12:25.860,1:12:35.760
but everything is changed and I never (go) back
to my country. I left my home in my country.

1:12:37.560,1:12:46.620
It's very hard, yes, I hope someday you'll
be able to, I bet your family... I hope

1:12:49.140,1:12:53.520
How do you feel about telling your
story today? What emotions are you feeling?

1:12:57.540,1:13:10.440
I am happy to share my story with other people.
That was hard to talk about some ...

1:13:12.120,1:13:21.780
some experience back in my country, that was really
hard to explain it. I wish I could explain it

1:13:23.220,1:13:34.560
a little more better but but I am
happy to share it with other students

1:13:34.560,1:13:40.560
or other people. Maybe that will
help to them to change their way

1:13:41.580,1:13:49.140
they wanted to be. I have no doubt that people
will benefit from hearing your story. Is there

1:13:49.140,1:13:53.340
anything else that you would like to add, that you
haven't talked about today, that's important to you?

1:13:54.900,1:14:05.100
I think I share the whole interesting steps in
my life with you and thank you so much for having

1:14:05.100,1:14:12.300
me for this interview Professor. Mansi, it was a great
great pleasure. Thank you so much, I appreciate it.