

Husaina Yusuf

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SPEAKERS

Mehlam Bhuriwala, Husaina Yusuf

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 00:03

Welcome to the Muslim Voices in Texas Oral History Project. This is Mehlam Bhuriwala interviewing Husaina Yusuf for this collection on March 2, 2021. Husaina, how are you today?

H Husaina Yusuf 00:19
I'm doing good.

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 00:24

Would you want to introduce yourself a little bit and kick things off by telling me who you are.

H Husaina Yusuf 00:35

My name is Husaina Yusuf. I'm 25 years old. I was originally born in California. I lived there until I was like seven or eight. I remember moving here in Houston now when I was in second grade. I went to the University of Texas at Austin. I currently live in Houston. I live with my parents now. My parents are originally from Pakistan - Karachi. My parents are both college educated. My dad has his master's degree - think his MBA. My mom has a

bachelor's degree. I think she did a bachelor's degree in Karachi, like in Pakistan, and then she did another one in [unintelligible audio] or something like that here. So just education level of my parents. I feel like so you can gauge - I don't know - my background and stuff. I am currently working at a company called Alight Solutions, which is sort of software consulting - that's what you can call it. I'm currently living at home and then a little bit about my religious background. I'm part of a very small sect of Shia. So, it's a sect within Shia called Bohri. I grew up with that, my parents are that sect. I think that's probably had a lot of impact in the way that I grew up. That's how me and you met - our parents are friends. So yeah, that's like a little bit about everything, I guess.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 02:44

Yeah I'm glad you mentioned that our parents are friends because I was supposed to mention at the beginning that I do know you personally, which I think only makes these interviews more fun because, we don't have to cut through anything.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 03:00

So, I do want to talk to you about, obviously your religious background and then your family. But first, I want to kind of start by talking to you about your experiences with moving to Texas. You know, you moved at a pretty young age. What do you remember about before you moved? Or your life in California?

H

Husaina Yusuf 03:28

I think my parents were very open and they were very social and I wasn't. I think that they were young and they were around a lot of liberal influences, I'll be very honest. I think when they moved here, at first I remember them saying they really didn't like it. I just really didn't know what to think because I was so young. Eventually through the masjid and stuff, they made friends and they they kind of grew to like it. But I think the masjid really influenced the surroundings influenced - and I don't know if it was - it's such a combination of things - I don't know if it was like, age - so, as they were getting older, they were getting more conservative. But then what I also remember of Houston was that Houston had this reputation of being a lot more conservative.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 04:34

Was that something that attracted your parents at the time or do you think that was a factor in their decision to move?

H

Husaina Yusuf 04:40

No no, that definitely wasn't a factor. It was purely because of my dad's job that we moved here. Actually, that's a good point that you bring up. Economically, what had happened was that my dad had asked for a raise or a promotion of some sort at work and his manager at the time has said something like, "I can't give you a raise. I can't give you more money. But what I can do is give you the same pay [and] shift you somewhere where standard of living, like price-wise is a lot lower - with California to Houston was that. So, his money went a lot further here.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 05:22

That's interesting. So, what did your dad do?

H

Husaina Yusuf 05:25

Back then, he was working for - this is funny - I don't know if you remember phone cards by any chance. He was working for a phone card company. When that ended, that was sort of like on its last leg because phone cards weren't really a thing anymore, that's when he switched jobs. I just really can't remember what he switched to.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 05:57

No worries. That is interesting. Do you feel like that was a source of tension or pressure for your family at the time? Your dad was working in a dying industry and maybe wasn't so sure about the long term prospects about his job?

H

Husaina Yusuf 06:20

You know, I'll be honest, at least me personally, I don't know if these were the conversations that my parents had without me there, but I don't remember ever hearing about it. I don't remember it being like, "Oh, I'm in this dying industry." I think it was like, when it was almost dying and that was the point that my dad realized, "Oh shoot, it's dying." It was sort of like a mutual thing. I think the company was like, "Hey it's dying," and my dad was like, "Hey it's dying."

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 06:57

I get that. Your mom - I thought it was interesting that you said that - she was university-

educated in Pakistan - and then coming back to the States - so, what went into her decision to go back to school when she got here?

H

Husaina Yusuf 07:16

I think a couple things. So, her degree in Pakistan was political science. I think that there wasn't a lot of scope for work that she was finding to do that in, especially things that were like kid-friendly and stuff like that. I think she just like wasn't finding a lot of work. So, I think she wanted to move into something else. The other thing, my mom has always told me that she really likes to study, she really likes learning. So, I think that was also another thing, where she was like, "Let me just learn something new and get another degree." At the time - when she got her degree was when I was like, two or three years old. That's when she got her second degree. At that point, I think tech was very up and coming. So, she got it in California at the school called DeVry. I think it was just [that] she just wanted to do something. She's always been that type. My mom has always been the type to always do something - she doesn't like sitting at home or you know? Not that that's a bad thing, but that's just how she was. I think she was like, "Let me go and do something so I can get a job."

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 08:49

I think the other element of your mom's decision in her path is that - it's not typical for lack of a better term, desi housewives - to do that kind of thing and to take initiative and get an education or further their education and work in the states. Do you feel like that's had sort of an impact on yourself and how you view relationships and religion and cultural baggage and all that - do you feel like, Mom taking that different path has changed the way that you view those things?

H

Husaina Yusuf 09:40

That's so interesting that you bring all of that up, because even growing up my mom has always said to me that she is very lucky to - one, she attributes a lot of the things that she's been able to accomplish to my dad because she said that she's very lucky to have had a husband, who has supported her and even encouraged her to go out and do these things and embrace these opportunities. Because it's one thing for a desi woman to come to her husband and be like, "Hey, I want to do these things. Can you please like help me." It's another thing - and it seems very weird to say that this is progressive compared to our standards now. But for our parents generation, that is considered progressive to have a husband, who not only will be like, "Yes, I'll take care of things so that you can do this, " - but at moments when my mom used to doubt herself, or used to be like, "Maybe I

shouldn't, or I can't do this," - for my dad to be like, "No, I want you to pursue an education, I want you to pursue this job."

H

Husaina Yusuf 11:02

Fast forwarding to Houston around 2008, my mom got a job at an accounting firm. She started off as an admin there just almost doing like secretary work and then slowly started to move into tax accounting. They would send her to these courses so that she could start, getting more into tax and my dad was the one that really encouraged her to be like, "You should do these classes, you should move into this." And then she would have a busy season - that would be like very busy seasons during her tax season, where she would be up [at] 5:00 or 6:00 a.m and leave at midnight kind of thing, and it was very hard for her, but my dad really encouraged her to stick with it and continue.

H

Husaina Yusuf 11:55

So, she's always attributed a lot of her success to my dad and him supporting her. I think for myself, if I'm truly analyzing it, I think really, and truly, my dad has never been the one to say, "Oh Husaina, you can't do this, you shouldn't do that." I think he'll make certain comments sometimes, but in terms of actually supporting things that I wanted to do. He was never like, "Oh, you shouldn't do that." This is very anecdotal. I can't speak to numbers or percentages, but I personally knew a lot of parents and dads who would tell their daughters not to go to college in faraway cities or cities where they weren't living at home, or things like that - because they didn't think it was right for a girl who was unmarried or to live outside of home, even if it was for education. But that was never the case with my dad. When I got into UT, it was never like, "Oh, you should go to U of H or some other school that's closer, so you can be closer to home." I think my dad recognized that UT is such a great opportunity and, "I'm not going to hold her back from doing that just so she can be closer to home."

H

Husaina Yusuf 13:53

Even with me working, I don't think there was ever a point where my dad was like, "You don't need to work so hard, just wait 'til you're married or whatever, whatever." I don't think he would ever say that. I don't remember him ever saying those things to me. But there are other ways obviously, my dad, still held on to his very traditional beliefs. I think that's one thing, and that's a big thing in Bohris - I've noticed. One thing I do appreciate - they do emphasize education, not just to their males but to their women.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 14:45

I want to ask one more question about this. You talked about how it affected you, you talked about the dynamics between your dad and your mom when it came to her career. But I'm interested in how you feel like it affected your family dynamic - traditionally, the women in desi households or Bohri households are around to be doing all the housework and provide a constant presence in the household. It seems like your family was set up a different way. Do you feel like that had any effect on your dynamic as a family?

H

Husaina Yusuf 15:35

You know 'll be honest, this is I think one of the ways where my dad still did hold on to his very traditional beliefs. I don't think he was the type of person to completely take on the household work. My mom would completely focused on her work and I think there was still an expectation that my mom was going to come home and make dinner. I think another interesting thing to point out is that, for lack of a better term, the patriarchy is also very much perpetuated by women. So, like it wasn't even like my dad would be like, "Mahera, you need to come home, and, and cook the dinner and make sure the house is clean." My mom would be like, "Shabbir, don't cook dinner because I'm gonna come home and do it." I think my dad still did have this belief, in his most ideal world, he wouldn't have to do any of the dishes or make any of his own food. But he did do it and he was happy to do certain things. He did more than other male counterparts. But there was still this level of like, "In my ideal world, that was not expected."

Mehlam Bhuriwala 17:11

M

Right. Sort of the expectation that - perpetuated on both on both sides - but the expectation that her career was totally okay and encouraged, but that didn't offset her alternative responsibility to her household and doing the things that, "a mother figure is supposed to do," in that setting, right?

Mehlam Bhuriwala 17:45

M

I think it's very interesting that you bring up, obviously, the patriarchy, but also, you know, expectations about domestic chores, and tasks and things that are typically prescribed to women and associated with women. I think you're poking at a much larger conversation that we're having in our generation compared to our parents generation - about how modern marriages work, how to allocate household tasks. So, without sort of jumping the gun too much, obviously your situation, you are about to enter a marriage. So I'm just curious about - if it's not too personal - how that conversation has looked like

between you and your fiance, and how y'all have sort of had this deliberation about what your responsibilities look like?

H Husaina Yusuf 18:49
Give me 60 seconds [to answer that].

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 18:56
Sorry, I know, that was a long wind up.

H Husaina Yusuf 18:58
No you're good. I really want to follow up on your details, that's why. [unintelligible audio]. That's actually something I've been talking to a lot about with my friends. [unintelligible audio]. In some ways, they can almost be - I don't want to say harder to navigate - but almost more to navigate.

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 19:46
Sorry, could you repeat that?

H Husaina Yusuf 19:48
Yeah. It's not that they're harder to navigate. It's almost just like there's there's more to that. [background audio].

H Husaina Yusuf 19:59
- Okay - the conclusion that we have come to after talking to a lot of friends in modern marriages and stuff that we've come to is that essentially, the roles were very much linked to gender and they were very much pre-determined for you, right? So it's like, a woman is supposed to cook and clean and take care of the kids and a man is supposed to be the breadwinner and there was no room for like negotiation with that, right. I mean and maybe you could even say that there was room for negotiation on the man's part, but there was never really any room for negotiation on the woman's part, right. So if you take my mom, as an example, it's like, my dad sort has room for negotiation where he could maybe help out with the house and do certain things. There were even points where my dad wasn't the breadwinner and my mom was. But there was never really a

point where my mom was never the caretaker of the house right. I think that speaks to a lot to our parents' relationships, and arguably even so from what I see with my cousins and stuff in Pakistan. Even our generation, but couples that are in Pakistan, those roles are very clearly defined.

H

Husaina Yusuf 21:44

The difference between with modern relationships is that it's entirely up to us to determine what those roles are. It's not a question of - women are expected to do this and men are expected to do this. It's like, "Well, women are earning now and men are earning now. So all of the other stuff is completely up to the couple to determine who does it." And so, for some modern couples - or I don't even want to say modern - but some couples of our generation they still have this dynamic that they've decided for themselves is what they want to do where the woman cooks and cleans and does all these things, because she wants to do that - or they've determined that those are the roles that they want to keep - whereas in my relationship, we've determined that that's not how we want to do it. So, it's very much like we've talked about putting systems in place to where it split up. Talking about my cousin's marriage and things like that, they've done things where it's like, "Okay, dinner, responsibility alternates every night." If some nights you can't do it, you just communicate that to the other person.

H

Husaina Yusuf 23:16

Financially, you pool together your money to pay for rent and things like that. So, it's almost like there's more discussion to be had in marriages and relationships of our generation. Because it's like, you really need to discuss everything and who those roles are going to be allocated to. What ends up happening, I think, sometimes is that the things that aren't clearly outlined and discussed, you just fall back on what you've seen in your house, which is that the woman takes care of it. I think that's what ends up happening in relationships of our generation is that - things that couples don't really talk about with like, "You're going to do this and I'm going to do this," - it just kind of falls on the woman, which sucks.

H

Husaina Yusuf 24:20

With me and Saif, I have always been like, very firm from the beginning that, "We are going to split these things." Because that was something that I really didn't like seeing grow up - how stressed my mom would get doing all these things and I would just see my dad - and yes, my dad was great, points to him - he was progressive, in the sense that he supported my mom to go after what she wanted and things like that - but from

my perspective - that was just something that bothered me - seeing that dynamic in the house. I really didn't like that. So, that was something that one of the first things we talked about, was that - "It's not going to be like that with us."

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 25:17

I'm glad that y'all had an explicit conversation about those, because I think you're absolutely right - in that when these topics aren't discussed by couples and they start to live together, for example, they start to share some responsibilities, oftentimes, men will default to sort of gendered norms that they're comfortable with, that they might not even be thinking about. Obviously, that responsibility is then passed on to the women. I think that's a really good point. I did want to pivot a little bit - because just respecting our time, I did want to talk a little bit about want to discuss your religious identity. But I also wanted to talk about your sense of Texan identity. First, kind of take me through - did it feel all that different from where you were growing up? And what do you think were the major differences when you made that transition? [What were] some of the things that you had to change?

H Husaina Yusuf 26:44

Because I was so young, I was like seven or eight - and I know that's not crazy young, like I wasn't two or three, where I still didn't have senses, but I was so naive to the world. I was really in my own little bubble, that I really can't speak to what I noticed as major differences. I think it really wasn't until I got a lot older, probably in high school and even college, that I started to realize how fundamentally different Texas and California were in so many different ways and how different my childhood would have been if I'd stayed in California, but I think it was never an active thought in my mind growing up.

M Mehlam Bhuriwala 27:43

I'm glad that you said that because you're right. In so many ways - it's just a difference between being a kid in California and being a kid in Texas.

H Husaina Yusuf 27:56

Right now, we can talk about so many things - we're like, "California is so liberal," - just like different things that I've experienced in Texas growing up with racism and just how Houston - like the Bohri jamaat is a lot more conservative and things like that. I don't think I fully processed that that's very location contingent.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 28:30

So when did you start thinking about those things and really having a sense of like, "Oh I live in a place that is a lot more religiously conservative than - or do you feel like that was a thought that you ever had, where you kind of came to that realization?"

H

Husaina Yusuf 28:52

I really think a lot of these things didn't hit me until I went to college. I almost, I think, separated from my parents. I think I'll be very honest, I think I would just regurgitate things that I would hear at home. Even a lot of things that I said in high school - they're so vastly different than the things that I even say now. I would hear things at home that my parents would say and just regurgitate that because I just didn't have the tools living with them - I was so influenced. I don't think I had the - not the intellectual capacity, but I just didn't have the that motivation to go out and seek my own information. I thought whatever I was consuming at the time was enough.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 30:11

How do you feel about that now - what you were consuming at the time?

H

Husaina Yusuf 30:19

I wish that I had had that thing to go out and seek more information because I think that a lot of the beliefs that I held in high school were so wrong and so - I don't even have like words - they were so wrong and so misguided and things like that. Having said that, I'm very glad that I got the opportunity of being away for college for four years to really, truly come into my own and have those experiences where I took a lot of different classes, and I learned so many things, and I experienced so many different types of people that I do think now I really have that skill to be able to review information and not just read something and almost believe it as fact and think that that's the only information that's there.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 31:28

Yeah, I mean, that's what college is for right? To enhance critical thinking skills and it'll allow us to do these things. So yeah, I'm really glad that you were able to have that growth. How does it feel different now? Now, you've been in Houston for a little bit of time. Now, somewhat in the same setting that maybe enabled you to have thoughts that you

don't have anymore? Does it feel different now being in those spaces - being in the masjid or being around other Bohris for example?

H

Husaina Yusuf 32:16

Yeah. When I was younger - I lived at home, I didn't have a lot of autonomy. So, my parents said to go to masjid, I would go to masjid. My parents would almost dictate who I hung out with, where I hung out with them - all of these things. I think when I was younger, I would go to masjid and my parents would tell me to pray and they would tell me that the way to heaven was these things - and they would say, "Doing this is good and this is good" and I think I would internalize that. It took a while, but when I was around all of that - a lot of my self-worth and understanding of good and bad came from religion - because that's what I was around. I think it wasn't until I went to college that I realized that good and bad, self-worth, it doesn't have to be linked to what religion deems as good and bad. As an example, Muslim people determine that drinking is bad, or sex before marriage is bad and those things are almost - at least in my anecdotal experience - I can't say fundamentally what Islam preaches - but it was almost taken as, "People that do these things are bad people." Not that they're just doing something that the religion deems as not good. But it was almost like a self-worth thing, your self-worth came from being a good Muslim.

H

Husaina Yusuf 34:33

I think when I went to college and I wasn't around that so much, I was really able to extrapolate the two things. I was able to separate them and determine that like, "If I drink that doesn't make me a bad person." I determined what my own versions of good and bad are. I determined that being a good person means that you care for other people and that you do the right thing and that you don't steal, you don't lie, you don't cheat - those kinds of things. So, for me personally, that's what it was. It was more of - I determined that my own self-worth and even the self-worth of other people comes from like more of a moral standpoint rather than what religion deems as good and bad. I think when I really started coming to those conclusions, that's when I really started to drift away from religion because I personally didn't like the feeling of feeling like I was a bad person because I just felt like I was doing things that the religion deems inappropriate, but I felt like I wasn't harming anyone by doing these things. I had determined that that wasn't what I wanted to determine if I was a good or bad person.

H

Husaina Yusuf 36:00

It can still be a struggle sometimes, being at home and especially my mom, still [coughs] - holds those values of, "If you're a good Muslim, you're a good person and if you're a bad

Muslim, you're a bad person," and still very much preaches that at home, that could be hard. But I think it is good that I've determined what my own moral compass is.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 36:28

Good. One other thing, I want to discuss while we're on the topic of religion, and values, and custom. One of the biggest ways that these things are enforced is our parents, obviously, but I feel especially in our community the next biggest thing is probably the community itself - certain norms - and sometimes that means policing certain people, sometimes that means ostracizing other people - it can take up a lot of forms. But I'm just curious about first, what your experience is like with the community either positive or negative, and second how you feel like that impacts the way that you look at it and the way that you interact in that space?

H

Husaina Yusuf 37:17

Yeah, that's a really good question, I'm glad you asked that. I will say that I am a very big advocate for the community that being Bohri allows you to have. I think that there are pros and cons to that community - because we are such a tight-knit community, they're allowed to police what you do and almost ostracize you if you don't do things in the way that they want you to. However, I will say that it is a very, very nice feeling to have a built-in community wherever I go. I think one of the reasons that I'm so pro-community is because I have been able to find a community of people that I think have the same beliefs about religion as I do. What I mean by that is [that] I think I have found a community of people who truly believe there it's more about who you are as a person that matters and not who you are as a Muslim that matters. So, it's a very non-judgmental community with the choices that you decide to make.

H

Husaina Yusuf 38:48

I think that as I've gotten older and I'm not forced to be part of that community in ways that I don't want to be part of it, I'm able to pick and choose like, "Who are my friends?" "Who do I want to hang out with?" "What part of the community do I want to associate with?" I have also been able to find these people, and so that's why I'm such a big advocate for [community].

H

Husaina Yusuf 38:49

Having said that, I will say that being part of the community does require some sacrifices,

in some ways. I don't even want to say sacrifices. I think it just means that you do have to be aware that if you publicly do things and the community finds out about you doing certain things that they don't deem appropriate, that you will be ostracized. So, I think that that's then your personal decision of whether you want to continue to do these things privately and still be part of the community or whether you choose to do these things like very publicly - because I will say, I think I'm like a pretty public person with the choices that I make, but in certain situations, I am careful as to what I do publicly because I know that it will affect whether I can be part of the community or not. So, I think it's that choice that people have to make of - do you want to privately do what you want to do and still be part of the community? Or do you want to publicly make that choice and then be ostracized or no longer part of the community. There's no judgment, at least on my end of what choice people make.

H

Husaina Yusuf 40:44

For me, I have always found more value in being part of the community than publicly doing things that the religion deems inappropriate. Having said all of that, there are a lot of situations that I find so frustrating and that are very very hard to stomach. But it's just that trade off and for me, I really value being part of the community. The other part of it too is that, I can potentially determine that I no longer want to be a part of the community because my religious beliefs or my beliefs in general, just don't align with, whatever Bohris deem to be Bohri, but my decision heavily impacts my parents ability to be part of the community. I think that's something that that is very hard for first generation kids, because I can't make that decision for myself. The decision that I make is going to impact my parents, and so I have to determine not only, "Is it worth it for me to publicly do these things and make the decisions that I make and how it's going to impact my ability to be in the community - but also how it's going to impact my parents' ability to stay in the community"

H

Husaina Yusuf 42:05

For my parents, the community is everything to them. Coming from Pakistan, where it's like Muslims all around them and everyone looks like them and believes the same things - it is so important for my parents to have a group of people that they can turn to that believe the same things that they do and look the same way that they do. I think that's such a source of comfort for them. I just don't want to be the reason that that's taken away from them. So it does it impact my life in a lot of ways. For example, I'm engaged now, but for people who they're gonna marry, and who they can hang out with, and even potentially what kind of job you can have and things like that. I just couldn't take that away from them, so I know that for me, I need to make sure that I'm at least somewhat staying in line.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 43:24

That feels like a lot of responsibility on your shoulders, you're responsible on some level for your place in the community, but also in a way your parents' as well. I just want to ask you one last question, because I know we are a little bit pressed for time. But rather than opening up an entirely new topic, just carrying on this thread. I'm just curious about how you think, or whether you think gender sort of plays into this topic of conversation when it comes to sort of responsibility and community and family and public versus private [life] - that entire discussion. I'm just curious about if you feel at all, and if so how gender factors its way into the discussion.

H

Husaina Yusuf 44:29

Yeah, that's a really good question. I think I am very curious how this is going to play out with our generation. I can't really tell you how I've seen it play out in our generation yet, but I think for us, our parents are still the ones who enforce religion and who enforce community and stuff and that's when you couple it with gender - it's always females - it's always your mom is the one that tells you to pray, your mom is always the one that tells you to come to mosque, and those kinds of things and your mom does that at home too, with your dad. So, I think females are always the one that are expected to enforce the religion and keep that culture going. I almost think in some ways, males have the - in their case, it's a privilege of choice, where they have the privilege of not being a person to enforce it. So, they can just like, do what's being told of them and be part of the religion versus women have the really difficult task of being the model Muslim, in the house, not just for themselves [but] because that makes them "eligible women" - but also because they're expected to enforce that for their entire family.

H

Husaina Yusuf 45:50

The ways that I've seen it is like if a husband isn't as religious, to the wife, it's like, "Oh well why don't you enforce it? Why don't you tell him to do 'this' and 'that'" If the kids aren't as religious, it's always like, "Well why doesn't the mom tell them to do anything?" So, I do think that the majority of that brunt work is placed on women to do that. I can speak from my parents example that - I do wonder, for my parents, if it's a matter of doing it out of choice or if it's just the way they are and the way they were told to be good mothers and good wives. I wonder if the things that I'm talking about - how my mom needs to be a model Muslim - I wonder if these are things that are running through her head as she's doing it or [if] it's just that growing up, women are taught to be more religious and that because my mom is more religious that she naturally wants everyone around her to be more religious. I definitely think that subconsciously there's probably some of what I was saying going on, but I think in my mom's head and for the women in our lives, I don't think it's as much [of] a conscious thought. It's just -

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 48:02

An in-born responsibility?

H

Husaina Yusuf 48:04

Exactly. Just the way they're been taught to be good mothers and good wives.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 48:14

All right. So, just being respectful of the time, I know that we don't have a whole lot of time left. Obviously, I very much appreciate you talking to me today. I just wanted to I wanted to close this interview off by doing something that I like to do with all my interviewees, which is pretty much the exact same thing that I asked you at the beginning, but with keeping in mind everything that we talked about, I was hoping that you could maybe just reintroduce yourself one last time and really sort of define who you are on your terms.

H

Husaina Yusuf 48:56

Yeah, I like that. That's a cool way to end an interview. So, my name is Husaina. I'm 25 years old - I moved from California when I was around seven or eight years old and I think being a first generation woman of color with desi parents, has really caused me to to have a much higher sense of responsibility of my actions. So I think that's something that I have to keep in mind every day. I think the biggest thing that I've been able to do for myself is create my own moral compass, rather than relying on a religion or some pre-determined moral compass. I think that's really what I use to navigate life and to navigate my actions is my own moral compass. I think it's really that balance of applying my moral compass to life while also knowing that my parents religious moral compass has impacts on my life and their life.

M

Mehlam Bhuriwala 50:26

Great. Thank you so much. Yeah, I really appreciate you coming on. This has been an interview for the Muslim Voices Oral history project with the Institute for Diversity and Civic Life. The date is March 2 2021, signing off.