

Emmad Mazhari



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SPEAKERS

Emmad Mazhari, Rimsha Syed



Rimsha Syed 00:03

Hello, this is Rimsha Syed with the Institute for Diversity and Civic Life. The date is June 16 2022, and I'm here on a Zoom call with Emmad Mazhari for the Muslim Voices oral history project. How are you today Emmad?



Emmad Mazhari 00:17

I'm good. I'm good. How are you doing?



Rimsha Syed 00:19

I'm good. So for starters, can you just introduce yourself and tell us where you're joining the call from today?




Emmad Mazhari 00:27

Yeah, my name is Emmad Mazhari. I am calling today from Houston, where I just recently moved back about three-ish months ago from the Bay Area where I was living for a couple years.



Rimsha Syed 00:43

Awesome. So starting off, I'd actually like to jump way back in time and hear about your childhood and earliest memories. If you could tell me a little bit about your family background, your community, siblings, whatever comes to mind.



E

Emmad Mazhari 01:00

Yeah. Where to start? So I grew up in in Pakistan, in Karachi and did not move to the US with my family until I was ten. And my nuclear family is pretty small. It's just me, my mom, my dad, and I have a twin brother. I'm ten minutes older, which I don't know if it means a lot. But I have a twin brother who has a disability, cerebral palsy. And that has been maybe one of the earlier memories that I remember or just one of the earlier things that I remember being present in my mind and informing a lot of my life and my decisions. But outside of that I - what else do I remember from childhood? I remember growing up in Karachi, in Pakistan, near a bunch of immediate family, especially on my mom's side. Remember being very close to them and having a very tight family unit, and then moving here, and having to re-figure all that out with my parents. Yeah, I think that's maybe the stuff that comes to mind immediately.



Rimsha Syed 02:23

Yeah, so you said you were about ten when you moved here. I want to hear a little bit about your parents decision to relocate to the States and how that move went for you. What do you remember about what you were feeling during that transition?

E

Emmad Mazhari 02:40

Yeah. I found this out pretty recently, but my dad applied for just him to move to the US before he was even married or had kids. I don't remember the exact year. And it took until we were ten, which was almost a decade later since when he had applied, I guess a decade plus, for that application to get approved, I suppose. So moving was something that has almost been in the works in the family for a while. My dad's brother and his brothers and sisters, for the most part, were in Houston. So that was the reason for the move. They applied for him to come when he was single, and then when he got married, I think the decision was just to take the whole family over.

E

Emmad Mazhari 03:42

To be honest, I don't remember a lot about moving. I do remember that we moved two days before the start of eighth grade. So I remember coming to the US, this new country, and then two days later after landing, having to go into eighth grade and figure that out, which was interesting. I do remember saying goodbye to family a lot. One specific memory I do have is if you've ever been to the Karachi airport, they used to let you, if you were dropping people off, go on the sky bridge and see people checking in and going through security. And that's one specific memory I do have is seeing my extended family stand up there on that sky bridge while we were checking through security and moving. I don't remember much else around that time. But yeah, that memory does stick out.



Rimsha Syed 04:40

Yeah, thanks for sharing. It seems like maybe that transition was a little bit easier for your family, given that you already had close family here in Houston. But I want to hear a little bit more about your first day of eighth grade, and I'm sure you experienced some sort of culture

shock and just how you navigated that.

E

Emmad Mazhari 05:00

Yeah, it really helped a lot that we had family here because we stayed with an aunt and uncle for, I want to say, three, four months, maybe even more when we first moved here. And I had cousins around a similar age who crammed a lot in on those first two days trying to give me a little bit of a summary on what to expect. But it was a challenge. I remember the first class I was a biology class, eighth grade, and I do just remember, I walked into class late, and everything had started, and the teacher was going through the syllabus, and I don't remember much about how I felt then, but in hindsight, I'm almost surprised that I didn't feel more kind of frustrated or troubled by it. I think at the moment, I was just like, "Whatever this is, it's so much change that I just can't be too shocked by it. I just have to roll with it." Another memory I have of that day is being put into an ESL class and trying to, one, figure out what that meant and basically, yeah, I had to figure out what it meant, what an ESL class was, what the implications were by these teachers assuming that I should be in it, and then trying to correct them and be like, "No, I can actually speak English. I think I should be in a different class." Yeah, I remember that being a thing I was dealing with the first day or two.



Rimsha Syed 05:01

Yeah. And have you been able to travel back to Karachi since?

E

Emmad Mazhari 06:55

Yeah. One thing I really appreciate is I because I grew up there for an old enough age, I have a strong connection to the place. I just went back recently in January I want to say, and saw family after quite a while. Yeah, I feel like I moved at an age that really allows me to not feel like a visitor when I go back to Karachi now, which I know a lot of people don't get to have that feeling when they go back to places they come from. I feel like I really lucked out with that, and I get to visit quite often.



Rimsha Syed 07:32

That's good to hear. And would you say you have that strong sense of community in Houston as well?

E

Emmad Mazhari 07:42

So I just moved back, and I do. I have a lot of friends here that I grew up with, and that I feel close with. I actually just went to a close friend's wedding on Sunday, and it's just nice to be around for that kind of stuff and be closer to them. And I grew up in Houston going to go into the mosque and having what feels to me in some ways like a pretty traditional Pakistani family upbringing of being close to a bunch of other Pakistani immigrants and Muslim immigrants. So I have a lot of that here. I think the thing that I'm most struggling with is after having left for six,

seven years, if not more, I've developed ideas for what I want from a community outside of that. And I think I'm trying to figure out what that means for bringing that back here, if that makes sense.



Rimsha Syed 08:39

Yeah, totally makes sense. And so speaking of moving back, you said that you were in LA for the past six to seven years. Tell me about that.



Emmad Mazhari 08:48

San Francisco, San Francisco. Yeah. Yeah, I was there for, I want to say, five, six years. And then before that I was in Michigan for school. I really, excuse me, I really enjoyed San Francisco, and I had such a such a wonderful time in the city. I think there's a lot about the city that I appreciated, but maybe more so, the city really let me figure out how I wanted to think about my life in some ways, and what it meant for me to think of myself as a person outside of my immediate family and community, which is, I think, the mode that I grew up in a lot. And I think it was helpful for me to have that amount of time there. I don't think a shorter amount of time would have been the same. But yeah, I got to figure out a lot about stuff that excites me to work on, the type of art I'm interested in, the type of communities I'm interested in, while I was in the Bay, but moved back home to Houston to be closer to family. Yeah.



Rimsha Syed 10:01

Yeah. And so seems like being in San Fran was a pretty formative experience for you. Did you move there for any reason specifically after school?



Emmad Mazhari 10:13

Mostly for work, I want to say. Like 95% for work. I didn't think too much about it. I think at the time, I felt like there was a maybe more traditional route in my mind of going back home to Houston and working and growing up closer to family after graduating college. But I felt like I still wanted to explore what it felt like to live by myself. And I had a opportunity to work in Houston, but San Francisco just ended up being another option that came up. And it was mostly just motivated by wanting to do something different and be in a different city for a while.



Rimsha Syed 10:59

Yeah. So we talked a little bit about Texas and a little bit about San Fran. Would you mind talking about Michigan, and what you studied in school, and how you enjoyed being there?



Emmad Mazhari 11:11

Yeah. Yeah, I went to the University of Michigan, and I ended up graduating with a major in

econ. I applied and went into school wanting to do a bio major and do the whole med school route, but pretty quickly realized that that was not what I wanted to do. And then I bounced around a couple of majors and schools. I feel really grateful for my college experience but don't feel very emotionally attached to it in some ways. I was very grateful that I got to experiment with a lot of different disciplines and subjects, basically. I took some architecture classes, which I really liked, some business school classes, some econ of course, computer science, all over the place. And I really felt like I got a good, well-rounded experience out of that. And again, being out of Houston and getting that in such a different city that I don't think I'd find myself in again, Ann Arbor. It was really helpful for me.



Rimsha Syed 12:29

Yeah, thanks for sharing. Do you have a favorite city or place from some of these these cities that you've gotten the chance to explore?



Emmad Mazhari 12:44

That's a tough question. I don't know. I like Houston the most right now because I think for me, it's sort of a blank canvas in trying to figure out what this next, I think, pretty long chapter of my life is going to look like. And I think I get to think about a lot of questions that I've been wanting to think about in some ways, but I've been putting off, like what does living closer to family look like? What does working and making art in Houston look like? What does pursuing stuff like photography and woodworking and all this stuff in a more settled and stable environment for me feel it feel like? So I think Houston only because of what it what it means to me right now. But tough question.



Rimsha Syed 13:37

Yeah. Yeah, I think you answered it perfectly. So tell me a little bit about your connection to art and what your journey with photography and other mediums you might have explored has looked like so far.



Emmad Mazhari 13:50

Yeah. I've always struggled with that question a little, but particularly in the moment I'm in right now for the past few months. So I work professionally as a software designer, and I work full time now, but before that, I was doing freelancing, doing similar type of stuff, graphic design. And then on top of that, I take I take a lot of pictures, I do some freelance photography, but mostly I take pictures as a way of what started as just a hobby but turned into more of a - feels like somewhere between an art project and work, and it bounces between that sometimes. I think that's the main mediums that I use and am interested in, but I don't particularly feel strongly that like a photographer or designer. I am in a phase where I just feel very interested in making things and trying to figure out what resonates with me the most what feels interesting to share with other people. Right now I'm doing a lot of woodworking too and

trying to make more physical objects and playing around with some mixed media stuff. But yeah, I've been trying to figure out what my voice and lane is, in some ways. But photography has been, in some ways, a major, medium or tool. I can talk more about that, too.



Rimsha Syed 15:33

Yeah, I definitely think that's a journey for any artist. But I wanted to ask if you have any particular projects, like maybe something specific that you've worked on, that you feel proud of, or something that you're currently working on, like a series?



Emmad Mazhari 15:49

Yeah. The thing that I am working on right now is, like I said, I recently moved from Houston to San Francisco, and I tried to sit in the move - or sorry, other way around. San Francisco to Houston. I tried to be really deliberate and sit in the move and not try to rush through it. And part of what that meant for me was taking a lot of pictures of the whole process. And also I packed up all my things, and I drove from SF to Houston. So I did a long road trip with all of my cameras. So I have this huge collection of pictures of me basically unpacking or packing up and emptying out my apartment. And it's a collection of maybe, I don't know, 5,000 to 10,000 pictures that I collected over the course of three weeks, just me packing up this place that I lived in for quite a while. And I've just been sitting on that and noodling on what to do with that. That's one part of it.



Emmad Mazhari 16:58

And then in a similar thread I'm thinking of, I took a lot of pictures on the road trip, almost exclusively film pictures. That's the medium that I feel most interested in with photography. And I'm slowly scanning through and developing those pictures and trying to figure out what is interesting in there, if anything, and have those two projects about documenting this move that felt really major for me if there's anything interesting in there. So I think yeah, I think that's one big thing I've been playing with.



Rimsha Syed 17:38

Yeah, so speaking of you packing up your apartment, I remember seeing photos of your space on Instagram and noticed that some decor pages had reposted it. And I guess I was curious as to if you see interior design or that curation of your physical space as another art form?



Emmad Mazhari 17:59

Yeah, I appreciate you noticing that and mentioning that. Yeah, I think that relates back for me to the question of not knowing what my art form is almost. Part of what I know I really enjoy is creating and documenting spaces that feel, in some ways, just beautiful. And part of that, for me, is just I'm really sensitive to spaces that I'm in and making sure I feel comfortable and others feel comfortable in a space that I'm making. And I think the way that's manifested is

making spaces for myself and interior design. But it has been cool to see other people respond, what seems like really positively to that. And I have been thinking about that as another thing that I like doing and seems like there's some voice I have in there that's resonating with people and trying to figure out, how does that incorporate in the rest of the work?



Rimsha Syed 19:14

Yeah. That project that you mentioned with your whole move and road trip back to Houston seems really cool. And I was wondering if you have any other long term visions or future projects that you currently had in mind.



Emmad Mazhari 19:32

Yeah, I think a lot about space and the spaces in which I exist and take part in. And one of the big dimensions of that is thinking a lot about the cities I'm in and the history of that city and spaces therein. I spent many years building up this collection of taking these photographs of San Francisco, trying to document a lot of current pictures that I was taking of the city and then going around the library and used stores around the city and finding old old film of the city that other people had taken and old footage. And just overlaying that and thinking about how much the city has changed and observing that through photographs. And as I was moving to Houston, I found a book that did a similar thing and documented that process for Houston in, I want to say, the 70s, the 80s. I can't recall the title of the book, but I've been thinking about that a lot.



Emmad Mazhari 20:45

And I want to, and I'm thinking about how to document Houston and how to document that while learning more about the city's history and connecting those two somehow. For me so far, that's meant joining a bunch of Facebook groups and email lists for people who grew up in Houston that share their family images, and going to the library and looking through archival pictures. I've started doing a little bit of that. But I think that's going to be an ongoing project for me, as long as I'm in Houston, which is just trying to dig up stories about the city, particularly through pictures and then trying to maybe retell the stories or take pictures in a similar style. That was a bit of a ramble.



Rimsha Syed 21:45

Yeah, yeah, that's great. Have you ever thought about exhibiting your work in a physical space like a museum or something along those lines? Unless that's something that you've already done.



Emmad Mazhari 21:57

No, no, I haven't. I haven't. I think that's something I am thinking about more seriously now. I imagine a lot of people will feel this, but I struggle with feeling a bit like not knowing if my work is there or feeling qualified to have my work up in spaces like that. But I think that is a goal that

I'm thinking about more now, which is, how can I almost lean in more to feeling okay with the title of being a photographer or an artist and exhibiting work in other places? Yeah.



Rimsha Syed 22:36

Yeah. Yeah, that would be awesome. And do you ever think about your Pakistani identity and how that maybe ties into your work as an artist?



Emmad Mazhari 22:49

Yeah, yeah, definitely. My identity as just a Pakistani Muslim affects so much of just how I view the world, that it's hard for me to even untangle how much that's informing. I will say, I think in the past two, three years, I've rekindled on my own an interest in just religion and Islam. And I think that's informed a lot of just how I think about the world and think about my work and maybe just operate in general. Yeah, particularly, I've just been thinking a lot about Islamic theology and how the history of the religion and - yeah, maybe broadly, I think I've just been exploring that topic more and trying to reteach myself in some ways what the religion means to me.



Rimsha Syed 24:05

Totally. Well, thank you so much for sharing your artist's journey to me, and speaking on your Pakistani identity, I wanted to transition and talk a little bit about culture and ask what sorts of traditions does your family participate in? And what are some of your maybe favorite aspects of your Pakistani Muslim identity?



Emmad Mazhari 24:27

Yeah. Maybe I can give a bit of background about my family first. So like I said, we're Pakistani Muslims. My parents were born in Pakistan, but were originally from the state of Bihar in India. And I think as a larger family unit, I think we identify with being Bihari and trying to hold onto those parts of identity. So I think as I grow older, I'm realizing that that has informed more of my cultural traditions than I thought. Yeah, so that's my family background. I think the traditions that I took part in growing up in Pakistan felt like very much just what everyone did. It was just part of being a Pakistani Muslim person where you have Eid off and you're out in the streets partying and spending time with family.



Emmad Mazhari 25:45

So I think there was, obviously, an adjustment coming to the US and having a lot of those almost institutionalized or state-sponsored or holidays and country-wide - what's the word I'm looking for? Country-wide celebration of traditions changing. So I remember that being a bit of a culture shock. But at least as I grew older, I think my parents did a pretty good job of trying to preserve a lot of the traditions, at least the main ones that we practiced. So Eid was always, it is always, a pretty big deal. I have tried to spend all my Eids with my family, both of them. And

I think that's a pretty important thing for us. I've tried to think outside of that. We observe a lot of what feels like pretty traditional Pakistani, Sunni I should add, Muslim cultural traditions, though I'm trying to think of specific ones and maybe struggling a bit. Yeah.



Rimsha Syed 27:03

Yeah, does your family speak any other language at home, aside from English?



Emmad Mazhari 27:09

Yeah, that's a great question. So I only talk to my parents in Urdu for the most part. And we still talk in Urdu at home. Again, I think that's because I moved here old enough where I was fluent and could speak. And I think my parents pretty actively wanted to make sure I could still speak in Urdu as I got older. Yeah, so both my immediate family and with my uncles and aunts, I'm mostly speak in Urdu.



Rimsha Syed 27:38

Yeah, no, that's interesting, because I guess many of the people in my community moved to the States when they were very young. So a lot of us have maybe lost our connection with the language a little bit more. But I'm glad to hear that you're fluent and that you still speak in Urdu with your family. Yeah, I guess transitioning over a little bit. What is your relationship like with religion or spirituality?



Emmad Mazhari 28:11

Yeah, that is a big question. So yeah, I mentioned this a little earlier, but I think I would identify myself as more religious, or it feels better put, just way more curious about religion in a way that I hadn't been growing up, particularly in the last few years. I grew up in a household where I was expected to practice Islam and pray five times a day, fast do what, to me, felt like the standard ask of - I'm trying to think of the right word to compare to here. Yeah, I grew up in a household where I felt like I had to be a performing Muslim. And I did that for a while without knowing why I was doing it, but doing it more because it was taught to me as the right thing to do.



Emmad Mazhari 29:27

I went to Sunday school for many years in middle school and high school in Houston. And I had a similar feeling about that, which was I felt like I was being told to be religious but not sure why. And I think when I left for college, and when I left for SF, maybe in hindsight, I think I didn't react to that in the best way. I dropped practicing some traditions and praying and all of that. I think I felt myself being reactionary and feeling like that was the right thing to do. But as I've gotten older, I've read a lot. I've tried to read more about Islam from what feels like more modern scholars who try to address concerns that I think I've had with the way I was taught the religion, particularly around ideas of justice and equality and who is accepted into the religion,

stuff like that. Yeah, so I think in the past few years, I've really reconnected with it, and in a way, have been feeling much more connected to understanding what religion is to me and what Islam is to me than I did when I was growing up and was taught about it.



Rimsha Syed 30:59

Yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense. You talked a little bit about Sunday school, but I also went to Sunday school. So I'm here to hear a little bit more about your experience with that.



Emmad Mazhari 31:13

Yeah, my memory of Sunday school is being more of an opportunity to goof off and hang around with other kinds of kids my age who were also Muslim, as opposed to learning a lot about Islam. All of the teachers I had, I think, deserved way better than what the students gave them. They were all volunteers and were trying to teach these kids about rules about Islam. And I think in the moment, I didn't react to it, because it felt like a lot of rule teaching. And I do remember a distinct couple moments where I would ask a lot of questions or feel like I was asking a lot of questions. It was a weird power dynamic, because we were in elementary school, or Islamic elementary school. So imagine a bunch of high schoolers sitting in tiny elementary chairs on a tiny table, and there's a teacher. So it was just this dynamic where I felt very much like a child and infantilized in a way and felt like I wasn't getting questions or concerns I had about the way I was being taught the religion answered. So I think I never took it seriously. But I'm still grateful for that experience. I don't think I would, even with that hindsight, want to change that. But yeah, I don't know if I got a lot of religious education out of it.



Rimsha Syed 32:55

Right. And how long were you in Sunday school?



Emmad Mazhari 32:58

Oh my god, middle school all the way through junior year. So I guess four years middle school to junior year. Not a while.



Rimsha Syed 33:05

Okay, yeah, interesting. I started in elementary school, I remember, in first grade, so fairly young, and then stopped at the end of middle school.



Emmad Mazhari 33:16

Yeah. Okay, so you didn't do it in high school.



Rimsha Syed 33:19

No, thankfully [laughs].



Emmad Mazhari 33:21

No, I knew a couple of people who had been at since first grade and did it all the way through high school. And it was amazing to me, because I think at that point, it was truly a social thing. I don't think there was any new information after you'd been there for nine years.



Rimsha Syed 33:39

Yeah, yeah, definitely a great source of community, one thing I will say, yeah. So this is a little bit more open ended, but I'm just curious about if you've ever had any experience with Islamophobia during your time here or in San Fran or in Michigan.



Emmad Mazhari 34:01

Yeah. I think there are a couple instances where I've had some very overt and aggressive experiences with it. There have been moments where someone has called me a slur based on assuming that I'm Muslim or based off my looks or whatever. I don't think those bother me as much anymore, or those ever bothered me too much, but I think there's instances that really in hindsight click in, and you're like, "Oh, that's what was going on." Yeah, I'm trying to think of a specific example that would be interesting to share. I don't know. I think the biggest thing that I am just conscious of have these days is I feel like as - sorry, this maybe is not directly answering your question, so I apologize in advance. As growing up, I felt very much a strong need to look presentable and act presentable because I felt very, very clearly that I was being judged for being Brown and Muslim, and there was ways in which that was playing out.




Emmad Mazhari 35:36


One obvious example that I think everyone talks about is TSA. I just have such a clear model of if I look cleaned up a little, and I'm wearing jeans and a t-shirt, I don't get pulled aside for a search. But if I'm wearing hoodies and sweatpants, without a doubt, I always get pulled aside. And it's little cues like that, that I've almost internalized at this point, where I think, in some ways, I'm trying to recognize that and push back, but I think a lot of my - how do I say that? I think I've internalized a lot of Islamophobia and reacted to it by trying to be more presentable and agreeable in places where I don't need to be. Does that make sense?





Rimsha Syed 36:32


Yeah, no, that makes sense. It sounds a little bit like the model minority mindset that a lot of young Muslims in America have almost internalized, like you said, especially since 9/11, I would say.

 Emmad Mazhari 36:45
Yeah, yeah.

 Rimsha Syed 36:48
Yeah. So do you see yourself living in Houston for the long term?

 Emmad Mazhari 36:55
I do. I do. I mentioned a little bit of this, but I moved to Houston mostly because I wanted to be closer to family. My parents are still here, and my brother is still here. And my brother has a disability, and my parents have been taking care of him for the entire time I've been away from home. And I think as the years go by, I felt that responsibility weigh on me more and more. And I think it was at a point where it felt like time for me to step up in some ways and be closer to family. And I think that for me means just being in Houston for the long term and finding my place here. So I think I imagine being here for the foreseeable future, unless something really changes.

 Rimsha Syed 37:56
Yeah, totally. Thanks for sharing that with me. Definitely a responsibility and definitely sounds like it can be challenging at times. And I wanted to ask what brings you comfort? Or what do you find healing whenever there's, I guess, something a bit challenging or difficult happening in your life?

 Emmad Mazhari 38:19
Yeah, yeah. One thing I've been trying to lean into is I've been recognizing over the past year or two more actively that I'm very much a people pleaser. That's just my personality type. It's how I grew up. And that's just, for better for worse, what motivates me and keeps me happy a lot, when other people are happy. And even though at times, it's a bit of a struggle and it adds stuff to my life, I think one thing that has been really nice and lovely about being back home is being able to step up for not just immediate family but extended family. Even if it's small stuff, just being around to - well, feels like doing what I'm here to do, kind of thing. And so I think just thinking about that has helped me quite a bit, just realizing that I get a lot of happiness from just fulfilling what feels like a responsibility and a role, and I'm feeling like I'm doing that right now in some ways. I think that's one thing.

 Emmad Mazhari 39:38
On a more specific note, I suppose, I've been really getting into making more physical objects, because I've been getting a lot of satisfaction from just turning my brain off and just doing woodworking or sanding or trying to construct a physical object. I think that's been really

comforting work. Really mind turn off, play some music, make some stuff. Yeah, two very different levels of comfort but both of those.



Rimsha Syed 40:16

Both valid. Yeah, woodworking is very niche, I would say. I'm curious as to how you got into that.



Emmad Mazhari 40:27

It literally started because I wanted a very specific desk, and I was trying to find it online. And every version that fit the closest online was too expensive. My budget was a hundred bucks, and we were looking at five, six hundred. So I decided to just build it. I figured I would just invest that money into getting some tools. That my that was my first big project, a workbench, basically. I'm sitting on it right now, so I'm looking around at it. It's not the best, I will admit that, and I'm okay with that. But it was one of the few moments I've had recently where I felt like I came out of a rut to just work on it for a whole day and have a very specific vision of a physical object in my mind and just getting a bunch of wood and shaping that in a day was just a crazy fun experience. And I've been doing more of that, which has been fun.



Rimsha Syed 41:36

Yeah, that does sound like a lot of fun. I've upcycled some furniture items when I moved from my old apartment to my new apartment to match the aesthetic, so I definitely know the feeling. Do you have any other hobbies aside from the ones that we've already talked about?



Emmad Mazhari 41:56

Any other hobbies? I do. I do. I don't know why I'm embarrassed by this, I do read a lot. But I've been doing a lot of audiobooks recently. So I've been on a real audiobooks kick. Trying to think what else I've been doing lately. Honestly not too much. I've been doing a lot of interior design work because, like I said, I moved into this new place, so I've been trying to fill it out. Oh the other thing I do related to that, I like gardening a lot. And in my old place, I had a lot of plants. So I'm on a journey right now to rebuild that back up. Yeah, but it's been slow because I feel I have to feel ready to have plants again and feel ready to garden and dedicate energy to them, and I don't feel fully there. But yeah, that's another hobby.



Rimsha Syed 42:59

Yeah, plants are definitely a commitment. I hear you. What's your sign?



Emmad Mazhari 43:06

Wow. I am a leo sun and a cancer moon and rising.



Rimsha Syed 43:13

I see. Okay. Sorry, that was a bit random.



Emmad Mazhari 43:18

Can I ask what you are?



Rimsha Syed 43:20

Yeah, I'm a libra sun, cancer rising.



Emmad Mazhari 43:26

You cut out on this last part.



Rimsha Syed 43:28

Oh, I said I'm a libra sun and a cancer rising.



Emmad Mazhari 43:31

Got I got it. Okay. Yeah.



Rimsha Syed 43:33

So going back to the conversation of art and photography, woodworking. Do you have any artists that you look up to or any places you go to for inspiration?



Emmad Mazhari 43:46

Yeah, yeah. Any artists that I look up to? There's so many. I can name a couple that I've been thinking about right now. There is this person named Zane Ollie, who makes this clothing, maybe not directly an artist, but they have a clothing brand that makes these sets that are inspired by what feels like Pakistani cuts with Pakistani fabrics. And I think they're so beautiful, I think there's just such a specific taste and vision that he has that I think is just wonderful, and I've been really inspired by a lot of his recent releases. So I've been really enjoying that. I I've also been really into Salman Toor's paintings. I don't know if you know of them. But he does these paintings that are very green in bottle green shades, and I just love the colors. I'm really a big fan of them. Yeah, I think those are two ones that come to mind.



Rimsha Syed 45:09

Awesome. Thanks for sharing. So I'm looking at the clock here. I don't want to take too much more of your time. I have one last question, which is also a bit broad. But seeing as this interview will be archived, the hope is that people way down the line years from now will be listening to this interview. And I wanted to ask if you had any thing that you wanted to expand on, any advice or words of wisdom, maybe coming from an artists perspective that you want it to just put out there.



Emmad Mazhari 45:44

That is a broad question. I don't know if I have any advice, because I don't feel qualified to give any advice. But maybe I will say, for some future record, that I do feel like a lot of people that I know right now, particularly immigrant, people of color, Muslim, all these marginalized communities, all these people that I know in my life are struggling and dealing with these questions of responsibilities to their communities, to their immediate families, to themselves in what feels like a new question, at least for a lot of people that I know and a lot of families that I know. and I know a lot of - the example that's coming out of my mind is a lot of Brown and immigrant families that have kids who left home for the first time kind of like myself, and are trying to figure out what it means to move back home, what it means to take care of family, all that stuff. And I don't know, I guess I'm thinking of that because it feels, in some ways, like a pivotal and important moment for a community and a group of people trying to figure out their place in this world, in this country, and all those things, while trying to preserve some version of themselves. I know I'm doing that, and I know to some degree, everybody's doing that. But I think more so now than not, it feels like. Yeah, feels like people are doing that. So I don't know. I don't know what to make of that thought. I hope it turns out in some future in a better place. Yeah, I'll leave with that hopeful note.



Rimsha Syed 47:47

Yeah, no, that was very well put. Thank you. And thank you so much for talking about yourself today and giving -



Emmad Mazhari 47:56

Thank you for all your questions. They were they were great.



Rimsha Syed 47:58

Yeah, I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording now.



Emmad Mazhari 48:01

Perfect.