

Interview 4

This interview was conducted by The Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC) of The Graduate Center, City University of New York (June 2002 – March 2003)

Gender of respondent: Male

Age: 27

Q. I would like to start to ask you a few questions about yourself. Where were you born?

A. I was born in Pakistan.

Q. You grew up...

A. In Pakistan.

Q. When did you come to the United States?

A. 1994.

Q. How old were you when you came?

A. Eighteen.

Q. And your parents were both born in Pakistan?

A. Yeah.

Q. And what is your religious affiliation?

A. Muslim.

Q. And how old are you?

A. Twenty-seven.

Q. And are you a U.S. citizen or a Green Card holder?

A. A citizen.

Q. And your highest level of education?

A. A Bachelors degree.

Q. In what?

A. Accounting.

Q. And where did you obtain your education?

A. Baruch College.

Q. And what is your main occupation right now?

A. I am an infrastructure analyst.

Q. And what is that exactly?

A. It is like accounting. It's an accountant.

Q. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you experienced September 11th. Where were you on the day around 9 a.m.? So how did you hear of the attacks?

A. Well, at the beginning of September 11th ... I mean, in those days I was studying for the CPA exam ... to prepare for the CPA exam and ... and I used to get up a couple of hours before work starts and go down there and have my cup of coffee and study a couple of hours before 9 o'clock. So I was in the building on the forty-sixth floor.

Q. So you worked in the World Trade Center?

A. Yeah. In 2 World Trade Center ... the one that came down first. So it was around 8:40 a.m. or something and then the first plane hit the next building to us. So when the first plane hit our the next building to us there was a big explosion. And ... and the guy right next to me, he goes, what the hell was that? And I started smiling because I was busy and studying. And all of a sudden when you hear someone saying "what the hell was that," then ... then you smile. And then, all of a sudden, I asked myself: Well, yeah. What the hell was that? It's a big explosion kind of thing. So we just ran towards the window and we saw all this debris coming down, papers ... are coming down because twenty-six stories is pretty much in the middle and the first plane was way above, like, eighty or seventy, something like that. So everyone ... And the guy said again, "Well, I'm getting the hell out of here" very fast. We didn't know what to think. And we started evacuating the building. Someone just started yelling. And then we saw that crater back there and we started going downstairs. And we didn't know how big ... how big the devastation is. So we just started evacuating the building, and ... and in our mind we were just happy, me and my friend. You know? And I go ... we had a day off so go home

because we didn't know what was going on.

Q. Yeah.

A. I was ... we were talking. Meanwhile we were going down, saying Oh ... And then they expect us to walk all the way down here from forty-six floors down. And that was the question. I mean, afterwards, when all this happened, I was thinking, oh, probably people on the one-hundredth floor, they're probably thinking the same thing. They probably thought the same thing. You know? They expect us to walk all the way down. And we were lucky we were only on the forty-sixth floor, which is not as much. And by the time we got out to, like, twenty-fifth floor another explosion happened when the plane hit our building and our building had completely shook, like, completely back and forth two or three times. And we really, really got scared then. People just ... A couple of people got even ... started even rushing. And evacuation was not that smooth either. People were stopping and then going forward, then stopping, then going forward a lot of times so that by the time we got out of the building and went a couple of blocks away, and actually when we got at the esca--the stairs and I was facing right, a big yard in the middle of the two buildings, I was facing that. Once I got out of the stairs I was facing that big yard. That yard was very, very bad I mean, that's where I realized that something really, really big has happened. So while we got out of the building the...

Q. When you say "bad," what do you mean?

A. Bad means I saw the ... I saw bodies.

Q. Oh, you did!

A. Yeah. I saw ... I think I saw a body without a head and legs. I think so.

Q. And that was...

A. The woman ... It was a woman's body without a head and legs in a ... in a business suit.

Q. And there was debris?

A. There was debris, lots of debris, lots of debris in that big yard. That's where we ... I

felt something very ... Actually that was the second time we realized something very big has happened. The first time was when the plane hit our building and the building shook.

Q. Did you know it was a plane that hit or was it...

A. Yeah. While we ... while we were coming downstairs, it's so funny, some people were even smoking in the stairs, standing in those, you know, rest areas people were smoking because some of the rumors before the plane hit our building, the rumor was there that the security guards there they were spreading those rumors, Oh, just a small plane hit the next building. Don't worry. Everybody just do their normal work, or whatever. And some people, to relax, I guess, they were brokers or something; I couldn't tell, they wanted to go back to work. But as for us, we just started coming down. Some people, I'm sure, did stay there thinking that it was just a small building ... a small plane hit the next building, and they stayed there. And I'm sure everybody who could evacuate, they did evacuate when the second plane hit our building because that's where you know, like, something big has happened. So we started seeing the devastation. And then as coming ... going out we see a lot of people lying down because they got hurt by debris, because once you get out of the stairs there is a door ... this big mirror...

Q. What is that place called? It had ... it had the whole big water fountain and they used to hold concerts there? I can't remember what it's called but I know what you're talking about. It was right in between the two buildings and people used to come and sit there. And they used to hold concerts there.

A. They just used to call it Square.

Q. Yeah, something Square. Yeah.

A. I guess. Yeah. I don't know now. So there is a big ... big mirror, not mirror; what do you call it, glass, big glass. And then there's a door and then there's the big yard and square where they had concerns. They still were having concerts on those days even into September every day they used to have new concerts. The people were there, the tourists especially. So we got out and went down, even downstairs in the basement. And from ...

during ... from the basement they took us out somewhere else, some other part. I don't know the name of the street. But once we got out, in the way coming out we saw lots of people waiting for ambulances, bloody and all that. I am assuming they got hurt while they were standing in that yard and the debris fell over them or something. See girls crying. A couple of girls, I saw them crying and then we walk out. And then when we look at the building, that's when we really got scared: Oh my God! [There were] so [many] huge, humongous holes in the building. And people were standing there smoking, thinking, looking up, even blocking the ambulance or emergency services way. I mean, it was so logical just go home or something. There is nothing to see. Basically, everything is stopped there. It was stopping there means you're going to block some emergency personnel or something. So me ... all of a sudden I bumped into one of my coworkers, kind of boss, I mean, and we, ... me and him, we started walking. He wanted to make a phone call to Jersey, his wife. I wanted to make a phone call to my home to let my brother know, like, I'm fine; I'm out, because they were watching the same thing on the TV. The phones were out. No phone was working, no cell phone, nothing was working. Eventually I ... as I was going I was trying to check as many phones, the telephone booths, as I could. Eventually I found one ... that one was working I found out. The girl just hanged up and she left and I used that one to call. She couldn't find any phone. So we were just talking. Me and him were walking and talking: Yeah, this is definitely terrorist attack. We knew that this was a terrorist attack and we had no doubt about it. We were talking: Oh my God! You know? He was saying, "I have to now consider whether I want to work in this building any more or not." He was working there for the past thirteen years and he was saying, Oh, now I have to evaluate whether I want to work in this building or not because this building is being hit so many times. It's at least the second time for sure because no one imagined that it is going to come down, or is coming down while we are walking away and it's coming down in the back of us. We saw lots of smoke and debris but we didn't dare look back or anything.

Q. Did you know that the buildings fell while you were walking or...

A. By the time I got to 34th [street] they were showing replays of the first tower coming down and I was completely shocked: Oh my god! I tell you, it's probably ... they were just probably making it up just showing people how it's going to be probably and you're still not accepting it. And in our way going back home I see some ... a lot ... the second thing I got scared of ... While everything was done I wasn't scared of ... about my life, I mean, any more, once I got out of the building and I was walking all the way down to 34th Street, and then to 59th Street and then to the Bridge.

Q. So you walked all the way...

A. To Queens? Yes.

Q. Close to a hundred blocks.

A. Yes. So I wasn't ... While I was ... after 14th Street, even after ... while I went and left the financial district I wasn't afraid for my life any more. But certainly ... suddenly some strange things started coming into my head like, Oh my God! If it's a terrorist ... then how are people going to act now. It suddenly clicked in my head: Oh, people are going to act very stupid now. And I ... even when I was walking home I see peoples' reaction, very strange.

Q. What kind of reactions?

A. Kind of like they are trying to tell me something like, like...

Q. Was it hostile, positive, negative...

A. Like, hostile. Some ... a guy was very angry, he ... the guy was very angry and he was saying, Oh ... There was just something on ... He was looking straight into my eyes and he was saying, "Oh, Osama Bin Laden just did it and he said if he had more money he would collapse another tower or two." And he was looking straight into my eyes like he's telling me something.

Q. Now who was this guy? Was he a white guy?

A. He was white. And then I went to get some water in a restaurant and I got the water, I

paid for the water, and this guys says, "Oh, I can't believe," he used a bad word, "they did it to us." He was looking into my eyes like...

Q. Like he was talking to you?

A. And then I got really scared. I was, like, oh, this is not a good place to stay right now, staying in Manhattan.

Q. Where was that?

A. Right here between 23rd Street and 50th Street in the City. And then when I went home, my home ... I used to live far away from here. I used to live on the other side of Queens. So I went to my friend's home. We were watching on TV and I got really scared: Oh my God, like, this is going to have so bad reaction among American born that it's not going to be funny. It's going to be so difficult now. And my friend was ... "Oh no, (unintelligible) It's not going to be nothing." But I knew it's going to be, and it did. It definitely did. He probably doesn't ... You see, the problem probably is that he works in a grocery ... he owns a grocery store and he meets people on a hello, hi basis. He doesn't know ... He doesn't get to know people how they think. And I work where I get to see people. People become my friends or I become their friends. I know their psyche, how it's going to react. He doesn't know that. He just knows someone comes for his lotto or someone comes to buy candy. And even if they're nice to you, I mean, you don't get to know them personally. I am in a work environment where I get to know people personally.

Q. But what made you think that?

A. I knew that it was going to have a very bad effect somehow. I don't know.

Q. You just had the feeling.

A. I just had a feeling. And it ... it did.

Q. In what way? When ... when you say it did, what do you mean? What exactly do you mean?

A. Oh, what exactly I mean? I mean that the people...

Q. Give us an example.

A. Like ... like, at my work place I have heard so many things that it's not even funny. I mean...

Q. After you went back to work.

A. After I went back.

Q. And you went to a different place, obviously.

A. No. The same ... the same work place.

Q. No. But it wasn't building at World Trade Center.

A. It's a different place.

Q. Yeah, in a different office. Yeah. What did the...

A. The same people who had been with me while the plane hit the other building, they were making strange, strange comments.

Q. Like what?

A. Oh, like where's Osama Bin Laden? Or, like, I am very proud of what city or what country I am from. I have nothing ... I mean, when the whole operation was going on I used to call ... Like when the United States used to bomb Afghanistan and our city is right there, called Peshawar ... Peshawar city which is right next to Afghanistan on the border. And I'm very proud of where I am from. I'm ... I'm not going to hide ... I'm not going to say I'm not ... I just told them I'm from here. And that city all of a sudden so many times in the news. And they started asking me, oh, where's Osama Bin Laden? I took it as a joke at the beginning. Sometimes, you know a culture it's ... we try to tolerate things like that, thinking that someone will get better sense very soon. But unfortunately, people don't get better sense unless you really kick them back. This is something I have learned very recently that...

Q. What do you mean kick them back?

A. Like, you have to answer them back. You have to...

Q. But what did you tell them?

A. I just ... I just smiled and said I don't know. He's my ... At the beginning I took it as a joke. I'd say "He's in my father's basement. He wants some MacDonald's. Do you want to come with me?" I mean, I took it as a joke. But then it's not a joke. And more and more comes: We should nuke them, all these countries. And then I said, "Yeah. Maybe you should buy some cluster nuke or something so it can spread all over the place." I mean, try to take it as a joke. But after that I realized it's not just ... there's something really hated there because I think that ... I have friends joking about it, too, but I know this is a joke and this is not a joke. You can ... Sometimes you can just tell. And...

Q. How does it make you feel when people joke about that?

A. That's okay. But if, I mean, someone is your friend that's okay. You can joke about it. But if you work for someone it is a different environment. People should joke about different things. Like, the other day ... Like, for instance, this guy who sits right next to me and he says ... I said, "Oh, my brother wants to go to aeronautic school in Stanford. Too bad we don't have money." and he goes, "Oh yeah? He wants to fly the plane into the building." And that was a joke, even so bad it sounds, it was a joke. I can understand that and I started smiling. And that's it. And ... and that was a joke. And sometimes you just ... this is not a joke...

Q. You mentioned about your reaction when you heard about the planes that there was a possibility that it could be a terrorist act. Did you think that it was possible that it was Middle Eastern? That ... did that pop in your mind?

A. It didn't pop in ... Yeah. That's why I think ... that's why I got scared at the beginning, that it's going to be some Middle Eastern or something like that. Or I probably heard people saying Osama Bin Laden ... I mean, it probably wasn't ... no. It didn't pop into mind that it was a Middle Eastern thing.

Q. Did you think it was ... an accident or...

A. I didn't think. At the ... at the beginning I thought it was an accident. But once I got out of the building and I saw the two big holes I knew it was a terrorist act. But there was

no way in my mind that it was some kind of Middle Eastern thing involved in there until I heard people saying, Osama Bin Laden.

Q. So as you were describing September 11th and you spoke about many things you'll probably remember, what is your most vivid memory of that day? I mean, is there anything that stands out in your mind that you'll never forget; an image or a voice, or a sound or idea or something?

A. I would have felt ... In the back of my head I would have tried to remember so much, because if something really dear to you gets taken away and you feel bad for that. But it's ... If you're not made to feel part of that, that it's something is dear to you, you don't care, like, forget it. I mean, you don't want to remember anything. I mean, place...

Q. When ... Is that the change in your feelings so you ... Are you saying...

A. Yes, the planes. It's the ... I think I would have been much more ... I would have held something dear or I would have held some thoughts in my mind more ... so I could remember that something terribly, really bad had happened. But...

Q. What ... what made you ... What changed your feelings?

A. What makes one's feeling change is, in other parts of the world people die every day, and especially countries that ... in Afghanistan which is right next to our people in my city, [?], Afghan refugees and very, very poor people, full of dignity but poor people and people who don't like to give up and ... and ignore circumstances. I mean, these are people, they would just give their life just for their word. And they're being slaughtered every day, even now, very full of truth people, very simple, full of dignity and they are being slaughtered. And there are so many of them. And I just don't feel so much. If I was ... If, while living in New York City, if I was made to feel that I was part of it as well, I probably would have remembered something. I probably would have felt more, but I don't.

Q. So this experience...

A. It's just a building for me now.

Q. So this experience ... what exactly ... was it the experience of people reacting to you here, or was it what they did to Afghanistan?

A. Reacting to ... and what has happened in Afghanistan before and after. Reaction plus their reaction, plus what happened to Afghanistan before and after. Even if someone had taken care of our responsibility of something after ... Yeah, so many ... And I never watched news. Since I was in America I never watch news. But since ... I watch the news every day and I see, you know, what happened in Palestine there every day and it seems like only one side of the story is being told. And, like, some ... someone in ... someone is lying and, you know, I don't feel sorry for them any more.

Q. Before September 11th if somebody asked you what your ethnic background was what did you say? What would you tell them?

A. I would tell them Pakistan.

Q. And after 9-11? What do you tell them?

A. I always say Pakistan.

Q. Immediately after the attack what were your feelings about what happened?

A. Originally after attack I had a feeling that we had a day off. And then the second plane hit and we were in twentieth floor, I had a feeling that we were going to die here. The building was just going to ... I had heard the phrase saying, oh, my legs started shaking and all that, really and getting to know what it feels when your legs shake because I was really, really in shock when I saw on the TV the building coming down. I felt really bad when I saw a couple of people directing things, unintentionally, to me.

Q. So peoples' reaction to you as a Pakistani made you change your feelings?

A. Yeah.

Q. Have your feelings towards the United States changed since 9-11, in, like, in the sense politically or ... You mentioned before how you never really used to watch the news and you weren't aware of things happening. Now, has your level of political awareness changed?

A. My political interest goes only as ... see, I don't have any big 401K or a pension plan going on out there so I don't really care about what's going on in there; what the President decides or what's going on in social security, I don't really care. And my political interest goes only as far as Palestine or Afghanistan is concerned. If that is something they are talking about I turn on the TV. But the rest of that I...

Q. ... Policy you're ... you're interested in...

A. Yeah. Yeah. But right now it's just so ... Right now I just feel that people are so helpless, I mean, you just ... so I probably am not going to watch any more news just to make yourself feel bad. So why make yourself feel bad.

Q. If ... I mean, are your plans to stay in the United States?

A. I probably would have more confidence before September 11th. I'm not so confident right now. I don't know what's going to be after a couple of years. Hopefully it will get better. But I always think of going back, always. Even before and now. I probably think more now than I did before.

Q. How do you feel about being here now? Like, do you have a sense of belonging? Do you feel at home in a sense? Do you belong in the United States? You're comfortable here? You're part of the larger fabric of society?

A. No. No.

Q. Have you always felt like this?

A. No.

Q2. Did you feel differently before September 11th? Has the....

A. 'Cause I'm so aware of how unfit I am. I was so unaware of it, but I became more aware of it now. Yeah. It was pretty much more nationalistic where I born even before. But I was here (unintelligible) very good and pretty much accepts everyone. What's so great about this country ... It doesn't mind anything or anyone. Everything is just fine here. I mean, people just can live here and somewhere else as all at the same time. It becomes more...

Q. Has there been a change in the way people from, the Middle East or South Asia are treated in the United States since September 11th?

A. Sometimes people can be very ... the majority of the people are nice. They don't mind. At least they don't say that they don't mind. At least they pretend that they don't mind. They're smart enough to pretend at least. But some people are very, very ignorant too. One day I was reading the newspaper on ... on line and back then I was reading ... One of our newspapers uses Arabic alphabet. But to other people it ... it looks like Arabic or something. And this guy comes along, completely freaked out.

Q. This is after 9-11?

A. After 9-11. I say, "this is a newspaper, just like CNN. People look at their Internet to work, you know, like, fifty thousand of them out there. I mean, this is one of them. What else to say?" He just looked so freaked out when he left. And one day I was writing an e-mail to my ... to my younger brother, we call him "sheik." I call him sheik because ... just to make fun of him, basically. So gullible. I just call him sheik sometimes. Sheik, tell Abu, "Abu" means father.

Q2. Yeah, we know. She's Egyptian and I'm Lebanese so we know. (laughs)

A. And I say ... say: Hey, hello, sheik. Tell Abu that this and this and that. And...

Q. Is your brother here in the United States?

A. No. No, in Peshawar. I was just e-mailing him. And I was ... just before I was sending it, this guy next to me and, says, "dear sheik?" What the hell is that?" and he said, "I hope authorities are looking into it." I don't ... He wasn't kidding. He was trying to disturb myself psychologically and that's it. And because I had made fun of him earlier, like when he asked me where is Osama Bin Laden and I said, "Oh, he's in my father's basement. He wants some MacDonald's. Do you want to come with me and give it to him?" He ... I said it as a joke because they put it as a joke and I didn't know that they were going to remember it for so long that I answered them back. And then in the ... after the United States Marines they got some kind of permission from the government of

Pakistan, okay, they can go and search for Al-Qaeda members in the border region and tribal areas, and he said, Oh and he knows that my city is by because I have no problem ... I don't ... I'm not going to hide it because of some stupid person that I'm from Peshawar. And I tell him and he tells oh no. Then he tells me: "Oh. Now the Marines are going to go to your home and knock on everybody's door." and I was, like, No. That's it. And then I typed out a complaint to HR and I told them someone has to teach them. I mean, imagine, something like this can happen to them.

Q. How big is your firm? How many employees are there?

A. It's huge. I'm going to say the name of the firm?

Q. No, no. Don't say it.

A. It's huge.

Q. So .. so your HR firm was responsive?

A. Oh yeah. They took care of it. They really took care of it. These guys shut up.

Q. Are you the only Pakistani there? Are you the only South Asian person or Middle Eastern person in your unit, anyway?

A. I don't ... Yeah. There are not a lot of Asian people there. You know? I'm ... So different than someone else.

Q. John Smith.

A. John McCormick.

Q. Besides the jokes that you talked about have you personally experienced any backlash after 9-11 like harassment or racial profiling or any kind of discrimination?

A. Beside my work I don't have much contact with different world. I don't ... We don't do grocery shopping. I don't cook.

Q. ... just jokes.

A. No.

Q. And has any of your member ... family members experienced backlash or

discrimination or harassment?

A. I think the worst happened to me.

Q. Meaning...

A. At my job, because I'm the only one who is in contact with ... the rest .. Like, my younger brother, he goes to school and in school people don't usually with a brain, with at least open brain, for the time being while they're in school for four years. After that they...

Q. This is in college?

A. Yeah. In colleges it doesn't really happen that much and, well, they...

Q. Do you think Middle Eastern or South Asian organizations have been able to handle the backlash against groups, like Middle Eastern groups or South Asian groups, since 9-11?

A. If they're able to handle that?

Q. Do you think they've been effective in doing that, handling any backlash in the sense...

A. Oh, there's backlash all over. I mean, September has nothing but backlash on all kinds of causes all around the world.

Q. But in the United States...

A. Oh., in the United States?

Q. Yeah.

A. No. They don't have anything. I mean, Muslim community or Middle Ea-- ... they have nothing, nothing to protect themselves, financially ... and even intellectually too they can't ... I mean, people are much ... Opponents are much more smarter or ... or well ... well established in the United States to ... Our Muslim people can't even describe themselves, even if they're put on TV most of the time that I have seen. So it's a backlash all over someone is taking advantage or their being innocent. You see? In the culture they come from they are not ... I mean, at least where I'm from we don't keep things in

the mind and wait for the better ... better time and lash back at other people. But in this society it is held back for timing and it's thrown upon you when the right time ... We ... It doesn't work like that in our ... So, because we don't think like that, we're completely a failure when it comes to protecting here.

Q. So have you heard of any organizations that have been trying to do something like this in order to organize the community or respond to the backlashes?

A. No.

Q. You haven't heard of any?

A. I have seen some of them on ... on TV. In extreme cases the lawyers, a bunch of lawyers will get together and follow some case just to make money. But nothing sympathetically going for the cause of the people.

Q. In your opinion, what do you think the nature of the relationship between ethnic or religious groups right now in the United States, what do you think it's like right now? Is there more ... are people more tolerant of each other or do you think there is some kind of strain or opposition between ethnic groups? For example...

A. I understand. About other places in the United States?

Q. No. You can only talk about New York.

A. ... Talk about New York. In New York people are ... they care for law. But in this state they ... they have, I don't think it's going to be replaceable for the next fifteen years. They are tolerable ... tolerant not because they think you are also nice people, bunch of nice people just like us. They don't think that. I don't think they're going to think that for the next fifteen years. But they're not going to say anything bad to you either because they're afraid of law or they're afraid of ... you might just yell back at them. But I don't think ... I don't think that...

Q. So relations between the various ethnic and religious groups in the United States have become worse after 9-11 in your opinion, more ... more strained, more stress, more conflict.

A Yeah.

Q. More tense?

A. Yeah. It's ... it didn't let up.

Q. 9-11 did not help? What do you think members of your community can do to improve the situation, the relations between ethnic groups?

A. For starters ... Hold more seminars explaining to people ... the short term, how many people you can possibly persuade while they're having seminars. Seminars are only people going to attend who are really interested in you and they're have some intellectual capabilities. You can't change the image of some other people who don't really care about intellectual stuff and want to learn about other people and they don't care...

Q. What about television, like, programs on television, schools...

A. Yeah. Yeah, the school programs and television. And the most important thing if the Muslim community wants to do something like that is be really, really serious about educating their own kids. Lots of them go to college. I don't see them, many...

Q. Well, educating in what way?

A. Educating ... educating their own ... own kids. I mean, education is not somehow ... in the Muslim community education is not so important to them?

Q. Oh, so push kids to go to college, you mean?

A. Colleges, yeah. That's very important. Whatever happened now, it's irreplaceable. Only you can try or I can try. But for the long run if something like this happened, God forbid, and if it does happen or someone tries to corner you because of your ethnicity or religion you can fight back only because ... if you have the intellect to fight back you can answer. Most of the time in this community they don't.

Q. Given your understanding of the status of Middle Easterners or South Asians, the immigrant groups in the United States after 9-11, would you encourage people in these countries to come to the United States, to immigrate here?

A. I wouldn't tell them to come here. But the situation is so desperate like in my younger

... I have a more younger brother, like I said, is in ... he's there [Pakistan]. I wouldn't want him to come here. I would rather have him doing something there such as going to the air Force or something ... Oh, because the Air Force or military is one of the good employment positions that you can depend on that he can go to. But sometimes, like, the situation is so desperate ... Like, I came here ... I didn't come here to stay here. I came here to study. And by the time it was time for me to go back my father had so many financial losses because the economic uncertainty there is nothing more to depend on. We had no more business so we ended up staying here. I didn't come here to stay here. I didn't even imagine that I was going to work here. I wouldn't suggest someone to come here. I wouldn't want someone to come here. I would rather have them there because that's what I want to do. I want to go back.

Q. So why wouldn't you tell them to come here? Is there anything specific that you would be worried about for them?

A. For me it's just comfortable if I just stay in my own country, in my own community. And I don't have to worry about these things. And it's very important to me. I mean, it just becomes very, very personal to me when someone tries to corner me because of ethnicity or religion. No money is replaceable for that, nothing. No future is irreplaceable. I don't ... Call it nationalistic or something more. This is just so important to me.

Q. Well, so far we're talked about the negative consequences post-9-11. Were there any positive consequences of 9-11? More understanding or more visibility of Middle Easterners or Muslims or Islam in the United States after 9-11 that wasn't around before?

A. Yeah. There are some positive points but negative completely overrules them.

Q. What are some of the positive do you think?

A. Some people want to learn about what it is like and there are a lot of books out there and all that which is very important for Muslim religion. And there's nothing bad about it.

People want to learn more about it. And people want to learn about Islam more but ... There is a positive thing but it's very small.

Q. Why do you think the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon happened?

A. Before I didn't ... like, where I'm from, that someone who has a big beard or prays so many times ... very, very respectable people. And I can't even imagine people like this can do such a thing. I didn't even think that. What was your question again?

Q. Why do you think that that happened?

A. And when I started looking at the things that they are keep on saying and bad words that coming out of the mouth of Al-Qaeda are completely wrong representation of Islam. All in their mind they have decided one certain part of the world something has happened and they're going to get back to United States for something. And ... and that's why it happened. I mean, they just wanted the United States to get out of their coast and they just wanted them to take their ships away.

Q. You mean Saudi Arabia?

A. In a way ... Yeah, Saudi Arabia. In other parts of the world they have their ... their ships. In a way it makes sense because they want them just out of there so they can be alone. But the thing is, these ignorant people they don't have a plan. They want to create ... Like, if I want someone out of my room who is controlling everything in my room I'd better have a good plan for that too, so you can persuade someone, okay, because I have something better. They want to create a Taliban utopia all over the world. It doesn't work like that. They want to create a whole Taliban thing and what are they going to do? I mean, we ... they had one Taliban in Afghanistan and everybody knows it was very bad. They weren't listening to anyone. They thought they ... they know everything. And nowadays it's not about looking in one way. It's more about learning new things as well.

Q. How do you think the United States right now can resolve this problem of terrorism directed against it?

A. I ... I really don't know what they can do. I really ... This ... sometimes I do think. I just really don't know what can they do. I don't think anyone can do anything ... this is the history of the world. No one else from other part of the world has ever gone to other part of the world and helped them build something. It's been the history that people of that part of the world, they always help themselves. No one helps no one. I mean, if someone tries to help someone it doesn't work like that. If some people want to be left alone, have their freedom in that country. If they say get out of our country, then you should get out of that country 'cause ... And, you know, something like ... no one can help. It's been history of the world. People help themselves. And people down there in Saudi Arabia, most of ... mostly they think that they are ... they are being dictated.

Q. By the United States you mean or...

A. The United States is just dictating them what to do, what not to do. How we can dictate someone is just put a couple of sanctions on you and pretty much that's dictation--dictatorship nowadays. I mean, you don't have to go to some country and have your army in there to dictate someone. We just put a couple of sanctions and everybody just goes toward that and this is how you dictate. And then we say okay, we are doing business here. I mean ... the money is just ... the whole money in the world is here and in New York City. It goes through New York City. And it seems like everyone ... everything is just decided here: who's going to get what and how much, and how much someone is going to pay. And people don't like ... I don't think anyone can help. This is the way this part of the world works in a completely different way other part of the world works, completely clash of cultures and everything just completely clashed. And I don't think anyone can help. This is a clash of cultures.

Q. Are there any other issues or points that we haven't touched upon that you want to comment on?

A. You are using the word South Asia or Middle East. I think it's too vague. Where the problem is, if you really look at the map, I mean, Afghanistan is ... I don't think its

anywhere near Central Asia. I think Iran is in Middle East. Afghanistan is in Southeast Asia. And the Central Asian countries are Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmenistan and...

Q. It's an American term. (laughs)

A. I think the right description of the map of Pakistan and Afghanistan, is Southwest Asia. I have seen it. Then Central Asia is those Russian states, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan [and] Uzbekistan. And Iran is the Middle East.

Q. Thank you very much.