

Interview 32

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 – June 2003)

Gender of respondent: Male

Age: 28

Q. Initially I'd like to start by asking you a few questions about yourself.

A. Okay.

Q. Where were you born?

A. Cairo.

Q. And where did you grow up?

A. In California.

Q. How old were you when you came to the U.S.?

A. I was about five months.

Q. Where were your parents born?

A. They were both born in Egypt.

Q. What do you consider to be your ethnic background?

A. Background? Well, I'm Middle Eastern.

Q. What is your religious affiliation?

A. Muslim.

Q. And how old are you now?

A. Twenty-eight.

Q. What is your highest level of education?

A. I have a Bachelor's.

Q. In what?

A. In economics.

Q. In what year was your degree awarded?

A. 1996.

Q. In what country did you obtain your education?

A. The United States.

Q. In which university?

A. Yale, UCLA.

Q. What is your main occupation?

A. Financial consultant.

Q. And are you working for a private company or government agency?

A. A private.

Q. What is your marital status?

A. Single.

Q. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you experienced September 11th. Where were you on that day around 9am?

A. I was at home, leaving for work.

Q. How did you hear of the attacks?

A. I ... My sister telephoned me told me to turn on the TV.

Q. Where was your sister calling from?

A. She lives in LA as well but she gets up before I do.

Q. What was your first reaction?

A. My first reaction was probably disbelief.

Q. And after that?

A. Okay. And it's really ... it was kind of like, I said, disbelief, like it didn't seem real. And then when I realized that it was and at the time when I think the first building came down, that's when I felt like, sick, like ... like it was ... it was like a sickening feeling. Like, I can't believe that many people just got smashed in the building along with it's ... it's just going to be so bad now for Muslims and Middle Easterners living in this country 'cause they already have all kinds of stigma and ... feelings towards them; that this ... a nail in the coffin.

Q. What was your reaction ... did you have an idea that the terrorist act could be Middle Eastern or Muslim?

A. I was ... I had no idea what it was, but the ... that's just how it works. I mean, ... here for as long as I have everything that can be associated with terrorism always goes towards Muslims. And that was ... I figured that would have been the conclusion that people would have jumped to regardless of who did it. Tell everybody what was really going on.

Q. What were your feelings about what happened immediately afterwards? You mentioned that initially you had disbelief. Did you feel anger?

A. No. I never felt any anger.

Q. Was guilt involved because Arabs or Muslims were involved in the attack?

A. Definitely not, especially in the beginning. I had no idea who did it or what it was about and there was no guilty feelings whatsoever.

Q. How did you feel when you found out Arabs or Muslims were involved?

A. Still ... I mean, it wasn't a guilty feeling 'cause obviously I didn't sympathize with them or felt like I had anything to do with it. But I guess it was more of the same that I

felt, like right after it happened, that this is definitely going to get generalized as a Muslim or Islamic issue and that we're going to have to go back and defend ourselves and our religion and our ... and our culture because of what happened, and that was a tragedy in itself, that this isn't going to get this... . Obviously it was going to get a lot of press, but the idea that this was going to be, like, at the forefront of current events in the U.S. and going to be like, an issue rallying point and Muslims in this country would be the ... the target or if it.

Q. Have your feelings changed since the events?

A. Not regarding that. It's been more clear, like, that's what's happening to the Arabs. Actually, no. It's probably gotten worse, like, in the beginning, like, right after it happened there was a lot of solidarity and people were, like, F--you know--this is ... we know this is not what Islam says and we know that that's not the way Muslims are. And we know, like, a lot of Muslims in our community that aren't like this so. So, like, the local ... gets a lot of phone calls and people send flowers and stuff 'cause they know there's going to be a backlash towards them. But then ... so initially it almost seemed like people are going to deal with this better than I expected. Then the whole periods of political events and foreign policy and the things that happened afterward showed that that wasn't the case and that it was going to be much worse than expected.

Q. What would you say your most vivid memory of September 11th was? Is there anything that stands out in your mind that you'll never forget?

A. I was just watching the towers fall into nothing.

Q. How did that make you feel?

A. I guess it was kind of a scary thing. It was scary to see buildings falling and knowing there was people inside, seeing people jumping from the windows was kind of ... it's kind of, like, a scary, very ghost feeling like you feel like, watching it.

Q. When Americans asked you about your ethnic background or origin before September 11th what did you tell them?

A. I'm not very patriotic or nationalistic to anyone really so I wouldn't ... Egyptian wasn't ... so--I don't know--it was probably ... I was, let's say, more with my religion than my nationality. Egyptian-American people would be like, well, which one? One or the other. So it's just easier to say Muslim.

Q. What about immediately after 9-11,

A. Immediately after?

Q. Yeah, how did you respond to Americans when they asked you about your background?

A. It didn't change, I guess. It was pretty much the same. For the most part, I guess it kind of the whole incident just made you ... it strengthened your identity or made you realize that couldn't be ambiguous about who you were or what you ... for 'cause you couldn't get by being ambiguous any more. You had to be very much American and back everything that America stands for try to keep your identity although people would, like, stereotype you or stigmatize you or... .

Q. Is that how you felt?

A. Yeah. I'd have to say yes. Yeah. The day after it happened I was working ... I was doing some consulting for this company in upper Orange County, which is like a very white suburb area, at this computer company. And the very next day ... it was a

consulting basis job so I wasn't actually an employee of the company. I was just filling in and doing work for them on an hourly basis. And the next day she, the woman ... the person who's in charge, she said, "I think we're done. We're not going to need you any more," and she basically asked me to leave, like, the day after. And I kind of put the two together but I wasn't going to make an issue out of it, and definitely it kind of hit home that--you know --you're going to get associated or stigmatized as having something to do with this because of your religion or nationality or racial background.

Q. What do you say now if somebody asks you about your background or origin?

A. It hasn't changed. I mean, I guess I always didn't really associate too much with being, like, American, like ... apple pie American, but this definitely makes ... it definitely, like, makes you more Arabic, more Middle Eastern because... .

Q. Since 9--11 you feel more Arab?

A. Yeah, basically, because--I don't know--when you ... I've ... I've always been very, very quiet about everything that happened and, like, a lot of people just kind of rolled over and hate who they were and ... I mean, like, the ... this dying woman who wears hijab that they should take off their scarves and ... blend in more because people are going to look at you weird, and what not. But, oh yeah, definitely, because ... because you had, like, with everything that was happening afterwards a lot of people were kind of trying to de-emphasize who they were because of the sentiment and people didn't feel maybe as proud or didn't want to mention it for good reason 'cause there was a lot of aggression that was directed toward Middle Easterners and Muslims, and even people that were mistaken for Middle Easterners, so people were trying to hide who they were. And, I mean, a lot of the community leaders and people who we spoke to and ... just

discussions that happened among our friends and Middle Easterners, they would always say-you know- this isn't a time for us to go and hide under a rock because it's going to make things worse, 'cause if ... if people don't see you or just if you just become a shadow then people are always afraid of what they don't know and that just gives them more reason to ... to hate or to do the violence or whatever was being done, like the mosques that were vandalized and Arab businesses that were vandalized. And if people just kind of hide and pretended that they weren't there or, like, tried to change who they were, then that would just create more of a problem because the people in this country had nothing to do with it. And the Middle Easterners here need to be more vocal and to talk about it and like reach out to people and show them who they were so that they could see them for who they are and not what they think they were. So in that sense, I, like, I completely agreed with that and I followed it and still do as... . Like now I think I have a much stronger identity of who I am than before because I realize the importance of it, or ... or the importance of not just, like, blending in or trying to blend in pretending that you're just the same as everybody else when in actuality, now I can see, like, a big difference between a regular old mainstream American as opposed to anything else, like any minorities, like Middle Eastern or Latino, African-American or what not; that ... have a way of dividing people, like the way the politics happened right after, they tried to, like, polarize the issue and say you're either with us or against us, or these guys are the bad guys and these guys are the good guys and they totally make sides. So either you just give up everything that you believe and say: all right, I'm going to be with the good guys and alienate everybody else or you stand up for what you think is right and you get up

and I guess you have to, like, be more ... more vocal about who you are and what you think is right.

Q. Have your feelings towards the United States changed since 9-11?

A. No. I can see how a lot of peoples have but I would say most of the things that I've seen that I didn't like that happened after 9-11, I've seen before and this just made it more clear that this was where they stood and this is what they believed. And I was amazed that it was so ... it was so open, like ... like, the policy could be so honestly and openly against certain groups of people without trying to, like, sugar coat it, like, all the Patriot Act and the laws they made that ... made that allowed them to pick up Middle Easterners or people that they assumed were terrorists and they could lock them up and they didn't have to bring any charges against them. And it was very ... I mean, to me it seems, like, very blatant forms of racial profiling and racism, and they were very ... they still are very honest about it and it's not something that they're trying to hide. I mean, before September 11th I guess I thought--you know--this goes on every day. In, like, the inner cities African-Americans get racially profiled. But when it comes down to it they're going to try to hide it or they're not going to be very open about it, like, Oh yeah. We're arresting him 'cause he's black. And now it just shows that they don't really care what people think and if it serves their purpose they'll do it. And it just seems like, I guess the word you'd use is ... I didn't think they had that much ... to get away with something like this or expect to get away with something like this so blatantly racist.

Q. What about politically? Has your level of political awareness changed?

A. Yeah. It definitely has. They...

Q. Because of what?

A. I didn't really ... I would go march every once in a while when they'd have, like, a Palestinian occupation ... end the occupation rally or what not, but besides that I didn't really think about getting too involved in politics and trying to be active. But now I definitely have 'cause now it seems that if you don't, then you're just going to stand by and watch your civil rights go down the toilet as well as international events. I mean, things that have been happening between Afghanistan and Iraq and Palestine. I guess that it's just so blatantly obvious now how they're attacking culture or our religion that you can't ... it makes you... . If you stand by then you're obviously ... you obviously don't care. I mean, 'cause it's just so out there. It's so obvious that what's being done is wrong that you have to speak up. So in that sense I felt more of an obligation, you have to do something 'cause it seems so black and white, like, this is wrong and something needs to be done about it. And also the environment. There's just a lot more activism going on now since this happened 'cause a lot of people disagree with pub-- with our foreign policy and even our domestic policy there's a lot more being done than I guess people feel more of a need to get involved now that they can see ... or they feel that ... that it's being mishandled so badly.

Q. Do you feel a sense of belonging to the United States? Do you feel at home here?

A. Yeah. That's like a ... that's a yes and a no. It's a yes in terms of, like, community and friends and local people that you know and, like, school and work and, like, a local social belonging I would say yes, like, my group, the people I hang out with, people that I meet at the gym and friends and people I play soccer with. But in terms of feeling like you belong--like you're represented and that this is your government and they look out for you and want to protect your rights, I would say definitely no. It's very obvious now that

our political system doesn't ... isn't there for not just Muslims but people of color and minorities. And I guess for Middle Easterners this is like a late wake up call because as long as they've been here there hasn't been that much that's directed toward ... directed towards them as it has toward other minority groups that have been here for a long time. I guess now we kind of get a feeling of what people have been going through in this country for a long time from the powers that be.

Q. Have you always felt like this?

A. That I wasn't part ... Yeah. I guess I have but now it's more ... it's clearer, like, you actually feel like you're living through it so it's more ... you have more, like, first had knowledge and experience of it so it kind of strengthens the feeling that I had before.

Q. Do you think that there has been a change in the way people from the Middle East in the U.S. are treated since 9-11?

A. Yeah, definitely. I mean, from a legal perspective it's a huge difference. Their civil rights just went out the window and they just treated however authorities see fit. People get locked up for nothing where a year or two ago it couldn't happen, or not being allowed to have lawyers or not having any client-lawyer privileges or not having any charges brought up against you. I mean, it's a huge growth of civil rights abuse that has changed since 9-11 in terms of, like, local communities and how people deal with Middle Easterners I guess you hear both sides. I've seen some people who are very supportive and very, like, very sympathetic towards Muslims since 9-11 because they know that they're being mistreated or they know that there's a lot of hate ... toward them, especially to, like, my sister and my mother. Whenever they go out they're both they're both ... whenever they go out they're very ... like, they see it obviously much more than I do.

Like, some people will come up to them and just give them a hug out of the blue. They're like: hey, you're brave for ... doing this and--you know--we're behind you and I support you, and this stuff, and, like, complete strangers that will come up to them and like, pat them on the back and, like, be very nice to them. And other people just give them dirty looks like they're criminal. And I guess you have, like, both sides of it. You have people the treat them differently for the better and for the worse.

Q. Have you personally experienced any backlash after 9-11, such as harassment, racial profiling, discrimination?

A. I guess the incident about having to leave my work the next day was probably one. And a bunch of people at my work flipped out too, and said, like, I can't believe you let her ... you let her ask you to leave the day after. That's so obvious. You should have, like, got a lawyer and this and that and the other thing.

Q. Did they ever give you a reason or did they just say the job is finished?

A. No, no reason. They just said thanks.

Q. Was the job finished?

A. No, not really, and they ended up getting somebody else to finish after I had left. I mean, I was friends with a lot of people that worked there so they were always telling me the news about what's going on. And they hired somebody else to finish it off. It was pretty obvious but I didn't really pursue it.

Q. Has any of your family experienced backlash?

A. Nothing ... nothing too direct, just...

Q. It doesn't have to be direct. I mean, even if it's...

A. Like, dirty looks. Like, my sister will tell me that at times she'll just be walking through the supermarket and people will look at her like she's a criminal, like she's done something wrong or, like: why are you here? No ... Nothing like verbal or physical that's happened to anybody in the immediate family.

Q. Can I ask you, did your mother or your sister at any point want to take the veil off or feel pressured to take it off after 9-11?

A. Yeah. My mother did.

Q. She took it off?

A. My sister lives in Los Angeles. Los Angeles is like New York. It's more international and there's more Muslims and there's more different kinds of people so people are a little bit more tolerant. But in Orange County where we live it's ... and my Mom, like she didn't even want to go to work for, like, the first couple of days afterwards and I would drive her to work and pick her up. And after I stopped dropping her off and picking her up she, like, would wear a baseball cap over her hijab, like, on her way to work. And then once she got to work she'd take off the cap and go into the office normal. And she was worried that, like, on the way to work some ... and, like, do something to her, like, bump into her and try to run her off the road or something. They died, or she felt pressured about the hijab thing and especially 'cause a lot of people were saying: You know what? You guys should take off your hijab because it's dangerous now for women and you should be more careful, at least until this blows over. But she decided against it.

Q. And how about now? Are they ... is she more comfortable with it?

A. Yeah. Now it's just like nothing ever happened. I mean, now it seems like things have blown over. Feels like Americans forget things very quickly so it's ... I don't know if they get over things. And it seems now that they're over it and everything's back to normal.

Q. Do you think that Arab-American organizations have been effective in handling the backlash against Arabs after 9-11?

A. Two organizations that I kind of follow are MPAC and CAIR and ... CAIR, Council on American-Islamic Relations. And then there's MPAC which is the Muslim Public Affairs Council and I kind of follow stuff that they're doing. I'm on their email list so I, like, see the events and things that they do. And, I mean, they're not huge organizations so it's hard for them to do everything. But in terms of the work they have done I think it's been effective. They do, like, a lot of town hall meetings in all the big cities where they go and they have like, ... they do, like, ... by different speakers and discuss current events and ... and do, like personal perspectives from, like, Muslim's point of views, Christian points of views, Jewish points of views and it's ... like they create a lot of dialogue and try to educate people. And in terms of what they're doing, I think it's really effective, like in terms of them trying to teach out, even though they can't get to everybody, I think that the work that they are doing is effective and good.

Q. Do you think that they've managed to organize or mobilize our community politically?

A. No, not effectively.

Q. Why not?

A. Everyone is very lazy ... and they ... it would take a lot to get them to get out and act or even to move or do work. It's very difficult.

Q. Why is that?

A. I mean, they've definitely made some changes and, like they've ... they've ... like, when they organize events I get ... I'm surprised about how many people turn out because they heard about it through one of these groups or organizations who are advertising it so people came out. So I guess ... I don't know. They've been able to do some ... some work in terms of mobilizing the community. But for the most part, I think it's really hard to mobilize the Middle Eastern community in this country.

Q. Why do you think that's the case?

A. Because Middle Easterners in this country have this idea that they are and always will be outsiders and they always think of themselves as whichever country they're from first, and they don't think of themselves as Americans. They think, well, I'm Egyptian and I live here. And my family's all back home and I'm just here to make money or take care of business or put my kids through school and then I'm going back. So they don't really see themselves as Americans even after they get their Green Card or citizenship. So they don't care about the political situation and they don't care to vote. They don't want to get involved. They don't get involved, like, socially or politically or, like, ... it's like, they feel like they're here on an island. Like, they'll try to stay in an Arabic community or live near the ... or, like, just stick together. Like, they don't have that melting pot idea, which is good and bad. I mean, it's got its pluses and minuses. But I think even now, if you do want to keep your culture, and your religion and ... and that's a good thing, you should still be able to interact with the people that are here. I mean, we're social beings. And even if you have your own culture you should be able to, like, share it and ... and interact with people. But we have the mentality or at least the Middle Eastern community, when

our parents came here had the mentality that they weren't going to be American and that they were ... even if they were ... even when they did get their Green Card they still ... it's like an inferiority complex, like, we're different or we're less than them and we have our own culture and our own group. And they're somebody else and there's not a lot of interaction. I mean, there's a lot of other minorities that came to this country and they mixed in much better or did find ... Or I guess it could also be they have, like, this ... perception as Americans being very loose and evil and they don't want their kids growing up like that or they don't want to interact with that so they kind of alienate themselves. So that's like ... I think that's, like, the core of their situation here, like, one of the reason that they could be ... like, they could have all this anger towards them and the government could deal with them in such an awful way in terms of civil rights and everything else. They kind of do that to themselves 'cause they're alienated; like, they don't really ... they don't mix, they don't vote. They don't have any representation in the government. They don't have a lot of support for that reason because they've made themselves outsiders so they're treated as outsiders.

Q. Do you think this is a personal choice that they made for themselves or do you think that there's something in society that is keeping them from wanting to join the larger fabric of society?

A. I'm sure both have some to do with it. They definitely alienate themselves. I mean, I know so many families that will only associate with, like, ... like, Pakistani families will only associate with Pakistani families and Middle Eastern families will only associate with Arabic families and they have their own functions and their own things and you'll never see them, like, invite their next door neighbor who's been living next door for, like,

twenty years who's American, probably has never been in their house and never went out to lunch with them--like the extent of their conversations are hi and bye. Then, at the same time, there's definitely somewhat of, like, a racial aspect in this country that does make people feel different or uncomfortable if they're not if they don't blend in or aren't part of the norm. You know? And I'm sure that both of them work together. It's not just one or the other.

Q. Have you joined any ethnic or religious organizations since 9-11?

A. No.

Q. In your opinion, what is the nature of the relationship between your ethnic or religious group and others in the United states at this time?

A. You mean specifically like me as an Egyptian or a Muslim in relation to other ethnic groups in the U.S.?

Q. Yeah. Like, our community. There's a relationship between our community and others right now?

A. There's also been ... there's always been a huge potential for our community to associate with other minority groups like Latinos or African-Americans who have experienced a lot of the same civil rights issues and just issues of being immigrants in, like, a predominantly white country. There was a lot of common ground there. But we haven't really built any bridges between our communities and theirs and we should. I mean, we've all ... we've obviously gone through a lot of similar experiences. But again it goes back to isolating ourselves and not associating with other groups. I mean, there's a definitely a good reason for us to get together, and now more so. I think some people are realizing that we do need to form, like, coalitions with different groups in terms of our

civil rights 'cause no matter how big our community is, it's still a very small number compared with, like, a lot of other minorities in this country, like Latinos or African-Americans or Asian-Americans. But seeing as we have all been through, like, similar circumstances, if we were working together on these issues then we'd have a much louder voice and we'd have a much better chance of getting to where we want if we were able to work as a group. And it's kind of starting like, when you go to different ... like, I've been to a couple of big anti-occupation rallies for ... like in San Francisco and LA, and you see a pretty huge turn out and most of the group is like, non-Middle Eastern, non-Muslim, and a lot of them are people who kind of associate with... . You know, the U.S. screws a lot of people over and ... of it and stop what's happening in Palestine, stop what's happening in South America, stop what's happening here and there. So I think in that sense there's ... like, I can associate more my group, ethnic or religious group, with the other groups in this country where before it wasn't as ... it wasn't as visible. Like, I didn't ... or I didn't see the need as much as I do now.

Q. What do you think members of your community can do to improve the relations between the ethnic groups and religious groups?

A. I guess just dialogue would be good; just to go to different functions and talk to people and just show up and I guess communication. There's not a lot of communication right now between these different groups and, I think, if ... if we just show up then that would be the biggest step and probably that's needed to start some kind of co-operations. 'Cause right now we don't really associate much with different groups, so I think once that first step is crossed where we actually go and show up at one another events and introduce ourselves or invite them to come to, like, the ... and have like, some kind of open house

for, like, Latin-American day or something, or today we're inviting the African-American community to come to our ... that would be a significant step towards them ... I mean, once they start talking those people are going to realize that we have a lot in common and we should work together. So we just have to, like, take the first step and start bridging the gap.

Q. This is on an individual level. What do you think organizations can do?

A. What ... what can organizations do?

Q. Yeah, to improve the relations?

A. I guess, like, whenever people do, like, rallies or lectures or programs and say they talk about Palestine or an issue that deals with Arabs or ... or Muslims they should probably try to invite speakers or even listeners from different organizations or different groups that they would think would have ... would have, like, similar ideas or would have things in common, especially speakers. Like, if they can get, like, good speakers from different groups to come and ... speakers to come and join in some kind of rally or come and ... even a cultural event and then bring people with them and that would be better. 'Cause I actually went to this one day, like, all day lecture that this group called [name removed], --it's a Muslim-American society I think--and every one of the speakers was Arabic or Pakistani or Indian and they were all Muslim, and they were talking about, like, civil rights issues and, like, things that have happened in terms of civil rights in the U.S. since September 11th. And I mean, they could have easily invited some ... somebody from the NAACP or some different civil rights organizations that could have probably spoken much better than them 'cause they may not be as familiar with these issues as other people who have been her and lived through them longer than we have. So that

would be ... that would be a good way to get those different groups involved is, like, to invite them to our functions and speak at our events and... .

Q. Given your understanding of the status of Middle Eastern immigrant groups in the United States after 9-11 would you encourage people from these countries to emigrate to the U.S.?

A. That's a tough one, 'cause on the one hand, I know that there's a lot of people that ... who dislike them more than they did before--have, like, bad feelings toward them more than they did before. But then, on the other hand, I think this is an important time for ... for more Middle Easterners to be ... to visible and be out there, 'cause we don't want to, like, try to hide or not show ourselves any more because we think ... I don't know. It's like that ... that guilty mentality, people who feel like, oh we're guilty so we're going to go hide and not come out. We want to be more visible and more vocal and more out there and speak up. And I guess even if there is a little more repression or ill feeling towards Middle Easterners I don't think that we should shy away from it or have people who don't come because... . Since what's happened, do we need to, like, lay low until the smoke clears? We should ... we should just be ... we should be up rising above the smoke and just be more visible and showing people what we're about. And if we discourage it, then people are going to think we are guilty and people are going to think, oh, they do have reason for us to dislike them. They're, like, hiding or they're gone or what not. So, yeah, I guess I would encourage it. I would say ... I would encourage that people just live the same way that they were before and not let this change them.

Q. We've talked about some negative consequences of 9-11. Do you think that there were any positive consequences?

A. Yeah, definitely. There's a lot of education that happened post-9-11, a lot of people wanting to learn about everything from religion and Islam, to politics to, like, Middle Eastern politics, Middle Eastern history to just, like, Arabic culture, and people getting to know one another better. Like, in terms of the local mosque that I go to, ever since 9-11 probably like every other Friday some non-Muslim goes up there and asks ... become Muslim. Tons of visitors. I assume pretty large ... in the area compared to some other ones so it's kind of... . People know that it's there so we get tons of visitors that come and ask questions or just come to listen to ... come and visit and want to check it out and see what it's about. And I guess it's like, a very--what's the word? People are very interested in knowing more and learning more 'cause this, was, like, at the forefront of the news every day and everybody was talking about it so it's kind of a catalyst for people educating themselves and wanting to learn more and wanting to see more, and even, like, wanting to meet their neighbors who had been living next door to them for so long who were Muslim or Arabic and they've never met them. And now they are, like, holding open houses and come visit us and, like, trying to teach them. So I think a lot of good came out of it. There's a lot of dialogue that started that wasn't there before and people, like, started to see the importance of ... even in terms of Middle Eastern and Muslim communities, they ... they, like, realize the important of, like, doing ... I know some people said that they ... they feel like now they have to do more dialogue because they want to show people what they're about and what their religion's about and not just ... all of them in terms of peoples' being more friendly and not keeping to themselves like they were before, seeing that they wanted to interact more with the community because they know that there's a lot of ignorant people who don't know what they're about or think that

they're weirdos or terrorists. So now they see the importance of mixing more and interacting more with different people. So I guess those are two very big positive aspects that came out of it.

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

A. 'Cause of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Q. Can you expand on that?

A. Well, if it's true--if everything that Bush and the government says is true --that there was this big plot and this many people hijacked planes at the same time and drove them into the World Trade Center because they hate the government, the only reason that any Arabs or Muslims would do some to such a large extent against the U.S government is because of their foreign policies in their countries and in the Middle East in general. I mean, it's obviously not because they don't like the World Trade Center or they are envious that we have McDonalds or Roy Rogers. It's because they hate what the U.S. has been doing in their countries for as long as they ... Palestine or ... Saudi Arabia or anywhere else. So this was their way of saying what goes around comes around, and--you know--you people ... for so long before it comes back to get you.

Q. Do you think the average Arab or Muslim in the Middle East hates America?

A. I think the average Arab probably loves America and wishes that they could live here and wants to live, like, the Hollywood and New York life style and be American. But I think the non-average Arab who actually cares about politics and current events and follows what's going on in the world probably dislikes America a lot for what they're doing. Like, I mean, just in terms of Egypt, I know when you go there people--the

average person, he probably knows better than I do about what people that you see think about the U.S. and loves coming here in the summers and spending a summer session at UCLA and doing everything American that they can. But then people that actually care about their countries and their politics will tell you that they dislike the U.S. for a lot more reasons ... I wouldn't say it's half and half. I'd say average people love the U.S. and then ... and a small minority dislike them a lot.

Q. What do you think the United States can do to resolve the problem of terrorism directed against it?

A. They would have to definite-- ... I think it all goes back to their ... their foreign policy 'cause the terrorism that's directed against them is a direct cause of foreign policy and the way that they deal with nations and governments and people around the world. So I think the only way to offset that is to have more friendly foreign policies; less aggressive and more cooperative with other governments.

Q. Are there any other issues or points that you'd like to comment on that we haven't mentioned in this interview?

A. ... 'cause I was thinking about this today: Oh my God, what am I going to say? And I forgot. No. I guess that's it. If I remember anything then I'll have to email you.

Q. Okay. Great! Well, thank you very much for your cooperation.

A. You're very welcome.