

Fall 2017

# Oral History Conversation with Rabea Jouja

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**FROM CRADLE TO CRADLE:**  
**Oral History Conversations with Iraqis & Syrians in San Diego**  
By students in PHILOSOPHY 111-07: Philosophy of Human Nature | Fall 2017

RABEA JOUJA  
(born in Syria)

Conducted by Chloe Naquin and Luree Scott

Hi My name is Luree Scott. I'm  
studying Theatre and English and I'm

00:00:05.390 --> 00:00:07.780  
a sophomore at the University of  
San Diego.

00:00:12.230 --> 00:00:14.040  
Software engineering?

00:00:15.560 --> 00:00:16.410  
Theatre

00:00:20.430 --> 00:00:27.340  
I'm Chloe Naquin and I'm going to study also  
theater and performance arts.

00:00:33.259 --> 00:00:41.890  
My name's Rabea.  
I lived in Syria. And moved to America.

00:00:43.660 --> 00:00:48.630  
Since two years and uh  
since one year and two months

00:00:48.980 --> 00:00:52.410  
Hi my name is Noora, and I'm going to  
be the translator for Rabea.

00:00:55.990 --> 00:01:01.140  
Could you share with us memorable story  
from your childhood in Syria, perhaps

00:01:01.150 --> 00:01:06.030

a story that you find yourself telling  
Americans who you've met for the first time?

00:01:22.320 --> 00:01:26.930

I lived in Syria with a beautiful childhood  
uh, life.

00:01:28.450 --> 00:01:30.050

It was a simple life.

00:01:33.640 --> 00:01:35.670

I remember of one of the stories.

00:01:40.390 --> 00:01:43.390

When my father was employed by one of the companies

00:01:46.530 --> 00:01:47.790

And we had

00:01:47.870 --> 00:01:51.900

holiday parties there. It was  
so beautiful.

00:01:55.850 --> 00:01:57.070

We were waiting for

00:01:57.510 --> 00:02:03.580

Athid, which is a Muslim holiday, to come  
so we can wear new clothes.

00:02:05.660 --> 00:02:06.780

My family was

00:02:07.020 --> 00:02:07.950

a big family.

00:02:14.000 --> 00:02:20.210

My mom and dad, um, have seven  
kids...six kids...

00:02:20.210 --> 00:02:21.050

Seven?

00:02:25.060 --> 00:02:26.550

Six boys and one girl.

00:02:34.970 --> 00:02:39.820

So, at that time, everyone  
we are seven sisters and brothers

00:02:39.860 --> 00:02:45.060

want new clothes and that was very hard for  
for us at that time.

00:02:49.510 --> 00:02:50.710

The beautiful thing is that

00:02:50.750 --> 00:02:54.540

every one of us should choose or  
pick one thing only.

00:02:56.880 --> 00:03:00.120

Either a shirt. Or a trouser.

00:03:11.560 --> 00:03:15.810

So, we...I was waiting for my brother  
what to pick, so

00:03:15.810 --> 00:03:17.610

If he pick a shirt I would pick

00:03:17.620 --> 00:03:21.260

a short, so...so he can wear the, you know?

00:03:21.280 --> 00:03:22.650

the full suit

00:03:26.240 --> 00:03:31.520

So we tried to, eh, choose  
a size that fits us together

00:03:34.360 --> 00:03:36.310

So I order an eight, so we can wear

00:03:36.320 --> 00:03:37.740

the full

00:03:37.750 --> 00:03:38.520

suit

00:03:43.030 --> 00:03:48.290

So, eh, although we were poor

00:03:48.300 --> 00:03:52.310

we are a low income, but it was a beautiful moment. It was a simple,

00:03:52.320 --> 00:03:54.320

beautiful moment to remember.

00:03:59.590 --> 00:04:05.240

I learned in in Syria

I used to study in winter and work in

00:04:05.250 --> 00:04:06.010

summer.

00:04:14.550 --> 00:04:18.650

I got my high school degree in two thous--in nineteen

00:04:18.670 --> 00:04:21.820

ninety four? Nineteen ninety four.

00:04:24.910 --> 00:04:29.460

and I entered the

Institute of economy.

00:04:39.730 --> 00:04:43.480

OK so

I got a diploma...diploma? I got

00:04:43.540 --> 00:04:50.200

a diploma in how to filter the water and make it ready to use and drink.

00:04:54.080 --> 00:04:57.370

And I moved to...um... Gulf countries

00:04:59.440 --> 00:05:01.590

to get some income and work there.

00:05:09.070 --> 00:05:09.740

After I

00:05:09.990 --> 00:05:16.570

moved from the Gulf countries, I get back to Syria and got married in two thousand

00:05:18.720 --> 00:05:19.890

Two thousand and one.

00:05:24.220 --> 00:05:26.140

I had four kids in Syria.

00:05:27.655 --> 00:05:29.225

Three girls and one boy.

00:05:34.110 --> 00:05:37.270

In two thousand and eleven when the war started,

00:05:40.760 --> 00:05:42.990

I had to move from my country

00:05:44.350 --> 00:05:47.660

because I was aware about my kids.

00:05:51.810 --> 00:05:56.280

I felt that me and my kids are no more safe in Syria

00:05:56.290 --> 00:05:57.060

and these countries.

00:05:58.900 --> 00:06:00.580

So I move to Jordan.

00:06:04.370 --> 00:06:08.250

So, uh, I got another girl.

00:06:10.150 --> 00:06:16.790

I got another girl. Her name is Miriam. Now, we have five kids at that time.

00:06:20.810 --> 00:06:21.710

And, after three years and

00:06:21.720 --> 00:06:23.130

a half.

00:06:27.090 --> 00:06:28.600

I got a phone call

00:06:32.210 --> 00:06:35.080

from a organization  
for immigration.

00:06:38.200 --> 00:06:41.690

Asking me if I'm willing  
to move to America or to travel to

00:06:41.700 --> 00:06:43.000

America

00:06:45.260 --> 00:06:50.180

I was not stable that time.  
I was hesitating at that time

00:06:53.750 --> 00:06:56.910

because in Jordan I started my own  
business.

00:07:00.620 --> 00:07:01.500

And I started getting

00:07:01.510 --> 00:07:02.860

good money there.

00:07:18.230 --> 00:07:19.660

So, I have to choose between

00:07:19.950 --> 00:07:25.030

either going to America and start a new  
life or stay in Jordan and continue with

00:07:25.040 --> 00:07:28.370

with...with what I already started.

00:07:32.890 --> 00:07:35.730

So, at home we start  
voting.

00:07:38.180 --> 00:07:38.730

Who wants to

00:07:38.730 --> 00:07:42.100

go or who doesn't want to go

00:07:45.210 --> 00:07:48.950

So, the voting, more, goes to, "We want  
to go to America."

00:07:53.240 --> 00:07:54.680

So we came to America in two thousand and

00:07:54.730 --> 00:07:55.760

sixteen.

00:07:58.170 --> 00:08:00.680

And we got another kid.

00:08:01.820 --> 00:08:02.350

He's a boy.

00:08:04.280 --> 00:08:06.960

Now, we have six kids.

00:08:07.010 --> 00:08:08.640

That's a great family.

00:08:08.660 --> 00:08:09.460

Yeah

00:08:17.940 --> 00:08:19.190

And when I first

00:08:19.370 --> 00:08:21.890

arrive to America I started  
thinking.

00:08:26.730 --> 00:08:31.080



The resettlement organization, they settled

00:08:31.090 --> 00:08:33.869

me in Arizona.

00:08:37.339 --> 00:08:41.720

I put three choices.

Offered three choices for me

00:08:43.460 --> 00:08:44.390

First...

00:08:49.430 --> 00:08:52.550

First, I have to get driver

license.

00:08:56.440 --> 00:08:59.370

Second thing, I have

to learn the English language.

00:09:01.260 --> 00:09:04.840

Third I have to find employment and as soon as possible.

00:09:06.830 --> 00:09:08.170

I got the driver

00:09:08.170 --> 00:09:09.180

license

00:09:10.365 --> 00:09:13.865

I enrolled in ESL, in adult school

00:09:16.340 --> 00:09:18.060

and I got my first job as

00:09:18.070 --> 00:09:20.290

a driver in the airport.

00:09:21.805 --> 00:09:23.395

But I found

00:09:33.000 --> 00:09:33.760

He thought Arizona

00:09:33.770 --> 00:09:34.560

it's not

00:09:34.750 --> 00:09:41.360

a place when I can invest business there  
or get some investments because of

00:09:41.370 --> 00:09:42.860

the weather.

00:09:46.290 --> 00:09:50.040

So, I log into the Internet.

00:09:56.000 --> 00:10:01.020

And, I start searching which  
states that it's good to work.

00:10:02.720 --> 00:10:04.810

So, I found  
three states.

00:10:06.100 --> 00:10:07.460

Michigan

00:10:08.120 --> 00:10:09.390

Boston

00:10:09.850 --> 00:10:10.870

California

00:10:19.020 --> 00:10:21.040

So, I found that San Diego

00:10:22.360 --> 00:10:27.300

The weather of San Diego it's more  
suitable with my family and it

00:10:27.310 --> 00:10:31.360

is the same exactly with the weather  
in Syria.

00:10:35.190 --> 00:10:36.850

So, again we vote.

00:10:36.850 --> 00:10:38.310

Michigan

00:10:38.310 --> 00:10:39.310

Boston

00:10:39.310 --> 00:10:40.490

California

00:10:44.390 --> 00:10:47.260

So, California wins...the voting.

00:10:48.180 --> 00:10:49.470

So, I came here.

00:10:53.360 --> 00:10:55.170

I put three choices

00:10:55.170 --> 00:10:56.010

here.

00:10:58.460 --> 00:10:59.510

I have to find

00:10:59.510 --> 00:11:00.450

a job.

00:11:06.220 --> 00:11:06.890

To find

00:11:06.900 --> 00:11:11.120

a school that teach us English, me and  
my wife.

00:11:13.080 --> 00:11:14.120

And establish

00:11:14.120 --> 00:11:17.350

a business here. My own business.

00:11:18.520 --> 00:11:20.350

I found a job, also in the

00:11:20.350 --> 00:11:21.580  
airport.

00:11:22.810 --> 00:11:24.480  
San Diego Airport

00:11:29.540 --> 00:11:34.100  
So, uh, we started to learn  
the language in English.

00:11:39.650 --> 00:11:42.450  
So, since a month,  
I started my own business.

00:11:44.610 --> 00:11:46.480  
Uh...It's a truck.

00:11:52.140 --> 00:11:54.620  
Yeah, it's just like a snack shack  
or food truck.

00:11:54.620 --> 00:11:55.740  
Oh, ok.

00:11:55.740 --> 00:12:01.150  
Ice cream, coke, cappuccino, um...  
coke, water

00:12:08.920 --> 00:12:12.960  
And search for places where my  
business can be successful

00:12:17.430 --> 00:12:18.140  
So, I created

00:12:18.190 --> 00:12:19.370  
a company

00:12:22.000 --> 00:12:23.100  
Yeah, I just started

00:12:23.100 --> 00:12:25.240  
a company under the name Rabea.

00:12:26.060 --> 00:12:27.270

Rabea Café.

00:12:33.260 --> 00:12:35.090

I see the certificate.

00:12:35.890 --> 00:12:36.920

Rabea Café.

00:12:36.920 --> 00:12:37.830

Uh huh.

00:12:40.600 --> 00:12:42.700

And this is the registration.

00:12:48.410 --> 00:12:49.600

ID tax.

00:12:57.780 --> 00:13:01.540

So I start

to develop this business to have more than

00:13:01.550 --> 00:13:03.990

one truck under my name.

00:13:08.220 --> 00:13:10.270

Life in America.

00:13:11.330 --> 00:13:13.090

Beautiful. It's beautiful. Life in-

00:13:14.790 --> 00:13:16.490

But, it needs money.

00:13:18.160 --> 00:13:19.220

That's true.

00:13:22.910 --> 00:13:25.740

So, I'm trying to

make my family happy.

00:13:25.740 --> 00:13:27.370

Maybe

00:13:31.330 --> 00:13:34.030

Maybe I'll be something in  
the future.

00:13:35.420 --> 00:13:37.880

That they can remember.

00:13:40.320 --> 00:13:43.590

And this video that we are  
taping right now

00:13:45.070 --> 00:13:48.900

may be in the future will be something  
important.

00:13:51.120 --> 00:13:51.900

This is all about

00:13:51.900 --> 00:13:53.550

Rabea.

00:13:56.090 --> 00:13:58.470

Well, I think you're somebody now,

00:13:58.470 --> 00:14:01.890

as well, I mean, that's amazing  
starting your own business.

00:14:06.500 --> 00:14:08.590

A lot of people dream about that.

00:14:11.740 --> 00:14:13.860

I didn't pass even the fifth mon--

00:14:13.860 --> 00:14:17.220

This is my fifth month here, I didn't  
pass even the fifth months

00:14:17.220 --> 00:14:18.580

and I did all this.

00:14:18.580 --> 00:14:19.820

Wow.

00:14:23.780 --> 00:14:25.120

That's a lot.

That's

00:14:25.120 --> 00:14:26.210

Awesome.

00:14:28.400 --> 00:14:31.940

What did you know about America  
before you came here?

00:14:41.700 --> 00:14:42.080

It's

00:14:42.090 --> 00:14:44.750

a country were they create  
movies.

00:14:45.840 --> 00:14:46.360

And

00:14:46.840 --> 00:14:47.500

And

00:14:49.120 --> 00:14:51.140

And create dreams.

00:14:54.290 --> 00:14:56.100

Was it

00:14:56.100 --> 00:15:00.560

when you did arrive here  
was it like what you thought?

00:15:05.180 --> 00:15:08.460

Arizona yeah...uh-no  
Arizona, no.

00:15:08.460 --> 00:15:09.990

Not in Arizona.

00:15:11.460 --> 00:15:12.610

California Yeah

00:15:12.610 --> 00:15:14.710

In California, yeah.

00:15:20.510 --> 00:15:22.550

I arrive to Arizona at eh...

00:15:23.200 --> 00:15:25.790

eleven thirty P.M.

00:15:31.240 --> 00:15:32.570

So I thought they are  
taking me to

00:15:32.580 --> 00:15:33.560

a desert.

00:15:40.820 --> 00:15:43.740

When I was in the car with one of the

00:15:43.750 --> 00:15:46.380

employees from an agency there.

00:15:49.110 --> 00:15:53.600

I asked them, "Where are you  
taking us, me and my family?"

00:15:55.530 --> 00:15:57.690

He said, "To your new house."

00:16:02.010 --> 00:16:03.140

He said, "There's

00:16:03.140 --> 00:16:04.990

a new city here."

00:16:07.540 --> 00:16:09.330

And, I said, "Where?"

00:16:11.990 --> 00:16:13.940

"I don't see any city."

00:16:20.690 --> 00:16:25.780

When I first arrived to California  
I came by myself. I think if my family...



00:16:25.780 --> 00:16:27.470

If my family....my family was still

00:16:27.470 --> 00:16:31.480

there in Arizona. So, first I  
came alone to California.

00:16:34.350 --> 00:16:34.920

So, I taped

00:16:34.930 --> 00:16:38.530

a video and sent it to my kids there in  
Arizona.

00:16:42.980 --> 00:16:46.870

And the kids asked him

"Dad are you in America now?"

00:16:51.810 --> 00:16:55.670

Because they thought Arizona  
is not in America.

00:16:57.390 --> 00:16:58.390

Oh my goodness.

00:16:59.150 --> 00:17:00.860

That...that's...

00:17:03.010 --> 00:17:07.330

That's funny. I mean, we we kind of..  
I mean I've been to Arizona.

00:17:08.480 --> 00:17:11.210

And I felt like I couldn't breathe there.

00:17:16.989 --> 00:17:17.569

Yeah.

00:17:23.139 --> 00:17:24.480

Uh...my son

00:17:24.740 --> 00:17:25.890

he was only one month

00:17:25.900 --> 00:17:30.250

a year old and he got  
allergic in his skin.

00:17:33.420 --> 00:17:37.010

The doctor told him, "Your son  
has 200 kinds of

00:17:37.020 --> 00:17:40.470

type of allergy... in your son."

00:17:40.470 --> 00:17:41.750

Oh my god...

00:17:46.460 --> 00:17:50.990

So, my kids every month  
go to take some medication.

00:17:55.580 --> 00:17:59.420

In order not to, uh...  
to get allergic to it

00:18:01.790 --> 00:18:03.930

And they never go out of the house

00:18:03.940 --> 00:18:06.990

a lot. Only to go to school.

00:18:07.720 --> 00:18:10.130

Hot, very hot.

00:18:10.970 --> 00:18:11.800

Yes.

00:18:11.800 --> 00:18:14.740

I'm from Arizona. I know.

00:18:22.880 --> 00:18:24.560

Could you describe

00:18:24.560 --> 00:18:31.170

your day...your typical day in America  
and how it's different from in Syria?

00:18:49.640 --> 00:18:52.680

My life is all about work.

00:18:58.180 --> 00:19:01.200

In Syria, I used to get  
up in the morning.

00:19:04.560 --> 00:19:05.350

And work to

00:19:05.200 --> 00:19:08.770

a company were they do the water  
filtering.

00:19:09.940 --> 00:19:12.740

And, then go back in the evening  
to my house.

00:19:15.650 --> 00:19:19.370

And after that, I go  
with my family or my kids to

00:19:19.630 --> 00:19:21.660

a garden or a park.

00:19:23.400 --> 00:19:27.050

And, this is exactly the same.  
What I am doing right now.

00:19:28.500 --> 00:19:33.920

When I get back from work...  
from work to home...I

00:19:33.930 --> 00:19:36.790

take family and go to the park

00:19:38.940 --> 00:19:41.230

To the park or to the beach.

00:19:43.070 --> 00:19:44.720

One hour, two hour...

00:19:46.970 --> 00:19:49.910

When I get back to house, and then  
come back, I sleep.

00:19:59.790 --> 00:20:05.120

Do you still remember your very first day  
in America? Could you maybe describe that

00:20:05.130 --> 00:20:05.940

to us?

00:20:13.890 --> 00:20:16.230

It was a night. Not a day.

00:20:19.080 --> 00:20:20.790

I was very afraid.

00:20:23.460 --> 00:20:26.550

Just like, I don't know  
what the future is.

00:20:30.070 --> 00:20:31.550

And my shoulders...

00:20:35.250 --> 00:20:40.190

And I have kids I felt on my shoulders  
that I...They want to live. They have to

00:20:40.190 --> 00:20:41.390

live.

00:20:44.300 --> 00:20:46.850

There's a lot of barriers in front of me.

00:20:51.140 --> 00:20:52.500

First month.

00:20:54.340 --> 00:20:56.890

First thing is the house  
rent.

00:20:58.010 --> 00:20:59.980

To educate my kids.

00:21:04.210 --> 00:21:06.100

How to deal with my kids in

00:21:06.110 --> 00:21:08.300  
a different country.

00:21:17.910 --> 00:21:20.050  
But finally I have to

00:21:21.670 --> 00:21:24.710  
So finally I, now, I know what's  
the future for my kids.

00:21:26.550 --> 00:21:27.710  
I found a job so

00:21:27.710 --> 00:21:29.480  
I can pay my rent.

00:21:34.660 --> 00:21:38.960  
I solved all the problems that my  
kids face in the school.

00:21:44.470 --> 00:21:46.940  
The first night, it was full of thinking,  
me and

00:21:46.950 --> 00:21:48.700  
my wife, keep thinking.

00:21:51.255 --> 00:21:53.715  
I always tell them that you choose.

00:22:04.860 --> 00:22:07.430  
I mean that's very democratic way to  
handle it.

00:22:16.890 --> 00:22:17.340  
I do have

00:22:17.350 --> 00:22:20.890  
a follow-up question. If that's...ok.

00:22:20.890 --> 00:22:24.170  
Do you think it's harder

to raise your kids in

00:22:24.170 --> 00:22:26.510

America rather than Syria?

00:22:35.240 --> 00:22:35.990

Yes.

00:22:37.160 --> 00:22:37.960

Because of two

00:22:37.960 --> 00:22:39.220

reasons.

00:22:40.750 --> 00:22:42.750

The traditions.

00:22:43.670 --> 00:22:46.280

It's different from the  
traditions back home.

00:22:51.840 --> 00:22:55.330

The way they deal with the kids in the  
schools...

00:22:57.280 --> 00:23:00.830

It's different from the way they  
deal with the kids in Syria.

00:23:01.600 --> 00:23:03.710

But, here it's better.

00:23:04.900 --> 00:23:06.780

It's good. It's not bad.

00:23:09.630 --> 00:23:10.440

But we as

00:23:10.450 --> 00:23:15.160

the fathers, we have to be familiar  
with this. We have to...

00:23:16.920 --> 00:23:20.120

There's no problem

with the kids.

00:23:21.630 --> 00:23:26.370

And there's nothing wrong with the  
with the teachers and the schools.

00:23:29.270 --> 00:23:32.330

But the--the---the problem  
is with the way the fathers

00:23:32.400 --> 00:23:34.240

thinking here in America.

00:23:47.440 --> 00:23:47.980

It's kind of

00:23:47.990 --> 00:23:53.260

acculturation, so they have the fathers,  
when they come here, they should be...

00:23:54.080 --> 00:23:58.310

Yeah, the father's here when  
they come to America, they have to be in

00:23:58.320 --> 00:24:04.510

acculturation and they know the culture  
very well and be used to the traditions

00:24:04.520 --> 00:24:05.570

here.

00:24:11.800 --> 00:24:18.280

Without causing that,  
the kids see we say something

00:24:18.470 --> 00:24:20.430

but we don't do it.

00:24:24.710 --> 00:24:25.220

Our words

00:24:25.220 --> 00:24:28.070

should be exactly like our actions.

00:24:31.900 --> 00:24:35.740

So, the kid can accept any idea from the father.

00:24:37.185 --> 00:24:38.555

First they should,

00:24:47.540 --> 00:24:49.600

So in order to teach my son what's the right

00:24:49.610 --> 00:24:54.020

what's the wrong, my son should see it in me.

00:25:00.620 --> 00:25:02.740

The fathers should change themselves

00:25:02.780 --> 00:25:06.810

because their kids, they will learn everything but as a diff-- as

00:25:06.820 --> 00:25:11.400

a new culture, the fathers should learn their new culture and change themselves.

00:25:15.290 --> 00:25:18.830

Me and my wife, we thought about this a lot and we discussed this

00:25:18.840 --> 00:25:19.930

a lot.

00:25:23.560 --> 00:25:28.710

So we started taking lectures and trainings regarding this issue in

00:25:29.400 --> 00:25:33.900

organization. A WIC organization. The name of the organization?

00:25:33.900 --> 00:25:35.510

Yeah, yeah. WIC.



00:25:39.450 --> 00:25:42.460

We started it in Arizona, taking these lectures

00:25:42.470 --> 00:25:44.750

and we continue taking these  
here.

00:25:48.750 --> 00:25:52.330

And we found a big difference with  
the way we deal with our

00:25:52.340 --> 00:25:53.480

kids.

00:25:54.540 --> 00:25:56.550

Which is good for the kids.

00:26:02.770 --> 00:26:03.940

So in order to

00:26:04.330 --> 00:26:09.640

raise our kids in a good or healthy  
environment we have to be just like,

00:26:09.650 --> 00:26:11.490

a good example for them.

00:26:13.670 --> 00:26:16.300

The good father raise

00:26:16.340 --> 00:26:18.180

a good kids.

00:26:19.380 --> 00:26:20.900

The bad father or not good father

00:26:22.130 --> 00:26:23.260

Maybe

00:26:24.980 --> 00:26:26.940

Maybe their kids  
will be also.

00:26:32.260 --> 00:26:33.920

I also have a follow-up question,  
uh

00:26:33.980 --> 00:26:37.200

Were you ever worried that your  
kids may not fit into like

00:26:38.120 --> 00:26:38.830

"Fit in" with

00:26:38.830 --> 00:26:40.490

all the other kids?

00:26:50.330 --> 00:26:51.290

No.

00:26:52.620 --> 00:26:58.020

No I don't think about that. I  
was thinking only about education.

00:27:03.850 --> 00:27:05.690

I have four daughters.

00:27:07.440 --> 00:27:11.990

They are in school. I  
gave them their freedom.

00:27:16.080 --> 00:27:19.210

And, at the same time they  
ask me about anything they want.

00:27:22.460 --> 00:27:24.570

Even if they  
want to go to a trip or

00:27:24.580 --> 00:27:28.220

a tour. I tell them, "Ok.  
You can go."

00:27:38.880 --> 00:27:43.590

So, every time the daughters ask their  
Dad, "What is the wrong?" What is

00:27:43.600 --> 00:27:44.760

right?"

00:27:45.775 --> 00:27:48.275

And all I do is advise them.

00:27:50.410 --> 00:27:52.500

My wife do the same, does the same.

00:28:05.240 --> 00:28:06.940

You did not ask me

00:28:06.940 --> 00:28:09.670

if I were in Syria, am I'm going to be

00:28:09.690 --> 00:28:12.300

a successful person or no?

00:28:12.950 --> 00:28:15.120

If I'm still in Syria.

00:28:16.200 --> 00:28:20.360

Well, would you be successful  
if you were still in Syria?

00:28:27.240 --> 00:28:28.840

I think, yes.

00:28:30.270 --> 00:28:31.920

For one reason.

00:28:34.200 --> 00:28:35.680

I made a business.

00:28:38.400 --> 00:28:39.510

I create or made

00:28:39.510 --> 00:28:44.530

a business and the company, its  
name is The Golden Group.

00:28:50.080 --> 00:28:51.320

This company is

00:28:51.360 --> 00:28:57.600

a specialized in filtering the water  
to all the houses in my town, Hance.

00:29:02.330 --> 00:29:03.630  
Do you have a time so I can share

00:29:03.640 --> 00:29:05.200  
a story with you ?

00:29:05.375 --> 00:29:06.655  
Yeah !

00:29:09.402 --> 00:29:11.122  
When I started working,

00:29:17.090 --> 00:29:21.710  
OK. When I started my work  
there, I used to look

00:29:21.710 --> 00:29:23.560  
at the villages.

00:29:29.360 --> 00:29:35.000  
So, I started to convince  
them to buy the machine

00:29:35.470 --> 00:29:40.470  
that filter the water, so just kind  
of marketing.

00:29:41.740 --> 00:29:44.410  
One upon...one upon a time ?

00:29:45.830 --> 00:29:47.730  
I went to a village.

00:29:48.510 --> 00:29:50.290  
It's a poor village.

00:29:51.890 --> 00:29:54.890  
But, their water there, its  
not good.

00:29:57.720 --> 00:30:01.370

So they don't have a money to  
buy the machine.

00:30:07.010 --> 00:30:07.890  
They told me, "We

00:30:07.900 --> 00:30:11.220  
really want to buy this but we don't have  
money to buy it.

00:30:12.720 --> 00:30:14.770  
And we really need it so much."

00:30:15.950 --> 00:30:17.540  
"Please help us."

00:30:23.640 --> 00:30:26.800  
"Please help us and we will put this

00:30:26.810 --> 00:30:29.630  
machine in the whole houses in the village."

00:30:31.880 --> 00:30:32.560  
And, there was

00:30:32.600 --> 00:30:35.520  
a one hundred and twenty nine house.

00:30:40.920 --> 00:30:44.500  
So I suggested to the  
investor that send me the machines,

00:30:48.630 --> 00:30:53.080  
So, to make them, the  
payment, in steps, you know?

00:30:54.260 --> 00:31:00.700  
So, in order---sorry---in order for him  
to sell more, to make the machine in

00:31:00.710 --> 00:31:02.940  
payments not on a one payment.

00:31:06.080 --> 00:31:07.550

When this thing will make

00:31:07.550 --> 00:31:09.070

the other villages

00:31:10.040 --> 00:31:11.640

think the same.

00:31:16.830 --> 00:31:19.250

Because of this I was able to get  
married.

00:31:20.600 --> 00:31:22.610

And buy stuff to my house.

00:31:22.960 --> 00:31:23.500

And buy

00:31:23.510 --> 00:31:24.490

a car.

00:31:28.160 --> 00:31:30.460

And, I was able to enroll my

00:31:30.460 --> 00:31:31.020

kids in

00:31:31.030 --> 00:31:33.270

a good schools.

00:31:38.090 --> 00:31:44.270

And the manager of the big company  
that I used to take the machines from

00:31:46.820 --> 00:31:51.630

He offered me to be his uh...to be his uh...

00:31:51.770 --> 00:31:55.320

just like assistant director in Damascus  
in Syria.

00:31:55.780 --> 00:31:57.470

But, I refused.

00:32:02.600 --> 00:32:03.520

Because I told him I have

00:32:03.530 --> 00:32:08.700

my own business and one day maybe I  
will have more money than you have.

00:32:12.890 --> 00:32:16.690

And he said, "Ok. Good luck. We hope so."

00:32:20.520 --> 00:32:22.930

This is story I would never  
forget.

00:32:23.550 --> 00:32:24.840

We won't either.

00:32:27.850 --> 00:32:31.200

This is story, since fifteen years.

00:32:31.200 --> 00:32:33.260

Really? Mm-hm.

That was fifteen years ago?

00:32:33.260 --> 00:32:34.220

Yeah.

00:32:36.200 --> 00:32:39.360

My beginnings, my start. It was  
good when I first started.

00:32:43.510 --> 00:32:47.880

That's why I told, "Why didn't you ask  
me the question because I want to say I would

00:32:47.880 --> 00:32:48.220

be

00:32:48.260 --> 00:32:51.710

a good businessman in Syria if I were there,  
still there.

00:32:54.030 --> 00:32:58.820

Because I' am able to get

used to any society any

00:32:58.860 --> 00:32:59.660

culture.

00:33:00.940 --> 00:33:03.270

And, understand what the needs.

00:33:03.320 --> 00:33:04.250

Ok.

00:33:06.340 --> 00:33:07.420

That's amazing.

00:33:07.420 --> 00:33:10.730

That's incredible. We're both very impressed.

00:33:15.260 --> 00:33:20.890

Ok, uh...Miss Nora, he's referring to  
me...I am his instructor at the

00:33:20.900 --> 00:33:21.980

public consult.

00:33:23.310 --> 00:33:25.080

And, she saw that in me.

00:33:27.780 --> 00:33:28.470

And she said

00:33:28.470 --> 00:33:30.780

"One day you're going to be something  
in America."

00:33:35.950 --> 00:33:38.360

OK, one last question.

00:33:47.490 --> 00:33:50.080

Ok, um, Suppose you were able to

00:33:50.090 --> 00:33:55.130

return to Syria tomorrow. What story do  
you imagine yourself telling people back



00:33:55.140 --> 00:33:57.640  
home about America and why?

00:34:13.939 --> 00:34:18.590  
Uh, there's two, sorry I'm...  
There's two stories.

00:34:22.440 --> 00:34:24.880  
First I'm  
going to tell them my start

00:34:24.929 --> 00:34:31.150  
my beginning here. How I  
started creating my business

00:34:35.369 --> 00:34:38.440  
And the  
second story how I said

00:34:38.449 --> 00:34:39.980  
goodbye to America.

00:34:40.909 --> 00:34:43.909  
And, I'll take my old business to Syria.

00:34:48.760 --> 00:34:51.119  
I mean. I think it's...

00:34:58.270 --> 00:34:59.350  
I don't know how to say this.

00:35:11.100 --> 00:35:13.090  
How has the word

00:35:13.100 --> 00:35:18.240  
home changed for you after living  
here in America?

00:35:25.580 --> 00:35:26.680  
This is really good

00:35:26.690 --> 00:35:27.730  
question.

00:35:30.450 --> 00:35:31.430

In Syria,

00:35:38.140 --> 00:35:41.110

Back home when I was in Syria,  
my family was

00:35:41.120 --> 00:35:46.310

related with...with my big family, so  
they are all together...my dad and my mom-

00:35:49.120 --> 00:35:51.590

I have a small house  
and I have

00:35:51.600 --> 00:35:52.750

a big house.

00:35:53.980 --> 00:35:56.290

I used to have two houses.

00:35:59.440 --> 00:36:04.220

I have two houses. One of them, me and my  
wife and kids, and the other house with my

00:36:04.400 --> 00:36:06.580

my...my parents' house.

00:36:08.000 --> 00:36:08.930

Here...

00:36:13.620 --> 00:36:14.760

Here there is no

00:36:14.770 --> 00:36:17.670

big home. There's no parents.

00:36:19.670 --> 00:36:25.190

Your question is good but it makes me sad.  
Because it remind me about my mom and dad.

00:36:28.590 --> 00:36:32.280

My mother died. I didn't  
see her since four years.

00:36:36.010 --> 00:36:38.550

My father is an old man and  
he's sick.

00:36:39.650 --> 00:36:42.130

Maybe I'm not going to see him again.

00:36:45.620 --> 00:36:48.110

This things really remind me  
about the past.

00:36:50.970 --> 00:36:54.310

I always am afraid of what's in the future.  
That I may lose my

00:36:54.320 --> 00:36:56.100

dad as well.

00:36:58.050 --> 00:36:59.690

Thank you so much for the question.

00:37:02.360 --> 00:37:05.810

Well, thank you very much for sharing your  
stories with us.

00:37:05.810 --> 00:37:08.350

We really appreciate it and we...

00:37:08.350 --> 00:37:09.770

We feel very honored.  
I mean...

00:37:18.230 --> 00:37:20.400

It's my own honor that I be

00:37:20.410 --> 00:37:21.790

interviewed by you.

00:37:22.950 --> 00:37:25.650

Thank you for, uh, inviting me  
and to

00:37:25.650 --> 00:37:27.200

listen to my stories.

00:37:29.210 --> 00:37:32.210

Because you are the only

00:37:32.210 --> 00:37:37.220

country that opened its doors  
for me and my family.

00:37:38.980 --> 00:37:41.510

So we can  
continue our life.

00:37:43.390 --> 00:37:44.510

I hope...

00:37:46.890 --> 00:37:50.330

I hope in the future I will listen  
of good things about both of you.

00:37:51.540 --> 00:37:53.320

And, also about me.

00:37:57.310 --> 00:37:59.920

Thank you so much.  
Thank you.

— End of Transcription —