

Oral History Project, UC San Diego

Narrator: Faiza Warsame

Interviewer: LeAnn Le

Date: Wednesday, May 6th, 2020

Time: 4:03 PM – 4:58 PM

Interview Location: Over Zoom Video Meeting

Collection: Race and Oral History Course, Spring of 2020

Length of Interview: START 00:00:00, END 00:45:30

List of Acronyms: FW- Faiza Warsame, Interviewee/Narrator and LL- LeAnn Le, Interviewer

FINAL TRANSCRIPT

START 00:00:00

LL: Alright so I'm gonna hit record, so it's recording. [Laughed] Okay, so this interview is being conducted on May 6th, 2020. It is currently 4:03 PM and my name is LeAnn and we are doing this interview over Zoom. So now I'm going to be reading this like opening statement. So, hi Faiza.

FW: Hi

LL: Before we begin, I'd like to thank you for your time and participation in our interview today. I wanna emphasize again that if you ever feel at any point that the question being asked is too personal and you do not feel comfortable in answering, you are more than welcome to let me know and we will skip the question right away. You may also end the interview at any point in time if you feel necessary or if you don't feel comfortable. As we went over last Thursday, this interview and your answers will be recorded, transcribed, and ultimately deposited in the UCSD Library's Digital Collections for preservation and dissemination. However, I want to assure you that I will share the transcription with you beforehand, and you will be able to go through it and redact any information you do not want to have included. Please think of this as an informal conversation. I want this to be a safe and welcoming space for you to be able to share your stories, experiences, and emotions. Are you ready to begin the interview?

FW: Yes I am.

LL: Alright, [laughed] so let's begin with a few start-up questions. Can you state your name?

FW: Yes, my name is Faiza Warsame.

LL: And then tell me about yourself like how old are you, what are your hobbies or interests and what are you passionate in?

FW: Okay, I'm 23, I am passionate about working with the community, especially the youth, trying to figure out like you know, you know their way of life and also like going through like you know school struggles and like kind of like helping them figure out like being that platform where they're able to ask questions and figure out like you know which ways to go and just

making, giving them the option of things to do that they would like so they have a clear idea of what they want to do.

FW: Things I like to do is reading, writing, I like to do a henna too, watching movies, [laughed] spending time with family and friends, drawing, yeah! Pretty much, yeah. Except shopping.

LL: Thank you I really- except what?

FW: Shopping, I don't like shopping [laughed].

LL: [Laughed] You don't like shopping? Okay, thank you! I feel like that's so telling of like the person you- the type of person you are and I love hearing that. So this is more like an abstract question, I even take, like I even struggle in answering this, but if you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be and why?

FW: Oh wow, that is hard. [Brief pause] I'll say honest- [brief pause] hardworking can be one word right?

LL: Yeah!

FW: Honest, hardworking [brief pause] and positive I think that's... Honest because I like to be honest with myself and also like honest of things I do and you know, instead of... instead of lying I like to be honest with a person and try to show them like honesty's the best thing to, you know, to be and also to do for someone like being honest with them all the time. Hard working- I try to believe that I am a hardworking cuz, I mean like, when you tell yourself you are a hardworking you're able to accomplish so many things, and I feel like they're so much that I do in life that I feel like I was not able to do any of those if I was not a hard worker. And then the last one is positive. I think positive is a huge thing that I'm still working on, but if you are able to look positive in every situation in life I think you are able to accomplish so many things, even though when they're so much negativity if you're just honest pers- like positive person- you're able to look at it from the positive side, you are able to accomplish so many things and I think that's one of the things that I like to do and strive to work on more on.

LL: I love that. Thank you for sharing. From my time knowing you, like, I can definitely see that in you and I really, I really, like, admire it. So we're moving on to more personal like individual and familial background/history questions. So could you tell me more about, like, your education, or your just background... where you came from, upbringing, and then where you currently reside, or, yeah.

FW: Okay, so I was born in Somalia and then when I was young, I moved to Egypt and I lived there for a couple years. I was raised by a single mom. We then moved here to American when I was ten years old and I mean, education was very important in our family especially since I was raised with a single mom like you know, she sacrificed so much in order for us to have a better life and a better education with better opportunities and so education was very important, but I think the hardest thing was kinda overcoming so many barriers, you know, like I remember when I was in Egypt like we- she- was able to provide us like a private tutor where he was able to

teach us a bit of English right, so when we came here we had few words to say. Words like hi, bye, like how are you, I'm doing good, right? But there was not like the concept of understanding when you are reading, like understanding, you know, the stuff that you're reading so I was struggling with... with that and also like I feel like the teachers didn't know how to help an refugee student that just came right now, so it was just kind of like, "Okay! Here's the homework; here's everything", so and I think that's one of the thing that made me really passionate about working with kids right- to make them feel comfortable and know that, you know, they're able to thrive to greater things if, you know, they believe in themselves and, you know, have someone to kind of like, you know, show them in the direction. So I was able to- I finished high school and then after that, I started working in high school cuz my mom wasn't able to work anymore, so I think with that like it made me like less confident of like in myself and also like who I am and there was not like teachers that would motivate you and be like, "You are smart, you got this, you can do this", so I was kind of afraid to apply for colleges, universities especially, and so I applied in ones that were far away so I don't feel like you know, ashamed if I didn't get into the ones in my area and so I got into San Bernardino and my mom okay was me leaving, but my older sister, my older half-sister that was in a different country said no, so I wasn't able to go, so I went to community college and I'm still in community college. So and then I think something I realized with community college is sometimes you forget yourself and so with the community college I was also working and also like providing for my family and so I think the idea of like providing for the family took over me and like it was just more of like it's better to work hard at your job because you're getting paid; you're able to see the result right away, you know, and you need that pay in order to provide for the family. So, you know, school, you're still going to school, so it's okay, but it wasn't [brief pause] it wasn't like motivating myself to do, to work hard in school and to kind of like and to like be on top of my education. It was like, okay well I didn't do well in this class, it's fine, I could retake it or it's okay like I have time or like I'll do my homework later on like I have this job I need to finish and so that kind of like took so much of my time and made me forget like my passion of like working hard and school and getting a degree and so that kind of like... made me lose my purpose in a way, for school, and, but at the same time it helped my thrive more in my job area right and I was able to go higher and higher, but then later on I was able to realize you know what like you can still work hard at school, I mean at work, but at the same to you need to work hard at school, so you need to figure out ways to balance it right because without education, you're not able to fulfill the purpose you had or the purpose your mom had which was like getting an education and at the same time, you're not able to prove yourself you're- like is a way of proving to yourself you are able to accomplish this right, you're able to get that degree, and so, I think a couple of two years ago I was able to kind of give myself esteem up and like you know think positive more and then you know kind of like re-shift my... my purpose. Not only for work, but also for school, so I was able to re-shift my purpose and also like when you're, you know, when you put one down and one higher, I think you're- it's because my self-esteem wasn't high, right, because in high school I didn't have teachers that were pushing me and like were believing in myself right cuz those teacher were more like of interested in taking care of like the AP students, this student-

LL: Yeah.

FW: so it didn't feel like I was [hand air quoted] believed in right and-

LL: Yeah.

FW: and even I knew myself I was smart, and I was capable of so much, I think when your self-esteem goes down, a lot of things go down with you too. I know my mom was like a big motivation to me, but like you're not able to accomplish anything unless you believe in yourself and unless your esteem, your like self-esteem is high, no matter if your parents or someone else you love encourages you and motivates you all the time, so I think a couple years ago that's when I tried to be like okay you know what, my self-esteem needs to go back up the way it was and I need to believe in myself and kind of like realize you know I am able to accomplish a lot, you know, and so I think that's when the re-shift of mind changed and I applied and I got into state, so I'll be starting in State this fall and I think-

LL: YAY!

FW: [Laughed] Thank you. And so it just kind of makes you realize that like- it also made me realize like when the time is right for everything, it's gonna happen. You know, God writes everything, so it was like a moment for me to realize and learn so much, especially from my job, I was able to learn so much and grow as a person, but it was also kind of like it wasn't written for me to go to a university because there was so much that I was supposed to accomplish within my community and within myself and now, I think believing in yourself and like having self-esteem and trusting God will get you somewhere far, so... yeah! I think that's pretty much my story.

LL: Thank you, thank you so much for sharing. I feel you and I hear you and like I am sorry for the hardship that you endured, but also I think based off of the stuff that you're telling me, I don't know, I've seen so much growth and you're such a strong like woman and thank you, thank you for sharing.

LL: [Brief pause] So- sorry that was- so wow! [Laughed] If you're comfortable in like sharing, I guess like since you told me that you were about, or you were ten when you migrated from Somalia?

FW: Egypt.

LL: Egypt? [Nodded] Okay, sorry, thank you- Egypt to here- what was that like for you? Or like, do you remember any memories or just...

FW: I will say it was really lonely cuz like in Egypt it was, you know, we're living with my cousins and aunts and you know, and so we're a big family. And so, when we came here, it was just like me, my mom and my brother, just three of us and so I feel like it was really lonely. Like, at the same time, it was, a confusing moment cuz the culture here and stuff is really different than back in Egypt cuz Egypt, you know, this is like a Muslim country like, you know, I was able to hear the Adhan, which is like the calling of prayer. Like, there's so much similarities that when I came here, it was just like a really, a like, huge change for me. I feel like at the same time, like lost, like, I didn't fit in because the students already had their clique, and they already like, you know, were speaking really [hand air quoted] good English. And it was just like a really, a hard adjustment, I think I would say, but at the same time, it was kind of [brief pause]

beautiful at the same time cuz you're able to see like, wow, there's so many different opportunities and stuff, so I think that was.. yeah, [nodded] yeah.

LL: [Nodded] Yeah! And you can be as descriptive and brief as you want, but do you remember what was going on during that time in Egypt or like why your family decided to migrate over to the US?

FW: The reason my mom went to Egypt was for us to kind of come to America like, you know, I think that-

LL: Oh okay!

FW: that they (?) they were trying to, you know, they were [brief pause] they were like taking people and like, you know, the immigration was there I guess you could say. But also, in Egypt, if you're not like Egyptian, you are not able to work right-

LL: Oh okay. [Nodded]

FW: and so it was really hard like my mom wasn't able to find a job and if you're not from the country, you're not able to work. And so like, I had my sister that like, you know, would send us bills and stuff, which is very difficult. First, they cannot be always sending you money, you know, they also need to like, they have their own life basically, so it was a- it was, I would say like it was just like a one stop ticket to America, basically.

LL: Okay. And then... that's really interesting. But, so I remember you saying how it was sort of difficult- difficult upon like, arriving here just because of the culture shock being so different and just learning English. I guess can you describe what it was like to learn like more English upon arriving here?

FW: [Brief pause] I, like, [for in my fifth grade, like my in fifth grade] I mean, fifth grade was pretty awesome for me, which is like middle school that was hard and high school, but fifth grade, I had an amazing teacher-

LL: Okay.

FW: that would explain the reading to me and break it down to me. And, oh my goodness, I can't forget that teacher, she was just so amazing. She would also like, motivate me. She will try also to speak to my mom after class and explain to her how well I'm doing and how great student I was and how I am very smart and I'm doing well in her class. And I think that motivation that she was able to put in me was just like something that really made me continue to read more in her class, to do the spelling more and, so that, like that elementary part was really successful for me cuz I think she was a great asset of making me do well in my English and also make sure that I was- my level was moving up. But at the same time, I think like talking to my mom and explaining to her like, "Your daughter is doing well and she's this" in front of me was also a motivation because you are praising that child, but you're also telling them like this is something that they can work on, but they're really great in this and I think that really motivated me I'll say.

LL: That's really great to hear. It's always interesting to learn more or hear more experiences about teachers, I guess, because there's always going to be some good ones. There's always going to be some, you know, not so great ones. So that's really awesome. ...So, describe the house you grew up in! The rooms- what were the rooms like? I guess like what were your favorite or most memorable childhood experiences?

FW: In America or like back home?

LL: I guess in America? ...Or back home!

FW: So, when we first came here, we lived in one-bedroom apartment-

LL: Mhm.

FW: and so, and it was three of us so, which was... I wouldn't say not hard, but it was a really old apartment and so [brief pause]. I don't- it was- my mom did her best, which I am so grateful for, but like there used to be like mouse and cockroaches that lived in the apartment, which was really gross, but like, she would make sure that to clean the house every single day, so, you know, they will be gone and she would always stay up at nighttime to make sure [laughed] nothing will bite us or anything, so that was interesting and like it, it was, it was an interesting experience like I.. It- because like you're thinking like America is like this great place and like the first place you move in, it's just like, a place that's really old and like there's mouse and cockroaches and we're just and we, like we never, there was nothing like that in Egypt, so that was just like a interesting experience I would say.

LL: Yeah!

FW: But, you know, the apartment was close to the school, it wasn't far away from it, so that was nice. But the second apartment that we lived in, which much was much more nicer. Also, like it was an apartment complex that had, like, majority of the residents that lived there were Somali- so I felt like I was back home in a way cuz like all of them were Somalian and they would sit outside of their apartment. So that was a really good experience for those two apartments. I mean, the second apartment, not the first one, but yeah.

LL: That is so fascinating how you bring up the cockroaches and the mice, because when I was talking to my dad about his, like, place that he moved to after immigrating from- or migrating from Vietnam- he was like, man, the cockroaches, [laughed] the mice. And then, he basically said, like a similar experience, and that's just so... yeah-

FW: It's crazy I remember like my mom would try to find like, would try to find like chemicals or things to kind of like, make sure that the mice will eat so I can die or something right. And I remember like, I don't know what they call like the ones that like, it was just like a really glue/ sticky thing that like if they walk on, they get trapped and they die instantly or something. And I remember she used to put it around the house. And it was just like so disgusting and I remember like one was caught on it and I couldn't look at it. I was like, "No, no, please throw it away" [laughed]. But it was, it was crazy experience. Yeah.

LL: Yeah! All right! So, I this kind of like goes along with that past questions and if it's redundant, we can skip it, but what would you say are some of your favorite childhood memories besides the lovely roaches and mice.

FW: [Brief pause] I would say able to build like a bond with friends and stuff. Like I remember this one neighbor, we were able to bond this like friendship with them. And so, like, in our culture, the way it is, is like if you meet other people, if it is an older person, you automatically call them aunt and uncle, right? And so, if you get close to them really well, and you guys are, you know, interact with each other really well, in a way, they're your family, you know, like in Somalia, like everybody's family kind of. And so, I remember that neighbor, like became a family to us, you know, and so their daughters were like my older sister and like, you know, she would take me to the stores and stuff. So, I think building that connection with the neighbor was really nice. Until now, I still call her like sister, so I think that is something I really loved about that, yeah.

LL: Aw, I love that. Okay! So... these are going to be- we're gonna be like moving on to like more community-based questions. So, what's your relationship or affiliation with UWEAST [Unite Women of East Africa]?

FW: I am staff there. I am the program coordinator at the UWEAST [United Women of East Africa].

LL: And then how did you originally get acquainted with the organization.

FW: My mom used to go there like before it started, but like they had a different program before it became the organization where they were doing cooking classes with the younger girls. And so like, my mom used to attend there and she would take me once in a while to do the cooking classes with the young girls and their mothers. But I, at the beginning, wasn't really interested in going there cuz like, it was a lot of young girls that have already knew each other and they (clicked/cliqued?) and so I felt like I was left out and I'm the type person that I'm very quiet at the beginning, but once we get to know each other, I'm very talkative. So I felt like- I felt like really out of place and I didn't wanna be there, but my mom used to take me there when I was younger, I think in middle school once in a while they had like cooking classes and later on, when I started in high school, they, like they already started their organization. And they had programs going, so I would go there and see like the youth in the programs that they were- they would do. And so that's how it started, basically.

LL: Yeah. And then since you're, we're talking about cooking, there's a question that I, like, previously forgot, but are there any special foods or any special foods you remember from your childhood and do you still make it; do you still make those foods?

FW: I mean, Sambusa's big in our culture, so like, [laughed] we made some (?) and so I think that one is really big, with childhood especially for like Ramadan because like, I remember, I mean here too, but like I remember in Egypt like Ramadan since we were like a big family together, like Sambusa was like something that had to be, you know, made, especially in our family. And so, and I think with that dish, we still make it and I think we kind of made it like a

tradition like me and my mom would make it together and (they/then?) will kind of like race to see who makes the most.

LL: [Laughed] Aw

FW: There's that and I love that. Another dish I really love is like, which is an Egyptian dish, is Koshari/Kushari, which is like, it's like kind of like rice and pasta kind of with... with vegetables and stuff; it's really good! I make it once in a while, not all the time, but I make it once in a while and I think that's like one of my favorite dish from Egypt too. So yeah.

LL: Yeah! That's, that's so good that you still make these dishes and have those traditions. Okay, this is like, now going back to like the community questions [laughed]. What or who inspires you?

FW: Hmm. [Brief pause] It can be more than one right?

LL: Yeah! Yeah.

FW: [Brief pause] I will say like my mom is one of my inspiration. Cuz... it was... I was one years old and my brother was couple months when my father passed away, so for her to raise two little kids and move into so many different places just for better opportunity, and better life for them and also like, how hard working she is like, I remember when I started working and I had to pay for the bills, like I cannot, like and still until now, I couldn't believe that, like she'll wake up really early in the morning and, you know, make lunch for us like early in the morning and then she would take us to school and then she'll go to school and come back and do our laundry, clean the house. And I was just like how did you do all of that and pay for the bill?! So I think my mom is my biggest inspiration. Another person I will say is [brief pause] there's so much. [Brief pause] I would also say like my boss; she is an inspiration to me too. She is- yeah- she is also a big inspiration because she is... she is running the organization and at the same time, she is a mother. At the same time, she is a wife. And like, just last year her mom passed away, but she was also taking care of her mom. So doing so much with five kids and taking care of her mom and like running an organization- that's not easy. Like me just being a student, also taking care of a family and also going to work, I thought that like, like compared to her, that's nothing and so I think for me, like she is a biggest inspiration too, for her to have like the inspiration to help the community and make sure that every child in the community and all the community members are getting their needs done- met, all their needs are met and making sure that like, you know, to ask the youth like, "What other programs would you guys like?", you know, and "What are some other things to do" and like, for me, like, you know, talking to her, she would give me like perspective of things to do for the youth or like ideas that I wouldn't even come up with and I'll be like, "How did you even come up with when you have so much on your plate?" So I think those are the two inspiring people for me. So yeah.

LL: That's just amazing. I, I honestly, like that's incredible. And just the fact that they have, you know, they have their own lives going on and then working with so many things. And doing it flawlessly. Like [laughed], I love that. Thank you. And then what do you admire most about this organization?

FW: Ooh, there's so much. [Brief pause] I think like putting the youth needs first. I think that's something big in our organization. I mean like parents and like, you know, are important but also making sure that their- the youth, their needs are met. I think that is the biggest thing that we... we do. And I think that's the biggest thing that we, that I am very grateful for that we do because like, I remember when I was a youth, if, you know, if I had someone in middle school or high school to tell me like, "This is what you should do" or "I went to this experience and like you got this" or whatnot. I think that would have changed so much in my life, but at the same time, me going to those experiences is what shaped me to be there for the youth. And I think the organization is something that wants to be there for the youth and be a bridge to the both worlds that they're in right- their American life, which is school and everything, but at the same time being, you know, Somali American or being like, you know, Ethiopian/ Eritrean, and being that bridge to bring them together and make them feel like they are welcome and they are, you know, amazing and they are smart and they're able to accomplish so many things. And I think that's one of the things that our organization does and I think I love about it.

LL: I can definitely agree. And that is also a reason why I love the organization so much. So, what would you want people to know... to know most about your community?

FW: I will say, our community is like a big family, you know, even if you're not related by a blood, like, we are always a family. I think it's something that like... they care for each other, they're compassionate about each other, they want each one of them to thrive, so they push each other... it just like, you know, just like how your family is, you know, your parents would want you with what- would want the best for you and they would make sure that you get all the opportunities that you have, and I think that's what the community is right? If I walk down the street and someone that's Somali sees me, they'll call me like, "niece!" and stuff. So like, we're just a big family you can say that, you know, that cares for each other, even if they don't really know who your parents are or where you actually are from so.

LL: And then what are the challenges that you have faced as a community advocate?

FW: Ooh [Brief pause]

LL: Or like, have you or your community experienced or witnessed disparities or inequalities and like, if you feel comfortable sharing those like examples and experiences?

FW: As a community member or as a... I'm sorry, just repeat the question one more time.

LL: Okay. So, the first one was, have you or your community experienced or witnessed disparities or inequalities and also like, what challenges have you faced as a community advocate? They're like, kind of both separate questions, but you can like...

FW: [Brief pause] I think... I don't know, those are two hard questions. I think one of the inequalities that the community faced was... not to- not like- not being able to get as many opportunities that they want or services. For example, like, translation that is the biggest need that the community needs. And I think, even though some hospitals are able to provide a

translation, but it's not the translation that they need, like, for example, they might have a translation over the phone. But like, for us in Somalia, like there's some, like, there's some... things that you're not able to explain in Somalia, right? Because like, there's some words that we don't have in our language, that is in the American language, right? So, you need a physical person to be there to kind of explain it with motions and, you know, showing the body part and this is what it is, this is what they're trying to say. So, it's just really hard to- and I think that's something we've been advocating for. I mean, for most of them were able to get, but is not like, the best result that we're looking for. Right? So, translation, I think that's the biggest need that the community, like, we're not able, or they're still not able to receive, like, having a person there. I think the second thing will be like [brief pause] understand, like, school system don't understand our culture.

LL: Mhm.

FW: So, for example, like, my mom went to school and stuff, so she's more educated, right? But there's some parents in the community that are not educated, that don't know how to read, and that they're more into, like, you know, just verbal, right. And so... so a lot of them don't know what is going on in their children's life, especially in school, right. So, I think the school is trying like to be more culturally appropriate and like just understanding the culture more. I think that's something that we're still working on. So they're able to understand like, "Oh, this student wasn't able to sign the permission slip because of either he wasn't able to show it to his parents because he doesn't understand, since he's a just a newcomer, or because the parent wasn't able to read it." And so, they- that's why they're not able to sign. I think that's one of the things and also... get like, getting more programs that are towards newcomers, right? So, a lot of the newcomers are like, for like, for example, one of the students Amira, she's a newcomer, so it's just like, they just placed her in, you know, the same grade as other students, but her reading level and you know, math and everything is very low because she never went to school back home. So, trying to get like more resources for students that are newcomers and trying to help them get their reading and their, you know, writing and their math skills to be higher- same level as the students that they're in, right? And so, when students are thrown to random classes and their levels are not the same, that's I think what, you know, gets them to have lower self-esteem, have lower trust in themselves, right? And so, I think that's some of the things that we're struggling with that are we're still working on to get through the community.

LL: Yeah. And then how do those incidents make you feel? I guess, cuz it's still prevalent, like, how does that make you feel?

FW: It makes me feel really sad. Cuz like, with, there's so many new kids that you're not able to... I'm not able to sit with each one of them and be like, "Okay, this is how you pronounce this" or "This is how you do things". And so, it's really sad because at the same time, I try to explain to the kids that like, "Make sure you believe in yourself, you can do this, it just takes time", you know, because it can be really hard and it can really affect them on the long run. And for, for the hospital, one- it's just really sad because there's so many community members that are not able to go to the hospital because they don't have anyone that translates for them, they don't have anyone that explains to them, which is why we're, we have a program right now where we're able to go to their doctor appointment and be a person that translate for them, but, I will

say it's really hard cuz I remember I would go in with my mom and translate for her right? And so, a lot of the, a lot of community members are taking their ten-year-old and eleven-year-old to go to the hospital and traveling for them. And that's not fair to the younger kids cuz they don't even know any of the things that you know, the doctors are saying, so... it's really heartbreaking and really sad, but hopefully you can achieve it one day.

LL: Yes, yeah. And then with everything going on with the pandemic and just COVID-19 How did your organization react to the sudden changes and uncertainty caused by COVID-19?

FW: It was really hard at the beginning. I think the way we were able to work was kind of like trying to shift every program we have to zoom. So for the girls program, the boys program, the tutoring that we have, we were able to educate ourselves about, like, how to use zoom and how to create it, all the stuff and we were able to contact all the youth that we have, and just trying to explain to them how they are able to create zoom and like, get on zoom and create times that work for them. But at the same time, it's really hard because, you know, there's so much families that like you were trying to contact and make sure that they're doing well and they're able to pay for their bills, and, you know... you know, they're not feeling any stress or anxiety. But at the same time, it can be hard because like, kids are less motivated. [Shrugged] They don't want to be on computers and just talk to the screen and say, "Yeah, I'm doing well", you know, so it's, in a way, it's very hard because you're not able... not all of the youth and or not all the community, you know, join Zoom, so you're not able to see everybody, but at the same time, in a way, it's kind of good because there's some that are still connected. So, yeah. [Nodded]

LL: Yeah. [Nodded] And then what's a normal day for you like under the quarantine measures?

FW: Oh... [Brief pause] so we... so our organization and three other organization, we collaborated together and we were able to raise a fund for the community. And so, it's kind of like a grant. So like, you know, community members will call and we'll help them fill out the application for them, in order to assist them to pay for their bills. And for the ones that lost their job or, you know, got reduced hours. So, before when it kind of started, it was crazy. Like, I would always be sitting on my desk sine, like if I wake up like I'm just brushing my teeth, I don't even get to eat because there's so much phone calls coming in and there's so much application that we need to do for, like community members. And like, you know, replying to emails, you know, making sure if there's zoom calls, to join in the zoom and, you know, talk to the kids and see how they're doing. But right now, my day to day is kind of pretty much really relaxed.

LL: Mhm.

FW: Just replying to emails, doing a few application. You know, if there's a zoom, just joining the zoom, and trying to figure out time to do my homework and stuff, and, you know, cook a little bit, but it's relaxing, yeah.

LL: Yeah. And then do you feel any anxiety as a result of the Coronavirus? And if so, what part in particular are you most anxious about?

FW: To be honest, like, I didn't really feel any anxiety cuz I, I felt like... I felt like there was a reason that God made this happen and there's a reason that we're in this. So, it was just kind of looking at it from the positive side and saying, like, "Now, I get to spend more time with family, especially my mom" and now I get to spend more time for myself since I was always on the run, so now I just like more relaxing and I can be at home more often, like, you know longer than I used to be. So, I'm not really anxious. I think the only part I'm a little bit anxious about right now is like school since it's coming towards the end. And it's kind of like, okay, there's so much work to do, but yeah, not much... other than that.

LL: Yeah! Okay, and then, so speaking of school, have you experienced an increase in your stress levels since staying at home and learning? Like is online schooling better or worse in your opinion? Do you prefer physical class?

FW: I always used to not like online because I'm a person that's like, I don't want to teach myself, but, you know, in-

LL: Yeah.

FW: in college, you always have to teach yourself. At the beginning, I didn't really like it, but now I'm used to it. I think it just, you know, it's much easier right now since we're just at home like I'm able to get a lot of work done. But I think the part that really irritates me a little bit is not all of my professors are doing zoom classes.

LL: Mhm.

FW: So, it's kind of like they're just submitting an assignment it's like, "Okay, you got it; just do it", right? And so sometimes you need clarification on certain things, but other than that, I think I'm good- I'm liking it so far hopefully.

LL: Okay! [Nodded] That's good. That's great. And then what do you miss most during the quarantine? Like what do you miss most about your I guess post- pre (situation?) [laughed].

FW: [Laughed] Mhm. I'll say... seeing the kids cuz since I love working with the kids like seeing them you know... be irritating them a bit. [Laughed]

LL: [Laughed]

FW: I mean, oh, them making jokes and stuff. I think just working with the kids. I think that's something I really miss the most and... yeah.

LL: Yeah! And then what's something that makes you happy during these times?

FW: These times right now that we're in?

LL: Yeah!

FW: I think like I have more time to reflect on myself and kind of like more time to see like okay there- this is something that I wanna change, so I should change it and stuff and so, I think in a way, it was able to give me a lot of perspective on what is important to me and what is not and like what I should be working on, so I think it just like... and also like self-love like it gave me more time to kind of like.. you know, love myself more and like, you know, say like, "Okay, you need to take care of yourself more and now you have more time to do your hair, do this". So just appreciating the time that I have I think and, you know, realizing there's so much that you can do just like prioritizing yourself and stuff.

LL: Yeah, I agree. And then in regards to Ramadan since I know that that's going on and how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your cultural practices?

FW: It affected it in a way like really huge at the same time not... before, Ramadan like I would go to the mosque and do like our night prayers there. And, and that was my biggest thing that I really love. I mean like I love Ramadan, but that was one of the things I love the most about it too, because you're able to hear someone recite the Quran and like, you know, just listening to the words of God and all of that. I think that was just something I really love doing and going there every night. So that was something that we're not able to do now. And also, towards the end of Ramadan, we used to go there nighttimes and like eat (?) there together with like, friends and family. So I think that's something that we're not able to do, but in a way like things can be... there's positivity to it too-

LL: Mhm!

FW: now like there's like more lectures and more like advices and motivational videos that like the mosque and like, you know, different organization putting out. There's like lessons about like, you know, the religion that people are putting out where you can educate yourself more. I think, also like, the night prayer right now, like me and my mom do it together, so it's like more of like a bonding time and like, also like, you know, sometimes if I do it myself is kind of like getting closer to God and seeing things differently. So, there's a lot of positivity to it, even though some of the things that we used love to do, we're not able to do, there's so much benefit to the time that we're into right now.

LL: Yeah. That's great. And then... okay, so from this interview, what is one thing you would want people to take away from it? [Brief Pause] [Laughed] It's the open-ended questions that always get me.

FW: [Laughed] Oh that's so huge. [Brief pause] I will say, I would say... it might not be connected to it, but I would say like if you come across an organization or someone that has a different culture or from a different place, get to know it, like, don't, I would say, don't have any like opinions about them or the organization. Get to know it first and see for yourself like who they really are because there's so many beautiful things behind what you see in the front, right? And so, like, for example, like this organization started off just with a couple moms, that just had an idea, right? And so, like, they're, even though they have, like, we have our own culture and everything, there's so much beautiful that the organization does and there's so much behind the, you know, behind the windows and the doors. So I would say like, be positive on things and just

look at it in a positive light and try to get to know the culture of the organization, or a person before you judge them and like, your eyes will be, you know, open to something bright, I guess you'll say, I don't know. [Laughed]

LL: [Laughed] Right. I really agree with that. Thank you. And then do you have any questions or clarification about anything we just discussed? And is there anything else you want to add?

FW: No, I hope I answer all your questions correctly-

LL: You did!

FW: And I-

LL: Thank you!

FW: But I really love this! No, I don't have anything else to add other than thank you so much. You did amazing job.

LL: [Laughed]

FW: Like, you know, every... I feel like every nonprofit has like a beautiful mission. They do. And hopefully, people can see that our organization wants to just like help the community and the youth and to, you know, for them to thrive in the world, you can say, but yeah, I don't know. [Laughed]

LL: All right. Thank you. No, that's perfect. Thank you so much for your time. And that concludes our interview. So I will stop recording now.

END 00:45:30