

MATTHEW DZOAN: Okay, so we're recording now and I'm going to give a little introduction and that we can start the interview. Okay perfect.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So, my name is Matthew Dzoan and today is Friday, May 28 2021, and I'm a current undergraduate student at UC San Diego. Today, I have the privilege of interviewing Hamadi Jumale through zoom for the ucsd race and oral History project so thanks so much for joining me today and i'm very looking forward to this conversation and please begin by telling me your full name.

Hamadi Jumale: Thank you, thank you, my name is Hamadi Jumale. I'm the executive director, with the Somali Bantu Community of San Diego.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So to start it off, how are you doing today?

Hamadi Jumale: I'm doing great, thank you for asking.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Of course. So lately, what have you been up to? Whether it's life, whether it's your organization, just anything.

Hamadi Jumale: Uh, this time for the past two years during the pandemic, COVID-19, we had a lot of work, working in the Community, which we are very busy. About working, helping with the community members with the COVID-19 vaccination and scheduling appointments for the testing and the vaccinations. So I think we're reaching a lot of people who are migrants and refugees, to educate them regarding COVID-19. How to be social-distanced or how to work. Our community is--We have very few people who have the literacy to know about health care so which is making us as community leaders or health educators, to educate the community on how to be healthy and social-distance during the pandemic.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And how has that process been? Has it been fairly simple to get everybody on the same page, or would you say it's been a little difficult?

Hamadi Jumale: There's some challenges in the Community, some people they see we're on the same page. Especially we're getting challenges for the vaccinations so some of them they're like, "Okay, you know, I don't think I need that so, what is that for? Because if I'm doing social

distancing and preventing myself from others to be affected, so what do I need it for then?" So for us as community leaders, is to just educate them, try to provide advocacy for them. We're not--We're not forcing them to take the vaccination but just to educate them what the benefits of the vaccination are.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Okay, so also if you can tell me--So let's sidetrack ourselves back to--We can talk more about the organization a little bit later but for now, if you can tell me just about yourself. If you can just talk about yourself in maybe like one or two sentences, what would you say about yourself?

Hamadi Jumale: I'm so grateful to myself, working in the organization as a leader, because I felt like, we, as community members, we didn't have a voice. So, right now, I feel like, okay they're getting a voice. They may feel like, okay, so we have--we are here in City Heights and we have a leader who is speaking for us, talking about our organization or what is--what our organization and community members are facing during the epidemic.

MATTHEW DZOAN: I see.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And so now let's talk more about your hometown, so like, where are you from and what's your favorite part of where you're from?

Hamadi Jumale: I was born in Somalia and I came to Kenya, while I was nine years old. And I went to school in Kenya, after 2004, we get a resettlement to come to another state, and I have been--I have been resettled here in San Diego, California. So after--In 2005, we started an organization, this organization called Somali Bantu Community San Diego, and I was one of the board members and I became executive director in 2008.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So, you said you were born in Somalia and then you moved to Kenya.

Hamadi Jumale: Yeah we came to--I came to Kenya when I was nine years old, because of the civil war, back when the war broke down in Somalia, then we came to a neighboring country which is in Kenya and I stayed in the refugee camp for almost 15 to 16 years.

MATTHEW DZOAN: It definitely must have been a little tough living--being born in the middle of a civil war. So you were born in Somalia but because you were so young, you didn't get to experience all of it.

You were there for less than 10 years, correct?

Hamadi Jumale: Less than 10 years, yeah.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So, is it correct for me to assume that most of your childhood was in Kenya?

Hamadi Jumale: Most of my childhood was in Kenya, I was--I went to school in Kenya.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So if you could describe to me, maybe your favorite parts of being in Kenya, living there, and maybe explaining how it's different from being in San Diego.

Hamadi Jumale: Oh, I think, uh, refugee--living in a refugee camp is very challenged, because you know, difficult to get food or a job, or a good education in the refugee camp. So it was so challenging because the food that was contributed--it was very little food. So there was--It was not enough for the family. And education--Going back to the education, there was no good education in the refugee camp. So until we came to the United States, in San Diego, to find out that this is where we can study.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Okay, and so, how would you describe your upbringing, if you feel comfortable speaking about it, maybe if there was--if you had specific friends or family or even just some culture or certain traditions that you carry as a child--just any memories you have?

Hamadi Jumale: For culture, you know we respect our elders. It's very challenging when you speak--Well it is a very different culture in the United States, like when a child is speaking to a parent, when they're speaking up on the face of the parent. And for us, we're like, okay, you know when a parent is speaking or talking to you, you have to be quiet and lower yourself because you're speaking to a parent. So that is our culture, so when coming here, even myself, I'm trying to teach my kids but it's still--because they are born here, they have American culture. [Laughs]

So it is very challenging so the culture is very different.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So is there anything specific about when you were being raised in Kenya that you can relate to how you are raising your kids here in San Diego?

[REDACTED]

Hamadi Jumale: The difference between raising kids in our refugee camp and in the United States is so different because, so you know there we have to teach them about respecting under demand. We have to tell them, you know, you have to do this, and you don't have to say anything back. Here is different. We let the child know that, okay, you have the right to speak, you can tell me what you want. For me, as I am raising [my kids], I told my kids, you have a right to speak. You can choose, but I make the decision. Because you're still young, I'm the one who can make the right decision, but you can choose what you want. But there's a way--That even if you choose it, but there's a way I need it to be done.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So I would say the main difference between specifically the refugee camps and here in America is that when you were a kid you didn't have much of a choice, but your kids--They don't make the rules, but they still have decisions that they're able to make.

Hamadi Jumale: Yes.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So definitely American culture is a lot different than culture in Somalia and Kenya, so are there any traditions--cultural traditions from when you were a child that you continue to practice today, or maybe even pass on to your kids.

Hamadi Jumale: I will say, yes. I want my kids to learn the culture that I grow up with. I want my kids to learn their language. Which--Which is very difficult because here in the United States, we don't have classes. Our language has always been there, but I'm convincing them when we are at home, to not speak English. So we can practice our language, and so, because they're spending time in school, so they can speak English while they're outside, but when we come home--So I have a certain rules at home, so if they all want to talk to me, they want to talk to their mom or their parents, they cannot speak English. So they can speak in our own language, so if they are by themselves with their siblings--Yes, they can do that, so they can speak between themselves, but when they're coming to their parents, they cannot speak English. So that is the rules that I made in my family, so they can practice their languages and our languages. Because I'm working in a nonprofit organization and I need my kids, when they grow up, to bring back their knowledge through the community because we--This is our first generation, and we know that our elders doesn't speak English, they have difficulty interpreting medical [documents] through their mid-level clinics all that, so we need our kids to learn their language so they can work, they can bring their education and their knowledge back to the Community.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Definitely, language is very important, even for my family. My parents--Sometimes it's a small language barrier between me and my parents, or grandparents as well. I would love for my future children, as well, to be able to speak the language my parents speak to0.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Okay, so is there anything that you were able to bring with you as a child over to America that helps you maybe, have the memories of when you were younger?

Hamadi Jumale: I remember, I remember--I grew up, my mom passed away when I was, I was 10 years old, in the refugee camp. So I had a lot of challenges to survive because I had to stay with my dad and going to school--That time, my siblings are married, so everyone left. I was just by myself and my dad, so it was so challenging for me going to school and then coming back home while there's no food--I have to cook for myself. So it was a lot of challenges, and I remember that when I was there. It was until I get back to live with my sister, so it was so challenging for me, because it was like, this is a lot for me and this was stressful.

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Hamadi Jumale: And I'm teaching--I'm teaching my kids about my histor, where I'm coming from and how I did survive and having them here.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Talking more about San Diego, because I believe you said that the first place that you went to in America was San Diego, correct?

Hamadi Jumale: Correct.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So you've been in San Diego for a while now?

Hamadi Jumale: I've been in San Diego for 14 years.

MATTHEW DZOAN: How much of--How much does San Dieg feel like a home--Would you consider San Diego home?

Hamadi Jumale: Yes, I do consider San Diego home. And I would like to raise my kids here in San Diego. Because I have traveled to different states to see if there is a way that I can live with my family, but you know the life of different states and they're cheap. When I'm talking about cheap, I mean renting. So and that--We as community members, we have a lot of families, like for myself, I have six kids. So living in San Diego without enough income is very challenging, so some of our community members move from San Diego to other states, because of housing issues, so they can live in other states with rent of \$300, \$800 or \$1,000 to \$1500, which here, that you cannot afford. It's only one bedroom or two bedrooms, which is very difficult. And we have seen here in San Diego--Some of the families that are living in San Diego are living like five people to six people, seven people in a two bedroom or one bedroom so which is very challenge. But I feel like San Diego is my home because I saw that some of the community members moved to other states, or have been resettled in other states--The kids, they are not , they don't have any activities to do so they are [getting involved] in gangbangs or in drug deals.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Yeah so I definitely under--From what you've been saying, I can tell that when you grew up, it was definitely a very tough situation. Do you think that helped you a lot with the situation you are in now, how that helped you be the person you are today? Tbe able to face a lot of different challenges like living in a new country and being able to adapt and raise children here and just being able to sustain?

Hamadi Jumale: The challenges that I face for the first time in the United States--Yes, I had no family relatives who arrived before me, so it was very challenging on transportation, getting a job or to get resources so you can help yourself. And I saw that--I came here, well I'm speaking English. I had this challenge and then what about other refugees who have language barriers, who can not be able to do things by themselves. So they needed somebody--Because I remember when I came for the first six months, it was very challenging for me to be in United States, until I adapt to the culture and I start to look for, start researching resources so which I can help me.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So, now that you've been adapted to American culture for about 14 years now, I'm sure you've started to develop a routine so, how would you describe your life each day, when it comes to the organization and just whatever?

Hamadi Jumale: Ah yes, the challenge is there, you cannot be perfect and everyday, I'm learning something new. It's not that difficult for me right now, because I feel like I have been working as a coalition, I feel like, okay, if I have an issue in the community or a community member have an issue and I cannot solve the problem by myself, I can go to my colleagues and say you know what, based on this issue that we're facing in the organization so--Is there anyone

have an idea or resources--We can help this community member, so we can get the resources or find a way that we can solve the problem.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So speaking more about SBCSD, so Somali Bantu Community of San Diego--How did you first get involved? I know you said you helped found it in 2005 but what was that whole process like? And when did you realize that you wanted to found this organization?

Hamadi Jumale: For me, I was--Somebody else established this organization and after he established it, he came to me and I was like, oh no I don't want to be involved in the organization, because you know, you have to deal with people's problems so, which is a very difficult to help them, because if I'm a kind of person that if someone comes to me with problems, I have to look for a way--How I can help the person, if I cannot help the person I feel like I fail from what I was doing. So when the guy told me okay, you don't have--We just want you to be a board member, you don't have to be responsible. We just need you to be a board member, so you can do all your activities but whatever you are doing in personal--But we want you when we have a meeting or we have to make a decision. So I said okay, no problem, so I went. I enjoyed the organization as a board member so in a few--In 2008 he told me that he was moving because of the family issues, so then the community members chose me [as the director] because I was doing. [REDACTED]... He made me look for resources and people to replace him like, okay, you know what can we do with this? They chose me to be the second Executive Director of the Somali Bantu in 2008, which it was very tough, for me, because I have no idea being the executive director and where to start. So until 2010, I get a capacity building from California endowment, I started realizing--Going for trainings, all that, learning more about about leadership.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Yeah, so is the position that you got in 2008 the same position that you have today?

Hamadi Jumale: Yeah the same position I have today.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Okay, so at first you didn't want to even want to join the organization, then three years later you became the executive director.

Hamadi Jumale: I didn't--I didn't want to, but you know, in our culture, we have this--Elders, when elders choose you to be a leader for them, you have to. [LAUGHS] So you have to because it was like, there were almost 20 elders of female and male. As community members, in our culture, if you have 20 people, elder so who are talking about you, they chosen, you may think that you said hey we need you to be a part of this, because we know that you can do this,

we trust you and for the last three years, whatever he was doing, we know that you can do this too. Even as an adult but still I'm a child, compared to them. And so I have to take the position.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And are you glad that they made you take that position?

Hamadi Jumale: I'm glad they made me.

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Hamadi Jumale: I was so happy, I tried, I tried to resign in 2012 and it didn't work for me.

[LAUGHS]

MATTHEW DZOAN: I'm sure that a lot of the organization members are glad to have you as the executive director. And so what would you say is your favorite part of the organization as a whole?

Hamadi Jumale: I love working with the community members because I felt like I'm giving charity, do you know what I mean? I'm giving charity to the organization so, in our culture, we say that if you cannot help a person financially, help them with what you know--With other resources so that the person can feel like, okay--He has somebody--He's not alone.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And how much, would you say that this organization has changed you as a person, how much has it influenced you?

[REDACTED]

Hamadi Jumale: It has changed me a lot because there's some things that I didn't know-- How to be a leader--You know, when you become a leader, you become like--You cannot solve all the problems that the communities are facing. It's all gonna come back to you, so I learned how to speak to people, to my Community--How to make them solve problems. So those are the things that I learned and they changed me. They made me feel like, okay, I'm doing something in my organization.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And so, moving on to more about the pandemic--I know we talked a little bit about it at the beginning, but how much has the pandemic affected you? First about you, and how much has it affected the community?

Hamadi Jumale: For me, it has been affected in my family--My dad had been tested positive. And he is 96 years old. And it was very challenging for me to make him social distance. I have to protect myself, my family and him too. So it was so challenge for me, and it was so stressful because I have to make sure that he eats, drinks and takes his medication. But after a few days when going back to checking for his COVID-19, they were like, okay he's negative. He got a negative twice in the same month after they found him positive, which was good for me. I felt like, okay I survived from the COVID-19. [LAUGHS] And that is such a challenge. It was the challenge that I faced during the pandemic, as I have kids that were going to school, and it was so easy for me to do all my work, but during the pandemic, the kids have to stay home to have Zoom education, which was so challenging because I have to work--To make sure that i'm working so I can bring income for the family, and I have to make sure that the kids are getting their education. Because it's very challenging when you have kids--You want to coordinate to them, saying, okay, you have to go to zoom meetings, you have to do your assignments, you have to do that. You have to call the teacher and say, okay, you know, one of the childre will not participate in the class, because this is what happened, so it was something that affected us.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Like so is there anything that helps you cope during the pandemic? Because now that the pandemic's happened, you were definitely staying home a lot more. Is there anything at home that you found joy in, like did you enjoy being able to be with your kids more? Is there anything specific that you found happiness in during the pandemic?

Hamadi Jumale: I enjoyed staying home, I was spending time with the kids. And, but I miss a lot of working outside in my office, or being in public, meeting with friends or sharing all those stuff. We have, because everything now, in my work, we have to do as a Zoom meeting.

[REDACTED]

MATTHEW DZOAN: Is anything about yourself that's easier to understand now because of the pandemic?

Hamadi Jumale: Yes, right now I understand a lot, because I went to some of the trainings, getting all these resources from the CDC and other organizations, which is helping me cope with COVID-19.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Great so yeah. Is there anything else that you wanted to share today? Anything specific you wanted to talk about whether it's about yourself, or about Somali Bantu?

Hamadi Jumale: I will talk about the challenges that the organization, the community are facing: employment, housing, financial loss. In 2020, February, we had a lot of community members who have been laid off or they are losing jobs, or they have a part time job so they are not able to pay their bills or manage their finances so--Which was very challenging for us as leaders to find a job replace a job for the committee members--Or finding rental assistance, so, you know, some of them--The hard work we were doing was finding rental assistance, working with them on how to find employment, so it was a lot of work to manage it with the community members--How they can survive during this pandemic.

MATTHEW DZOAN: And what motivates you to work so hard for your community?

Hamadi Jumale: The reason why I'm working so hard in the community is--We, all our community members, they have language barriers. And they don't have resources, they can't find the resources for themselves. So, working with them, they feel like when they come to the office, to the Somali Bantu office, they feel like they came home. They can speak their language and they can get the resources they are looking for, or they can be referred to another office that can be able to assist them. So the reason why--What makes me work harder is--The community feels like anywhere they go, they have to find an interpretation. They're not getting someone who speaks their language or they cannot speak what they want. People are not understanding them, so they can't get what they want. So when they come to the office they feel like, okay, this is where I can speak my language, and I can say directly what I'm looking for.

MATTHEW DZOAN: It is safe to say that when you first came to San Diego, you wish there was a community like the Somali Bantu Community?

Hamadi Jumale: Yes, yes.

MATTHEW DZOAN: So I just wanted to say thank you Hamadi for taking time out of your day, out of your night to have an interview with a college student at UC San Diego.

Hamadi Jumale: Thank you, thank you. I'm so glad we did it.

MATTHEW DZOAN: Is there any final thing you wanted to say at all, before I stopped recording?

Hamadi Jumale: Thank you very much for the interview and I'm very happy. So the last thing that I will say, I will say thank you to the coalition. The coalition relieved me some of the stress that I had because working as a coalition--It helps me make a change in the organization.

[REDACTED]