

Interview 7

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

Gender of respondent: Male

Age:?

Q. Where were you born?

A. Egypt: Cairo.

Q. And where did you grow up?

A. After twenty-two years ... My teenage I was there in Egypt. And then I travel.

Q. Where did you travel?

A. The Middle East, Iraq, Jordan, Europe, France, Sweden, Holland, Belgium. Coming to the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico. That's it.

Q. What year did you come to the United States?

A. 1984. On June 22nd, 1984.

Q. Where was your father born?

A. Alexandria, Egypt.

Q. And where was your mom born?

A. South Egypt, like ... I don't know the city. I know she's from south.

Q. So that makes you first generation over here.

A. Right.

Q. And your ethnic background?

A. Egyptian. That's a hundred percent.

Q. What is your religious affiliation?

A. I believe in God. All religions are good. That's my philosophy. I'm not a fanatic one. I like ... I love Islam. I love Catholic. I love Jewish. I'm a kind of funny Muslim guy. You know? Like I go out, I drink. I have two kids. They're both men. My kids go to Catholic school, which is, you know, like, I have an open mind. Like I believe in better

education so I put my two kids in catholic school, which is, again, is against what the people think. I love Islam. Like we have some people very open minded. So they ... they believe in better education in Catholic school which is ... We are Muslim but some people believe in that so I send my kids to Catholic school.

Q. It's understandable. What is your highest level of education?

A. High school back home.

Q. High school back in Cairo?

A. Yeah.

Q. And what was your major field of study?

A. No. One of the general high school they just gave me. Like, they have English, they have science and, you know. I was taking English, with the language background.

Q. Right. So you have a high school diploma?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your main occupation now?

A. I'm truck driver.

Q. And what is the name of the company that you are working for?

A. It's called [name of company].

Q. Where is it located?

A. [location].

Q. And this is a full time job or part time?

A. Yes [full time].

Q. So what are the ages of your children?

A. [Age of children].

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

A. I was in Brooklyn Navy Yard at that time, close to the river, and I watched the whole scene alive across the river.

Q. So first hand you saw this?

A. Yes. I heard the bombs and I saw the building was on fire. I was in the truck and I run out. I was watching the whole thing. I put my truck radio on 1010 and I was listening and looking at the scene. You know? Like ... I don't know if you know Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Q. Yes.

A. You just look across the water and you can see the whole thing.

Q. Yeah. What was your first reaction?

A. First reaction was an accident. After a few minutes there and the second hit obvious it looks like something is going on here.

Q. Did you feel at all like there was any possibility that it was Muslims attacking?

A. I don't think about that at that time. The way it looks to me like it's very well organized things happened here. You know, I know these people sometime when they go crazy they blow themselves up, but it didn't hit me like somebody or some people they're going to be very organized in doing that. It looks like a big job for them so it didn't hit me at that time. No.

Q. Right.

A. I figured to be something else. I don't know. So I figured ... You know, people started pointing finger on different ways, so I figured, I thought to myself we should wait, and see what's going on first before we judge someone else. You know? Before raise ... People will go crazy. And I will not say it's Muslim because real Muslims shouldn't do that, if you think about it for real, because Islam never say kill. If you look at the Koran as a whole, never say kill. Islam is a very peaceful religion. But the way it is ... looks to me now, if they are it's like they're brainwashed. Like, you've taken someone, you brainwash him for a couple of months and you tell him God say do that, and you try to make everything possible for him, he will do it. Brainwash, he'll believe you. And if he believe you're an honest person, you're not going to do anything to harm him. And I believe that they are brainwashed about like, the things that's going like over hands, Bin Laddin and

here and here and here. Everything comes up to that. But I was really surprised, at the situation of Bin Laddin ... and all these guys. I was ... I was surprised by that. You know? Like when they admitted that they were. And I was shocked about that. That's what shocked me really. And...

Q. So do you have any vivid memories from September 11th, something that will never leave your mind?

A. Yes. I was standing when the things happened. I was loading my truck because what we do is, like, contract was bought or paid. We were doing some work for the schools, city, state, so outside, of course, I know that they is over. So I took my truck back to the ... my company. And the main things I have is my son is in downtown Manhattan where is the school is, few ... few ... like, less than half a mile away from the ... so I was scared. I was tried to call up the place. Everything was closed. Even walk. Tried to cross Manhattan Bridge to go down for my kid and they were blocking everybody. So what happened to me in that time I will never forget that, watching the whole smoke and everybody running, coming from downtown. I was just standing there and crying, I don't know why, crying from fear for something, like something big is coming again, or crying for my son, I cannot reach him, or crying for the way the people looked. I don't know, but I was crying but yet from the Brooklyn side. And I tried to run. And telephones, cell phones, everything was, like, messed up. I was, like, a nervous wreck. You know? And my ex-wife, finally she reached me and she was running to catch her daughter. She is in the midtown, Lexington Avenue and 65. She took a pipe and she went there to pick her up by the high school and to come back. And my son's school to hold my son until the situation gets better. And she did the whole thing because I cannot even cross Manhattan to get in. That was unusual experience. And the second day I don't go to work. I feel like I cannot face anyone. That's how I feel.

Q. Why did you feel like you couldn't face anyone?

A. When I heard this, like, from Arab organizations or Muslim organizations I felt so

bad. I went back to ... to the work the second day and everybody gave me the look like, you know, like what happened? What happened? Everybody ... all my co-workers they asked me what happened? Like, they make me feel like I'm responsible. So I decided not to go to work anymore for two days. I was sitting home and...

Q. Did you feel that people were more interested in knowing why this happened? Maybe they thought you had the answers? Or you really thought ... or they thought that you were involved?

A. I believe ... No, no, no, no. They just ... They want to know what happened because they think I'm more knowledge, in general, about the situation that was going on between Middle East and the United States and Israel and all of that. So they knew there is something going on there and they want ... Now ... Before, the people they don't pay mind; they don't pay attention to what's going on in politic. Now, I believe, our nation now as an American, because I become an American in 1989. I don't ... That is something to be proud of but what a ... I do think now after September 11th, that people is more educated now with more knowledge about what's going on now.

Q. How do you feel that it took something this big for people to have an interest in Middle Eastern politics and Islam?

A. I don't ... I will never say Islam. I will never say that because that's a bad judgment. I will say is the hate is a political ... political point. People do want to say something. And I think they ... they want to ... they want to have a point. That's what they did. It's stupid. You know? They want to say something and they did it that way.

Q. What do you think they tried to say?

A. They want to try to say, you know, like, we are hurt. That's what they've been trying to say I guess. And that was because Egypt is suffer from that. I don't know if you know.

Q. No.

A. In the '80s they used to ... told us buses and they tried to hurt the Egyptian economy and everybody was crying and screaming. And these people used to go everywhere,

running to England, France, Germany, even here asking for political refugee. And every country they used to protect these people. And now when the time is over in Egypt and they cut them off completely, like the whole ... they start to work in this country, like, they ... like, they see what's ... So Egypt was one of the first countries to suffer from them and they was asking for help and nobody paid attention at that time. And sometime is take ... it may take you ... take you, like, shocking things. But it's so sad because it was shock and it was a bad time. It cost you, like, thirty-five hundred people, which is they had nothing to do with them. So ... But politics is a very strange. When people think of politics they don't care who's going to go. You know what I'm saying?

Q. Yeah.

A. It's like...

Q. So have your feelings changed in recent months?

A. Yes I do. I believe it's not about politic issue now the way the media showing here in the U.S.A. is everything's about Islam. It's ... They don't ... they try to ignore the politic issue so this is what's going on now. I believe, it's like everything now against Islam. And I've been talking to you now. I've been talking ... I talked to my kids yesterday, as a matter of fact.

Q. About the same...

A. No. I told my kids something: I'm tired. I want to leave ... I want to leave New York, I told my kids, my daughter. I want to change my name. My daughter, she told me I shouldn't do it. But I told her I'm willing to do it because I can't take it any more. I have applied for three different jobs and I'm not getting any and I believe that is one of the reasons. I want to go ... I want to leave ... I want to quit my job and I have a fear that I cannot do it. And I can do better money somewhere else. But I lost confidence. I cannot do that. I am afraid to leave my job because I won't ... nobody's going to hire me. I'll be honest with you. That's what's going on in my mind. I cannot afford to stay home for one month, no work. Day after day bills keep coming. You know? I've become like in

American society now, like, I have necessities to deal with, kids, life style, everything. I won't be able to change it.

Q. So because of the situation you feel you're in, that if you leave your job you probably ... you feel that you won't get another job because of your ethnic background

A. And my name too.

Q. What kind of feelings do you have toward terrorists who are giving Muslims in this country a bad name?

A. A bad name.

Q. Who are giving them a bad image?

A. Wow! I don't know if ... because we're fighting with some people now, you don't see them. They have no faces. Like, you don't know who you're dealing with. You know what I'm saying? Like, this maniac that wasn't ... he went in Los Angeles airport last week. He just ... he's a angry person. I won't call him an Arab. I call him an angry person. He's been watching the media, like the Arabic media, for example. He's watching what the Israelis keep doing to Palestinians. He get very angry. He's blowing. His brain start to act stupid. He pulled a gun and he went there and boom, boom, boom! That's ... I wouldn't call this a terror ... I call this an individual act. He's an angry person. So it is ... like, it's different.

Q. Right.

A. Everybody can ... you know, my kid was in school. He has argument with some kids. He slammed them in the face, which is not nice but could be happened anywhere in school. They put my kid in the principal's office for four weeks by himself because he terrorized the kids, my son. And I had to take my kids off the school. And I used to pay cash, to pay money for my son to be in the school. They put him by himself, the poor kid. And I went to the principal crying, begging her to put him back with the kids. She don't want him in school. She told me, "Your son terrorized my kids." And they checked the

background and where he come from and I'm sure all that happened because when they called my ex-wife they don't call her Miss [name] ... They call her Miss [another name]. So they looked into the background of where she is, and where I am, and where is my son from. 'Cause even my kid, he's got to ... my son, which he has nothing to do with that.

Q. So what is the situation now? Did you...

A. My son had to come off the school.

Q. Oh.

A. I put him in a public school for the rest of the year and he graduated with “A” plus. He always does that, all his life. Maybe sometimes the kids act funny, but you cannot calling my kid a terrorized the class. It's like a new word now. Everybody uses it, like even for a child. They cannot talk ... terrorize the kids. That hurt me, really. I feel bad for the kid. Even if it wasn't my child I would still feel bad for him too.

Q. So how do you explain this to your children? How do you explain the anger that people exhibit toward them just because of their name and their ethnicity?

A. My son, thank God, all his friends ... a lot of them we know about. He left the school and then he went to another public school. He finished public school the year which is ... the public school where he was now does not belong to him. He's a ... I'm talking about intelligence and ... He's a “A” plus kid so I know his degrees are going to come down but God's always there. They opened a new school they call Science, Math and Science and Technology. He made the test and they accepted him.

Q. But how did you talk to your children about this? What do you try to tell them?

A. I spoke to my ex-wife, no more news allowed in the house. She is a very, very nice person, my ex-wife. She don't put the news anymore, like, you know, all about Bin Laddin. There was a lot of big mess the last few months so we cut this stuff off. I don't let my kids see that any more. And I keep him busy with games. And he's in the soccer club and I make him very busy and so we keep it quiet. We don't talk about it any more.

Q. So you don't want your children to have too much of a knowledge...

A. No. I don't want my children to be exposed with that. And a lot of families, they've been watching the news and they have the kids sitting next to them. I believe that's wrong.

Q. What do you feel it does to the children to watch news like that?

A. They ... they put, like, a fear in the kids and the kids, they act like, insecure. You be in your own home, in your country and you feel, like, insecure, like you can get hurt anywhere. That is wrong to show your kids the possibility you're going to get hit. That's wrong. As the father of the family you should teach your kids: I'm here next to you. Don't worry. I'll protect you. The country's going to protect you. The police is outside. The Army's outside. Everybody's here. You know? But the way the media reacts, like, these people over ... over act, like, oh, you got to watch the airport. Oh, you've got to watch the ... because they're going to bomb. Oh, you've got to watch that because ... crazy. If you remember after September 11th, the first week, how many bomb were threatened all over the City. Do you remember? Empire State. Empire State like, five or six times a day, that was crazy. People are so stupid calling and they think it's a joke. It's not a joke. The lady, she used to work for Empire State. She pushes ... I'm not going to take that. She left. People take ... They act different.

Q. How do you feel about the foreign policy of this country since September 11th, foreign policy towards Middle Eastern countries; how they react toward things that are happening overseas?

A. Foreign policy in this country here is like has been in one rule for the last forty years.

Q. What is that rule?

A. The way they're looking at it, is one country in the Middle East. They believe they are very democratic, they're very open minded, they're very liberal and free speech and free Presidents and all this stuff is only Israel, and they're not going to change about that. You know, some Arab countries, some Arab nations, they don't try to improve themselves to be as a free country, to improve themselves to the western countries: Yes, we are like

Israeli or maybe better. But I don't think that policy's going to change any time soon if they don't, Arab nations, improve themselves in a democratic way.

Q. Why do you think that Arab nations aren't improving towards democracy?

A. Democratic way?

Q. Yeah.

A. Everything comes from education. If you look at Egypt as a country it's almost sixty-five million. How many people educated? School education or college education. You can educate yourself. You don't have to go to college or high school. So I believe in educated in Egypt education as in Egypt as the biggest Arab population? I would say thirty percent of the people are educated and the rest, twenty, basic, and the rest are ignorant. They don't know any better.

Q. Right. So how do you think they ... how do you think you can change the leadership? Do you see a problem with the leadership or mainly with the people?

A. I will say the people first. It's the people like, the more educated themselves, they're not going to accept what the leadership does. I go with that. It's not the leaders.

Q. So you definitely think that there's a difference in the way Middle Easterners and Muslims have been treated here since September 11th on the whole?

A. Absolutely. Absolutely. You want to hear something funny? I'm a single guy. I could be a very attractive guy. I could not be like whatever dream man for any women. But before that I used to go out with some girls as ... You know? And now sometimes like, I'm getting bored stayed in the house. I going on line. Sometimes I used to go chat rooms sharing with people. Sometimes I go out blind date, all this stuff. I can't do that anymore. You know? You understand me?

Q. Yeah.

A. Like, some people are going to ask me what is my name, what race. I don't know what to say. Do you understand me? There's a change with me too and it's...

Q. So have you experienced any discrimination, any...

A. Yes I do.

Q. Has anyone attacked you...

A. Personal? Yes. Yes.

Q. In public places it has?

A. No. It don't happen. But almost happened with September 11th or September 12th, across the street from the store there. One guy was coming out of a bar. He's half drunk but he's an American hero now and he wants to fight with me. And I'm sure, the way he looks, he never pay taxes on his life. But all of a sudden he's an American hero now. I've been here eighteen years. Check my file, my record. I've been paying taxes all my life. I never went to welfare or anything. I've been working hard, paying tax. But this one here, he come out of the bar, he's an American hero, he's forcing the Chinese man across the street to put an American flag on his damn front door. He force him, actually. I was watching that.

Q. Physically forced him?

A. No. You know, like, the man, he was like ... he was going ... You know how those Chinese are. He put the flags, want ... make holes in the tent, which is this thing, like, three thousand dollar, to put the American flag. It's not about ... You cannot force anybody to love the flag. You cannot force them. If you don't believe in your heart you love this country, you love the stars, you love the stripes, you love what that means, all that, it's not going to do anything to you. But I believe some people start to put the American flags on the car, which support that ... some fears. Do you get my point?

Q. Yeah. It only happens after we get attacked.

A. Yeah, for fear. It's not because they believe it a hundred percent.

Q. What do you think they're afraid of?

A. Afraid of...

Q. Like, the regular American citizens of non-Arab descent who put American flags up. What do you ... what do you think they're afraid of?

A. I know a lot of Arabic here, a lot of Arabic people that live here used to have, like, a Koran hanging down by the windows, somewhere down, something on a car. They take everything off. Everybody worried about it, smashing cars here and...

Q. So you mentioned that his guy, this drunk guy coming out of the bar and wanting to fight with you.

A. No, because ... Yeah. Yeah. He was going to ... He would look at me and he was looking to fight with me. He gave me a straight look. When I was backing up my car outside to take my car, he wants to fight. I ignore him and I did the right thing, see? 'Cause I don't like what I'm doing with him. I'm not going anywhere. He's a half drunk.

Q. Have you experienced anything else where anyone has tried to...

A. Argument, arguments every day.

Q. Arguments about what?

A. Politics and all this stuff. Some people don't understand. You know?

Q. People walk up to you and ask questions?

A. Yeah, yeah, something like that, argue.

Q. And these are just random people that you don't know?

A. Mostly like, mostly I know. Some people they do understand what's going on here. But you know what? I learned here in this country you do freedom of speech and this ... I learned that here. I can say ... If I don't like Bush I will say that. I can say that anywhere. I don't like Bush. I was in Iraq for twenty-two months. If I say such a word like I don't like Saddam they will cut my head there, from experience. So there is something I appreciated what I have it now to be here. And some people appreciate here. I'm not going back home. It's not because I hate my country or background, no, 'cause I love it here. I like it here. I've become ... Like half of my life is already here. I like it here. I don't deserve to be treated that way, if you look at it. I don't deserve that. I'm honest working. I pay my taxes, work very hard. I support my kids. I want my kids to be very good kids. You know? I don't deserve that. And I'm sure they have a lot of people like that.

Q. Has anybody else in your family experienced any kind of...

A. I have no family here.

Q. No family here.

A. Only by myself.

Q. So there was just your son in school.

A. Or my daughter I have. My daughter, she never had any complaint. Maybe she's big and her name she can get away with. I don't know. It's my last name. I have no idea.

Q. Do you think that Middle Eastern organizations in New York have been doing enough to...

A. No, no, no, no, no, of course not.

Q. What would you like to see being done by these organizations to improve the way Muslims are being treated and improve relations overseas?

A. They don't have a voice.

Q. Why do you think that that's so?

A. They don't have control. Look at the Jewish community here, how many are here. The Jewish population in the United States is about six million. In New York alone there's over two million. Look how they control their life. Look at the Jewish family. They have six kids, six kids, spit them out and then private school, the Yeshiva, send them there. From the six kids you've already got ... you've got accountants, lawyers, accountant, whatever. And one is no good he has five or six ninety-nine cent stores, the one isn't good. You understand me. And they always stick together. They don't buy from no one else. If you're a Jew, from Jew. They support each other. What the Arab community have? They don't look for that. They never get that.

Q. Why do you think so?

A. The Arab as an Arab has twenty-two states or maybe more or less. They agree about some things, all of them. They agree on one thing. You want to know what?

Q. Yeah.

A. Not to be agreed on anything. That's the philosophy of that.

Q. It's that apparent. But why do you think they don't agree on anything?

A. You go ... If you look in ... in the past before '70s, the Arab nations they were divided, Iraq with Russia, Egypt with Russia, Syria with Russia. Jordan, America, Saudi with America. They were all divided. They all have before ... the days when I'm talking about, the Cold War before the Russian collapse. So the thing is over and they're still divided mentally.

Q. Even when they come to this country?

A. Yes. They're still...

Q. Even here?

A. If you look at ... at it here, Egyptians are ... they don't like Syrians too much. Syrians, they don't like Palestinians too much. Lebanon, they hate Syrians and Palestinians. It's the way they are.

Q. So do you feel that there's been any kind of unity after September 11th or no?

A. There should be, at least self-defense. At least defend yourself. But then they're ... they afraid. Even if they think about it they will be afraid to get reunion and talk about it.

Q. Why do you think they're afraid?

A. If you look at Arabs here, like in the mosque ... I don't go to mosque. I don't pray. I'm not a religious person. I'm not ... I go there, like, on occasion, once a year. I shouldn't be proud of that but there is ... that's me before. I drink. But the way ... Especially after September 11th like, if let's go ... say, let's go get fifteen, twenty educated persons like, they work in the courts, have good positions here, let's go get together and talk. Before they start to talk about this you will see what's going on in Syria. They're all going to react very stupid, and everybody: Why you want to get a group off for? Why you want to talk about it? The FBI ... They say: Everybody's going to send them about what these people talk ... You know what I'm saying? It's not like things is different now. I don't think it's going to be easy anymore.

Q. So when it comes to tolerance and understanding between Middle Eastern organizations and United States organizations do you think there is more...

A. What do you mean by United States organizations, American secular organizations?

Q. Government agencies. Do you think there's more harmony and understanding or do you think there's more chaos between them?

A. No. It's no understanding. It's like miscommunication now. Even if they try to do something good to express themselves, there's going to be miscommunication now.

Q. Where do you think the miscommunication comes from?

A. Can't trust. They don't trust each other. I believe so. They don't trust ... Look at it that way. Honest. Like, from what I've seen now. I don't know what's going on exactly. I read sometime in ... in the paper like they're arresting people and if they found any our race, the Muslim race, have no green card, they just ship him, boom, no time. And if you look around here how many Mexican, how many different races here, they don't have a green card and they still put them down for one day and they take them back again. It's ... it's now ... the issue now is Arab and Islam. Bad news here. Let's go work on them. That's it. So me, I have not any reason to be complaining because I never had any problems, personally, never had any problems. But from where I read and I've heard, I heard a lot of stories. But I never have any experience, never.

Q. What do you think that members of the Arab community can do to improve the way Americans are treating them and improve relations between them and the U.S. government?

A. How are you going to improve something if you have no communication? You've got to start with communication. You've got to start with some. Like, you start it from the police and the police goes higher to communicate with someone. They're not going anywhere. You want to make a meeting you've got to get police permit. That's how it's started, little by little. You know, like, we just ... we don't just go down a park and get a microphone and start talking, let's go support our country. Of course not. It's got to be

organized ... organized a nice way.

Q. What do you think it will take for Arabs to become politically active, like, members of other...

A. They are active but they're not ... they're not, like, there are not many. But they have politically active, but I don't see in New York, somewhere else maybe. Michigan, yes.

Q. How about Florida?

A. Florida, maybe different states. But not in New York. New York is a very funny ... You know why?

Q. Why?

A. 'Cause of the green dollar. Everybody's hungry. Everybody wants to make money. They don't think about it ... nothing else. New York is a magic city. If you don't work, if you don't put like, twelve hours, fifteen hours a day, you're not going anywhere, if you think about it.

Q. That's true.

A. You need that.

Q. So given the way Arabs are treated right now would you encourage somebody from overseas to emigrate here?

A. You have to understand he's going to ... Whoever who is going to come now the first time is going to be harassed and it'd happen. I don't know. I heard some people comes to the airport, they sent them back for no reason, just they're unwanted now. Immigration now involved, near anything is happening ... involved. Before, police, now immigration. And the police they have no power now. They can ... they cannot stop you. The cops can stop you anywhere now. Even if you don't have paper the police can pull in, boom, take you away. There is a change.

Q. So you wouldn't encourage people to come here?

A. Yes, I will.

Q. You would?

A. You will ... I will if ... I will do it. Personal, I would do it, yes. I would come back there, yeah. Things will come one day to be clear and I hope. I hope one day, nothing happen again. Because if it's going to happen again something like that you know what's going to happen. They're going to put all of these people in a camp like World War II. I don't want to see that because some people they don't deserve that really. But the anger of the American citizens, they're going to fix a blow if it's ... if it's going to happen again.

Q. So let me ask you a question. If it came to that, hypothetically, if it came to that and you and your family were rounded up to be put in a camp what do you think you would do about it?

A. I may be over react now but ... but you know what? I would be angry personally, too, as been living here all these years because I'm going to get attacked, it's going to hurt me. Economic wise, I'm going to get hurt. But as an American born and raised here the people are going to get very angry. And that's what happened with Japanese. Like, remember the things when they hit Pearl Harbor? They put all the Japanese in a camp. And I expect something like this is going to happen here.

Q. So we've talked about all these negative consequences from September 11th. But do you feel that there are any positive consequences?

A. Positive? Like, Palestinian issue you're talking about? Or positive like Arab community?

Q. Well, there is a bigger understanding of Arabs: who they are, where they're from. There's a bigger understanding of Islam. People are wanting to be educated which may be a positive consequence. Do you see anything else being positive?

A. No.

Q. Not even with the Palestinian issue?

A. I don't think the Palestinian issue is going to be solved any time soon. No. And I agree with the things like Mubarak-Arafat. It think it's time for him to go. And if he's a honest person he should resign, not to wait for someone to tell him leave. He should give

somebody else a chance to take that. He's been trying for thirty years. I think his time is over thirty years. I think he should give somebody else a chance. I recommend one leader over there but they're not going to put it down. She's a beautiful lady who's named Hanan Ashrawi. She's excellent. She can lead this nation. She can get everybody under her arms. But the Palestinians, they're not going to go for it for two reasons.

Q. She's a woman?

A. That's number one. She's not Muslim. She's Christian, but she's very smart and intelligent talking and she's an awesome lady. And she's the only one she can lead these people. But the Middle Eastern, like, especially Palestinian, they're not going to go for that. But that's personal opinion. I don't know if you know her.

Q. What do you think Palestinians feel about Arafat? Do you think the majority wants him to stay or want him to go?

A. Even if they don't want him to stay, now they want him to stay.

Q. Why?

A. Because the Americans, they don't want him. Now the Palestinians want him. It's all about, like, games because Sharon ... they believe Sharon comes here and he asked the President to take Arafat out. That's that the Palestinian believes.

Q. Why do you think that Arabs and Muslims hate America? Do you think they do hate America?

A. People make you think Arabs and Muslims hate America?

Q. It's just a question. Do you feel that they do hate America or that...

A. No, of course not. If you go back to Egypt the old days, '70s like, there is ... they don't hate America. That's wrong. They may, some people, hate the American policies overseas but they don't hate America as American people mean. You understand?

Q. Right.

A. It's different. Even if you are American citizen and you love your country that doesn't mean you love the American policy. You have the right to say yes or no. You have the

right to express yourself. And I believe the Arabs do that too. They don't like the American policy but they love American style. They love American movies. I used to, back home dress like this, go watch movie, the American movies. I loved them. I love the American style. And as an American citizen and being here all these years I love this country. But it doesn't mean I have to love the President. I learned here I don't have to love him. I liked Clinton. I don't like Bush. It doesn't mean I'm a criminal now.

Q. No.

A. You know what I'm saying?

Q. What do you think the U.S. can do to resolve the problem of terrorism in the United States?

A. Who are the terrorists? Who are they? If you're looking out at the terrorists you don't talk about country. You're talking about some group, some people. These people they can be anywhere. They can be here, they can be in England, Jordan, Iraq, in Egypt. They can be anywhere. How are you going to get these people? That's the funny one. Like, if you're talking about, like, go ... let's go hit on Iraq, bombing in Iraq, that's not going to resolve the terrorist problem. It's not.

Q. So you don't feel there's any way to stop it?

A. I believe if the Palestinian/Israelis issue is over and everybody's happy I don't think ... is not going to ... I don't think there's going to be any more terrorism.

Q. What about a different education system in the Middle East?

A. No. I disagree with that now.

Q. Why do you disagree with that?

A. Because people there ... like, you're not going to change their education. Like, what are you going to teach them? The American people are so beautiful? What are you going ... What are you having in mind education? Koran?

Q. No. But what are they teaching? Like, a lot of the schools right now are teaching hate for America, hate for Israel.

A. That's wrong. If you got this information it's wrong. I disagree with that. I born there and I'm raised there, and that time when I grew up American and Egyptian, that time they was a buddy. That's before Saddam. I don't know if they're any more. I never learned that in school and I don't believe they're teaching that in school in Egypt. I'm talking about Egypt. I don't think they teach that in school now.

Q. Do you think it's possible in other countries?

A. It could be in Afghanistan and Iran but not in Egypt, no. A hundred percent no. No.

Q. Are there any other points or comments or questions that you have?

A. Just hope for peace. That's all we have, hope for peace. Hope things get better. That's it. I hope things get better. These people fighting for fifty-five years and they bring the problem to our land here, to our cities. I think we should focus on that. And the Palestinian/Israeli problem, try to get it resolve now. We need that. And I think it could work, positive side, and be all right.

Q. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for participating.

A. Very welcome. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Q. Thank you.