

April 10, 2021

*Interviewee is staying anonymous. They are a Syrian college student, studying in the U.S.*

Cristy: Can you talk about your exit story?

Interviewee: I remember the day when we said goodbye to my grandma and aunts. And I also remember my mom preparing everything. It wasn't so much a "goodbye", it was more of a "see you later". I was excited to go and travel; we went to Disneyland and lived our childhood normally. The worst part was that the feeling that we weren't coming back was slowly building up; it was unexpected. I always ask myself if it is easier to not be able to come back because of something like a war or to willingly make the decision to not come back and leave your family behind?

Cristy: What do you miss the most about Syria?

Interviewee: I miss Nadi Halab. I also miss the fact that you can take a short drive and see your whole family or friends. I miss the strong community. What I miss the most are things that aren't physical but rather the feelings; knowing that my grandparents are safe, being financially stable, knowing that you have everything you need around, especially because your parents have built their lives there. And the things you will not get back, the people you won't get to see.

Cristy: Do you think the people you know in the U.S have an accurate image of Syria? Why or why not?

Interviewee: I can't generalize but for the people around me, I don't think they have an accurate image but I don't think that's important. You don't need to get sympathy from your background. Instead, you need to represent yourself well and show that you are a good person and part of the reason you are good is because of your experiences, background and country.

Cristy: Have you been treated differently because you said you were Syrian or spoke Arabic? If so, how?

Interviewee: In college, you are praised for it. People there are educated, and they value that you know multiple languages. Also, in college, I realized that some hesitate to talk in Arabic when other groups of people are also talking in Arabic, which honestly I don't understand why.

Cristy: How did the language change affect you?

Interviewee: For the better I think. But it was hard to express myself in english because I considered it a formal language.

Cristy: How did you deal with the added responsibilities that you had to take while still very young, because of the war?

Interviewee: When you are young you don't really feel those added responsibilities. It makes you a better person. Part of me is grateful that I had to take on more responsibilities because of it as it made me the person I am today. It's sometimes hard but what can you do? You can't just focus on the hard.

Cristy: What would you like the world to know about Syrians?

Interviewee: To not to forget us when talking about other minorities as Arabs are also a minority. To be knowledgeable about what is happening to arab countries. Actually understand what is happening in Syria and not just surface level understanding. And not to put a sign saying you support them while also supporting actions that destroy them.