

Ruby Abdulla

Where: At her home in Charleston, WV

Date: April 13, 2016

Location: Charleston, WV

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 22:57 + 4:31 + 29:03 = 56:31

Ruby Abdulla

Ruby Abdulla, b. 1949, is an immigrant from southern India (via Canada). She was born in Madurai. Abdulla is Muslim and a member of India's Memon community, a cultural minority. She is active with the Islamic Center in Charleston and is a skilled home cook, preparing traditional southern and northern Indian dishes. I met with her for lunch at her home.

EH: Emily Hilliard

RA: Ruby Abdulla

NF: Nariman Farah

00:00

RA: Would you like some water?

EH: Sure, I'll have some water—thanks.

Thank you.

Okay. So could you tell me your name and where and when you were born?

RA: My name is Ruby Abdulla and I was born in India in 1949.

EH: And where you born?

RA: It was in the city called Madurai, about 300 miles south of Chennai, which used to be called Madras.

EH: Okay. And what did your parents do?

RA: My dad came from a business family and they dealt in textiles and that was one of the reasons my great-grandfather migrated to the south of India from you can say a Northwest part of India called Gujarat. And they settled there.

EH: And what was your childhood like there?

RA: We had excellent schools in Madurai and I went to a convent run by the sisters from America and we did my schooling over there. Also we, there's 6 of us in my family, my siblings—I have 5 siblings and we all grow up and went to schools and colleges over there and I went to college, I come from a community called Memon community which, you are not going to find anybody in West Virginia—maybe there might be one, but you know... so this particular Memon community is kind of a minority of the minorities and we do not have a language, a written language, so we write in Gujarati but the dialect we have, it's a dialect we speak, so we speak this dialect called Memoni at home. And so that's how we grew up and in schools, of course, they were all English as first language, and of course we studied this, and also studied Hindi as a second language. And then at home we used to get Urdu papers and magazines so I learned Urdu and Gujarati just by learning to read.

EH: And does—is it Memon? Am I saying that right? Okay. Is there a cultural aspect to that too?

RA: Yes, it's a very different culture from any of the other Muslim communities. The clothing is different, the food is different, they have you know, all the traditions and things are different. They are Muslims, of course. The religious beliefs are the same, but the culture is totally different from the rest.

EH: How is the clothing different?

RA: The clothing is different in that they have—remember the era here, was it the Elizabethan era?

EH: Uh-huh

RA: Where they had these long dresses?

EH: Mmhm.

RA: So that's how my mom, you know, my grandmother had these long dresses and they would wear lose pants and a very long scarf. Those are the three pieces of clothing which was very impractical when I was going to school and college! I couldn't wear the long dresses and my mom didn't expect me too either so we kind of came up with the shalwar kameez at that point. So I started wearing—I wore dresses a lot when I was growing up but then as I grew up, you know in the Muslim community, you cannot wear short dresses and as you grow up, so we have to modify our clothing, but you know, we didn't actually wear the long dress like my mom because we had to play sports and games and sometimes volleyball and all this. So we just had to wear those, you know shalwar kameezes. So that's how we kind of transitioned on that.

EH: Okay. What about the food?

RA: The food is totally different, cause it's a... everything is... in a culture everything is borrowed so, because the Memon community is a Muslim community, but they wear kind of in the Hindu city—predominated by the Hindu culture, so we borrowed a lot of traditions from the Hindu culture, and but at the same time, the Hindus were strictly vegetarians where the Muslims were not. So some of the vegetarian dishes you can say we borrowed a little bit from the traditions, but the meats and things that came a little bit more from the Muslim kings brought... the Persian kings ruled India for a long time so some of the culture's—the food that came from that, we borrowed that from there.

EH: Mmhm. And when did you come to the United States.

RA: I think it was 1976 we came. But before that we were in Canada, in New Brunswick. St. John's, New Brunswick in Canada for about 5 years. My husband came as an intern and he wanted to do his residency, so we really came to Canada but it was too cold for us. So we thought, well we would go down south, so we spent a year in Schenectady/Albany, New York.

EH: Also cold!

RA: Also cold! So we thought we can go further down south! (laughs) And we came here and then we stayed here.

EH: And why did you chose Charleston, West Virginia?

RA: My husband just fell in love with the mountains. And he said this is a nice place to have a family and raise the kids. And we kind of liked the you know, community, and stayed here.

EH: Did you find a pre-existing Muslim community here?

RA: Yes, there were already a few people, not, I mean since then the community has grown but even at that time, there were maybe 20, 30 families here. So, we came to know them and in the beginning there was, they go together in a makeshift place in Nitro—they had a small, it was a home that was kind of

converted into a prayer place and that's where we used to go to worship and you know, in Islam, your prayers can be done at home, except for the Friday's prayer, which is a congregational prayer. And it is incumbent upon the men to go—the women can pray at home if they want to, but if they want to go to the mosque, they can.

EH: So are you a member of the mosque here?

RA: Yes, we were a member for many years of the Islamic Center here.

EH: I came to the Interfaith Meeting that was there with the different speakers—that was really nice.

RA: Yeah, we joined... now this, as you saw, it was the 66th year of the Kanawha Valley Interfaith Council, so we were invited in the 1990s, it was early 1990, we joined the Interfaith Council. And then later on the Hindu community came on board, and the Bahai too.

EH: What is the Muslim community like here and what, you know regular gatherings and celebrations do you have?

10:33

RA: Well we have 2 holidays that we have that are the religious holidays—one comes after the fasting month of Ramadan, which will be starting in June and right after that we have a celebration called Eid. Eid al-Fitr. And the second one follows 2 months later and that is, coincides with the time people go on a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. And that is based on the sacrifice that Abraham did where he was going to sacrifice his son. And that's based on that sacrifice, that holiday. It comes at the time—people when they go for Hajj to Mecca, we have a celebration. Anybody who doesn't, even though we don't ... we celebrate it. And that's called Eid Al-Adha, or the feast of sacrifice.

EH: And how do you celebrate it here?

RA: Here? Well there's a special prayer on that day, in the morning, it's a congregational prayer, everyone goes. And then after the prayer we kind of meet each other, greet each other and then we visit friends, a lot of charities are given. And also you can, you know, people do make a point to visit people who are sick and all that. And of course, gift exchange, you know, the kids, they expect a lot of gifts—you know how they are! They are ready to (wear?) Then of course, the Islamic Center sponsors a nice lunch for everybody, so we do gather at lunch.

EH: So is that for both of them?

RA: For both of them, yes. At that time what happens is not only Charleston, but people from the surrounding areas also come and attend this because it's the largest city here in Charleston. We get to see people from Huntington and Beckley also.

EH: Are there other groups that come out of the community at the mosque for other purposes?

RA: Other than this we, whenever we do some kind of an event, you know, open houses, in fact we are doing one this Saturday. And this particular one is just for the people in the mosque, but it's a, it's kind of a workshop on drug abuse, but later on we're going to open it up to the public. Later on.

EH: How did you learn to cook?

RA: When I was in college, I took... my main focus was on home economics and I learned to cook, but you have to remember, I'm living in a different culture at the time, so I, what we cooked at home was nothing like what I learned to cook in the college because it's south Indian cooking. So I learned quite a bit of that tradition, but at home of course, we made different foods. And we used to have a full-time cook and he was there as a young man and he kind of grew old with us. He was there for many years. So whenever he prepared anything, I would just go into the kitchen and I would observe him. I had an interest in cooking. So I wouldn't attempt to cook for everybody because I'm sure I would have ruined the food. (laughs) But I always observed and see how the spices go in and how things, so that helped me a lot when I came with my husband. I knew how to do the cooking. So I started small and then, you know. It just, you just learn it as you go along, so that's how I learned.

EH: So what do you make mostly now, do you make south Indian food?

RA: No, no, I still make the traditional, our cooking that was the main thing that I learned. And then we were doing, we loved the food—it's called dosa. It's a south Indian food.

EH: Mmhm—I've had that.

RA: And it really requires a lot of preparation because there is grinding of the grains and the lentils, rice and lentils and then you have to marinate it for overnight so we would always come home and tell my mom—we want to eat that, we want to eat the dosa! So finally she told the cook that we better make the dosa for the kids. So every Sunday that was a treat at home. We had dosa and the gravy and the lentils that go with it—it's called sambar, so we ate those and sambar. And one, if ever there was a Sunday that we couldn't, everyone was really throwing a fit or upset because we really wanted the dosas growing up. So I learned how to do that and of course I can do it now. Some things you always learn, you know, but not the full entire cooking.

EH: Right. Have you had to change how you make things because you can't get them here?

RA: In the beginning I did. We didn't have many things available. We used to travel sometimes to Washington or to whenever we went to a big city we would shop for the spices and we would bring it here. And we used to do, I used to do mail order from New York. They used to, they sent us food through UPS, you know all the rice and the spices and lentils—everything would be sent here to the door. I thought that was pretty good! But as time went on, these Indian stores have popped up everywhere now, the grocery stores, there's one in Kanawha City here and one in downtown Charleston so we can get, you know, everything here.

EH: Where did you order in New York... does it start—I'm blanking on the name.

RA: I don't know.

EH: It starts with an S?

RA: I think it was called Patel Brothers, or one of those big chains. Yeah.

EH: Yeah. So what do you make—daily basis, what are some things that you make?

RA: Daily basis, I make you know, we make breads, and this is a flatbread I make. It's unleavened, you know, and it's made from whole wheat flour, that's something we make at home every day. And we also make rice and there's a rice and lentil mix called kitchari. It's a very common food, the Turkish people make it I found out, the Arabic people make it, the Iranian people make it and so the Indian people make it. So I have that today, we made that today.

EH: Oh, nice.

18:59

RA: So it's a mix of rice and lentil. And there's a very traditional dish called curry, which you make it with a lentil flour called besan, which, you can get that here. And it's a mixture of—it's made with yogurt and some special seeds and spices.

EH: Hold on, let me just look at my questions... How have you found in West Virginia that there's any discrimination or have you ever been faced with misunderstanding of Muslim culture?

RA: I personally have not come across anything of that sort. But I have heard people complain and say, you know, that either—I'm also in a realtor business, I'm an Old Colony realtor here in Charleston and as you know, discrimination is one of the nos, you know. So, but I have heard people coming from different countries and they are, when they go to rent a place, they're not allowed. They would say that we have no vacancies, and then you know, when they turned around, they had been rented to some other people. So this is still going on, I mean people come and tell me this, but I don't know who's doing it. And also in the past a friend of mine, she's a school teacher and she's also worked with the Kanawha County Board. So when she was first applying for a job she went to the St. Albans community, somewhere there, where she was denied vacancies. This was almost 25, 30 years ago. And then she was offered, and then when another person came in, she was offered the job, so she went to the higher authorities and took care of that at that point. That was a long time ago. But there are some things going on, you know, subtle things going on. Also there was a time when some of the Arabic Muslim people, when they want to wear the hijab, they were not allowed to work in the Charleston Area Memorial Hospital, and then they had to kind of come... now you can see, they are okay. I think it was just, they didn't understand the culture, and you know, they have come over that. Also in the schools, some of the girls at George Washington High School had problems in the beginning a few years ago when they were wearing the hijab, some of the students didn't understand them, some of the teachers didn't, but they have overcome that now. There's a lot of students now at the University of Charleston, George Washington High School, the middle school—John Adams, and they are fine. (phone rings)

EH: Do you want to get that? I can stop.

22:57

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00:00

EH: So do you think in general it's getting more accepting of diversity here?

RA: Generally speaking yes, it's... in Charleston itself I don't see much of a problem but as you go into some of the counties, there is. And there's actually a program coming up called "Ask a Question" and that's going to be featured on the 17th, I'm not sure, I got to check the date on that, where they're going to set up this table outside Walmart on Corridor G and all faith group representatives will be there. And people will be coming in and out and I think they're going to serve donuts and water and say, "ask us a question" so that's something, we'll have to see how it goes. But like I said, in Charleston, people are more accepting of cultures. Sometimes I go to work in my shalwar kameez, I have gotten compliments!

EH: Well it's very beautiful!

RA: So I don't think people have any problem. But you know, it's just that sometimes of a hindrance at work, even when I'm cooking I have to kind of watch because these loose flowing clothes, you don't want to be near the kitchen or the range, you know. So for practicalities sake, for me it's much more practical to wear a top and a pants, or something to go to work. And also in the wintertime, it's also very practical to do that.

EH: Are there other people I should talk to in the Muslim community or the interfaith community who are maybe elders in their community or church or practitioners of food, traditional food or music or art?

RA: In the Muslim community?

EH: Yeah, or even if in the greater—you know...

RA: Yes, I can give you some names and you might want to check with them and see. And talk to them. I have a friend here, her name is Nariman and she's from Sudan and she follows her traditional clothing, no matter whether it's winter, summer, she's comfortable wearing her clothes, and a lot of her cooking, when we cook together, we cook a lot of things similar—foods. And then they have of course some differences. And you know Sudan is in Africa.

EH: Right

RA: But sometimes I think a lot of Muslim traditions bring some things together also.

EH: Yeah, I was working with a woman who was Algerian, talking about some of her traditional foods, and some of the celebrations, the foods for celebration are similar, even though it's more of a Mediterranean flavor.

RA: Yes. You know, mainly when we open our fast, no matter where you are in the world, we always open with a date, even though dates don't grow, I don't think they grow in India, I'm not sure. But they come from different countries, you know Mediterranean countries.

EH: Yeah.

RA: And it's of course, everything is available everywhere now, but we do open our fast with the dates. So that's a tradition. And traditions, it's a fluid. Their cultures are so fluid that they just mix with each other.

EH: Well do you have anything else you want to add?

4:19

RA: No, we can go... I can show you some of the food we prepared.

EH: Yeah, I might take photos and maybe leave this on a little bit. Well thank you.

4:31

END OF TAPE

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00:00

EH: Alright.

RA: You want to see what I stick with the whole wheat flour?

EH: Sure.

RA: This is a whole wheat chapatti flour, or roti flour that you can buy in the Indian store. It comes in a big 10 pound bag... You just mix it with water until the dough is all ready. And then you leave it for an hour, half an hour. And then you start rolling, rolling like this. So and once all of them are, half of them are rolled out, you can start using this flat iron pan. And...

Start making them.

EH: That's a nice rolling pin.

RA: This rolling pin's from India.

EH: It's very cute.

RA: Yeah. Because, I can't find this! So I just brought this one from home.

EH: Usually they're a lot bigger.

RA: They're a lot bigger! So this one...

EH: I actually wrote my master's paper on an Indian woman in Chapel Hill, North Carolina who had community dinners out of her home for 12 years and then she opened a restaurant. And she made dosa and I took a video of her making dosa.

RA: Dosa. So I can make that too. I thought this would be more interesting.

EH: Yeah, yeah.

RA: So you know what happens is like the children like to play with the dough when they're hungry, so we give them like, you can also get little ones for the kids, so we just give it to them and they learn. My kids used to have a small one, and I took pictures of them, they're somewhere in an album. But they wanted to do the rolling. Kids love to roll, you know the dough?

EH: Yeah.

RA: And this, the other bread, we make the puri. Have you eating a puri?

EH: I don't think so.

RA: It's fried.

EH: Is it P-U-R-I?

RA: Mmhm. I'll take you to a wedding if you want to go to.

EH: Oh!

RA: Would you want to go?

EH: Sure!

RA: I don't think they would care. And this is also going to be an Afghani... they are from Afghanistan, like Pakistan, but he's more... ? So they have a tradition. He's getting a cook from Washington, D.C. I'll let you know. It's going to be at the embassy.

EH: Okay.

RA: So when they have the henna, it's going to be very interesting. She will be there too.

EH: I've actually been to two Indian weddings—one was in Utah, and that was a Hindu wedding and the other was in London and that was a Jain wedding.

RA: So you haven't been to a Muslim wedding?

EH: No!

RA: Okay! (laughs) Good. In Charleston.

EH: I did get henna.

RA: In your hand? Did you get it?

EH: Yeah at the... I think maybe both of them actually.

RA: It's still in there. You mean for the making this?

NF: Yeah. Okay.

RA: No, you want it...

(sizzling sounds)

EH: And is this just the flour and water?

RA: Flour and water. And a touch of oil. Some people add salt. I don't. It gives it, if you like that salty taste...

EH: Yeah.

RA: I just made a few, so we can... So we do have, usually there's a wooden plaque like that. But everyone sits down on the floor to cook... that's the tradition. But now, all the kitchens are like this, in India. Standing cooking. But we used to sit down and cook.

EH: That sounds nice.

RA: Yeah! They used to...you know it's like, like a low chair. You know, with the four... Like a stool but with a back. People would sit and do...

EH: Okay.

RA: So we got 8. The hotter that is the better.

EH: The pan?

RA: Yeah, so it can cook quick and fast.

EH: Did you bring that pan back?

RA: No, this one, you know what? Long time ago, it has a story behind it. There was a restaurant going out of business here. And I used to just go and see what they have and they don't have, and I found this pan and I thought, well I'm gonna get it. Because it had a handle. And I'll show you the traditional pan that comes from India, but that does not have a...

Hmm? You gonna make it?

NF: Yeah, show her how the...

RA: Okay. This one... And I brought that pot from home also. This one. See this?

EH: Oh yeah.

RA: It's... you can put any warm food in here, it's thermal. And then close it. I usually keep the rotis in here.

7:46

RA: (to Nariman) Did you make the roti before? Before you come here? Like this?

NF: Yeah... Same but a little bit different.

RA: How? How different? Do you make it like...?

NF: Not same, same...

Ra: If we are lucky, they will just come up...

NF: It's cause it's the first one...

RA: See once I turn it, the trapped air like this, it puffs up the whole layer...

EH: Ah yeah.

RA: See? And now you can put some butter or if you like it.

EH: Uh-huh. How old are your kids?

RA: My kids? My kids are in their 30s. My daughter is in D.C.

EH: Okay.

RA: Washington. And my son is in ...

EH: Okay. I moved from D.C. before I moved here.

RA: Oh really? Where'd you live?

EH: I lived in Takoma, D.C.

RA: Takoma.

EH: Where does she live?

RA: She is right on Wisconsin Avenue.

EH: Okay. Nice.

RA: Near the National Cathedral. I love that National Cathedral. I love to walk into that rose garden.

EH: Do you visit her often?

RA: Yeah, I go. She comes more than I go.

EH: Uh-huh.

RA: They had their... How long were you in D.C.?

EH: I lived there for 4 years.

RA: Did you work there?

EH: Mmhm. Yeah, I worked for Smithsonian Folkways. And then I was working for the National Council for Traditional Arts. I did some stuff in there, just outside of D.C., up New Hampshire Avenue with all the churches. I was doing a project around there and I did a lot with the Cambodian Buddhist Temple—the Cambodian Buddhist Temple.

11:17

RA: So you have tried all different kinds of foods, right?

EH: Mmhm. Not all of them, but I'll try anything.

RA: I had made a very traditional, we call it kheema. It's ground beef, with all the spices. And potato. Now all my kids' friends when they were growing up have eaten this. And now they ask me, "Mrs. Abdulla, you know you used to make that thing with the ground beef?" I was like, "when did you eat that?!" But I guess they remember it! I can't believe that they remember it.

EH: How long have you lived here?

NF: In Charleston?

EH: Mmhm.

NF: 10 years.

EH: Where'd you come from before that?

NF: Columbus, Ohio.

EH: Okay.

NF: Virginia.

EH: You've been all over too!

NF: Mmhm (laughs)

EH: When did you leave Sudan?

NF: Sudan.

EH: When did you leave?

NF: Khartoum (misheard the question as "where did you live?")

RA: Khartoum is always in movies. When did you leave?

EH: Yeah, when did you come here, or when did you leave? When did you leave Sudan?

RA: What year?

NF: Oh, a long, long time.

EH: Mmhm.

RA: Maybe if it's finished... I don't know. She has a daughter who's in D.C. now.

EH: Oh you do! Where does she live?

NF: Virginia. Fairfax.

EH: Have you been to the Great Falls waterfall? Did you say Great Falls?

NF: No.

EH: Where in Virginia does she live?

NF: Fairfax.

RA: Fairfax.

EH: Fairfax! Okay. I thought you said Great Falls.

RA: Oh yeah. There are really huge, where you can shop in D.C. All our meats have to be kosher or halal and just like, they're slaughtered in a particular way, and they taste much better. They taste so much better.

EH: Is it because they're fresher or the way they're slaughtered?

RA: They way they're slaughtered.

EH: Okay. Yeah.

RA: They let the blood run. You know how in the olden days, they used to hang things. That's what happens, when the blood runs out, it tastes much better.

EH: Yeah.

RA: Plus I think they also feed them, they give them, it's more organic...

EH: Can you get halal meats around here?

RA: You can get them here. I think at the store here... at the Indian grocery. They do some and keep it in the freezer. You know, you can always... you can get... and then there's a store called Vitra (?) in South Charleston. They have halal meats.

Used to be one here but they closed, in Charleston.

EH: Is there one where the former owners of Little India?

RA: Huh?

EH: The former owners of Little India?

RA: Yeah, the former owners of Little India, they have some. Not a big thing, but they have some chicken cut up. And skin removed and everything. Ready to cook. I think they have some lamb too. You can find some, now somebody said Walmart! Who sent me the picture—did you send me the picture?

NF: No.

RA: Walmart has halal chicken and you can buy... at Sam's... Sam's has lamb.

EH: Oh, I've heard that.

RA: And that lamb comes from New Zealand.

EH: Is it a full lamb?

RA: All the lamb that is there, it's from New Zealand, and you know, it's halal.

EH: Okay.

RA: When we first came to Canada, you know, I could not find a single bread without any lard. All the breads they made had lard. The only one was Sunbeam—something like that.

EH: oh yeah.

RA: Only one we could find that did not have it. The last time, lard was completely removed. Cause that's a pork product. Are you Jewish?

EH: No, my parents were both raised Catholic. We went to the Unitarian church for a while but I didn't go much.

RA: Yeah, I like them also.

EH: Yeah, they're very nice.

RA: Unitarians here are friends. They do a lot here in the community. The community is very active. Have you been?

EH: I haven't been yet, but my friend does some of the sermons sometimes. So I want to go.

RA: What's her name?

EH: His name is Joe Solomon. He's actually Jewish.

RA: Oh yeah, I know him! He does... what does Joe... Joe is Jewish but what does he do with the Unitarians?

EH: He's there doing sermons and reflections. But we had a lot of Jewish and Muslim people in our church, in our Unitarian church.

RA: Yeah, I was there not long ago. For something.

EH: Oh, there it is! (remarking on the cooking roti)

RA: That's what I was telling you. Last one! It didn't disappoint.

EH: Oh, is it gonna do it?

RA: I think add the flour—this needs to go. So then it will keep... Our cook used to go like this—he used to flip it in the air, and then he would go like, (pop!) something like this (laughs) I don't know why he did that! Make it soft or something.

EH: Wow.

RA: Those are extra.

(small talk)

Oh yeah, I was gonna show you a chutney. Is that okay? I didn't make it because I thought you would want to see...

EH: Oh nice. Is that cilantro?

RA: Yes. It's just a condiment, you know. And it's very good for you. You know, they say eat a lot of greens.

Okay. Need some water.

Now, I'm using this salt. (pink salt)

EH: Smells so good—cilantro.

RA: Oh you like cilantro? We were so afraid. I said, you know some people don't like it.

EH: Oh, I like it.

RA: This grinder came from India.

EH: Oh okay.

RA: My husband, on one of his trips, he brought this. And it will grind anything. Some of the stuff... you know, all blenders are not made for... I bought different kinds, but...

The lid... you know how you put it like...

EH: Yeah, that's a lot!

RA: You can even put a clove of garlic, or...

EH: Oh yeah.

22:18

(blending sound)

EH: Wow.

RA: I want it to blend completely, you know?

(blending sound)

RA: It's a little watery. It's a little bit watery. Too much water. It's like a sauce. I don't want it to spill. You have to hold this so I can take it out. Hold the bottom.

But you know, like you have a pakora and things like that, you eat it with this.

EH: Oh yeah.

Do you always do cilantro, or do you do mint?

RA: You can do mint, you can do a lot of things. Um, what is it the thing they talk about now that they do the... something similar, but with parsley? Basil?

EH: Oh basil, yeah, pesto?

RA: Basil, yeah pesto.

EH: It is similar, yeah.

25:51

RA: It reminds me of this.

EH: Yeah.

RA: Usually it's a little bit more because I put a little bit more solid—like a garlic clove—you can even put a little tomato in there. I often try with avocado—it gives it some body.

EH: Ooh, sounds very good. I love avocado. (laughs)

RA: I even made some dessert for us.

EH: Oh, wow.

RA: Ready to eat?

(sound of water and dishes)

(small talk)

EH: Maybe I can interview you sometime.

NF: (laughs)

EH: I'll probably have to head back after we eat, fairly soon. But maybe we can talk another time.

NF: Mmhm.

(small talk)

RA: You're used to eating with your fingers, right?

EH: Yeah—whatever! (laughs)

RA: Sometimes with the roti... (motions eating with roti)

EH: Yeah, in D.C. I ate a lot of Ethiopian food.

RA: Mmm! Oh my god. That's so good. I love that.

EH: They have so many great restaurants for it there.

RA: They eat like...

(water sounds)

What do they call it? It's like dosa... fermented. And now they say fermented food is good for you.

EH: I know! I'd like to try to make that injera bread.

RA: What?

EH: I'd like to try to make that fermented bread that they serve.

(small talk)

RA: They keep it like overnight, do they?

NF: I don't know—ask Zurizam (?) or Nafisa. Nafisa.

RA: There are some Ethiopian women here.

EH: Oh yeah?

(small talk)

29:03

END OF TAPE