



Marwe

Hamrah, together on a journey— The Hamrah Oral History Project is a series of interviews with immigrants, refugees, and asylees in Arizona, people who had to leave home due to oppression, war or violence, pursuing their future elsewhere. These are personal accounts of life between places and cultures, exploring how we arrived here and why we left home. Listen to stories of joy, dream and emotional pain that comes with the relocation and separation. Recorded at KXCI Community Radio's Historic Armory Park Studios in Tucson, Arizona.

My name is Marwe. I'm 16 years old. I was born in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Can you tell me about your childhood?

I have four brothers and one sister, and since very young age I loved painting. I had very close friends growing up. I lived in a house with my uncles and my grandparents and I was about three years old that my grandfather passed away. My family has a garden in Panjshir, which is about three hours from Kabul and there were animals in the farm and there were trees and fruit trees, but our house in Kabul was owned by my grandfather and all my uncles lived there.

Do you have a favorite memory growing up?

One of my favorite memories from childhood is playing with my friends, especially hide and seek.

When did you leave Afghanistan?

My father had worked for the Americans for 14 years and in 2020 we decided to leave because it didn't feel safe to stay in Afghanistan. And then the Taliban came in 2021 and we were there until 2022 that we finally went to Pakistan.

Who did you leave Afghanistan with?

We didn't leave in 2021 when a lot of Afghans were being evacuated because it didn't seem safe to go to the airport when a lot of people were going there and it was very crowded and

some people got killed in those days. We went to Pakistan from Afghanistan with my uncle's family, but they only stayed there for two weeks and then when it was closer to the time we had to leave, they came back and brought some of our belongings to Pakistan for us. We left about 3:00 AM in the morning with my uncle. We were two cars and one car went to get money for us to cross the border and it was very stressful. It was very scary, and those four months in Pakistan were very difficult for us.

What did you do in Pakistan in those four months?

In Pakistan, I studied English and we applied for refugee status with the United Nations and after three months we heard back from them. We stayed with our relatives in Pakistan and they were very nice, but that time was very difficult for me. Everything about it was very difficult.

What was it like when you first arrived to United States?

Because I had a very hard time in Pakistan. When I arrived in the U.S. I was very happy, although I was very exhausted because the plane ride was very long and when I first arrived I was very tired and confused.

What has been the most difficult part of adapting to life in America?

Language has been the hardest part of the experience here because I didn't speak English when I first came here, my dad didn't speak English. No one in my family spoke English, but since I started school I have learned some English now and now I can speak to people and I have friends and it feels a lot better.

How has your life changed since you moved to U.S.?

I couldn't continue my education in Afghanistan, so going back to school here has been very important for me and I'm really happy that I can continue studying.

What are some of the advantages of living in America?

One of the things that I really like about America is that women and men are considered equal, but in Afghanistan, women were not considered equal as men and they were thought of as less or not as good enough as men.

Do you ever dream of going back to Afghanistan?

Yes, I would love to go back to visit my relatives and my family who are still in Afghanistan and I really like the weather in Afghanistan. That's a place I was born and that's a place I was raised in and I feel very connected to it.

Do you ever wish that you never came to the U.S.?

When we first learned that we were coming to the US I was not happy about it and I really didn't want to come here because I thought it would be very difficult, but it was also much harder for my parents because they left everyone behind in Afghanistan and they came here for my education and for my siblings education.

Is there anything about your culture, country or past that you miss?

Yes, I do miss a lot of ceremonies and rituals that we had in Afghanistan like the Eid or the Ramadan, and I miss them a lot.

How has the experience of immigration affected your sense of identity and belonging?

Since I have left my country, I feel I miss something so much. I feel a very deep loss and it's very painful and I feel it in my heart and it's very difficult to talk about it because I cry and when I cry I can't talk or I can't answer questions, but I feel a lot of pain about losing something and it feels like losing my mother or being away from my mom or taking my mother from me.

Have you faced any discrimination since you came here because of your identity?

I haven't experienced discrimination here yet, but I don't feel this is my home yet. I still feel very sad about having left Afghanistan mainly because all my relatives are still there.

What hopes do you have for the future?

I hope to finish school and do well at school, and also I love art and I am really interested in drawing and painting and I want to become an artist and open my own artist studio one day and train students, and I hope that happens in Afghanistan.

Can you remember yourself when you had just arrived in us? If you could talk to her, what advice or message would you give her?

I will tell her to try and to work hard and you will do it and I'm sure you will do it very well.