



Arzu

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Can you introduce yourself?

Hi, my name is Arzu. I am 15 years old. I was born in Iran, Tehran.

Can you tell me about your childhood?

When I was four, I moved from Iran to Turkey, so I don't have much memories living in Iran, but growing up in Turkey, it was really fun. I had a lot of friends. People will help me. It was really fun.

What are some of your favorite memories growing up?

One of my favorite memories growing up is probably going to the castle with my family. It was, I think it was like a 600 years old castle. I don't really remember.

When did you leave?

I left Iran when I was four and I left Turkey when I was I think 9 or 10.

Who did you leave with?

I left with my two sisters, one brother and my mom and my dad.

What happened to the other family members who did not leave with you?

Everyone in my family came with us except my two brothers who left to Sweden when we were in Iran.

Do you know why you and your family left?

We left Iran because my disabled brother, because they couldn't help us and we decided to go to Turkey and see if they could help us, but in Turkey they couldn't help us either, so they sent us to America.

Is he younger than you?

No, he's my twin. Well, my parents never told me how we came from Iran to Turkey, but we didn't come with airplane or a bus.

Can you talk about your journey to U.S.?

We came from Turkey to USA since my brother's disabled and Turkey didn't know how to help him, so they send us to the states for my disabled brother.

What was it like when you first arrived in us? What were your expectations?

Well, my expectations was really high. I was thinking about a high buildings, really cool stuff. You know, every kid's imagining that are in the Central Asian and all there. It was really different than I saw USA.

How long have you been in U.S.?

I've been in USA for five years.

What was the most difficult part of adapting to life in U.S.?

The most difficult part in USA was learning the language. The hardest part to learn English was the grammar because I didn't know anything.

What has been the easiest part of living in U.S.?

There wasn't any easy part of living in USA.

What do you like about Tucson?

The view, the mountains. Like up in the higher mountains that have really cool stuff.

How has your life changed since coming to Tucson?

My life changed a lot since I came to Tucson. What I was thinking about USA and everything has been changed a lot. I know more stuff. I'm more open-minded now than I used to be.

In what ways has it stayed the same?

Nothing really has to stay the same. Everything changed a lot since I moved.

Do you dream of going back?

Yes, I do dream. Going back to Iran, pretty much.

Can you describe your dream in detail if you have an image in your mind?

As I said before, I moved Iran when I was four, so I don't really remember Iran, so I want to go back to Iran and see everything. What is it like?

What do you want to see in Iran? What's your expectations about Iran?

My expectations in Iran is the people, how they're going to treat me.

Where do you want to visit in Iran?

Probably Tehran where I was born.

Do you wish that you never came here?

I do. At the beginning when I first came to Tucson, yes I did. I didn't really feel comfortable here with the people and all that. I wish I never came.

Why did you felt left out when you first came to US?

I felt left out because I didn't know the language, the cultures, and nothing was the same as it was in Turkey. Everything was different.

What do you miss the most about your home, country and culture?

The most thing I miss in Turkey is my friends, that I never get to talk to them no more. I miss a lot of things about my culture. I missed our traditions, how we used to do Eid, go to people's house, we'll stay there like midnight till 12 and we'll just walk to our house after we're done.

What type of culture do you guys have in Afghanistan, Iran or Turkey?

We have Eid. Eid is like a new year, when people all get together, they will bring food, everyone wear their culture dresses and we'll just get around. We do dances, culture dances, and we'll eat the foods.

Can you talk about the role that language has played in your experience living in U.S.?

English made my life harder because English has been the hardest part of living in U.S. because learning English wasn't that easy that I was thinking of. I feel left out. I couldn't talk to no one because I didn't know their languages and they were trying to talk to me and make me feel comfortable, but I couldn't understand them and understand what they were saying, so I felt really left out.

Have you found something you really like here? For example, food, new friends, plans, opportunities?

One thing that I liked living in U.S. was probably about opportunities that I have. I have a lot of opportunities to do right now than I used to have.

What type of opportunities? To be specific?

Right now I have opportunities to do everything that I want. I want to become a pilot. I have an opportunity to become one.

So you like the freedom in here?

Yes, I like the freedom in here.

What do you like about the freedom that you have in here?

I like the freedom because I can do anything I want to do. No one can judge me or say anything, say that I can't do it. I have every right to do whatever I want.

Have you found emotional support here?

I found friends that speaks the same language as me and they went through the same thing, most likely through the same thing that I have and then trying to learn the English language. Yes, I did find emotional support.

How has your experience living in your home country affected your identity and sense of belonging?

I don't feel like I belong here because people be judging my cultures, what I do.

Have you faced discrimination or prejudice in your new home?

Yes, I did get a lot of racism towards me saying that I look Chinese, that I should go back to my home, that I don't belong here.

How did that affect your mental health? How did that made you feel like, did you feel like you were extraneous and you needed to actually go back to your home country?

I did feel like I was extra here, that I wasn't really needed, that I should really go back to where I was.

Who made you feel like that?

It's most likely middle schools that will keep on, make fun of Asian peoples or any people that they don't really know.

How did you deal with racism?

Well, after I learned that they don't really know anything about Asians or anything, I decided to just leave them alone. They don't know nothing. They don't search up anything, so I just left them alone and decided to just focus on my studies.

Did you try to change them, teaching them about your culture and maybe changing their point of view?

Yeah, I tried to tell them how are Asians not only Chinese and Japanese and Korean, there's other type of Asians besides them.

What are you planning to do to change maybe some regimes in your home country or some stuff that you don't like about the things that are going on in Iran or Afghanistan or Turkey?

Well, I would probably changing people's mind about Afghanistan because most of the peoples think that Afghanistan is a bad place like terrorists.

What are you planning to do for your own home country for Afghanistan? What are you planning to change in Afghanistan?

I want to become a pilot and role model to Afghan and Iran Womens.

What advice do you have for yourself when you had just arrived here?

I'll probably tell my younger self to don't lose hope. It's okay that you don't know the language because you're going to learn it, even though if it's tough for you to learn it.

What advice do you have to other young people who just has arrived to US from the Middle East?

I will probably tell them the same thing that I told to my younger self, to don't lose hope and you will learn it. Learn the language and there's a lot of racism going to go towards you, but don't take them to yourself. Just leave them and focus on your studies and focus on your future jobs that you want to be.