

INTERVIEW WITH AMON

Sunday, July 16th, 2017
Amon Tiquat
December 5, 2016 arrived
Refugee Status
27 years old (born 1989)
January 10th birthday

What brings you joy? I like family and I like my home. 10 years ago In my country, Eritrea, I lived with my brothers and sisters and mother and father. At night, we would just chat. I miss that.

What is the best part of your life here? I like meeting new people. They are friendly. Sometimes I go to downtown Salem to meet new people. I go to bars and have a beer.
{Add a story or some specifics}

What is your favorite book? The History of Eritrea. **{Add more about the book and why you love it}**

What was your favorite tv show in Eritrea? I like this Indian show called “ B4 Lou” because
{Add what the tv show is about}

What is the most difficult thing about being here? The language is difficult.**{Big gap between these two sentences. Fill in for making sense of the leap!}** English is important to meet new people. In my country I studied English and here I study English in Lynn at the New American Center.

What do you want people to know about you? {As an immigrant or as a refugee or why you are here.}

What is your favorite food? Steifel foods (?) Fish. There's a lot of fish in my country because we border the Red Sea.

Where would you most like to live in America? I like Miami because they have good weather, ocean. The water is hot, not like here. I think it is friendly.

What is a traditional poem or song or saying from your country? {This is a popular song, not a traditional song }“Aswerki! Semay” by Abraham **{Watch on You Tube together. I think that is the singer's entire name, not the name of one song. I may be wrong}**. It means, “Life is change. Life is not one direction. Some days are poor. Some days are rich”

What do you see in your future? I'd like to speak English better and then go to college and then drive a big truck. {Talk about how truck drivers do not usually have to go to college and job goals/education goals discord}

What kind of a world do you hope for in the future? {Answer}

What are your goals? I'd like to travel to Rome, Italy, Paris, France and see Egypt.

What is your best quality? I respect everybody. I respect all religions.

What is your favorite English word? Love. {Explain why here}

Is there a verse of the Bible that is most special for you? Yes, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It's in the Book of John.

What was the happiest moment of your life? The moment I arrived in a new country. Five years ago I left Eritrea and went to a new country, the Sudan.

What is your proudest accomplishment in your life? {Answer}

What is the most important lesson you learned in life? Relationships between people are the most important. {Clarify. This is not a lesson!}

Tell us a story of how you learned this.

{This might help answer the question above}

How would you like to be remembered? {Answer or something less abstract like "Discuss your favorite sport?"}

Interview with Davy

MPC: What's something you'd like to do over the next year?

DS: Now I'm working, have a job, but over the next year I want to go back to school too to get some more experience and skills to help me in the future. I'm really really good at technical things. Fixing air conditioning, that was my skill before I came to America. In America to get more technical experience you have to go back to school.

Learning more and getting my diploma, that would be great for me.

MPC: Did you speak any English before you came to this country?

DS: No, I didn't speak any English before I came. I've learned fast since I arrived, I tried to find ways to learn fast because this is America, most people speak English. It's an anglophone instead of francophone country. When you stay here, to be able to work, to do good work, you have to know the language. It's so important.

MPC: Do you have a favorite English word?

DS: My favorite English word is complete. I like the accent, I know what complete means too, that's why I like it.

MPC: What do you think is your best quality?

DS: I think I'm good, I'm nice. I love how I am, I love my body, I love my skin. I love how I am, I love that. I love my personality.

MPC: So if you could meet any famous person, either from here or from the DRC or anywhere, say like Beyonce, who would you want to meet and why?

DS: I want to meet like a famous person, but right now I feel like I'm by myself. It's not easy the first time you come to a new place. You have to talk with people all the time to make friends. But later when it's possible to meet some famous person that will be great, because I'm missing someone to be like my best friend too, my favorite person. It's not so bad, but that would be like amazing. I love Ariana Grande, and Beyonce, I love them. To meet them sometime would be so amazing.

MPC: What person in your life has had the biggest influence on you?

DS: It's so hard for me to answer this now because I just lost my grandmother. My grandmother was like my father, my mother, was everything to me. My mom died when I was two years old, but my Grandmother was there so I was okay. I promised my grandmother sometimes that was I gonna buy a car for her, I was going to give her extra money, so don't worry, but now I've lost her too. I'm gonna buy a car for you, I'm gonna give you some money. don't worry, but now I lose her too. She died one month ago, I think so. It's been hard for me.

MPC: What kinds of lessons did your grandmother teach you about living?

DS: She taught me to be nice, to be close to everybody. Don't worry who is this or who is that, but to be nice to everyone. If you feel that a person is someone who gets you, and who is nice to you too, that's good. If it's someone who is not nice to you can just keep being nice but don't spend time with that person. Be nice to everybody, everybody is human.

MPC: What's the happiest moment you can remember?

DS: A happy moment I remember was the first time when I traveled from my country to go to South Africa because I had never seen South Africa. Then after South Africa I went to New York, and I had never seen New York before. After that I came to Boston, it was an amazing moment. It wasn't easy to travel, but getting off the plane I felt good.

MPC: If you could travel any place in the world that you haven't been, where would you go?

DS: I think Europe. I love Paris, romance is in Paris that's why I'd love it.

MPC: Do you have a favorite movie?

DS: My favorite movie when I was young was a boxing movie from America. The Rocky Balboa one. Also James Bond, 007, I like all the movies.

MPC: Which historical person do you hate most?

DS: Someone who I don't like? I don't think so. Me, I like everybody. I dont think I have somebody I don't like.

MPC: Has anything about being in the US surprise you? Something you didn't suspect.

DS: The first time I saw a winter, snow surprised me because I'd never seen that. I like it, it's beautiful and it makes a beautiful white place. But it's too cold! The first winter I was here it was so terrible, there was a lot of snow. The first time, I was sleeping and I felt

something in middle of night, when opened my window at the hotel where I was staying I was like Oh my God! My friend was in the room with me and I was like wake up, come see this! That was the first time I saw snow.

MPC: What is your favorite season?

DS: Summer is good, you can go hang out at the beach, you can walk around everywhere. In the wintertime mostly when you get off work you have to just stay in your house because if you don't have car you can't just walk around, it's too cold.

MPC: So you walk around a lot? What kind of places do you like to walk to?

DS: Before I was walking in Boston. I love the Boston Common, so when I didn't have anything else to do I'd go to Boston to see how people work, to see them playing, to hear music, it was so...it makes me comfortable. I don't like to be isolated. I like to see people, to meet people.

MPC: What would you like to say to anybody who is reading is to learn more about you?

DS: I want to just say...My name is Davie Shongo, I came to America as a refugee and now I'm working. Anybody can listen to my story, but I've had some bad moments here. When I came here I lost a place to live because someone was stealing my money, and I didn't

know what was happening wasn't legal in America. When the apartments told me I couldn't stay because my name wasn't legally on the lease, I became homeless in Beverly for three months. Being homeless, it was so bad for me. Anyone can listen to my story, I accept that. Thank you so much.

Interview with Mebre Colmbos

From Asmera, Eritrea

October 1, 2017

What brings you joy?

I want to redo my life. I want growth. I want to grow in my work. I want to make something from my life. I want to build a life for my family.

That's all in the future. What brings you joy right now?

My joy is about work only. I want to get strong in work. I want to learn more about the restaurant. I want to grow and become a good chef. This is my intention.

Three weeks ago you seemed much more optimistic. In the last three weeks, a lot has changed, and so...would you consider yourself pessimistic?

Now? Yeah! It's a big difference. What's happened in the last three weeks has made me feel very different about my life.

Is there anything that can bring you joy now?

This is the big problem. I told you about my mom—my mom is in prison. So three weeks ago, I was okay. Everything was good. My plan was good. But now everything is ex—I can't sleep. Everyday, I'm thinking about my mom. When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I think about is my mom. There are many big problems.

What's the best part of your day?

I work two jobs. When I finish the first job, I'm on my way to the next job. And when I finish, I just go home and want to sleep.

Would you be happy to have an afternoon off? Or a day off?

I don't want time off. I just want to work all day. Because I'm a new person in the U.S., I need more money. I have many things in my mind, and am always thinking "how can I fix these things?" I need money to fix things. And if I work hard, maybe in one or two years, maybe after that I can change the way I live.

When you were back home, what kind of things did you enjoy doing?

Before?

Yes.

Before, when I came from Eritrea to Sudan—I worked in South Sudan and I remember that time was good for me. I was happy. I worked in many business places.

But still then it was work all the time? You still didn't say anything fun!

Yeah, still then I was always working. (laughter)

That's Mebre!

No, because I'm focused on my dreams, you know? If there's somebody you want to enjoy time or relax with, you make time, but I don't have that now. Now I'm empty. I don't have anything. I don't want time off, I don't want to relax, because if I want to relax, not here. Some people like to have holidays in other countries, but I—I have many negative things in my life now. So, now all I want is to fix these things. As for joy, as for relaxing, maybe next time. Another life. (laughter) Not now.

Because if I stay home all day—I can't—I'm sick. Really. I'm sick-headed. But if I go to work, I'm okay. And that's why now, I'm going to work. When I finish with you, I am going to work. My friend is sleeping at home now. He relaxes, takes a shower, eats dinner. But I'm going to work the second job. I want sleep, I want rest. But, I can't.

You mean that literally. You cannot. If I took you away two days, said "let's travel and go see something," I don't think you would relax.

Yeah, because how can I? Now, you live with your husband, with your children, with your family, so you're okay. But I'm not like you. I'm alone now. I have children, but I don't know—

These questions are very hard. Because I have bad feelings inside, you know? Because I'm alone now. I have four children, but I don't have any children with me now. I'm alone. So, if you have somebody you like—if you're with family, with children—then you play, you enjoy any place. But now I'm alone, and I can't.

Do you have a favorite possession? Something you own, that you cherish?

I'm going to cherish someday. I hope to work hard and to cherish.

But do you own something you've brought with your from Eritrea, to Sudan, to Malta, to the United States? Something you wouldn't want to lose?

When I was in Malta, the life was very hard. You didn't really have anything.

What did you have with you when you arrived in Malta? Did you have a backpack? Did you have a phone?

No, because I couldn't. There were three hundred people on the boat. If you had clothes, a backpack—everything was thrown into the sea. So I came like this.

Just the clothes you were wearing?

Yeah.

So is there anything you left behind that you wish you had?

In Sudan?

Yes, like something your grandmother gave you? Or a photo?

Yes, many photos of my children, from my family...all thrown into the sea—the Mediterranean Sea. Some I lost in the desert when I came from Libya.

How long were you in the desert?

I stayed one week. I'm very lucky. Many people stayed one month in the desert. Some were there for five days, some two months. It's different. It just depends on the drivers, because the drivers are Libyan people.

What's been the hardest part of being here in the U.S.

Well, you know, it's a new country. And it's different than I expected. In Malta, they had an orientation about America—how to live in America, how to work in America—and when I came here everything was different than what I learned. And it was winter, and there was snow. That was different.

And you came here, to Massachusetts first?

Yes, I came here to Salem.

And so, you know, this is a new country and I didn't have a good feeling when I first came here. There were many problems—about the work, about the life, about the weather. How people feel about us being here, and how to speak English with people. And because of the situation, you know, because it's a new country. And because the U.S. is a very different place depending on where you are. You know, some of my friends were sent from Malta to Seattle, to Washington, to Ohio, and there are Eritrean people in these places, so the life is a little easier. But there are no Eritrean people in Salem, in Boston, so if you need—well, even the food. I miss my country's food, but there's no food like that here. So I eat food I don't like, but I miss my country's food.

What was your favorite food to eat back home?

All the food you eat with injera, which is a bread. We eat everything with injera.

And the culture is different. If you have even a small party, you call fifty or sixty people, and you make many foods. The people will cook for days, making so many different things. In Eritrea, every year for holidays all my family from different places would come to my home, and my mom and my sisters would start cooking days before—one woman made injera, only. They'd make like eight injera. Another woman would make another bread or something. Another woman would start the meat—cow, chicken, different meats. And they'd have one big dish in the middle, and everyone would eat together.

Where I'm from, food means something. But when I move here, people invite me over and just make small plates, snacks, so I think "maybe next time I'll bring food with me."

What would you drink at a party?

Almost everyone drinks beer now, but made in the home.

Did your mom teach you to cook?

First my mom taught me, yes. I learned everything about how to cook from my mom and my sisters. I was the only boy in my home. And my mom was a good cook in my home. And sometimes I would cook for my mom, and say "this is for you."

What is something you would like people to know about refugees?

No one wants to be a refugee. It's because of the situation in the country, because of the problems—that's why I'm a refugee. My country is a good country, a rich country, with natural resources, and everything's okay. But because of the governments, many people from Africa, from Somalia, from Ethiopia, from Eritrea have had to escape and go to America or other countries. The problems, the situations, the governments make us different. But we're the same. Inside we're the same.

Is there a famous person that you would like to meet?

A famous person? Just in the U.S., yes?

No, anywhere in the world. Like Barack Obama, or Nelson Mandela?

Mandela would be good, but Mandela is dead. But I like him because he said "black, white, we're all the same." And he did many good things to fight apartheid.

When I came to America I saw many good people in television, like Oprah, and Ellen. They help many people. I would like to meet with Oprah or Ellen. I see the Ellen show every day and she does many good things. I love Ellen.

What's your favorite word in English?

Appreciate. People say that to me, "I appreciate you." I like how it sounds.

What's your greatest fear?

I'll give you one from my memory: when I came from Libya, there were three hundred people in the boat and it was sinking in the Mediterranean Sea. The boat was dead, the engine damaged. The captain said, "Everybody pray now." There were no other boats in the sea. Everything was finished. But my life—and the lives of these three hundred people—all saved by sixty-five cents. The phone on the ship had a balance of two dollars on it. The captain tried to call to Italy, to the Red Cross, to tell them we were in danger. He called the first time, and got nothing. The balance left on the phone was sixty-five cents. So the captain with this sixty-five cents sent a message saying "Please, I need help! I have three hundred people: men, women, children. I'm in the Mediterranean Sea. Help!" He sent our location with the GPS, and the Red Cross got this message. So, three hundred people's lives were saved with sixty-five cents. It was amazing. But I still remember that moment when the captain said "I don't have any choices left now, so everybody pray to God," and I thought "so what, I'm dead now?"

What are you most proud of?

I don't feel proud right now. I feel guilty about my mom. Everything now is different.

I'm not relaxed, you know? How can you sleep with your mom in prison? Even when I eat food, I think about my mom: "I'm eating food, and what's my mom eating in military prison?" And some time, like now, okay, I'm speaking to you and I forget for one or two hours, but then I'm back thinking about it, trying to come up with a solution. But what can I do? I pray to God. And I think I have to go back and take her place, because my pride is broken.

Three weeks ago, everything was okay. A month from now, I don't know.

In Africa, there are so many problems every day that people adapt. So, I was telling my friend about my mom and he said "Why are you angry? Every place is prison—in home, in prison, all the same." My friend thinks like that. And it's true. Because the life there is always prison—there's no freedom.

But I can't just sit, and I don't want to surrender. And if I sleep today, nothing is fixed. So I stress, I pray, and I have big hope that maybe tomorrow my mom will get out of prison. So I live with hope.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

No. Now I'd better go back to work.

Interview with Mohammad Akbari

Intro: My name is Mohammad and I am from Afghanistan. I used to work as a linguist for the U.S military in Afghanistan for eight years. After that I received my visa to come to the United States and have been living in the U.S. since 2016.

1. What do you like best about being here in the U.S.?

The best thing I like about being in U.S. is security (I feel safe). Law, rule and regulations are a priority in daily life. I like having my own freedom, and having multiple opportunities such as education opportunity and work opportunity. I also find the people helpful and friendly.

2. What are you most proud of?

I am most proud being honest and able to work. Also proud of being realistic and being true to myself and my family and friends.

3. What do you miss most about home?

I miss my family—my parents, I miss family gatherings and my relatives. I miss the homemade traditional food.

4. What is your favorite American food?

I like vegetarian pizza.

5. Where do you see yourself ten years from now?

In the ten years, I will be working here in the United States. I will have completed my higher education and get a professional job making more money. I will have a car and maybe either a house or a condo of my own. My wife will get a higher education and my daughter will be ten years old and will be getting educated in school. I am hopeful that everything will work out.

6. What is the best part of your day?

The best part of my day is when I am done with work, have earned my money and I come home with a paycheck to take care of my family. I am happy to take my family out for dinner or just for a walk.

7. What are some of the more important lessons you have learned in life?

Do not trust people right away. Be honest, work and make your own decisions.

8. What do you want the world to know about refugees?

Refugees are human. They have fled their homes and left everything behind to go to another country. They are fleeing from war and insecurity. They are just trying to make a life for themselves and their families and kids. I wish people would not be afraid of refugees or want to stay away from refugees. They are not there to harm others, they are here to try and make their own life better and safe. Treat refugees like you would treat your own people.

THE MEMOIRE PROJECT

**Featuring Zaid Ghandi
Interviewed by Shari D. Frost
August 2017**

SDF: This is Zaid Ghandi and he is going to tell us a little bit about his experience coming to America for our Memoire Project...What brings you joy?

ZG: Actually the things that make me happy, joy, now you know my fiance is different country, on way here. I hope too she can join me as soon as possible because you know we engagement from two years, we'd like to start a new life here. So maybe that is what makes me happy or joy for now.

SDF: What is the best part of your day?

ZG: Actually the best part of my day when I leave the second job for me, because I be so tired so I just want to finish and leave to my home to sleep.

SDF: What is your favorite possession? Something that you own, that's special to you.

ZG: Actually I don't have something special maybe right now. Maybe my phone cause this is with me from long time maybe, and always use it, I communicate with all the world by it, so maybe this the favorite thing for me. Yeah.

SDF: That's a good reason! What do you miss most about home?

ZG: Actually I miss two things. First I miss my friends cause these friends from ten years. And I miss to do something. To go to cafeteria for example, to talk and discuss. And they support me all my life. I think I can't find friends like them again. So I miss them always. And the second thing. The food. Because the food in my country is different. Here I don't use to eat fast food. We have special food. Special in my city. Cause it's famous to cook and they cook everything and delicious foods. So here I face problem with that actually, because I can't find this food here. But it's okay. Maybe...

SDF: Maybe we'll find it. I'm gonna look. I'm gonna find it. It has to be here somewhere. What is the hardest thing about being here? Most difficult?

ZG: The hardest things, maybe you know, I get my (engineering) license in my country and here this license not work. I can't work on that license. So sometimes I see my supervisor, in my company the engineers control everything, and I can't do anything, just follow the instruction on...Like see worker, simple worker like any worker, didn't get any license, or they didn't learn anything. So maybe this is hard for me. I try to process it or fix it in the future. Maybe.

SDF: We're already on page two! What would you like to say to people who read this? Or hear this?

ZG: Actually I want to say to them every case is special. Everyone maybe has different life. No one depend on my life or my experience. My experience maybe in hard time, in wrong country maybe. And happen many things with me. But this not condition for all. I think everyone should have dream and follow him. And believe me, anyone have goals in the life, he or she achieve it. Because it's not impossible. It's available for anyone. Just work hard and follow the dreams, and that's it. My experience may be special something. So don't depend on my.

SDF: But you're doing it! So it's good advice. If you can do it we can do it. Who's your favorite historical figure?

ZG: Actually I have favorite figure for me. It's from my city civilization. It's called Ishtar (sp?) It's something always on the gate for them in that time. So this, this civilization make me proud. When I see it, I saw it by the way in New York in a museum, and I take picture with it. And when I take picture I feel proud. Proudly maybe, because this my civilization, from my city. So this the favorite for me. I don't like any, any something, any president, any figure, anything. Because that people or those people did many things we can't do it now. Put something for us forever, to make us proud.

SDF: What's the most beautiful thing you can think of?

ZG: The most beautiful things I can think about it, maybe the future. Because you know, I lived a hard life and maybe the country faced many problems so now, when I come to here, I think about my children in the future. They don't have to live like me. They maybe live stable life. Respect everyone. They respect the people, the humanity. They help. They learn everything good. Because I say to you, when I was in school, or when I was child, there are many people say to us that's wrong and you're right, that's wrong and this people is right. So no one know who right and who wrong. And some people maybe pressure the other people to hurt some people they didn't meet them in their life. So why I hate some person I didn't meet him or meet her, or why I hate him? So the good things my children come to this world and they don't hate anyone. They respect, they love everyone here. They don't care. When see someone morning say hi without if they know him, or if they don't. So that's good things. Maybe I saw my life many bad memories, but they don't have to see these things.

SDF: What keeps you up at night?

ZG: Actually I say to you the things I worry about it, my fiance. You know in U.S.A. there are many rules, and in Sweden many rules, so these rules don't allow to me to visit her or go to her or join her, and she can't join me so I applied for her to join me. I hope everything is be okay, but I afraid maybe if this not happen that will make me many problems. Because you know, her family pressure her always about this subject and we maybe go to closed road. So in that time maybe we don't have any choice. And really when I think about this I be scared because maybe now I have choice but afraid maybe we don't have. What we'll do in that time?

SDF: Who is your best friend and why?

ZG: Actually my best friend, maybe, in my country. They were my friends from long, long, time, maybe ten years or more. They support me in all my life. I saw many bad things in my life. They support me, they help me always. They faced dangerous things because me, so they help me in many things and help me to find job in difficult time. So these, my friends, I think they will stay my friends forever. Now here in U.S.A. unfortunately I don't have time to know many friends. So now I know maybe some volunteers who help us, and they support us and we can say these people are best of friend now. And I think stay best of friend.

SDF: Are your friends at home safe now? In Iraq?

ZG: Actually no, because if disappear problem, appear another problem. The problems always. So no, not safe because the war is still...

SDF: It's still going on... What's your best quality?

ZG: Maybe the best quality I...when I was a student I had a dream. The dream, I'd be something, something important. I have to study something. So when I graduated actually I feel I have something now. I'm be special. I know there are many, many, many thousands have some. But you know, if you achieve your goal that's good enough for you.

SDF: What's your worst quality?

ZG: Worst quality actually, I wish to study medicine. But the problem, we have some rules. Weren't allowed to me to study this medicine because the mark, you should get high mark. So, I wish to do this. So this is still with me for all my life. I, I have dream and I can't, or I didn't achieve it.

SDF: What makes you angry?

ZG: Actually, I usually am...I, I don't be angry. But sometimes I be angry if I see, for example, my government for example, it's a group of, contain many thieves. So the problem my country always, they lose everything. They choose them every two years or four years, I don't know. So these people, make our country very bad. The worst country maybe. So why I choose them? Why I follow some person say to me crazy things. I don't have mind to think about this. So why I choose them. Actually I surprised because every year we have same problem. We say these people is not good people. But again and again and again we choose them. So why we don't have choice. That's good. That's bad, sorry. The other things maybe about the refugee, I think the refugee they came from different country. Probably that these country's bad and they face war and they have bad memories maybe. So they come to here to come to free country and the people here have free mind and they respect everyone. But they still, still have that closed mind and bad mind, and think in same way which thought it in their country. That's bad. I suggest or I see the refugee come to here, I try to live like the people. Okay, this culture is important. But not affect him to stay, live in this closed cycle. So that's me. I feel not good about it.

SDF: What is your greatest fear?

ZG: Maybe, I say this to you before, I afraid for my fiance. Arrived to closed road. Because that would be so bad for me. I promised her, I know I shouldn't do this but I do. I promised her to join me in maybe one year maximum, but actually in the truth, I don't know if she can join me in one year or two year. Or she can join me...

SDF: Has the lawyer told you at all how long?

ZG: No no, this processing take long time. They can't tell me anything. And our documents is maybe not complete, or not perfect. So I afraid, afraid from this actually.

SDF: What comes to mind when you think of the future?

ZG: Actually, for the future I say to you, I feel good about the future because the future for me here, I think I'm in safe place. I now work two jobs and everything's okay. To this moment. If my fiance join me everything's solved. I will go to next (?) So the future I think is good for me and my family and my children. I said to you my children, they learn something special. Maybe we learn the incorrect things. They don't have to learn this here. They learn everything is good.

SDF: Who or what has helped you the most to get settled here?

ZG: Actually I said to you this maybe most important question for me. There are many peoples or volunteers, when we come to here, they help us from that time to this moment maybe. They help us to get something, fortune for us help to get job, help us in English. You know sometimes they pay money not just for support us and everything. Sometime they pay money to support us. For example we meet every Sunday in cafe and teach us English. And actually we call them the angels because really these people's angels. They did and do everything, and without expect anything from us. Maybe everyone go alone in the future and we don't know what happen. But they were sorry and good friends and support us in everything. Actually I want to thank them. There are many names. I can't maybe say their names. But they did something for us, we can't forget it forever. We will talk to our children about these great people.

SDF: Where would you most like to live?

ZG: Actually I live now in Salem. I like that place because it's quiet and the people is good. And Marblehead, I visit it always because all volunteers are here and they invite us always to come to here and do something. So I like Marblehead also—

SDF: —Me too—

ZG: —And maybe Danvers, sorry, because my job in Danvers. But in general I like this state. Because this state I find the people kind and supportive. And they always welcome us. For example today I go to play football with some people I didn't meet them before. They welcome me and I feel we friend from long time.

SDF: That's good! What kind of world do you hope for?

ZG: Actually this kind may be impossible happen, but I like to be, uh, world live in peace without war. You know, in my life I face many wars. This worse thing, you live in war, because you see the people kill other people maybe for bad reason. Without reason, actually, no reason. When I check the wars happen in my country, and my neighbor countries, it's for nothing. Now for example I say to you in my country there are two group, you know Shiites...I don't like this call it...they kill together and why? Because they have different ideas about the religion. From same religion but they fight. So, in Syria, in Syria the Syrian people kill other Syrian people. Why, because the president is bad. All Arab president is bad. We agree about this.

SDF: American president not so good right now either...

ZG: But they leave every four years, that's good. You should thanks your god for this because our president stay forever. So actually that's bad. I wish some day in my life see the world without war. In any place.

SDF: Me too.

ZG: But maybe we can't.

SDF: What did you carry with you from home?

ZG: Actually when I came to here I just, I bring my clothes. And I have some memories maybe. Some, like medal, or something like this, simple things, but these mean me a lot. Because you know sometimes some simple things mean a lot for you because that's mean big memories for you. So I bring something easy or some little things but actually mean a lot for me.

SDF: What is your favorite food from home and also from here?

ZG: Actually the favorite food from my home. I like most of food in my home because I say to you it's very delicious. And I think Iraq is famous in foods because much calories, maybe 1,000 calories in each meal. I miss this food actually. I hope when, if my fiance come to here, can cook this. Here actually I face problem in food. Really. Because I don't used to eat these foods, fast foods especially. And the vegetable and the fruits, I think it's not tasty, that fruit or vegetable because not natural. So for her (Lis) maybe we can say 'Subway.' I prefer to use it always.

SDF: What is your favorite sport to play, and which is your favorite to watch?

ZG: The favorite sport for me is football. What call this?

SDF: Soccer.

ZG: Soccer.

SDF: I don't know why we call it soccer if it's football.

ZG: Yeah. We have the other football. This popular sport in my country. I say to you when you see empty streets I used to see the children play football. Now there are many special places for to play football. I like football. I like (?) by the way. It's my favorite team but I like, actually I be angry really when I support my team, Iraq team, when they are... no one stay near me from my family, because I be so angry!

SDF: What was your first impression of the U.S. and how is it different from what you expected?

ZG: Actually before I came to here I have maybe simple expectation about the U.S.A. I know the rules and the system, but maybe I surprised the system is good system. The government can control everything. You know about you everything. That's good. Because good for you and good for government also. I say to you maybe I see the taxes is much money. I pay much money for taxes. About 25% from my...

SDF: It is a lot.

ZG: Yeah. I don't know this so high. And maybe expensive some thing. But in general is good. But I say to you maybe I don't expect the people kind in this way. And they help us and welcome us. Briefly I afraid when I come to here because.there are many people hear about this but they don't have any idea about this. Just talk. Say maybe there are many people don't like the refugee. Maybe pain you, maybe hurt you, maybe fire you. Yeah. So when I come to here... When I see someone look to me...maybe I order something. But I discover that's all lie because I didn't see anyone. You know, when I go every day to my work, everyone see me say good morning, good morning, good morning. They don't know me or didn't see me before, so I see the people is kind. I actually didn't expect they kind, and they help us, and they don't care about the religion, and expect what we need and they normal with us, really. That's good things and big things.

SDF: Where did you live before you found a job? Or did you always have a job?

ZG: You mean here?

SDF: Yeah here.

ZG: No no, when i came to here I stay in this same apartment to this moment.

SDF: What is one thing you'd like to achieve or do in the next year and why?

ZG: Actually I say to you my by big problem now, my fiance. If she can join me I don't have problem more. So I have to study again and make evaluation to my license and make test for state license. I have big planning about this. But you know I need time. So I can't do many things, important things, in same times. So if my friends join me, I maybe be stable something and maybe have time to study. This actually big planning for me and my goal now in U.S.A. to make evaluation and study again.

SDF: What are some of the most important lessons you have learned in life?

ZG: Actually maybe I say to you everyone has a special case. So in my life the lessons maybe, stay have a goal, or stay have a dream. Don't lose the hope. Always hope. You know, when I went to Syria and apply for immigration, and when I got to my country because you know what happened in Syria, I lose the hope to go again to U.S.A. Because after three years no one call me, no one say me anything. So after three years they contact me and tell me you can now come to USA. So I think don't lose the hope any time because they have famous things say when the life's be dark, there is point from light. So don't look to all this dark. Look to this point. Because maybe this point small in this dark, but maybe save you some time. So don't lose the hope. And other things, I try to help. Because you know, these volunteers which I talked about them, give us lesson in humility actually. And give us some message, say help the people you find in the future. That's the lesson. And stay have goals. Don't lose it. Stay have something to do and follow it.

SDF: What are you most proud of?

ZG: Actually I say to you maybe I proud, I feel proudly when I graduated from my college because this was my family dreams. And my mother especially. When I saw my mother cry when I graduate actually that affect me, and feel in that time I did or I do something good or something make her proudly. And she says my tired all these years, or anything I did all this years, this the result for me. So I proud for this because most of people around me proud about it.

SDF: What was the happiest moment of your life, and the saddest?

ZG: Actually I say to you the happiest, I actually, maybe I have two happiest moment. When my dad join my...my family join my dad. When my father get resident and decide to bring my family because we lived in dangerous life actually, so say thank for god we finally go to all that, and together and safe. I talk about Sweden that time. So because my brother was, face, problem on his face and his body because some people, bad people, burn it, burn him, sorry, so when he leave I feel good because I hope maybe in Sweden process him and fix everything happen to him.

SDF: Did they?

ZG: Yeah. Maybe. Because when he arrive everything take long time so they help him, but not a lot. And when I graduated I say to you this maybe happiest moment for me. The saddest moment for me, I say to you, when I say good-bye to my family in airport, because in that moment I know this last moment we be together, we be as family.

SDF: Did you want to go with them to Sweden?

ZG: No I didn't go. Because my age over 18 years old, they don't accept me. So I say to you this moment I know that this last moment we be together as family. And unfortunately that was the truth because when I come to here I know now, I'm sure now we can't be together. maybe visit them and visit me, but we can't live together because I have life here and they have life in Sweden. So I hope be together. Maybe. Who know?

SDF: Who has been the biggest influence on your life? And what lessons did they teach you?

ZG: I've got to say these people, the volunteers, our friends, they support us, they made something to us maybe no one, maybe our family can't do this for us. So the lessons which, I learn it here in the U.S.A. actually, I should respect everyone. And don't care about anything. I respect them like respect me. There's many difference between the culture and the religion and many, many things. Well this not effect us. We human in the end and everyone have religion or culture. That's don't not let me hate him, or or I don't like him. We respect everyone. We don't care about anything. These people deal with me in good way I respect them and live with them in peace. And forget all the bad things. This big lesson. When I see the people here, actually I was surprised. No one asked me from where, or from any region. If ask me, ask me just for information, not for hate me or be friend for me. So, this big lesson. Why all the world don't be like this? I feel sometimes, in U.S.A. especially, all the world live in some peace, but in other places, fight. I don't know why.

SDF: How would you — actually this is our last question! — how would you like to be remembered?

ZG: Actually I say to you, these are memories which I had, maybe this bad things, or, but it still maybe push me to be better. Because maybe if I live in that time, in peace life and good life, maybe I not be excited to help the people, to advise the people. So these memories, I will talk maybe about it to my children. Not I say to them, "hate them." No no, of course, I say to them, "We leave in that life, bad life and hard life, and we come to here, to you live save life. So respect this and respect everything. And respect the country who give you the safe life. Not, I don't care about the government, but the country. This country respect me and help me, so you should help them. And be good and maybe be important American!" (laughter) So...

SDF: That's terrific! Is there anything else you want to add to any of that? That was wonderful.

ZG: Actually I would like to thank you, and sorry maybe my English not perfect, not good—

SDF: No, your English is wonderful!

ZG: I here some short time so...(laughter)

SDF: I think it's terrific!

ZG: So I thank you and thank everyone. And I hope this project succeeds, because this a humanity project.

SDF: Yeah, this is a good one! We will have lots of good stories to share. Okay, thank you Zaid!

ZG: Thank you.