

Laila Wali Interviewed by Shoaib Wali
November 4th, 2020
Queens, NY

Shoab Wali: My name is Shoab Wali and I'm interviewing my mom Laila Wali In my house On November 4th, 2020. Do you give me permission to record this oral history?

Laila Wali: Yes!

SW: What is your name?

LW: Laila Wali

SW: Your age?

LW: 63

SW: Occupation?

LW: Housewife

SW: Where are you from?

LW: Pakistan.

SW: Let us start with your nation of origin. Why did you leave your country of origin?

LW: For the betterment of my life.

SW: Why did you decide to come to the United States instead of another country?

LW: Because at that time America was on top and everybody used to love America so much, that all the time I would hear about USA, USA. So I decided to come here.

SW: What do you miss about your country of origin?

LW: I miss my family and old friends.

SW: What don't you miss about your country of origin?

LW: The fighting.

SW: What did your friends and family say when you told them that you were leaving?

LW: Best of luck

SW: What were your expectations of the United States?

LW: That I will work hard over here, I will make my future here, and come prosper here and give nice education to my kids.

SW: Let's talk about your journey to New York City. Tell me about your journey here. What did it entail and did it go according to the plan?

LW: Well when I was coming here, everybody used to tell me that they ask too many questions and they are very strict in every way, but when I came here they asked a few questions and it was not as bad as I thought. It was easy.

SW: When and with whom did you come to New York City?

LW: I came with my mom.

SW: How were you received upon arriving in your neighborhood?

LW: I was received very nicely because I had my brother over here and there were a few friends of his who came to receive me at the airport and they all look very happy and we have a small community. So everybody was very very happy.

SW: How were you received by the United States?

LW: Well, I was treated nicely. They welcomed me and congratulated me when I got my visa so that was very good.

SW: Let's talk about how you adjusted to New York City. How did you adjust to a new language and or culture in New York City?

LW: Back home my family was a little bit more feminist and we used to see on TV how everybody works over here and talks. So English was not the problem. The slang was a problem. But I adjusted to that and everything was okay.

SW: What new opportunities were available to you upon your arrival in New York City?

LW: Back home people are a little conservative and it's difficult for women to go out wearing anything but over here you can wear anything and go around without any problem. That's the opportunity.

SW: Any opportunities you were denied because you were an immigrant?

LW: I don't think so.

SW: What in your life keeps you connected to your nation of origin?

LW: Facebook.

SW: How do you remain connected to the people living in your home country?

LW: Every day I call them, I try my level best to stay connected through Facebook and by phone or any other way.

SW: Where have you lived in New York City and why?

LW: I am living in Queens right now and when I came I was living in Queens because my community center is here so I prefer to stay nearby.

SW: What was the hardest part about your move to New York City?

LW: The hardest part to move to New York City is that I had a house over there, but over here they have apartments that are so tiny.

SW: Was there anything else hard about the move?

LW: Yes, my friends and family and my husband over there. He didn't come with me.

SW: Did you find a community that made you feel like you belong when you arrived?

LW: Yes I have a very nice community over here, they are also been welcoming, very nice and they have lots of programs and we participate and lots of getting to gathering over here.

SW: Let's talk about your transition into becoming a New Yorker what's your favorite part about living in New York?

LW: Favorite part of living here is that there is a lot of Transportation over here You can travel anywhere easily.

SW: How has your neighborhood changed since your arrival?

LW: Not too much they are the same, everybody is good.

SW: Is there anything you fear because you are an immigrant to the United States?

LW: Not at all.

SW: Do you ever feel you need to hide who you are being an immigrant in the United States?

LW: Not at all.

SW: What would you change about the current US immigration system?

LW: Well before it was really good people used to respect each other but now they are very harsh with the immigrants and they confuse you a lot so they should be a little bit polite with the Immigrant people.

SW: So you become a citizen right?

LW: Yes.

SW: How was the process for you?

LW: The process for me was very very bad the lady who was taking my interview was not accepting that I was married, and I don't understand why she was not accepting me as married. Even though Shoab was in my stomach I went for the interview that was really very bad.

SW: How has the politics of the last decade impacted your experience as an immigrant?

LW: I'm not interested and I am not involved in politics and I can't understand much about politics.

SW: Let's get a little personal before coming to New York did you know someone who lived here if so who?

LW: Well my brother and my sister-in-law were here so I was blessed to have them here.

SW: When you first moved here where there are things that were available back home that you thought weren't available here?

LW: Well back home you can find organic things but over here everything is injected so that is the difference.

SW: Did you ever think about moving back?

LW: I did not.

SW: Why not?

LW: No I did not. This is my country now.

SW: Did any of your other family members moved here after you did?

LW: I need my husband because he came here after me And that's it since that time we have been here.

SW: He still here?

LW: He is still here.

SW: Do you feel like moving back home even after so many years?

LW: No I don't this is my country now.