

Race and Oral Histories In San Diego, UC San Diego

Interviewer: Leonel Perez

Interviewee: Abdul Kadir Adawe

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Location: Biomedical Center - Media Room

Sub collection: Race and Oral History Course, Spring 2018

Length of Interview: 00:58:04

Leonel Perez

Okay, so it's recording now. So today is Saturday, May 26. And this is Leonel Perez with the Race in Oral History course at UCSD in Spring of 2018 and I am interviewing Abdul and we are at the biomedical center. We're in the media room, and we will start our interview. It's 4:32pm and we will start with this conversation. So I'm doing, Could you please tell me your name? Can you state it or spell it?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

My name is Abdul Kadir Adawe A-B-D-U-L K-A-D-I-R last name A-D-A-W-E.

Leonel Perez

And where and when were you born?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

When?

Leonel Perez

Yeah, when.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I was born January 1, 1987 in Somalia, Mogadishu.

Leonel Perez

Can you spell it? Not Somalia but the place.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Mogadishu. M-O-G-D-I-S-H-O Okay, i 'm not sure. So

Leonel Perez

Yeah, maybe maybe describe your hometown

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Was the capital city of Somalia. It was a nice place like if it was like San Diego. It had a nice beach. [inaudible] It was right on the beach so.

Leonel Perez

And can you describe for me your childhood home? your neighborhood?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

The neighborhood I grew up with like that everybody knew each other, you know very friendly. And [pause] and there was it was a beautiful place. It was Beautiful.

Leonel Perez

Yeah, so tell me a little bit like about your like, favorite childhood memories.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

It was playing on the sand going, you know, going to school when [inaudible] Duxia going to school with learning their Arabic language. So thats all I remember going to the beach, It was like right? Like probably like probably like two blocks from my house

Leonel Perez

Could you, what was the school again?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

It's called Duksi

Leonel Perez

Could you spell it?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I can't spell it Duksi.

Leonel Perez

That's fine and what grade was that? Like was that...?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

It doesn't have a grade so. And so you'll find from a child's small children to grownups. So everybody goes there. You know, it depends on what chapter you're in. Everybody, nobody's assigned chairs so everybody sits on the ground, we form like a big circle. So it dont matter what age you are, it can be like a small kid can can be can be that can be smarter than you you know, but at the same time, nobody discriminate, you know everybody was there to learn no grade levels.

Leonel Perez

Wow that's a difference between the US.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, very definitely. Here there's grade level over there, we had no we had no grade level everybody was going there from starting from a five year olds to 20 year olds. So everybody was you know, there to learn.

Leonel Perez

So, it was there like so, basically was there kind of like the primary education.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea.

Leonel Perez

and then after that you had what was after, after ?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

After there you go to school, you know? What basically once you were once once you complete the, the by the Quran, the basically we learn the Quran under duksi so once you finish the the Duksi then you start going to school.

Leonel Perez

And that's like equivalent to like University meaning or ?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

No. Depends like Duksi says only they only teach one one one book, you know, the Bible, or the Quran, you know, that's just a more main focus in that. And it was reading, we didn't use books, we use, like, cut out cut out words, that's as long as you know, as tall as you probably sometimes when you're a kid and sometimes you have longer than you can say from here to, like, same size as the human human being shaped like human nature, we write it and wash it off at the end of the day.

Leonel Perez

Almost it's kind of like, your our tools to learn.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yes, that's our tools to learn.

Leonel Perez

Tools to learn. Does that mean they're made out of like a special material?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Cut out cut out wood. That can be washed off after, the ink can be washed off and then can be

Leonel Perez

So as its own. Yeah, Okay, can you talk to me a little bit about currently now in the US talk about like, your family and how many siblings? [inaudible].

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I'm the oldest of four. Four. Yeah, I got one brother and two sisters. We're one year apart. My brother and my brother's 30. And I'm 31. And then I got a little, little sister who's 15 years old and an older sister who's 23 23 years old. Was raised by my mom was raised by our mom. So yeah, no.

Leonel Perez

When was. When did you move into the US?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I came to United States when I was 13 in 2000 2000. And I've been living here ever since 18 years, I've haven't went back back home yet. Yeah. So I've been living in the US ever since. Ever since 2000?

Leonel Perez

And is that one of your goals to go back and live?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

[inaudible] to go see my, my family back home that I haven't seen over 18 years?

Leonel Perez

And part of that question was, are you still in contact with your family and your home country?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, we talked to them every, every other week. My mom calls them to just check how they doing. So yeah, we we talk to them. Talk to my uncles and my grandma.

Leonel Perez

Can you talk about your community here in the US or like your experiences here in the US in terms of like your communities that you're a part of?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To be honest, I haven't you know, haven't been involved with the community that that often, you know, recently I've started being involved in East African Community in Mid City. I've done like some community services, you know, helped out. But now I'm being you know, keep in contact with the community, trying to be part of the my part of the community.

Leonel Perez

Could you talk a little bit about the things that you have done in terms of like traveling within the US.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I after high school, I went to one year of Community College and Mesa College, and I've decided to go check out the Americans America. I went to go see America actually. So I have traveled and worked in very different factories or you know, different jobs. I've lived in Seattle, Washington. I've lived in Amarillo, Texas. I've lived in Dodge, Kansas, Kansas City. I've lived in Marshall, Minnesota. , St. yea Marshall, Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. St. Cloud, Minnesota so I have been all over America except the East Coast. That's one place that you know, I haven't checked off yet. And Miami, but it feels like I'm in Miami right now. San Diego is like Miami.

Leonel Perez

[laughter] So, so one day you will be, do you have specific cities besides Miami and the East Coast?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

New York and Miami you know and Wash- Washington DC get to see the White House. Yeah, take that. You know, that's one of my, the my bucket list. That's what it's called, right? New York, New York and Washington DC.

Leonel Perez

And can you tell me a little bit, like, how, how did that? How did that want of like, experiencing different cities? Like, where did that come from?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Mostly cuz I started, I started traveling because of, you know, the friends that I was I was around with when it you know, to start to start looking for a better opportunity. Besides, you know, California, California was, you know, it was that thing the recession hit California. When the recession had ever we all decided to get out because we couldn't afford to pay for, for rent. So I

mean, close family, family members and close friends from high school decided to travel and see, you know, see where else we can find a better opportunity besides, besides here, so that's, that's, that's, that's the reason why we started traveling, to get a better opportunity and to find somewhere that we can make a better living.

Leonel Perez

Then, so you mentioned Family Members, is there a specific person in your family?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, I grew up with two of my uncle's sons that were within the same age. So we decided to move to Seattle, that's the first place that we, because we can keep up with the rent in San Diego was like too much. So we went to Seattle, and the apartments is cheap over there, I think like \$500 for two two bedroom. And then instead of here we was paying \$1200 for two bedroom. So that's the reason why, you know, we left California because the life over here was way expensive and out there was much cheaper.

Leonel Perez

So I hear you saying that this wasn't like an individual.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, it wasn't it wasn't like, near my, my buddies, two of my close cousins, actually. And roommates from after high school that we became roommates.

Leonel Perez

And then then after that, after he went traveling to different cities throughout the US, did you move along with them? Or do you separate?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

We separated after Seattle because we they stayed and I came back to San Diego. Because I, you know, I wanted to because my, my brother, my younger brother was living here. And he needed my, you know, my guidance. So I came back, I left them and then I came back here. And then I moved to Texas, where I brought my little brother with me, too, so we can have, you know, we can have a good opportunity. But he's not. He's a lazy guy. So he doesn't want to he didn't want to work. When I brought him. I just I had to so I had to bring him back. So that's that's the reason why I came back. But I met him in Minnesota where we reunited again. Yeah.

Leonel Perez

Where you met your special friend?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, in Minnesota where we yeah, we've been united and one of them now is married and got two kids. So he's doing very good for himself. The other one lives in in a small town, small town in Minnesota.

Leonel Perez

And you mentioned so is there, you want to kind of go back to Minnesota?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, I want to go back to Minnesota because most of most of my family moved over there to a much better opportunity for, for our community. You know, our people like you know, when the when the civil war happened that Minnesota became a base for for the Somalian immigrants.

That's where most of my they're located and that's where most of my family members live today. And we're the only people with no actually only three family left in California.

Leonel Perez

Oh so actually, you have more family in Minnesota than here in San Diego. Okay. And you mentioned Minnesota is like the biggest population of.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Population of Somali immigrant.

Leonel Perez

Oh, wow. Yeah, so it's not San Diego.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

It's not San Diego. Minnesota is number one, I think Seattle Number two, and then Ohio is number three. Everybody left, San Diego used to be you know, they used to be like number three or two. But everybody moved because ever since the 2010 recession happened, everybody started leaving California.

Leonel Perez

And then Okay, that sounds interesting. So, so, can you talk a little bit about like, your educational experience? So, like What school did you attend here in the US?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

When I first came to America, I only know the basic like the ABC and what is the call to view point something out you know, I can I can say like, I will say, the only thing that I will start in like four year I think, I had like an English teacher, before we came to America for like, I think a year or less than that, but the only thing we will start with the ABC and then he will he will, he will, he will see this What is this? Like, you know, we will say table, well, you know, door, so I knew all the everything, you know, that was around me when I came to America, and they threw me in uh threw me in seventh grade. So that's when I, that's where I started my first you know, school, real, real school. And then I was in Orange County, that's where we first landed. And then we came to San Diego. And then that's, that's where I started my eighth grade year, I was in middle school in East Diego. In the beginning was rough, you know, getting used to the keeping up with the advanced kids that was you know, been taught from, from kindergarten all the way, you know, to, to eighth grade, and I had to, you know, keep up, keep up with the advanced students for me to, to move ahead. But I, you know, I have I've done very well. And then I graduated from eighth grade and my family. My, my mom couldn't believe it, because he said he just came to America today, how can you be graduating? You know? So it was a big shock to my family and, and then I went to high school, and then where, where I have I went to Hoover high school. I did, I did good. And I graduated for my class. And then I was I was held back. So you know, I was I was very fast learner. I went to one semester of college [inaudible], you know, if I would have, you know, stick around and you know, I would have graduated by now. But you know, I just was in I just decided school wasn't for me and I wanted to I wanted to make money. I was, you know, I was I was into that. What do they call the knife cords and, and I wanted the money I guess, to be to take care of myself actually, you know, get to make a living for myself.

Leonel Perez

So can you talk a little bit about like going back to your element- you didn't go to elementary school you went to straight to middle school.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Middle school. I started in seventh, and then and then I went to like a not a [inaudible]? Because I came when did the school close? I think for middle school, June so I came May. And you know, May May of 2000 in May of 2000, May of 2000. So I went to the middle of seventh grade for one month or two months. One month, and then I and then the school closed. Yeah, I came in May 16, 2000. So I went to seventh seventh grade. And then from seventh grade. I think the school got closed a week, a month later. And then I went to we moved here to San Diego, where we were I started eighth grade.

Leonel Perez

You started eighth grade at Hoover high school?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

No eight grade at Wilson Middle School. Wilson Middle School, that's where I graduated. That's where my family was shocked they even called they call back home and they say oh, you know he graduated. I don't know what he graduated with but he's graduating this week. It was a big shock to my family. They couldn't believe it.

Leonel Perez

So wait could you talk a little bit about like or why did you family move from Orange.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

to here?

Leonel Perez

To San Diego.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

The reason why we moved from Orange County is because we cause my mom didn't speak English and then she didn't know nobody was helping us, you know, with the groceries, or, you know, taking us to a like doctor's appointment, because my mom's brothers, and her sister was living here in Linda Vista, close area. So as soon as we we finished, you know, the school year, when the school year, and when the school got closed, my mom decided that, you know, he couldn't, you know, she couldn't make a living and because she was not getting any kind of, you know, community, there wasn't a community that was helping people at that time. So the most of the most of the most of our family members was living here. So she decided it was better for her to get close to her brothers and her sisters. So where she can get help, with so she can move around. And so that's the reason why we came over here.

Leonel Perez

So it's the lack of resources, family.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea lack of resources, and you know, and people that she can talk to, I guess, you know.

Leonel Perez

So she didn't, there wasn't a big community?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

No, there was only one more family that was helping us out in, in Orange County, and, you know, she didn't want to, my mom didn't want to, you know, ask, you know, too much, you know, so he decided to come close to her brothers and her sisters that was living here in San Diego.

Leonel Perez

So could you tell me a little bit about how is it? How was it navigating the US, like educational system for you, like, I remember other times that we spoke was like, like, soccer was a big thing for you, and, you know, like, friends and stuff like that.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

When I first came, it was a big culture shock. Because, you know, I've been my life I've been I have never, you know, seen anybody with, you know, everybody was the one skin color. You know, when I, the first school I went to was a big shock for me, because I was the only colored person at that school. I know, my seventh grade when I first landed in America. And it was a big, big culture shock. I was I because most of the the only thing I was, you know, sport was my, you know, my main thing. In back home, we played soccer, you know, I say we call it football. But when I came to America, it was it was called different things. It was called soccer. And then soccer was a big thing. And then another big shock was that, you know, I thought all Americans spoke English. And then I find out that, you know, half of the half of the people didn't speak English. And that was a big shock to me. And I'm like, oh, how come they don't speak their own language? You know, that's, you know, that's what I that was my main concern. I'm like, okay, they're the same color. You know, they they're the same people, but they're not speak, they don't speak the same language. It was a big culture shock to see, you know, to see how many, you know, different, different eth-eth. What is it called?

Leonel Perez

Ethnicity.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Ethnic, ethnicity? Yeah.

Leonel Perez

Okay, so could you talk a little bit about that, like, you mentioned, you were the only person of color.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah.

Leonel Perez

So uh.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

It was a bit scary. In the beginning, the whole school, I was the only color person at my, my school. And, and the hispanic community was, like, you know, the closest people that that felt like, a family to me, because they were the joker's, you know, they, you know, they wanted to be like, you know, they're welcome. They welcomed me with open hands, you know, they, they, every time we play the football, you know, they pick the they say, Oh, you know, we want, you know, we can play because, you know, they knew that, you know, I wasn't, I wasn't from this country, or, you know, they haven't seen anybody like me, you know, that plays the sport that they love. So, I surrounded myself around them. And then I felt like you know, they were like, more family to me, then you know, from them. And then we was going to the same ESL, ESL

class. So we was all learning English together. It became like, you know, okay, so me and you are the same, we're not from here too, you know, so we became very close to them and I felt like you know, they made me feel comfortable to be around them.

Leonel Perez

So, can you talk a little bit about like, the ethnicity makeup like of the other school like, like was, like majority Hispanic or Asian or like any?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To be honest with you, I couldn't tell, I couldn't tell the difference. You know, at that time, everybody, everybody looked the same to me, you know, when it because where I came from everyone, you know, it was just all African Africans When I came here, like, you know, to me, everybody was, was white, you know, I couldn't tell the difference, you know, the only people I can tell is like, you know, the asians, they, they, they're different, but you know, from Hispanic and the whites I couldn't tell the difference at that grown up, you know, at them, the first one that came, they all look the same. And then the fact that the shocking part was they, you know, how come you know, they all look the same, but how can they not speak? You know, the English language, you know? So, yeah, I couldn't tell the difference at that at that. Yeah. At that point. It took it took me a while to see the difference, you know, so, in the beginning, everybody was like, oh, everybody all looked the same. You know, as they say, you know, but especially as a 13 year old, you know, they came from a country, we've never seen anybody that was, you know, that was different color than me. We, we might see once in a blue moon in a car back home. But you know, or during the war, when, when America was we seen it, you know, probably on TV. That was it, but in real life, you know, I never had that close. interaction. Yeah.

Leonel Perez

Okay. Can you talk a little bit about like, football, and like the meaning for you?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Football was football was everything when I came to America, because back home, that was the only thing we did, you know, and we didn't had the real ball back home, we made our own our own from, you know, balloon and then you know, so so like, you know, what is it called? Like, the cut out cut out a shirt t shirt? Oh, yeah. cut out a t shirt and then, you know, we made our own. And then we, we used to compete. So I had, I had my own team, you know, from from our own family members. Growing growing up in Kenya, in Kenya refugee camp. So I was like, I was the goalie of my team, you know. And then all I had was like, my little brothers, you know, that we played, we played the we, it was a competition. You know, we play different, different countries, like, you know, there was like, the country that we was in with that Somalia was Kenyan. And you have when you see Kenya Kenyans are, you know, very strong Africans. And when we played them it was, like, you know, it was a very competition, you know. So when I came over here, that's the only thing I had, you know, that was that, that made me, you know, they made me a star when I came over here, but I was I became a star in my school, like, you know, because I was so good at it. And they, they were shocked that I you know, that I was I was so good at

Leonel Perez

You were great at Soccer. Wait could you talk a little about that. You mentioned you were in a refugee camp?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah.

Leonel Perez

In Kenya?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah.

Leonel Perez

And soccer was a big thing?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

That's the only thing we had, you're playing in dirt, you know, in your shoes. Growing up, it was it was it was rough.

Leonel Perez

And how was it like the interaction between you and like, other people, with other people from like, other countries? Like, how was that like?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

The Kenyans are very, very mean people in the beginning, because they were we was invading their country, I guess. Because we, we came like, you know, the whole Somalia came to Kenya, because there was everybody who fleeing in the war. So they were shocked that you know, all these people coming over to their country taking over their country. So they weren't, they weren't at the beginning. They weren't nice people, I don't know, till this day, but you know, I mean, one time because when the police come, you know, the police will walk through the neighborhood and they will start picking people up you know, and Oh, where's your Where's your paperwork? If you don't have your paperwork? You got to pay the money or you go to jail. You know, so as the as a young kid so I when I see the police come in I we used to warn the community run through you know, this, you know, the, the the neighborhood say, Oh, they come in, they coming, they coming, you know, hide everybody takes off, because either you got to pay money or you know, you got to jail so that you don't have paper yeah, pay me. And we take you to your house so you can get money so you can pay. So one time I used to do that a lot. And then they you know, every time they come to the neighborhood, we get one through Oh, they come in, you know, tell everybody that's around the neighborhood. Oh, get in, get into the house. houses, you know, lock your doors, the police, you know, the policia, the policia are coming you know, so everybody takes up and then one time I got caught, you know, said every time I did that I did that, you know. So you know, there was one that came from where I used to run and warn people, there was a cop that was coming in, I seen them coming from, you know, from this side. So I ran towards that, and then I got cut and I got, I got slapped, like, you know, his slab was so hard all five fingers of his was like, you know, tattered on my face. After everything, then I quit, I go like, Nope, I'm not gonna warn nobody.

Leonel Perez

They set you up?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

They set me up because I was, you know, I was being the lookout for the neighborhood, we used to look at the other little kids was the look of you know, we will play outside of soccer, and they will like see us, like, Oh, we want to you know, we want our people out, they come in, because we're the only people that they were, you know, they were targeting who was the target? So we use, you know, we would be the look out like oh you gonna let us know, you

know, like, an afternoon and went like four or five o'clock, everybody comes out, you know, doing nothing is going down. People are just, you know, just talking, you know, the whole neighborhood is out, that's when they come around. And, you know, ask all where's your papers? And you know, you got to pay them? You know, if you don't, if you don't have papers, you got to pay them cash at that spot or they won't let you go, you got to deal.

Leonel Perez

How did that start? Like, you being the new the look out person.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Because I was cause I've learned what it called, that was the leader of all the all the kids that was going to the Duksi I was like, a TA for the teacher.

Leonel Perez

You were a TA?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, TA for teacher. So because I learned I learned back home, my dad was a teacher of the Quran. So when I came to when we came to the refugee camp, I was I was ahead of everybody else. So the teacher was like, the teacher, you know, made me a TA, like, when he goes to breakfast, I will take over, you know, the two classes will be cut in the middle, like a woman class and then a guy class. They don't they don't interact with each other than the, like a curtain in the middle. And the teacher sits sitting right, you know, by the curtain. So when the teacher goes to breakfast, I'll take over, you know, I'll be the TA and you know, I'll be the teacher. So, I was known in the whole neighborhood, you know, and, you know, I was just a small boy, but you know, I was teaching a grown ups, you know, cuz I was way ahead of their. So that's why I was I was like, the little kid, that, you know, that controlled, there was the, you know, all the kids, you know, because I was I was there teacher also, you know, so yeah,

Leonel Perez

so you're kind of like a leader and...

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, in the community.

Leonel Perez

And could you talk about, like, how did it look like visually, the refugee camp like, was it like, you know, how, how, how can you describe that?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

The refugee camp was the refugee and at that moment, when the school was in a refugee camp, we left the camp at that moment, we came to the, you know, the capital of this was the capital of Kenya, Nairobi, the refugee camp. I think it was called softo, softo. I think yeah, that's where my sister was born. But it was just hard that we dealt with our own hands. Like front row, you know, we've got tents from from the UN. Some some people live in tents, some people they made their, you know, their own, their own had their own huts, their own. The where you will get some trees and you just build them. And then like a cow cow sh** to keep it stable, I guess. And I'm I even built my own bathroom where I dig the whole. Me and my brother dig the hole and then you know, that was that was that through for the family that we built? I guess. Yeah.

Leonel Perez

So you were you were doing a lot of hands?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Cause I was the oldest for that for our family. So I was doing I was that person that you know, their that mom always called down and like, you know.

Leonel Perez

you're you kind of have been a leader in your family?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea since I was a little kid.

Leonel Perez

So, thank you for that. So what does education mean to you? This is more broadly speaking, you could define education however you, you want, like this, how do you? What does it mean to you?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

education? The answer to is the key, the key to life, I guess, you can call that, if you have education, you have more, more varieties of things that you can, you can do basically. If you have education, you can, you know, you can make a life for you and your family, not just for yourself, but you know, you can help out a lot of people with education I get it depends, depends on what kind of education you get, you know, if you get good education, you can get, you know, you can make money, and then you can help out by, you know, with your education, or with the money that the education provide for you. So, education plays a big part in today's life, in today's society. Without without education is just another another, I guess, you can say another [pause] without education is like, like, you don't have knowledge of that education, and you will be you will always work, dead end jobs, I guess. You will never have something stable without education.

Leonel Perez

Can you talk about like, like, for you, like, the difference between education from Somalia and from the US.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

In Somalia, to be honest with you, I've never reached education, like, you know, where you were, I've learned the ABCs, I have never learned the ABCs of Somalia. The only thing I've learned with like, you know, the Arabic, ABC. And then I was, I was my, my family goal was for me to be a teacher, like, the Arabic Arabic teacher. And so that's why they were there might because my dad was like the teacher. So I came from a family over, you know, of teaching, teaching, my mother, my dad's dad was a teacher, my dad was a teacher. So I was, I was that person that was gonna take the torch, and then you know, be the, the teacher. And I was at a young age I was I was very, you know, very ahead of all my class classmates, all my, all the other kids, that was the same age as me. And I, when I came to America, I even helped my stay, I was like, a TA for my dad, like, you know, teaching the Quran or the Bible. So I always been that, that a TA, you know, so my, my, my, my family dream was for me to be that, you know, to be the person that teaches the, the Quran or the Bible, you know, but when I came to America, that that took a different turn, because, you know, I started learning that, you know, the ABC and you know, the American life, you know, the American language, you know, that everything that I've learned back home got erased. And in 2010, actually, I went back to learning

what I've learned back home, and being handled teacher with my teacher with, with, with the computer, actually. So while I have learned everything that was I will start back home. And I've really learned it because I forgot because I haven't taught or haven't opened the Bible, the Quran for 10 years. And then when I when I went back to, you know, try to see if I can read it, I couldn't, you know, I couldn't, I couldn't pass like, there is like chapters. And then I have learned that 77 chapters when I was 30, I was I remember 77 chapters of top of my head. But in the 10 years, period, I forgot the 77 the 77 chapters I've learned so so when I went back when I went back to reading, I couldn't, I couldn't read the fourth chapter, I stopped at fourth chapter. So I have to re-re-learned it. And now you can say I have no all the 77 chapters. So I'm proud of myself for you know, particularly for re-earning it.

Leonel Perez

So now you know the 77 chapters?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah.

Leonel Perez

Then do you have your own physical? Quran?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yeah, yeah.

Leonel Perez

Okay.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I got a little one that I read, because you constantly you have to, you know, the brain is like, you know, if you don't, if you don't practice it will erase. So, here like every, every, every week, like, you know, I, I've tried to read like, probably like 10 chapters every every day. So I go down and then once I finish it and I start back up again so that I won't, I won't make the same mistake that I've made 10 years ago and then you know, completely forget about it.

Leonel Perez

Yea well that is really interesting. So so talk to me about that so what are your interests in the Quran or is there like a particular topic that you're most in...

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To be honest with you I was I was taught they only taught me how to read it but I don't know the meaning you know? I can read it in Arabic but if you tell me oh what does it mean, I can not tell you what does it mean but I can know how to read it. So basically the only [inaudible] because i've never, once you finish it and then start all over, they'll teach you the meaning. So that's how it works. First you have to learn it the Arabic way and then they will start all over and then you learn the meaning. You see, so i've never read because I think there is 114 chapters in the Quran and then so i've learned 77 so I have a little bit left. 114 minus 77 is what?

Leonel Perez

Half way.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea.

Leonel Perez

You have like another half.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Half left.

Leonel Perez

And that's what you're going to be planning on doing?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Uhh.

Leonel Perez

Is that the next step for you?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

That was but you know here I can't do it. Yea I only have 37 left.

Leonel Perez

Oh I thought it was 141 never mind.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Oh yea I have 30 37 left so once I would've completed the 37 then I would've learned the meaning and then it would've been easy for me to pick up and read it. Because I don't really know what its saying in Arabic. So i never got the chance to learn the meaning of the 77. So then I was like you know my goal was to go to Egypt and then you know learn because you can do it in 6 months in the school that you know you finish it in 6 months. That was my that was my main goal to do it and then to go to Egypt for like 6 months and then I have close friends that have done it.

Leonel Perez

that have gone to Egypt?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To Egypt they go and learn it and come back and become a teacher you know help the community by becoming a teacher at a mosque. We we teach.

Leonel Perez

So the first step for you is finishing and then.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Learning the meaning.

Leonel Perez

And then after that you get certified as a teacher?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Teacher.

Leonel Perez

Oh okay, So then that's one of your goals?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea. My main goal is to go see back home and then go to Egypt. I want to go see my uncles and my grandma in Ethiopia. Ethiopia.

Leonel Perez

Wait so you have family in Somalia and Ethiopia?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea cause when the war happened my uncles and my we all fled to Ethiopia. We flew to Kenya and then my family went to Ethiopia cause cause Kenya was rough because of their the police and then the police system is so corrupted so Ethiopia is like a safe zone. You know like they won't check up on you like where is your papers? They don't do that you know. So they felt like this is like more family. So then Ethiopia Somalians and Ethiopians are like you know they are like one people they are the same people like you can't tell the difference. So yea most of my family members are in Ethiopia. Yea cause my mom was born in Ethiopia, my grandma was born in Ethiopia. So there is like land they took from Somalia, we was in that land so my mom was born in Ethiopia but went to Somalia when she got married to my dad.

Leonel Perez

Ok so then what about the languages is there a difference?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea there is a difference but my mom speaks it I understand it but you know i can understand when a person is talking to me. Ethiopia has like 77 different languages. It's like you know every tribe speaks their own language. The biggest tribe is Oromo my family speaks that.

Leonel Perez

What is it called?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Oromo.

Leonel Perez

Oromo. How do you spell that?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

O-R-O-M-A? O-R-O-M-O. I think yea. So my mom speaks that my grandma speaks that I understand it but I will say a few words because i forgot because i have been in the US. When I came to the United States I was fluent on Oromo and in Amharic but I was speaking Somali barely but when I came to the United States all my family speak in Somali they didn't speak the Amharic language or the Oromo language. So I forget those two languages. Oromo I understand it because my mom always speaks it back home so I understand it but I can't I do little replies you know. But nobody can talk about me for example like hey I know you're talking about me you know so you can't can't say anything.

Leonel Perez

They can't talk [inaudible]

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea around me that's right.

Leonel Perez

Um so could you talk a little bit about the different so you were born in Somalia. You've been to Ethiopia and Kenya?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Yea when the war happened we were in the refugee camp in Kenya and then we left the refugee camp and went back to Somalia and from Somalia we went to Ethiopia the war kept on happened, more tribes started fighting so we fled. Coming back to Kenya - we were ambushed because people was being killed for their skin color. Oh you look like their tribe you know why you so light skinned you look like their tribe and they just shoot you you know. So it don't matter you know whether the language you speak. oh your blood looks like their tribe. That was the main thing that people was, so our family decided to leave Ethiopia where my mom was born so we lived in Ethiopia for a while, that's where I learned the Amharic language cause you know there was a lot of people family members who speak that language so we learned. I picked up Amharic I was fluent when I came to America my whole family my brothers and sisters we all spoke Amharic but now we all forgot. They say hi to us and whenever we came they were fluent.

Leonel Perez

You were in Ethiopia and from Ethiopia you went to Kenya...?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Kenya. We went back to Kenya.

Leonel Perez

So it was Somalia, to Kenya, to.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Somalia Kenya Somalia Ethiopia Kenya and we lived in a refugee camp in Kenya that's where we came to the capital where we got a what is it called, to come to America. A certificate to come to the US.

Leonel Perez

Like a permission.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Permission yea.

Leonel Perez

So can you talk a little bit about kind of like when you knew you were going to come to the US. When you first [inaudible] come to the US. like you're going to.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To be honest with you I didn't even cause all our life we traveled by cars we never we never took a airplane. When my mom said we're going to America I thought America was just another place that we were going to travel with a car. But the day we was leaving we didn't know that much about America but we was really happy where we were at we made a lot of friends. It didn't hit

us. We went through the process you know and it didn't hit me. We're not going no where far. We're just going to come visit type you know. That was my main concern you know but the day we was leaving all our friends and all our family members that was there started crying you know and that's when it hit me like Oh definitely, we're going somewhere that we're not going to see anybody you know. Everybody that's the reason why they crying. I don't think we're never going to see them ever again and then when we came to the airport that's when it hit me America isn't nothing that close you know. And then the whole airplane ride I think was like for two days something like that. A night and a day and a night. So it was very far it was very shocking to be honest to come and see the airport and then see the roads. When we hit New York I think we landed in New York we never my family we never had technology this advanced. We went through the air, we touched the sky you know we reached the sky and the shocking part the thing that moves in the elevator the escalator, we come down the escalator in New York and then the thing was moving. My mom she say down she we got off the escalator and then she thought it was gonna walk but the thing started moving so she sat down on it she like uh uh I got a headache i'm feeling dizzy so they had to turn the whole escalator off so it was very advanced you know technology wise, road wise, car wise you know it was very very very very nice to see what human beings have accomplished.

Leonel Perez

And can you talk about how did you see like that moment when you saw people crying? Is there a feeling that came up for you with that?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

To be honest with you I was sad because you know I didn't want to leave you know but I had [inaudible] so special because we are very close friends you know. All our life we moved around something happened. We understood oh yea we're going to come back again. But now when they started crying I knew that you know forget about them you know crying, I was worried about the family that I left in Ethiopia that i'm like if they're crying what about the other people in Ethiopia. My grandma my uncles so that mean i'm not going to see them again you know. It was very I cried when I saw close family members crying I cried. and you know we're not coming back ever again we're never going to be here. It was a very sad day. A lot of tears.

Leonel Perez

A lot of tears yeah. Um yea but then now you're here what 18 years later and you have grown a little.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

A lot. I've grown a lot. I was just a baby when I came here.

Leonel Perez

Yea you were a baby. Wait, how old were you?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

13.

Leonel Perez

You were 13.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

And now i'm 31.

Leonel Perez

you're 31 and how, for you the next process is to go back.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

I don't wanna go back I don't wanna go back with empty hand because cause back home a lot everybody especially because i've been out here for 18 years they expect you know for me to come back with something. So my goal is to go to Alaska cause you make good money if you work for three months on a boat. So to go there with at least 10 to \$15,000 dollars so I can I can give back you know and show them that I came back with something I just don't want to go back empty handed.

Leonel Perez

But you said you wanted to go back and at least travel. Go to egypt.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

My main goal is to go to Ethiopia first and then you know help my family members that I haven't spoke or forgot about because the only people I remember is my uncles because I don't remember all their kids you know they got families. I don't remember all that you know go revisit that, And meet my family members and give them something.

Leonel Perez

And have you talked to your family about this? or like what does your family think?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Actually my mom goes back. My mom she went I think about 3 or 4 times. She goes to visit the family and she my family went to go visit. She took my brother with her I think in 2014 or 15 so she's been back and forth a couple times. I'm the only one person who hasn't went back. The only reason I haven't been back is because i haven't got my passport yet so that's one of my main things. and I haven't saved enough money to go now I can go back. My mom actually wants to go back with me hopefully on the next trip that she takes. Actually, I wanna get her the ticket. I want to take her out there with me you know. pay for everything and she doesn't have to worry about anything.

Leonel Perez

I see well thank you. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to add? or talk about?

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Um you got any more questions for me?

Leonel Perez

I mean I could follow up with more but I don't know if you had anything that you wanted to add that you think is important for the people that might hear this or listen to our your story.

Abdul Kadir Adawe

Um no America is a beautiful place and no matter what skin or race you are, at the end of the day we are all one, we all came from one tree and we are all going back home. Our mission is just to find our way back home. Home is heaven, right? So that's our mission just to go to heaven. And that's what I believe that we are all going to heaven you know I don't think that hell exists you know so that's what I believe.

Leonel Perez

Well thank you, Thank you for your time.