

Transcribe for Oral History: Majdal Center Lila Suboh
Interview

Lila: Hi. Hello. [00:00:01][1.1]

Hannah: [00:00:03] No. You're totally fine. [00:00:03][0.6]

Speaker 1: [00:00:05] Can you hear me? [00:00:06][0.4]

Speaker 2: [00:00:06] Yes, I can hear you. [00:00:07][0.7]

Speaker 1: [00:00:08] Oh, okay. Sorry about that. I was trying to connect and it was interesting. [00:00:10][2.6]

Speaker 2: [00:00:11] And I know you're totally fine. Sorry.

Speaker 1: [00:00:14] You have to go and have everything on your head.

Speaker 2: [00:00:16] Good. Good. Just before. Before we get started, I just wanted to start out with, like, this whole. Like the whole question, basically. Do I have your permission to record this interview? And if any point you'd like to change your mind, I can turn it off. And you can choose whichever questions you'd like to answer or feel most comfortable answering. Yes. Okay. Sorry. I just wanted to state that just because.

Speaker 1: [00:00:40] I'm like an evaluator. I don't organize or record right now, so I do informant interviews pretty frequently, so I know the drill. Okay, great.

Speaker 2: [00:00:52] And then, um, just for the record, could you just state your full name? [00:00:54][2.4]

Speaker 1: [00:00:55] Yes. De la Silva.

Speaker 2: [00:00:57] Okay. And then also when and where were you born?

Speaker 1: [00:01:02] I was born on February 18th, 1991, in Los Angeles, California. Okay.

Speaker 2: [00:01:09] Great. So how's your vacation going? Everything. How are you?

Speaker 1: [00:01:13] God, it's just so chaotic. I'm, like, working half days, and I'm trying to do, like, 8 hours of work in 4 hours. It's just insane. And then, of course, like, right afterwards, like, super busy with the I mean, we're driving down to L.A. tonight, actually, so cool. Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:01:29] That's fun.

Speaker 1: [00:01:30] Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 2: [00:01:32] Did you fly, though, from New Jersey? That was you.

Speaker 1: [00:01:35] Okay. Yeah. We flew in from New Jersey on Tuesday and then we're here till Tuesday. So I was like, I don't know if I can commit to a video call for like, yeah, until after I get back. Yeah, I totally understand.

Speaker 2: [00:01:49] We could do this interview too as well. And then maybe if you have time to do Zoom next week at all, like maybe we could schedule something, but I'm not sure exactly when the whole project is due. I know it's due week eight, but I'm not sure if it's due on Friday or over the weekend. But I'm going to figure it out. Exactly. Okay. Yeah. Okay. I'm just going to start kind of with the whole interview process.

Speaker 1: [00:02:11] Go for it.

Speaker 2: [00:02:12] Yeah. So the first question I'd like to ask is, so basically, what did your community look like outside of your family and like where you were born and where you grew up in L.A. and stuff like that?

Speaker 1: [00:02:25] So I move around a lot. I was born in L.A., but then I moved to the Bay Area. Like the sound of the area, actually. People would say, that's not not Bay Area. So I was in the San Jose area and then when I was in the second or first grade, I moved to Jordan, to the Middle East for a couple of years, for two years. And then I moved back to San Jose area and then I moved to Fresno. So I moved around a lot. But I'll just say that while my family did a really great job in connecting us to community people in our community, a very similar background, Palestinian, Muslim, where I went to school was especially in Fresno. It was not diverse at all. It was a very it was there wasn't that much ever see. It was mostly people of European descent and a lot of Armenians as well. But I was definitely one of the few Palestinian. So a lot of people from.

Speaker 2: [00:03:36] Attending your middle school or high school. [00:03:38][2.6]

Speaker 1: [00:03:40] So like elementary school and the high school and middle school, I actually did have an Islamic school. So that was, you know, I definitely was within the community then, but outside and I went to I went to undergrad at UCLA and UCLA was a very similar to UC San Diego was very large and. [00:04:02][21.9]

Speaker 2: [00:04:02] Even heard at UCLA. They have like their own Persian frat or whatever or sorority. Sorry. [00:04:07][4.5]

Speaker 1: [00:04:08] Oh, I think so. And I know that they have there. Like when I was there, one of my friends started, like the Arabs already. Oh, cool. Yeah. So I was a very involved. Yeah, I was. Yeah. But it was definitely I mean, there's like you continue to live there. Like, there is, you know, if you want, if you want to find your community, like it's possible. So I'm going to be like the largest community that you will find people. [00:04:34][26.0]

Speaker 2: [00:04:35] Yeah, totally. [00:04:36][0.3]

Speaker 1: [00:04:37] More so than in Fresno. Yeah. [00:04:39][1.6]

Speaker 2: [00:04:40] Yeah, yeah. I grew up in like went to after because I moved around a lot as well. But I grew up for like from like the age of 12 to around like 18. In Monterey, I don't know, like. Oh, yeah, yeah. I think that's by Fresno, I believe. Kind of. Yeah, it kind of. [00:04:57][17.1]

Speaker 1: [00:04:57] It's like 2 hours. Yeah, 2 hours away. So we're not far. Yeah, I might be in a very similar demographic. [00:05:02][5.2]

Speaker 2: [00:05:03] Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so, so next question is, um, so what was it like growing up as a Palestinian in America and how such did that play a role in inspiring you to start the martial arts center? [00:05:16][12.8]

Speaker 1: [00:05:18] Oh, man. That's a really big question. Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean. As a Palestinian and America, you are having to even like at first I say the better you're like China even prove to people that you exist but even just like your existence is like it is mind blowing for people, right? So like, I like, remember, like this came up a lot during doctor visits, right? Where they would be like, where are you from? You know, they want to know your family history, to know what diseases and they should be like, you know, cautious of. And when I tell them they're Palestinian, I'm Palestinian, they're like, what are you really like? You know? Yeah. And it's like they're questioning like. [00:06:09][51.6]

Speaker 2: [00:06:10] Like, what are you. [00:06:10][0.4]

Speaker 1: [00:06:11] Then? Yeah. And then even like professors I remember, I'll never forget this. Like I was in grad school and a professor was saying how you as a as a like he like looked at me and like other people who other people of color and, and said, oh, you will connect more to me, then you will connect to people back in your home country. It's only on the basis that like you're educated and I'm educated, so we're in the same, same boat. But the people in your in your home countries, they're not educated, they're not civil like you know. Mhm. Yeah. Yeah. They would say things like that and I had another professor who told me that he actually didn't know I was Arab, didn't know I was Palestinian and started talking about how um, how you have to use torture on Arabs because there's no other way to like make us conform and like how our brains are made differently. And of course, like, I took that, like I, I, I flipped when that happened. I like my, I took it to, like to management to like the higher ups. And I went to like a professor. I trusted him and she took me to like the dean and, and whatever. And, you know, they it it was and he and then they had me talk to him and he was like, Oh, you didn't understand what I mean? It's like, not you, but it's people like you, you know? And yeah. And so that's that's sort of like I feel like, you know, I've always liked it when people see me and they hear my American accent. They're like, not you don't know that I'm Palestinian. Like I'm racially ambiguous. Mhm. And yeah it's like not until I tell them then they're like they want to try to separate me out from my community, you know, I mean and, and so that's, that's like just sort of and then of course, like you see stuff all the time. You hear stuff all the time that, like, just really bothers me. Like, you know how people talk about Palestinians and talk about, like, other, you know, minority groups, and you're just like. Like I, I, you know, I'm not different. Like, yeah, I am a community. Yeah, totally. And I think I think most of center was like, I mean for me was I knew that like why our youth were going to experience like I had experienced it and I wanted to be a resource like, you know, I wanted to support them through this and make them know that they're not they're not just

like they can be who they want to be. Like, you don't need to conform because everyone's telling them to conform, you know? [00:08:47][156.6]

Speaker 2: [00:08:48] Yeah, of course. And also I feel like but I also, I feel like in America there's not many like, you know, Arab or, you know, so like Palestinian, you know, influencers or people being shown in the media. And if they are being shown in the media, it's usually in, you know, a negative way, especially Muslims and stuff like that. So it's, you know. Yeah, very hard. I yeah. [00:09:06][18.4]

Speaker 1: [00:09:07] Yeah, for sure. And it's like and and it's there's this like really good book. It's like, but good Muslim. Bad Muslim I think is a good Arab but I can't remember it. But it like and it, it's something like really resonates with me because, you know, I do refugee work like, like I know everyday like my work is like I still do refugee work, right? And like we're so good about highlighting, like we want to highlight like the successes, right? And like I've seen a lot of people who want to be like, Oh yeah, Arabs, like, you know, where we're doing well financially. Oh yeah. Like, you know, we, we have lawyers, we have doctors, we have this and and I'm like, you know, like we don't need to just be like those people. We can also be like the store owner. We can also be like the mother. We can also be the daughter. We can also be the husband. We can, you know, like, well, why do we always have to, like, be like, oh, no, like we're like like, I don't know. [00:10:01][54.1]

Speaker 2: [00:10:02] Like trying to make the most money. And I sense that. [00:10:05][2.6]

Speaker 1: [00:10:05] Yeah, it, it is actually very much linked to money like we want. We see success is like money, right? So like when we talk about refugees, we're like this many people got a job this meaning people are not on public benefits. This many people are like doing well and like we don't really like and I'm like, I'm out work like sometimes like a. Should we ask around social integration? Like how many American friends do you have? And we're looking to see like how I don't like it's not a bad thing to only be friends with Arabs and Muslims. My God. Things. Like, at all. Like, I don't see it as a bad thing. And so it's like that. The book really talks about like how like we really differentiate like we what we want to show people like and this is what people categorize me as like the good Muslim or the good Arab, right? [00:10:53][47.6]

Speaker 2: [00:10:53] Because putting like, right, like. [00:10:55][1.4]

Speaker 1: [00:10:55] Yeah, they're putting me in that box because like I went to a good university, like I speak American English, like, you know. [00:11:03][7.5]

Speaker 2: [00:11:03] Which I. [00:11:03][0.2]

Speaker 1: [00:11:04] Can. You are I trust. Yeah, exactly. Like I trust moderate. Like, you know, it's like things like this where they're like, we want to put you in the of like, no, I don't want you to put me in that box. I want you to put me as as Arab, as Muslim, like, you know. [00:11:16][12.7]

Speaker 2: [00:11:17] Yeah, totally. [00:11:17][0.3]

Speaker 1: [00:11:19] And it's okay if we're not all doctors. It's okay for not all, you know, it's like, you know. Yeah. Yeah. We are a community like you. [00:11:26][6.9]

Speaker 2: [00:11:28] Yeah, totally. Do you mind asking, is this, like, too much? I was like, what? What university? Did they ask you that? Or was that professor explaining all those things that. [00:11:38][10.1]

Speaker 1: [00:11:39] So the the one where he he told me that like, oh, like you don't connect with your family. Like you're like you don't like. And he was saying, like, the whole education even told me he was like. Like, no way would you, like, connect with somebody over there because they're they might they're pretty literate, you know? And my grandma is pretty literate. Right. And I was like, I will always connect more to my grandma than to you, like, you know. Yeah, I guess that was at NYU. Oh, okay. That happened. Yeah. And then the the whole, like, oh, like, Arabs need to be, like, tortured. Like, that's the only way to survive. Osama bin, whatever that happened, actually, in community college when I was here in Fresno. [00:12:21][42.2]

Speaker 2: [00:12:22] Oh, okay. [00:12:23][0.5]

Speaker 1: [00:12:23] Okay. Yeah. And he was. He was like a military man. I think he was teaching like a history class. Yeah. [00:12:31][7.5]

Speaker 2: [00:12:31] Like and military. [00:12:32][0.6]

Speaker 1: [00:12:33] Right. Yeah. Yeah. He was a former military. Like, he was. He was about ten, like, had and was was like teaching history. Yeah. And my brother actually and this is like what helps in this is like sort of linked to your question about like my dad and stuff is like my brother's a lawyer so I, my brother actually helped me through the process. Like when we were, we talked to the team. Like, I feel like if I had not if I did not have my brother and my mother to, like, support me and fight it and to say something and do something, I would have just shut my mouth and kept quiet. But like, you need that support system. And this is why pressure is important because like I give support, gives people like the support system to feel empowered to say something and do something and know that they have people behind them. [00:13:24][50.8]

Speaker 2: [00:13:24] Yeah. Yeah, that's great. Okay. So moving on to the next question. Um, so did you have any family members aside from immediate family in the area you grew up in? So in like Fresno or L.A.? [00:13:40][15.5]

Speaker 1: [00:13:40] No, I. I didn't. So the closest family we had was in was 8 hours driving in El Centro, which is like south of San Diego. I'm sure you've seen the signs. [00:13:51][11.0]

Speaker 2: [00:13:52] Yeah, I think. [00:13:53][0.4]

Speaker 1: [00:13:53] I think they tell us, actually also they lived in El Centro, so we were always that was the closest. And then my mom's side we were in. Oh, and like the East Coast, like North Carolina and Ohio. Yeah. So we didn't have any family. Yeah. [00:14:10][16.9]

Speaker 2: [00:14:11] Okay. And then the next question is, could you give me a little background on your family in any previous generations you know of. [00:14:18][6.9]

Speaker 1: [00:14:19] Okay. So starting out like my grandparents, you want to go that far? So my grandparents from my dad's side, it's like, pretty simple. Like, they were born and raised in Palestine, in the Nablus area, in the Old City area. My grandparents, when they got married, lived also and now this. And then in 1947, they moved to Jordan. So a little bit before now and it was mostly like due to feeling the pressure and that made the situation. Mhm. That they moved to Jordan and then my dad, my dad is the only one who left Jordan to get an education. He was the youngest son out of nine, came to America and then studied at Fresno State, which is a city that we ended up living in and then went back to Jordan, serving in the Jordanian military. There was a draft at the time, so he had to serve two years there on work that my grandpa was in like a construction company for a little bit and then came back to America with my mother. So that's sort of his own story, the family history and then my mother's side. So my mother is a quarter Hungarian. And the way that that worked is that her great grandma or her grandmother I'm sorry, I came to Palestine with her. With her sister or not her sister, her cousin who was actually in Palestine because she was a nun or of trying to become a nun or something like that. And then met like my great grandfather's brother and then got married and then was like, Oh, your brother is really great. I'm going to like to bring my cousin over from Hungary so that they can get to know each other. And then they got married and then my great grandpa was in the in the Palestinian forces are not for like I think it was, it was like the ah the police. The Palestinian police. Yeah. Which is like, it's like it's structured a little bit differently. It's like not here where it's like you have like the police and the army. It's all sort of the same, right? And you just have like your army has internal and then and then external branches, which is like, oh. [00:17:01][162.0]

Speaker 2: [00:17:02] Sorry during that time. Sorry to interrupt you. But yeah, if you say during that time, like, because I know in Lebanon they have, you know, different police forces and army and based on like what type of sect you are like if you're Muslim, if you if you're Shia, if you're Christian, if you're a maronite type of thing. I mean, I'm not sure if that is the same for like in Palestine. Yeah, they're in Palestine. [00:17:23][20.9]

Speaker 1: [00:17:23] Yeah. I mean, my, my parents and my grandparents have always been friends with Palestinian Christians. Jordanian Christians. Like it is never like my mom. Even when she went to school in and in Jordan, she went to a Catholic school. And she was my friend and she was in a muslim country. So like, it's that never like in my family's experience, like we've never liked my and my parents have always had like Arab. It's, it's like, to be honest, like they connect more with Arab than they do with non-Arab. Mhm. Oh. Like the religion has never like impacted like you know, like who their friends are with and who they're not friends with like and I mean they do have non-Arab friends and stuff but like it's just like I think language is easier. That's why I like it. Yeah, yeah. But yeah, I don't, I don't think like when he was like I never heard of that. I'd have to ask my mom for more details about that. I never heard there is a difference. And like my, my great grandpa was actually an orphan and he has his parents like had died because of like stuff like some disease that was going around. And so they put him in the military like, like so they had him in like a in a system that like led him to the military, like knowing that that was like his way to like, you know, stability, knowing that you didn't have a family. [00:18:54][90.1]

Speaker 2: [00:18:54] Yeah, totally. [00:18:55][0.7]

Speaker 1: [00:18:56] Yeah. [00:18:56][0.0]

Speaker 2: [00:18:56] Yeah. Sorry. That maybe. Sorry. [00:18:58][1.4]

Speaker 1: [00:18:58] No, go ahead. [00:18:59][0.6]

Speaker 2: [00:18:59] No, sorry. That was just me. Like, I just was wondering on the Palestinian part because I know that's like. Yeah, and Lebanon. Because it. [00:19:06][6.3]

Speaker 1: [00:19:06] Is. [00:19:06][0.0]

Speaker 2: [00:19:06] Yeah, my, my grandfather was also also, um, Muslim and he went to a Catholic school, I believe, in Lebanon High School. [00:19:14][7.5]

Speaker 1: [00:19:14] Yeah, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think like. Honestly, this is all very recent, you know? Yeah. Sort of like. Like the like and even like the Sunni outlook. This is it's such a new thing. Like, you know, my parents were like, we never thought about it. It's like nine. So and same with like the Christian, the Palestine, like the Christian and the Muslim like. It's also like a very like new, you know, divide. So I mean. [00:19:43][29.2]

Speaker 2: [00:19:43] That's a lot of it stems from the I think the creation of the borders around, you know, the core and the nationalism and all that sort of, you know, aspects which. Yeah. [00:19:55][11.3]

Speaker 1: [00:19:57] For sure. I totally 100% agree with you. [00:19:59][2.4]

Speaker 2: [00:20:00] Okay. Yeah. Sorry. [00:20:01][1.3]

Speaker 1: [00:20:02] No, no, no. I'm trying to remember where I left off. Where if you had enough information about the family history. [00:20:07][5.0]

Speaker 2: [00:20:08] Oh, no, I think that's fine. Maybe. Just like, did you have a lot of cousins growing up or, like, aunts and uncles, that type of thing? Like, did you have a big family? [00:20:16][7.7]

Speaker 1: [00:20:17] Yeah, it's definitely a big family. So Mom's side is like on the smaller side, like I have one and two uncles and each family has like three. But from my dad's side, he has eight brothers and sisters and I have, I think, close to like 40 cousins from that side alone. And they were also based in Jordan. Okay. So I saw them like every couple of years. I wasn't as close to them. Okay, cool. [00:20:46][28.6]

Speaker 2: [00:20:47] Okay. So moving on. So moving into the Marshall Center, could you describe the course you took in creating and starting it? And then like second part of question was a difficult process. [00:20:59][11.8]

Speaker 1: [00:21:01] Yeah, sure. So, I mean. Personally, like when I joined the cast of had was already established. So you already had the community was already aware of this like grassroots organization. It was also there was already like some volunteers. So I have to say, when I joined, I was not at like zero. It was like a little bit at the already had already started. And then also wanted to note that at the time there was so much happening in the media, right? Yes. It's like you had the huge life number of three refugees who came and you also had the drowning of the two year old and that was all over the news. And so, like, people were very, like, eager to support. Right. Like. So it was super easy to, like, recruit more people because people were reaching out to us, like, to raise them, like, how could I help? Like, I'm so, like, moved by what's happening and I like want to take action. Yeah. And so from that front, like, it was super easy to, like, mobilize people and get people to support and for, like, you know, to get, like, resources. Like it was easy to, like, ask people for donations and get donations, but then like. As any like organization, like sort of like this. Is that after a little bit like, okay, this crisis has like calmed down and now there's a new crisis. Like their attention was like lost, right? So like then like, you know, sort of our volunteer group got like a little bit smaller, but we still wanted to like expand our work. And so then I feel like that's when like we all started to really feel a lot more work on us. Does that make sense? Yeah. Making sense of it? No. [00:22:50][109.6]

Speaker 2: [00:22:51] Yeah, yeah. Totally makes sense. [00:22:52][1.2]

Speaker 1: [00:22:53] Yeah, for sure. So, I mean, I think I might have mentioned those too last time we spoke, but like, so I joined like as like there when we were at Arab youth collectives. And like one of the biggest challenges that we were facing is that we didn't have a space straight. So we're doing events at the library and at the park. It's like sometimes it's raining, it's sometimes like, you know, you want to do it. The day is shorter, so it's like hard when like everyone's a volunteer and everyone's working and has a full time job. So the only time they're available is on the weekends from the OR, you know, after work. And so we felt the need to have like a space. And so like we like, you know, one of our members had a place on ground. We got like the funding to like rent a space and that like was like a whole new chapter for us, right? Yeah. So now we can, like, have regular programing and things like this and, and then and then things like took off. And to be honest, like before, before Rama came on a little bit before, like we were definitely starting to feel really burnt out, right? We like, really started to feel that we needed like we needed stuff like it can no longer function. We're just, we're just like volunteers. And so I had a, I had already moved out of San Diego. So when like we were, they were able to secure the funding for her full time position. Yeah. [00:24:22][89.6]

Speaker 2: [00:24:23] That's great. Okay. Um, and then so Rama came in your after and you had already left San Diego. [00:24:31][8.1]

Speaker 1: [00:24:32] Mm. Okay. [00:24:34][1.7]

Speaker 2: [00:24:35] And then next question is, um, I remember in the pre-interview, um, that you mentioned that the module center was originally supposed to be named after a Palestinian activist. And you explain in more detail the obstacles you faced in creating the center and like moving forward and changing the name and how they approached you. The whole basically controversy, I guess, around the name naming it after the PLO activist. [00:25:01][26.0]

Speaker 1: [00:25:02] Yeah, for sure. That's a really great question. So what happened is at first we were in Lebanon and we named it after somebody who with a Palestinian that was working in in in Syria. But some of the community members felt that, first of all, that we didn't know enough about this individual. We don't know enough about, you know, what, like his political affiliations and that not everyone might agree with, like his his politics. And so by us naming our organization after this person, then we were affiliated with his politics as well. And the community members felt that we could do a lot more if, you know, our name was something much more inclusive and that this name was like dividing, right? So at first we felt that, you know, we that this person was somebody that I didn't know personally, but other people I know it, know personally and really felt that he was a really amazing person and that like it really made sense for us to like what the work we were doing was very similar to the work that he lived and died by. MM But we also like to recognize that a we shouldn't be, we wanted the center to be inclusive and, and a welcoming space for everyone. And so it made sense for us to, to, to change the name. And it's, it was definitely a, I have to say, like an old verse, a young lady. And yeah, it was like, yeah, who were like in the community for a really long time who, who like, you know, were like our parents age. And so we felt that. We wanted to make sure that, you know, that we work together with them and that we weren't lying and we weren't that we were considering their opinions and trying to, like, unify the community rather than divide it. Mm hmm. [00:27:18][135.5]

Speaker 2: [00:27:20] Okay, great. And then. Was it hard also to pick the name for it all, or did that come pretty easy? Is it? [00:27:29][8.7]

Speaker 1: [00:27:29] Yeah, it was. It was like a lot of like researching and then like we have like meetings where like everyone would sort of like pitch ideas and then we would like vote and then we in the way that we came up with this name is that most of it's actually a name of like it's like I want to say it's even more than just one thing. I think there was like several series called mesh up in those days. Mm. Or had the word motion in it and I know the word means like it's like a, like a lighthouse, right. Like a tower. And, and so we felt like that encompassed a lot of what we did because, like, we wanted this to be, like, somewhere that. People can come to and see, like from far, like, you know, be somewhere. Like, if you're not, if you're lost, but, like, you know, be. [00:28:15][45.7]

Speaker 2: [00:28:17] Yeah. Like something to guide you almost. [00:28:18][1.8]

Speaker 1: [00:28:19] Yeah, exactly. Exactly. There you are. [00:28:21][2.3]

Speaker 2: [00:28:21] Go. Guide you there. Bright light. [00:28:24][2.4]

Speaker 1: [00:28:25] Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Like a, you know, a guiding force. Right. [00:28:28][3.6]

Speaker 2: [00:28:30] So, yeah. [00:28:31][0.4]

Speaker 1: [00:28:31] So that's, that's how that came about. Mhm. But it was a, it was a difficult decision. I mean I won't underestimate it like it was, you know, it was very hard to change the name because especially that like, you know, we had even notified the, the parents, the fact of,

you know, of, of always about, you know, we had named the center after him and then it was just like such a hard decision to like, you know. Yeah. [00:28:58][27.0]

Speaker 2: [00:28:59] Yeah, I bet. Um. Yeah. Okay. And then. Okay. Thank you for that. And then. Oh, the next question is, how has the marginal center helped the influx of refugees in the community of Oklahoma? When you were. [00:29:16][16.5]

Speaker 1: [00:29:16] Yeah, for sure. So, I mean, something that was unique with the National Center was that we were a grassroots volunteer based and we were all running no organization. So this month felt like we were working with our community. It wasn't like we were not a service provider, which like there was there is a lot of that already happening. And we were not doing this like. In exchange for anything, right? Like we were doing this as being like to be with our community like we were. It was a very like community. Yeah. It was not like I was not going in there and being like, okay, I'm going to do this for you. I'm going to help you. Like this, like white savior complex, right? It was like, no, I'm just going to be in my community. Like, I'm going to support you. You're going to support me. We're going to support each other to like to do this, to navigate this world, navigate this community, you know, this. [00:30:27][71.0]

Speaker 2: [00:30:28] Like give a voice to the community. [00:30:29][1.3]

Speaker 1: [00:30:30] Yeah, it was like very much like, you know, like we're in this together. Like, how do we. Like How do we help each other out? It wasn't about like it wasn't one sided and it wasn't like I remember, like, I won't forget, like, we were doing this, like, carnival on aid and like this other organization, like, had heard that we were doing this critical. So they went and they came with a bunch of toys and they had a bunch of like cameras and videos and they would be like they would try to, like, lure the kids from the carnival over to their booth. And they would tell them, like, oh, like, let me take can you can I give you this toy? But I just like need to take a picture of you and I just, you know, take a video of you and like, it was just so much, like, commercialized, like it was, and it felt so genuine. [00:31:24][54.2]

Speaker 2: [00:31:25] Yeah. [00:31:25][0.0]

Speaker 1: [00:31:27] And so that was like us. We even had like a policy. Like we told all of our volunteers, you cannot take pictures. Like, this is not like, yeah, this is not a, like, a fun. Like, it's not like we don't want to be those people like we are. You were in your community like unless you are like like taking a picture because like you want, like a picture, like they want a picture with you. Like it needs to be like a mutual, not like a yeah, I don't know. It's not like a circus or something. Like, you know, like, let me, you know. [00:32:03][36.1]

Speaker 2: [00:32:03] It's not like. Yeah, something that needs to be taken seriously. I mean. [00:32:07][3.6]

Speaker 1: [00:32:08] Yeah, yeah. So like, definitely like something that I felt was okay. What was your question? I feel like I sort of know your game. [00:32:17][8.7]

Speaker 2: [00:32:17] It was. How did the moral center help the influx of refugees in the community? [00:32:21][3.3]

Speaker 1: [00:32:22] Oh, got it. [00:32:22][0.7]

Speaker 2: [00:32:23] Yeah. So Iraqi or Syrian or Palestinian. Yeah. [00:32:27][4.1]

Speaker 1: [00:32:28] So we definitely also became like gatekeepers for the community. Right. So like, there is a lot like whenever somebody would want to be like they want to do something for the community, were there to be like, okay, but it's like we're going to ask the community and see what they want. You know, we ended up like developing an advisory group and so this made it made it very clear, like we were able to really centralize, like make sure that the voices of the community were at the core of of the work being done in the community. So really sort of and sort of asking and surveying and then also like developing this advisory group that like became the voice for the community. And there was they mentioned like there was all these organizations that would come in and be like, Oh, we want to do this, we want to do that. Like and we were like, okay, let's see what the community says. And then we would like the community be like, Hey, they want to do this. Like, do you want this? You know? You know. [00:33:26][58.2]

Speaker 2: [00:33:26] Yeah, totally. [00:33:27][0.4]

Speaker 1: [00:33:30] And then we add in that like we like something we always says we would ask you, what do you need? Like what? What are the services like that you need? And so something that came up was like, Oh, like our kids need help with school, with tutoring. And so then that's how we develop that ordering program. And then there was a time where families were like, they'd help using our computers. And so when we started doing computer classes, this one was like one that I think everyone looked at by surprise, and it totally made sense. We got a huge request from several community members saying We want Arabic classes for our kids. [00:34:05][35.2]

Speaker 2: [00:34:05] Yeah, yeah, totally. [00:34:06][1.0]

Speaker 1: [00:34:07] They're confused about that. We're like, what? Like they know everything, you know? And they're like, No, they don't. They left school when they were really young. They don't know how to read and write in Arabic. Yeah, totally. And so that was like one of our most popular programs when we first started. [00:34:21][14.5]

Speaker 2: [00:34:22] Yeah, that's super cool. I would. That's like because I mean, I grew up in like Georgia, I was born in Georgia, I grew up in Virginia. Like, also my family is Lebanese. So we speak, I mean, like my cousins mainly speak French like only, oh, God has an aunt speak Arabic. Also, because my family grew up in West Africa, it was like a whole migration thing. It's pretty complicated, but like, I would love to have something around like that when I was younger, especially with Arab like people to take a class like that, that would be so nice. But you know, I grew up in different areas. Like, you know, they didn't have those opportunities, but that's really, really cool. [00:34:55][33.2]

Speaker 1: [00:34:57] Yeah. Mm hmm. Yeah. You would not think that. Right. Like, essentially that. Like. Like, you know, they were on, you know, like newly arrived to the U.S. But it made sense, like they are not going to school. [00:35:10][13.4]

Speaker 2: [00:35:11] Yeah, because my mom said she had to, like, practice, like she doesn't she cannot remember how to read and write in Arabic because like, she I mean, she would just. Yeah, she just forgot because it's like something I feel like they have to practice. And she's also been in America for, like, my entire life. So, you know, yeah, I feel like she wasn't as involved in things. It was harder. [00:35:31][20.8]

Speaker 1: [00:35:32] Uh huh. [00:35:32][0.1]

Speaker 2: [00:35:33] Yeah. But that's really cool. [00:35:34][1.4]

Speaker 1: [00:35:35] Yeah, that makes sense. [00:35:36][0.5]

Speaker 2: [00:35:37] And then so yeah, just there's one last question. [00:35:40][2.8]

Speaker 1: [00:35:41] And what was that I thought you cut out. [00:35:43][1.6]

Speaker 2: [00:35:43] Sorry. There's one last question I just wanted to ask you in the interview. [00:35:45][2.2]

Speaker 1: [00:35:46] Of course. [00:35:47][0.3]

Speaker 2: [00:35:48] So basically, how has the emotional center transformed and aided the Arab community and Oklahoman and the Arab refugees. [00:35:56][7.8]

Speaker 1: [00:35:56] While you're cutting out I don't know if it's sort of something on my end, is it? You repeat the question. [00:36:00][4.2]

Speaker 2: [00:36:01] Yeah. I mean, so how has the marginal center transformed and aided the Arab identity and the Arab refugees in El Cajon? And what are some of the next achievements you'd like to see within the center? [00:36:13][12.2]

Speaker 1: [00:36:15] Sorry, have I? Can you repeat it one more time? You completely cut out of the question. [00:36:20][4.7]

Speaker 2: [00:36:20] No, no. Your friend. Can you hear me? No. This is okay. [00:36:23][2.4]

Speaker 1: [00:36:23] Yeah. [00:36:23][0.0]

Speaker 2: [00:36:24] Okay. How has the marginal center transformed and aided the Arab identity and the Arab refugees in Oakland? And what are some of the next achievements you'd like to see within the center? As I could. [00:36:34][10.2]

Speaker 1: [00:36:36] Can you hear me? Oh, man. Okay, let me kind of go upstairs. [00:36:38][2.3]

Speaker 2: [00:36:39] If not, I can try here. If not, I can hear you. If not, I can text you the question maybe. [00:36:43][4.2]

Speaker 1: [00:36:44] Would that I can hear you now. It seems like, though, like every something that counts is untrue. But could you repeat it one more time? Have you checked the TV? [00:36:54][10.0]

Speaker 2: [00:36:55] No. Yeah, I know. You're fine. It's, um. How does this happen? How has the marginal senator transformed and aided the Arab identity and Arab refugees in Oklahoma? And what are some of the next achievements you'd like to see within the center? [00:37:06][10.7]

Speaker 1: [00:37:08] Yeah, for sure. So this is really great. On more work done since I left San Diego. But I think the census work has been so important. Yeah. Yeah. And, and I think like, like the, the advisory group that we developed back then was also really important. Right? Like, it has like really need a voice and they made it possible for our community to represent themselves, right? So like whenever, like approaches about resources and things like that. So it says something about their Arab identity. Like how we. [00:37:52][44.0]

Speaker 2: [00:37:52] Oh yeah. Like ate. I guess I would go into more like the census I'd say because. [00:37:57][5.0]

Speaker 1: [00:37:58] Yeah. [00:37:58][0.0]

Speaker 2: [00:37:59] Yeah. I feel like that's something that's very important because like for my experience, like growing up like as an Arab in America, like I feel like people normally like don't know what like usually Arab people are like even like when I say I'm Lebanese, they're like misinformed or like they just don't. They just kind of clump it up and just say, oh, the Middle East, you know, or like, you know, like a very Orientalist way of thinking about it, if that makes sense. [00:38:23][24.1]

Speaker 1: [00:38:24] Yeah, for sure. Yeah, for sure. I mean, I definitely think that the census work has been really important for that. But that was sort of after Lost. So I can't really talk too much about it except that like, I mean, it was something like in the works, but we really didn't have much capacity to do it. And then also I know, like I remember we had started the discussion with another community organization called Pana and and they had told us how, like, you know, it's, it's something that's like very central in their work and how it it really was especially about like alcohol and it was really like they call it like about that, right? It's like it's there's so many I like these are so many adults, like, and it just it makes sense that like there would be representation and it, I mean, it really like blows my mind that there really hasn't been like, you know, like, like you said, there really hasn't been much in that from like from a, like a political standpoint or like a, like the infrastructure is like really hasn't. Like, it's known, but there really isn't much representation. Mhm. Um, and so, I mean we were still really like when I was training. It was really much like we were just brainstorming, we knew it was important but we weren't really sure, like, oh, how we should advocate for it. Um, you think that, you know, the, like, all of, like the census work and the redistricting work has really been working towards it. And I wish I could talk more about that, but yeah. After my time. [00:40:07][102.8]

Speaker 2: [00:40:08] No, you're good. Okay. So I'm going to turn the recording off now. These are I finished all the questions, basically. [00:40:16][7.4]

Speaker 1: [00:40:17] Okay, wonderful. Yeah. And if you think of any question. [00:40:17][0.0]
[2291.0]