

ASIAN VOICES

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INTERVIEWEE: Andrew Jilani & Cara Siano

INTERVIEWER: Deepak Shinoy

(START OF TAPE 4, SIDE A)

DEEPAK SHINOY: So this is a recording for the Asian Voices Oral History Project. I am Deepak Shinoy, the interviewer, and today I'm going to be interviewing Andrew Jilani and Cara Siano and-, oh, today's date is June first, 1999. And we're in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in Andrew and Cara's beautiful apartment. Very nice apartment with a very eastern feel. Eastern prints everywhere, and we're sitting on mats, on the floor, very comfortably and sipping tea-, and eating snacks, getting ready to enjoy the afternoon. A very nice afternoon for conversation. Umm... So I think I'll start with some questions about Andrew-, because you were not born in this country. So we'll start there and-, ahm.. when did you come to the US?

ANDREW JILANI: Ahm.... I came in the early eighties-, to the United States.

DS: From?

AJ: From Pakistan. Yeah.

DS: What city?

AJ: I come from Lahore. City of Lahore.

DS: And-, um... was that the first time you came to

US?

AJ: That was my first time. Yeah.

DS: What reason did you come for? Was it a visit, to tour, to take a job, or school?

AJ: Actual it was-, I came here as a result of my brother getting arrested in Pakistan in the late seventies.

DS: Oh?

AJ: Ahm... he worked with a party called Pakistan peoples' Party with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, when Bhutto was in jail. He worked very closely with him, his lawyers. And, my brother's name is Peter and he was arrested by the military government, and through the help of Amnesty International, I worked for his release. So when Peter was released in 1979, he went to Germany with the help of Amnesty International. He got political asylum there. And I came to United States on a student visa initially, and then I applied for political asylum and I got political asylum in 1984.

DS: I see. So did you--? What-, did you actually enroll in school here? Did you () -. What schooling did you do here?

AJ: I did my Bachelor's degree-, in Nebraska-, in Lincoln, Nebraska. I went to a small college called the Union College. And-, So when I came, I had this desire and aim of- you know- making a life, making money in United states because in Pakistan I had heard about United states, you know, how much money-, it is here, how many possibilities are here. So, that's what I pursued, and I decided that the best way to achieve, you know, some prosperity, is to work in a bank. And I started working in a bank after I graduated with a degree in business administration. And, that was a time for me, you know, a very high time. You know, I was in a honeymoon stage and -, [laughter] in the States I thought this country is great, because I had left behind a brother who was in jail and, you know, released but-, and in his arrest, we spent a lot of money, bribing police, bribing the military government, so--.

DS: Necessary.

AJ: Necessary, yeah. So, the things I left behind were, you know, not very pleasant, so I started experiencing some positive things here, so I --.

DS: And at that time did you think you were planning to stay?

AJ: I had no idea!

DS: Okay.

AJ: I had no idea. I was just, you know, enjoying every thing. I bought my first car-, () In Pakistan I thought I would never buy a car. Only rich people buy cars, and so--.

DS: Actually has a safe street to drive it on! [laughter] So-, so you-, was there a danger in going back to Pakistan, or was it not possible at that time, or was it risky, or was it--?

AJ: Well, a combination of things. One was, that we had no hope in Pakistan. Also, I grew up, you know, as a Christian in Pakistan, so that was another factor. Christian, as you know, are not-, are not treated very well in Pakistan. You know, economic opportunities, social -, socially--, they're not tolerated well, so that also, it was-, I really felt good to be in the United States. I mean, I remember vividly some of the places where I stood and I felt free! You know, and I said wow! I left a very barbaric country, you know, behind. That was the early eighties, Reagan-, you know, Ronald Reagan style, and I could not find anything wrong with this country.

DS: When you first came here--.

AJ: My initial years, yeah.

DS: But that might have changed later.

AJ: It has changed. [laughter]

DS: I had to make sure. I'll ask you about that as we work our way through here. Ahm.. The-, why don't we go with that now, actually. What changed, I guess, in your perceptions about the US from at first to, I guess, now it's been almost-, fifteen years?

AJ: Uh-huh.

DS: So-, you know, that's a lot of time. What-, What's changed in your perspective?

AJ: Well, when I started working on my first job, that gave me a-, you know, very concrete experience of the society, and there I also reflected. I worked in a bank and I think that was a most boring place I ever worked in in my life. People would talk about football, and you know, they would talk about things that I didn't understand or, you know, I couldn't connect with the people--.

DS: Hmm..

AJ: So, I would tell them about Pakistan. They would listen to two sentences and change the topic, you know, so I-, I felt kind of both bored and lonely in the bank and so-, then I said, you know, I should either go back to my country or find something here. But in that-, at that time I had also applied for-, since I had applied for political asylum, I had no passport to go back--.

DS: Oh boy!

AJ: Because you surrender the passport when you apply for an asylum. So anyhow, I decide to work for the Amnesty International, the organization which had released my brother and-, so I left the bank, and started with the local chapter of Amnesty International in Omaha. Nebraska. And that gave me a little, you know, diversion and-,

something which I liked, you know. So I worked with Amnesty for a couple of years, and then-, while I worked with Amnesty, also, I was able to look critically at United States. But my two and a half years with the bank, you know, as I said, they were my honeymoon years, I did not find any problem with the United States. When I was hired at the bank, I was one of the eight people out of two hundred people who were selected for-, to go through the management training program. I was the only minority person, so I said, wow, this country has possibilities! So that was-, that experience was on one side, and then this emptiness and boredom in the bank drove me crazy, you know. And then-, so, then Amnesty International work provided me to look at the society more critically.

DS: Was-, was there, sticking with this first experience you had, was there a lot of other-- you said you were the only minority in the bank-- was there a lot of Pakistani or Indian, or just general South-Asian-, people or community at that time at that place?

AJ: In that city? Yes. In Omaha? Yes, there-, there was, and there still is a very big South-Asian community, primarily Indians. Professional people—doctors, engineers and-, er...and-, few Pakistanis. You know, very big Indian community. At the bank, I was the only-, the only South Asian. There was one person from Africa, one woman from Phillipines, and the rest of the staff was predominantly white, some blacks--.

DS: So, at that time, did you have a feeling of community, or-, were you involved with that a lot? Did you meet those people, or-?

AJ: Ahm.... That time, you know, when I initially came, I had-, mostly white Americans as my friends.

DS: Hmmm.... That's interesting.

AJ: Ahm.... Because that was-, because at the bank there were mostly white people. Ahm... and-, you know, and I played sports, you know, and socialized with them and -, and I didn't see-, you know, I didn't find ways to connect, for example, with the African Americans, you know. Because I was living in a white area, you know. In the school also, I mostly socialized with the-, with the white students. Ahm.... But yes, definitely, on the weekends, and other occasions I would socialize with the South-Asians.

DS: I see. So, I'm gonna repeat that-, you know, questions about community when we talk about-, life in Chapel Hill and-, Carrboro.

AJ: Carrboro--. Okay.

DS: But, ahm.... Why don't you tell me how you and Cara met? [laughter]

AJ: Cara, you want to tell it, or--? [laughter]

DS: Maybe Cara wants to--.[laughter] Both of you can chip in on the story.

CARA SIANO: Umm...-.

DS: How long ago was that?

CS: We met in a--. We met in--. 1992, right?

AJ: Yup.

CS: When you first came--. You'd first come back from Pakistan.

AJ: That's right.

CS: Having gone back to work with-, with Afghan refugees. And, Andrew had come back to do his doctors degree in education ()-.

DS: Uh-huh.

CS: So, I was an undergraduate at that time. And, we met at a-, actually at a party which I had at my place--. [laughter] So we had common friends and thry brought

Andrew and-, so that's where we met and-. We were friends through-out that year, and then-, it was in-, ninety three? Or ninety four? End of ninety three!

AJ: Exactly! End of ninety-three ().

CS: Then we started our relationship.

DS: Wow! So, that was in-, at Amherst.

CS: Yup. In Amherst, yes.

AJ: In the vicinity ()--.

DS: What's that?

AJ: In the vicinity of ()--.

DS: And so-. When did you folks come down here? To Chapel Hill?

CS: We moved to Chapel Hill in July-, of ninety seven.

DS: Ninety seven?

CS: [to AJ] You came back in July as well. Right?

AJ: Yeah. No! I came in August.

CS: And we moved back here from Sri Lanka.

DS: So, you'd been in Sri Lanka for how long?

CS: We went to Sri Lanka in-, ninety-six--. No!

AJ: Ninety-six. Yes.

CS: Yeah. Ninety-six. Spring of ninety-six. April of ninety-six, and came back in July of ninety-seven.

DS: So, that's quite a change to come from there-, [laughter] up to Chapel Hill.

And what--, what brought you along here?

CS: We came-, so that I could do my studies here.

DS: Okay--.

CS: In public health.

DS: Hunh...

CS: Yeah. () my studies.

DS: Okay. So that's what--? And then the Chapel Hill connections. Umm...so, maybe you could describe to me what you would consider-, um... your community here? Are there any community activities-, you take part in, either South-Asian or otherwise, just general community?

AJ: Ahm.....Well, I think we-, for us-, I mean it's also-, for me, communities, you know, also keep changing, you know, so. We hang out with a certain group of people, and then they fade away. And then we meet-, you know, I meet new people, and hang out with them. So most of our Chapel Hill--, community-, for me! Because I'm not in a school, you know-- and I do consulting work here and there—is probably-, limited for me, you know. Because I'm not a-, you know, full time student, and I'm not a full time-, working anywhere, so as a result I've met--, you know, different people. I've met Latinos, I have met African Americans, I Have met-, you know, one good thing about this project is-- you know, South Asian--, Asian Voices and the South-Asians who are here. So, I would say, I-, you know, I don't have a strong community. But, you know, pieces from different communities.

DS: How about yourself, Cara?

CS: Ahm.... I guess-. Hmmm... What is my community, huh? Hmm... interesting question! [laughter] Yeah. I mean, I guess I feel similar that it's-, there's

different, you know-, kind of different groups in which both of us move. One of those is academic-, studying. Because I was a student, we got to know people through that.

DS: Uh-huh.

CS: Um.... And, primarily, that-, I mean not-, not very deep-, of that kind of connections.

DS: UH-huh.

CS: You know people, but it's very transitory, sort of feeling, relationships.

DS: Sure.

CS: And--. Some of the stronger connections I think, for me, have been through my work with the Latino community in Durham, where I worked with several, you know, community groups, coalitions, and-, those have been stronger connections. You know, immigrants from Latin America, who have () they're gonna make their lives here, and maybe in a certain sense, we also feel like we have come from-, a sort of-, a very different background, in terms of-- you know, we've moved around quite a bit—we came here, not knowing, you know, not having family here, knowing a lot of people, and I think, in some ways that was-, we could relate in that way to-, you know, Latino immigrants.

DS: Even though it's not from the same background, experience of being an immigrant--.

CS: Yeah.

DS: you could relate at that level.

CS: Exactly! I mean, coming and-, just-, not knowing your way around, or the kind of things that you need-, help from--.

DS: Uh-huh

CS: Supporting-, and like-, you know, someone who's lived here their whole life, they wouldn't understand that, you know! [laughter] Those were kind of natural connections we made. And also because, I think, Latinos-, for us-, I mean, well, I don't know, I won't speak for you. But just because, I mean, I think they tend to be very--, there's a lot of--, you know, kind of fun-- that goes on in Latino culture and-, that was also a nice break, and it--, like--, this kind of - drinking, and kind of always talking about, and kind of, you know, academics, or whatever! So, it provided () just, you know, enjoy people, and you know, with music, or I mean, I think those kind of things, you know. At least I find that I missed from Sri Lanka and from my experiences in Central America, just kind of, people having fun, you know! [laughter]

DS: What about--? What about the neighborhood? Let's just narrow it a little bit. This neighborhood we are in here, is university housing. Do you have any--? Are there any neighborhood activities that go on? Do you know your neighbors, or do you ever meet them socially, or--?

CS: Umm.....I wouldn't say that in this-, you know, kind of these apartments that there's a real strong sense of community. Maybe most of the people that have kids, they have different events for kids--, and-, umm... but we do--, I mean, we have friends who live in, and who we see from time to time, visit in their homes. That would be the most socializing that we do. And we know the neighbors, you know, share the gardens in the back-, so--. Yeah!. I mean, it's a friendly place, but it's again, not I mean, very deep kind of connections, and things.

DS: So, are there a lot of immigrants in this housing area, in these apartment?

AJ: Well, I think they--. I would call them foreign students, you know.

DS: Okay! So they may not be immigrating.

AJ/CS: Yeah.

AJ: Yeah. I do not know. I would probably classify them as foreign students. One thing I wanted to add also--.

DS: Yeah. Sure!

AJ: About the community is that--, you know, when you were saying about Sri Lankan communities, also reminded me of the community which I was used to in Pakistan, you know. A very stable community, you know. In Pakistan they say-, or among Punjabis they say that Punjabis have a great love of the land, you know, and they're always connected to a land to which they come from, you know. So, and I remember growing up in Lahore. I mean, I would leave Lahore for two hours and I would extremely feel home-sick. [laughter] I wanted to go back to Lahore, you know. And, so-, and I think, for me-, the community-, the sense of community in America is very transitory. Either we move, or people move, you know. So it's very difficult. For me, it is really difficult. The moment I start feeling at-, at ease, and we have moved, you know.

DS: Yeah.

AJ: So, it's also--. So I have, you know--, and I see other people moving also, you know, so--. So it's a community-, you know, that sense of community--. I have learnt other ways of now living in a community.

DS: So, what is--? What do you feel is really different than Pakistan? Is it that people here move more, you said. Is it--? What is that feeling of community like theirs?

Is it associated with a place? Is it associated with certain people? Like, is it the city of Lahore, or the people you know there? What is it that feels--, that used to draw you about that? What did you miss?

AJ: Well, you know, for me, I mean, there was my primary school where I went, my middle school, my high school-, you know, so-, all my class-fellows I played cricket with, I flew kites with, you know-, I fought with. So, those people were always present there. [laughter] You know--. And then the- just the Pakistani way, or the South-Asian way, generally of dropping in somebody's home-, unannounced--.

DS: Yeah. No making phone calls!

AJ: No making--. You know, even now with people have phones--.

DS: People don't use it! [laughter]

AJ: People just show up, you know. So that was--. And here, initially-, I really struggled with, you know-, you know, people--, you know, having this expectation that you call them, and then it is a community, you know. So, and then Lahore itself, you know-, Lahore is a great place. So, those were my connections, you know. Both to places, people--.

DS: And you haven't lived in-, I guess aside from-, after Nebraska, it sounds like you haven't lived in one place for too long since coming to the US either.

AJ: No! No, no--. Not yet. [pause] After Nebraska, I went to Vermont, I got my Masters degree.

DS: How many years were you in Vermont?

AJ: Mmm... Probably a year and a half.

DS: Okay, and then what?

AJ: And then I went back to Pakistan.

DS: For how long was that?

AJ: I was there for about four years.

DS: And did you--? How did you feel going back? Did you view it the same, going back, or--?

AJ: No, going back actually, was tough for me. You know, I had gone back I think after about six-, six and a half years. Umm..... And you know, people had changed. I had changed! I had become, you know, kind of, americanized "desi"--.

DS: In what ways? In what--?

AJ: In my behavior I had changed. I remember one incident when I went to Lahore, you know, to visit with my brother and his kids. And I-, you know, it was my first or second day after I'd come from United States, and I took a shower. And, after shower I put on tennis shorts, you know-. In the house--[laughter] And my niece, you know, she started giggling! You know. [laughter] And she told my sister-in-law that, you know, uncle-, "chacha", you know, in Punjabi or Urdu--, is wearing shorts, you know! I didn't know--. To that extent I had changed.

DS: Yeah. You didn't--? It didn't cross your mind that they'd see you as if you're walking around in your underwear. [laughter] [pause] Which would have occurred to you if you had stayed there.

AJ: Exactly, Yeah.

DS: Had you kept in touch with them much when you'd been gone from Pakistan?

AJ: Yes. Yes.

DS: How? I mean, through letters?

AJ: Through letters, telephone. Sending gifts back and forth. Yeah! Through phones and letters.

DS: And--. Did you--? You felt-, still fairly close to Lahore even after being here?

AJ: Oh, yeah! I missed--. Those years I missed Lahore terribly, you know. That was my first time out of Lahore and, you know, for such a long period I stayed. So, then when I went back, I stayed four years-, four and a half years. So then I-, it became tolerable ().

DS: Uh-huh. So, which would you consider you home now? You still consider Lahore your home?

AJ: Ahm... I guess I have, you know, *homes*. A sense of *homes*. Lahore would definitely be one. Now my two brothers live in Germany, so-, there is also a space-, a some kind of space called home, and-, and now I've also become culturally adept, you can say that I relate to other cultures. I've learnt some Spanish, I went to Guatemala in January/February, so I'm extending to other people, and-, so that's also creating more possibilities of a sense of home. There's no one home for me.

DS: So if I ask you, do you consider yourself a "lahori" any more, what would you say?

AJ: Oh, definitely I am a lahari. [laughter]

DS: You're a lahari? But you might have more than one homes besides Lahore?

AJ: Exactly!

CS: Are you a Nebraskan?

AJ: Little bit! [loud laughter]

DS: Are you a North Carolinian?

AJ: Little bit! [more loud laughter]

CS: Well, in Sri Lanka they thought he was Sinhala.

DS: Really?

CS: They thought he was sinhalese. They got angry if he didn't speak sinhalese. I think Andrew has the ability to blend in where he goes. [laughter]

DS: That helps!

CS: Picking up the--.

DS: That helps if you travel around a lot, I guess. Pick up local--, ways and means.

AJ: Ways and means. Exactly.

CS: But I think, following what you were saying too, that our community is, I mean—because we have a transitory life up until now and—our future is again, sort of, you know-, you know, not determined. Sort of hanging! I think he learnt-, just create these kind of wider networks of you know, staying in touch with family who's spread out, stay in touch with friends who are spread out, and-, that's () maintaining some continuity in people in our lives. Just to stay in touch with-, long distance relationships.

DS: So, do you feel that- you had said before, you had mentioned a few times, Cara, that—not feeling that any of these relationships you had here were deep, is there something that's actually desirable about that? If you're moving a lot, is it--, or is it a situation where you'd rather have them more deep? I'm talking about in-, geographically where you are. Like in terms of the people who're not necessarily networked over years, but who are immediate--, is there-, do you feel that you like it this way, that it's more okay to have it like that, or would you find it that you'd rather settle down and make

some of those ties with people around you, like the way it is in Lahore, I mean? I mean-, what do you think about that?

CS: Ahm.... I don't think the situation of, you know, not having people is just-, I don't think that that's ideal.

DS: Uh-huh.

CS: I mean, I think wherever you live, even if it's for a short time, it's nice to have at least a few people who you can really relate to, and be open with. Say, well () doesn't matter. We share ideas, we share-, you know, you know-, a couple people like that, and it's natural that that takes time to develop but-, but I think you need that, I mean, even if you have connections with people from your past if they're not living in the place you live in. I mean, you need people where you live, also. Those you can relate to.

AJ: And also, I notice, you know, that-, it's not that I am moving alone, you know. Cara and I are moving alone, I see my friends, you know, in Pakistan, or even in United States, you know. They are also moving.

CS: Leaving Pakistan.

AJ: Leaving Pakistan, you know. Lot of my friends have gone to Middle-East to work, they've gone to Europe. You know, when we were going to Sri Lanka, we stayed with a very good friend of ours in England, you know, who had left Pakistan and we grew up together basically in Lahore. And he has come with his family. You know. So, if I look around, you know-, so it's not that I have moved and-, you know, it's many people are moving now. Lahore-, you know, Lahoris are all gone all over the places. [laughter] So I think that also helps in a way, to kind of say okay well, you know, this is the fate you know. This is how the things are--.

DS: Sure. So how's--? As far as these different places you've lived in, especially—let's maybe focus on Chapel Hill—does being-, South Asian, does that present any special difficulties or circumstances versus imagine if you were-, had been grown up in America, you were white and you'd moved around? Or does that present any special challenges, or special circumstances, or is it been pretty much you find that for your American friends, do they have this-, who are also in professions where you move around a lot, do you find that they too have the same experiences and that being South-Asian is not all that different and being an American who leads a lifestyle when you have to move around every few years? What do you--?

AJ: I-, I find that—you know, initially I didn't feel that-, um... that being a South-Asian makes a difference I think, in my life-, in my stay here in United States. It does make a difference, you know, South-Asians in my observations and my experiences, are treated differently, you know. And, my own unique experiences are, when I call over the telephone, you know, many times people would say, you know-, even make a very-, you know, rude, remark over the phone. They will explain something and they will say "do you understand?". You know, it's just kind of-, because they see the accent in my voice and they say that. So, in Chapel Hill-, umm... I would say--, I mean, I never feel--, I never have felt in United States that this is my place. I have never felt it. [pause] I mean, there are moments, perhaps I feel with certain people. But over-all, if I were to sum up my experience, my sense of place, my sense of community, I never felt that I belong here. And that's through various-, various-, that people let you know about it. The way they treat you, and you know--.

CS: You said initially, you didn't feel like being South-Asian made a difference, you meant when initially when you came to the States?

AJ: Uh-huh. Initially, when I was in--.

CS: Okay. So you were--. Do you think that's because you weren't aware? Like you said you had never left, you weren't aware what it meant to be a Pakistani, or-, I mean, you () took things for granted, or-, what do you think ()?

AJ: Yeah. Well I think--. Uh-hunh--. That's a good question. I think when I left Pakistan-, also, I had this feeling you know-, a very typical immigrant--, uhhh....-, of-, you know, immigrant expectations-, the hope of an immigrant that United States is the place where will make it, you know. And-, and I-, even though I saw initially some-, some problems that I wouldn't admit that they exist, and I wouldn't address that, you know. I said well, this is the place where I've come to make my future, and you know, this is the best country, you know. That was my initial experience, you know. So that was my-, perhaps a denial-, also my lack of learning about you know, that there is discrimination in this country, and only when I lived through, you know, then I was able to reflect on it and you know, and I was-, shaken, that you know, I am in a country which is very-, which treats different people, you know, differently, and-. So, I think in a process—because when I came I thought this was the country! There was nothing wrong with it, you know. And then by living I found what actual--.

DS: So, in the external image of US, those things are not--, it's not something one is prepared for. I mean, the US's appearance to the rest of the world is that it's a place of great opportunity. Doesn't mention--.

AJ: Exactly!

DS: That there might be discrimination, or unfairness--.

AJ: Exactly!

DS In some way. But then, coming here you found that--.

CS: Do you, I mean-, how much do you attribute that to these feelings, like, that you really couldn't go back to Pakistan? In a lot of ways, going back to Pakistan really wasn't-, an option. Especially-, initially when you came. Did that play a big part of you feeling like you had to really embrace things--.

AJ: Prob--, uh-huh--.

CS: and just ()?

AJ: Probably!. Probably it did, you know. Probably it did. I remember-, you know, my Bachelor's degree in business administration, applying for jobs, and I was not getting any answers, I wrote to my brother, Peter, who is in Germany, I said look, I want to go back to Pakistan. And you know, so my brother said, you know, "try harder. This is the place you will find a job". So it was like, all signs and all roads were leading here.

CS: Okay.

AJ: Why would I take any other different road? You know, and when I left Lahore, you know, all my friends said, "you made a great decision-, you know. You go there and send us a visa". You know--. [laughter]

DS: We'll come too, because it is so great there.

AJ: It is so great there! It was kind of--. You know--. So, when I saw these contradictions and I-, struggled with that, you know-. And I-, and actually, in the initial years I had nothing to go back to also. To Pakistan, you know. All our family money had finished, you know. And-, the military government was still there, who had arrested

my brother. I had seen my brother tortured, you know, in a cell. You know, there was-, there was no-, no image, no symbols of hope for me in Pakistan at that time, you know. And at the same time, I felt the pain of leaving the place, and friends, and--, So--, yeah, I think that's--. And but then-, through process, through time, I learnt, you know, about this society--.

DS: But--.

AJ: And then, how to find a place here, you know--.

DS: What about--? Let's talk about religion, maybe for a minute. Does that play an important part in your life, in any way? In terms of--.

AJ: In this country?

DS: Yeah. In this country.

AJ: I-, I used to-, I grew up as a catholic. I'm a catholic, roman catholic from Pakistan. I used to go to a mass, go to church--.

DS: In the US?

AJ: In the US. But then I also felt that you know, it's really not what this kind of worship which I was used to, you know.

DS: How was that different?

AJ: Well, first of all, it was in our language. The-, you know-, lot of joy, lot of, you know, socializing after the service, before the service. You know, you tell stories, you listen to people and, you know, you share the joys and struggles and-. In United States it was very-, people would just treat me as kind of an outsider, you know. They'd say, "Oh, nice to meet you", you know, and "see you again" you know, and that kind of--

. SO I had no way of connecting to people and I felt-, extremely-, kind of--. I mean, many times when I went to a church, I felt more lonely than if I had not gone to a church.

DS: So, it was that you were sharing a religion with the people, but not-, you didn't feel like you were part of that community.

AJ: Exactly! Or part of the culture. You know, part of that--.

DS: Did you--?

AJ: My christianity is a very, you know, concrete result of the Pakistani culture, you know, Punjabi culture.

DS: Right. [pause] Which is very different, in a way-, I guess christianity () is understood here.

AJ: Yeah. You know. Here catholicism is rooted very much in dominant values--. "Oh, good to see you", and "nice to meet you", you know, "have a nice week", and that's it, you know! You want to listen to me, what my week was, you know. Maybe not, you know! [laughter]

DS: So, to compare that with Pakistan, when you would go to-, ahm... a religious service there was with people you knew? Is that-, was that one of the differences, people you had some other form of community with?

AJ: Yeah. They were my neighbors! You know, neighbors, school friends--, and you know--, and I myself--, I was in a catholic seminary for three years. I wanted to become a catholic priest, you know. So I studied there--. So, I knew the religion very intimately, you know, and also christianity, you know, for us-, for me and for my family, and many christians I know in Pakistan, was a very unique source of hope.

DS: Huh?

AJ: And-, protection, because of the discrimination we faced-, faced, and still face from the Muslims in Pakistan. Ahm... you know, going to Sunday-, you know, worship was not only a spiritual thing, it was kind of a solidarity thing, you know.

DS: Uh-huh.

AJ: Strengthening each other, you know. Christians are about two percent of the total population, so--. You know-, I mean-, I had-, you know, I studied with Muslims, and I had, you know, more Muslim friends than Christian friends because statistically they are more--.

DS: Right.

AJ: But, we-, when we would look for a job, look for, you know, university admissions and, social accommodations, we will be discriminated. And people are still discriminated, you know. So-, so that way christianity to me in Pakistan meant, you know, many things, you know. It was a kind of a survival.

DS: And that's very different than coming to a church here and feeling like an outsider--.

AJ: Exactly!

DS: It's the same form, but feels different.

AJ: Uh-huh.

DS: Treated different. He--. Go ahead!

CS: No-. I-, I mean actually, I was glad that you got on to the religion topic because I-, I wanted to-, [laughter] No, because for me—I mean, having lived with you, I mean, I've seen how-, I mean there's one more religion where you go to the church, and you know, there's-, churches have their own communities, and histories that when you

come to a new community, it's often very hard to-, fit into that. But, besides that formal practice, it seems like religion-, especially christianity has played-, a big role in your life-, and in a lot of-, you know, the steps you have taken in your life, I mean, how you came and those initial contacts that you had with the different schools withdrew you from your seminary, and then it-, it seems like () them like thread in your life (). Ahm.. it's sort of, more liberation kind of christianity or catholicism--.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CS: Where you've been able to--. I mean, that's also, I mean, helped you come to this country but at the same time helped you, I think, be also critical, in the end, of many social structures and values in the society--.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CS: And then maybe connect you a larger community which is spiritually outside the mainstream, and critical of the mainstream.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CS: So I-, I mean, I just find that that's-, religion has played a very strong role in your life in many different ways.

AJ: Many different ways. Exactly!

CS: And maybe allowed you to connect to-, the Latino community.

AJ: Yeah. Yeah.

CS: But I don't know-, I mean, I don't know-, that's just-, that's just what I think.

AJ: Your observation. Uh-huh.

CS: I wanted to just--. That was my observation and I wondered if that's how you perceive it, or--?

AJ: Okay. Yeah. I see-, you know, I mean I-, I love theology. You know, I like to-, you know, and-, and I think my interest started while I was in the seminary. And in this country-, Cara, you know, I attended a seminar on liberation theology in 1989--.

DS: Uh-huh.

AJ: And I met the world's greatest theologians, you know, Gustav Gutieris, and Leonardo Boff, and Enrique Dosell, and you know, and there were Palestian liberation theologians-, there were-, you know-, black liberation theologians, and asian liber--, you know, Father Tisabalasuriya from Sri Lanka. Ahm... from India-, I forgot his name--. Ahm... another Jesuit priest from there. And a Muslim gentleman, who looks at Islamic liberation theolo--, You know, anyhow. That was one moment in my life, where I transcended looking at the very conservative church I knew, or I had seen, to very liberating aspect of-, of religion, you know. And also-, you know, like questioning, you know-, how like Gustavo's challenge, you know. How does a poor person know that God loves him, or loves her? You know. So, to me that was-, that made the religion a () for me. And-, so, and then we went to Sri Lanka and learnt a little bit about Buddhism, and-, and you know-, my mother's parents, you know—my mother's side is from India, my father's side is from Pakistan—you know, physically the location which is Pakistan now. My father, you know, his family came from Pakistan. So my mother's parents, they were Hindus.

DS: And they're from--? Tell me where they're from.

AJ: They are from Jullunder.

DS: Which in which state?

AJ: Dis--. Oh, I cannot. It's very--. It's in Punjab.

DS: Okay, okay. It's in Punjab.

CS: Ambala--.

AJ: Ambala! District Ambala. There's a place called Jagadhri. And that's where my mother, you know, grew up and then as a child she, you know, came to *then* Pakistan, and then at partition, my mother's family was separated. One sister was in India-, you know. So-, and so I remembered as a child growing up, when my mother worshipped, she worshipped as if she was worshipping, you know-, you know, she had Hindu-, symbols in her worship, you know--, like singing of bhajans, and --.

DS: In a Christian worship?

AJ: In a Christian worship, yeah.

DS: Wow!

AJ: You know, it was a very- very interesting, you know, way--. And I think one-, benefit I think of-, you know, my immigrant journey, is that, you know, when you're away from your country, you look at things from a distance and you know, you can see, you know, where you were socialized positively, and where you were socialized negatively, you know. So in Lahore, I never saw, you know, I said well, my mother's praying. You know, but when I came to United States, especially in Sri Lanka, when I did my field work on tea plantations, and I visited these people and they would sing bhajans--.

CS: Hindu--. Hindu songs.

AJ: Hindu bhajans, yeah.

DS: Wow!

AJ: And I would say, you know, that's how my mother did, you know! [laughter]

DS: Some of those bhajans are wonderful!

AJ: Wonderful!

DS: Very moving--.

AJ: Very moving, you know, bhajans. They were in Tamil and I understood very little, you know, but the whole ambience was just like when my mother worshipped.

DS: Wow!

(END OF TAPE 4, SIDE A)

START OF TAPE 4, SIDE B

AJ: Ahm... So after-, you know, after I attended that seminar, on liberation theology—and also, that happened just before I went to Pakistan, you know—and I-, so when I went back to Pakistan I saw Islam in a very different context. You know, it was the same religion which I had thought that discriminates against Christian, and discriminated against us as Christians, you know, my family and myself. So I saw, you know, liberating themes in Islam. And I-, you know, I would discuss it with my Muslim friends, and said, you know, you should look at Islam in this way. So I saw the beauty of Islam also after attending this seminar. So I think that was a very-, you know, a turning point in my understanding religion and the liberating roles of religions in different societies, especially in Pakistan where religion is very strong part of the society, and the government, and government capitlizes on that to move the politics one way or the other. Ahm..., so I-, you know-, and I remember when I came to start my doctoral degree I wrote a paper on liberation theology. Non-formal education and aspects of liberation theology, you know-, I reflected on Islam. So--. So I think that was one insight I got from that-, and that workshop was a change in my own thinking about Islam. And I now see Islam like-, you know, Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism and seeing more liberating themes in them that what we have-, what I have experienced. [pause]

DS: What about here in Chapel Hill? Have you met anyone who has those similar point of views or have you had any kind of—I won't say community—but at least, social contact because of religion, or is that not-, hooked up-, not really hooked up with people that way here?

AJ: Not very-, you know, in a strong way. I mean I-, you know, I mean I--.

[pause] I know people of different faiths, you know-, but I don't think I have, you know, connected to any one of them in a strong way. I have come to appreciate, you know, Punjabi poets like Bullhay Shah, you know, the great sufi poet. So you know, I have his music and I go to the Turkish place and--. You know, so that's-, I have come to appreciate sufism in that way and also see in my own culture, the Punjabi culture, you know how--.

DS: The--. I'm sorry! The Turkish place--?

AJ: They--. The Silk Route!

DS: Okay. Which is downtown.

AJ: On Franklin Street.

DS: I'm sorry to interrupt you.

AJ: You know, they are the sufi-, owners and sometimes I go there and listen, you know. And also I realize how rich Punjabi culture is. Where it produced great poets like Bullhay Shah, you know, who had so much to say in the fifteenth century, you know. So many powerful things in that time, you know. Ahm... so, no! I don't think I-, you know, connect any, you know, one group. I think I become rather uncomfortable if I just go to one church, and I just, you know, don't fit in there. [pause] [laughter]

DS: Quite a follow-up on religion! [pause]

CS: No. ()

DS: Okay. [laughter] The-, er..... Ahm..... let's see here! Okay. Er.... Why don't we ask hypothetical questions-, about-, just maybe--. Maybe this is too hypothetical. If you guys don't have an answer, just say this is too hypothetical, you

don't need to answer. Ahm... if not--, if you can't answer it, personally talk about it as what you think about people in general, but just in terms of issues of-, raising children and so on-, ahm... what do you think about your children being socialized to the mainstream of the United States culture? We start with that, and let's see. What do you think about that? [pause]

AJ: You want to () Cara? [laughter]

CS: You're deferring to the US-born? [laughter]

DS: Your culture, and you ().

AJ: Let me hear from you first!

CS: So, what was the question, again? What--, hypothetically how would we feel about raising kids in this culture?

DS: Kids in this culture--, yeah.

CS: Okay.

AJ: And you mainstream culture?

DS: Yeah, in the-, I mean, what they would get I guess from TV or school. Not necessarily Chapel Hill, but just maybe in general.

CS: Yeah. Ahm... I mean, I guess that-, I think that there's possibilities in the US-, I mean, to create a good environment for kids.

DS: Oh, yeah?

CS: But I don't see that that comes through-, you know, television and public schools necessarily, and I think, less than that, especially public schools. And we don't have kids, but-, so this is very hypothetical, but I think-, you know, I keep up with-, sort of, trends, and especially in public schools the trend seems to be less towards learning

and more towards testing and-, ahm... I don't think that's an environment that I would want my kids to grow up in. I mean, extremely competitive competition, and-, you know, like memorization kind of learning, and--. But, we-, I mean we have friends who home-school their kids. For example, in Vermont we have friends who-, they have a big community of-- like fifty families-- who home-school their kids, and for me that's-, I mean, it's-, it's nice that that's an option in the US, and it-, I think there's a lot of research, and depending where you live, ahm... I mean, in this area there're people from all over the world that you could (). I think expose kids to different cultures. Because, I mean, when you ask about US culture and what is US culture, if you try to look at it as-, kind of-, () of dominant thing, that to me basically corporate culture, and I don't think that has much meaning beyond making profit. So, I mean, I think, to socialize someone in the US-, you know, in the society that-, so that-, kids-, so that they'll grow up to really be able to be-, you know, an effective citizen, or you know, what's really going on in the world. And I mean, participate fully in the society, I think, they need to understand different cultures, because this country has-, we have-, although we have this-, I mean, this corporate culture, many people are a part of that, and have no say in that culture, and aren't represented there at all. I mean, only recently-, I mean, not that this is a solution to anything, but I mean, only recently, beer companies started using-, I mean, gays in their ads. So-, I mean, there's no representation of different lifestyles in any much of corporate culture at all--. So--. Ahm.... So I mean, I think, you know, kids need to be exposed to-, to different ways of living, and doesn't come through kind of, mainstream, you know, education. So--.

AJ: Yeah. Ahm... I mean, I think my reflections come from both having grown up as in Pakistan, and then seeing how parents, you know-, send their kids to-, you know, like my own nephew and nieces you know, they're getting education in Pakistan, and then seeing people here-, kids here getting education. Er... I think one thing I-, you know, agree with Cara is that this society is very cometicitive, you know. And also-, I think, at a very young age, not only competitiveness, but being alone, being alone-, being individualism is stressed a lot-, in this society. And I think that-, that probably is a lot of burden, lot of stress for a child, you know. Whereas I have, you know, in Pakistan, you know, I've seen, it's much more of a collective thing, you know, at least the socialization part-- I'm not talking about the education itself--.

DS: Uh-huh. Sure!

AJ: Definitely, there are more resources available in United States. You know, in terms of different-, different people, you know, are here. Linguistic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds. Ahm... and also material. You know, computers, books, you know, money, and you know, and--, but I think this kind of competitiveness and very-, stress on individualism, I think that's a concern of mine. Er.... And the other thing is also, the language, you know. I think-, just generally recognize that English in *the* language, you know, everybody should learn at the expense of other languages, you know. Ahm... I think I would like to see my child to-, to preserve not only one language, but two/three languages, you know, and then see that the schools and the society make that accommodation that, you know, doesn't impose on a child, you know, you can survive *only* with English, you know. I want to see-, you know, a society, a community, where a child can survive with two/three languages and that is respected, and

that is-, and that is not-, you know, a child is not made fun of who speaks other languages, you know, accent--.

DS: Ideally, should they-, I mean, a child be able to learn Punjabi in school?

AJ: Oh, definitely! Yeah, definitely.

DS: But also, you're talking an environment where the-, not just the learning of it, but the kids wouldn't-, would get some toleration from other kids--.

AJ: Exactly!

DS: Acceptance of being that way.

AJ: And that would, I think, only come when there is this kind of an environment, where people are bi-lingual, tri-lingual, who teach the kids, you know. If a teacher speaks only English, then the child would never get that appreciation, you know, that validation from the teacher, that speaking Punjabi is okay, and learning Punjabi is necessary, for example. The teacher may instill-, you know, English is the first thing, and then, you know, you do-, you know, learn other languages at home, you know. You know-, they're secondary, you know, that way. It's the hierarchy of languages, you know, that is a concern to me. English is generally at a high level, you know-, I think globally. In Pakistan also. So, what I think-, you know, our mother tongues are very high also, and then I think a child should be socialized, there should be () a child to see that, that there is a possibility of other languages, you know, to be respected.

DS: In terms of this-, I was interested by—you were talking about trying to come up with some other values besides the individualism, and competitiveness, and especially mentioned community, is that really possible, in this country? With so much moving around and stuff like that, especially for South-Asians, but even other people, who, as

Americans, don't like those particular values or at least find the extremes of them very troubling. What are some of the challenges in terms of that? I mean, in terms of-, it is a-, doing that? What are some of the obstacle that you see or whatever some of the resources that could be put to that?

AJ: Hmm..... [laughter]

CS: Seems like we're in parenting classes. [more laughter]

DS: Yeah. I don't know the answers to any of these questions, that's why it's purely off the top of my head. I don't know! I don't have any answer to that question, so--. Don't answer it. I don't know the answer. I think exactly the same way, and I have no answer. [laughter] () If you have some magic solution, let me know. It's just hypothetical. That's--.

AJ: Just a--, one reflection is this, that-, I think in United States-, more and more we cannot live, you know, by living-- now this is South-Asian, and this is the Latino community, and this the black community, and this the white community, and you know-- there was a time when communities sought strength from that process. Now I think it is important-- I think it is important that we do not live that way. That I should be able to find strengths from a black family also. I live in this country, you know. Yet in my day to day life in Chapel Hill, I hardly see black people. Or if I see it-, they are-, some different roles, or--.

CS: Driving a bus--.

AJ: Huh?

CS: Driving a bus, or--.

AJ: Yeah. Riding a bus, exactly! When I take a bus from Chapel Hill to Durham, the bus is full of either black folks or, you know, Latino folks. You know, I mean that's-- . So, the society still accords a different place to them, you know. A social or economic place--, and I think, in my view, it's not the way that we cannot build communities, you know. And blacks living only in the blacks area and the whites living a white area, and the -, and the Asians and Latinos, who are the, you know, fastest growing populations, I think we should not fall in that trap which the earlier-, early Europeans did, you know-, the Irish lived in one place and the Italians lived in one place. You know, there is a benefit to it I think initially, but then people should move away from that.

CS: I mean, are you saying people should move away from that because-, are you-- . It sounds like you're suggesting that we need like a-, the whole economic structure of this country needs to change. I mean, you are talking about the blacks and Latinos as being part of a class structure that is very unequal. Or, you think that culturally people need to get together, and--.

AJ: I-, I do not know. You know, I think maybe that's-, you know, looking at economics is definitely () because you know, I mean, when I see in the bus, the blacks and Latinos, that's an economic statement also. The white folks - most of them - and others, you know-, driving cars but the bus is full of minorities, you know. That is an economic statement, you know. I go over to certain areas - poor areas - and I see-, you know, minority people. That is an economic statement. So I think, maybe, that is looking at the economic structure also. And-, you know, like-, I have a friend, an African American friend who lives two and a half miles from here. And she has told me, she said. "Andrew, you should come to my community and I will show you African

Americans living without running water; without electricity". I cannot--, I can imagine it, but I cannot believe it, you know, somehow, that that's possible.

DS: Right.

AJ: You know, where I live, you know, in so much--.

CS: (*mumble, mumble, mumble*)

AJ: Yeah. So much wealth around me, and two and a half hours, there's communities, people living without running water and electricity. So--. Yeah, you have to look at economic structure, you have to look at how people are creating communities, you know.

DS: So, for__.

AJ: It's not an easy thing, you know.

DS: Oh, no--.

CS: And then a lot of times, I think, communities get built on the basis of an existing, you know, economic division or geographic-, you know, division. The Latinos who come move into low-income neighborhoods, which are-, have been predominantly black, especially in Durham. I mean, a few white neighborhoods but predominantly black. So--, you know-, because of the economics they're living in these areas with, I mean, blacks and-, it's maybe a community they never even thought about when they were living in Mexico. So, I mean, likewise, we-, because we are students we have access to live this place, in this village which is, you know, very convenient, very nice, it's clean, it's well taken care of--. Ahm...but it's also class-wise and culture-wise, it's very homogeneous in a lot of ways, even though there's a lot of foreign students, they come with incredible resources. And it's a very different perspective-, their perspective-,

in lot of ways – sometimes very foreign to us. I mean, not that we don't-- we also have resources, but we tend-, you know, to be critical, of society and I think a lot of foreign students and have their kind of career mapped out and don't engage in the US society and the politics that are here, and that feels like a division, so--.

DS: Of course, that point of view can change. [laughter]

CS: Andrew has shown that. [laughter]

AJ: Yeah.

DS: There is some hope. [pause] So, as far as thinking about-, you know, either children or next generation, that kind of issue. You would like to see-- Andrew, you said a moment ago—absorbing-, a language, and something of the understanding of history and culture, but not necessarily living separately, that there can be more, face to face, and mixing and knowing of different cultures and stuff, but--.

AJ: Yeah. I think that is--. I mean, right now I'm learning Spanish and I think-, it's-, you know, I don't want to-, you know, boast about it but I think it's important for me to know my Latino friends and families in the community. I cannot, you know, live-, you know, any more speaking Punjabi, or English for that matter, I think. And I think it'll be important for an African American to speak Spanish, and maybe Punjabi, to-, you know, to know people who are coming here. People are coming here, and people are coming mostly from Asia and Latin America. So, I think we have to look at-, differently, you know, at creating community by-, by creating ghettos of communities, I think we are not creating very healthy communities. So the Latinos speak Spanish there and, you know-, and the desis-, you know, South-Asians, they speak whatever languages, you know, there-, and that's very isolating, and I think that-, I reflect something and then I

carry and rally, you know, all South-Asians that are living--. You know, you can pretty much see where Latinos are living, where South Asians are living, where blacks are living. So, I think we are growing in a trap again. That may create a South-Asian community, but I don't think that would create a greater community, you know, of Latinos and blacks ().

DS: And, finally, what do you think about living in Chapel Hill, what do you like about being here? Is there anything that you liked in particular, or would you recommend it to other South-Asians who wanted-, they were thinking about maybe moving here, what would you-, what if you had to give a recommendation, what would you say?

AJ: I would say join the Asian Voices group, you know. [laughter]

CS: Work for us!

DS: That's right.

AJ: Yeah. I would-, my recommendation--.

CS: Well, now that we have Asian Voices here, you know, every South Asian should be wanting to come to Chapel Hill, you know. [laughter] If they only knew-, if they were listening!

AJ: I would tell to a friend of mine-,you know-, I mean, if somebody wants to come from Pakistan, I'll say look, there people from, you know, Latin America here, Mexico, there are people form India, there are people from Sri Lanka, there are people-, you know, African Americans, there are whites. I will tell them the rents are high here in Chapel Hill. [laughter]

DS: Sort of-, a universal fact for all cultures. Inflated rent!

AJ: Yeah. I'll tell them it's very clean. I think anyone coming from Lahore, probably anywhere in South-Asia would appreciate that, you know. Definitely, not as much pollution. But I would also tell them that there are not many cars here, sometimes it's difficult to go on a bicycle, or walk around, but--. And I would tell them this is a growing place, you know, that people are coming from different countries. That's what I think.

CS: I'll tell them to live in Carrboro. [laughter]

DS: Why is that?

CS: I-, I think it's-, Chapel Hill is-, [pause] I mean, I don't know, for an immigrant coming from South-Asia--.

DS: Yeah.

If I was gonna tell them--.

DS: Sure.

CS: Why or why they shouldn't come to Chapel Hill. I guess, probably cost of living. It's really like you can't just, kind of, you know, hang out-, I mean, not that Carrboro is even that much better, but if they had to be in this area, Carrboro is kind of less dominated by the university, and there's-, I mean, the drinking scene might be a little weird – coming from South-Asia, and just-, weekends, and Franklin Street, and like, big cars and the-, I found it—coming back from Sri Lanka, I was really disoriented by like, the big roads, the big cars, like I just looked like really disoriented. I only lived there, I mean, I didn't grow up in South-Asia, so--. [laughter] I mean, Carrboro is little smaller scale. You can actually have neighbors and meet them and-, so, I think those-, and cost of living. Those would be--.

DS: Might have a little bit more community feel--.

CS: Yeah. Sort of, walk around, that's more a part of life there.

AJ: Yeah. It's also my experience that on some weekends Chapel Hill and especially-, Cara, what do you think? – Franklin Street looks very kind of hostile, aggressive, you know, people going-, either they're drinking or have drunk, and their behavior seems to be--. They're not visibly violent, but you know, you sense that that's a very-, kind of not an easy, laid back street where you can stroll--.

DS: What do you say, it's a pretty homogenous crowd too?

AJ: Ah, yeah. [laughter]

CS: Pretty much.

DS: What () witness? [laughter] () on Franklin Street a few times [laughter](), but it's a-, that is-, also-, on top of everything else.

AJ: Exactly. [pause]

DS: That's a-, that's actually the questions I had. Do you all have any other-, questions you wanted to-, put out or, comments, or-, things like that.?

AJ: As director of the project-, [laughter] if you have anything else you'd like to add?

DS: () for the archive officially, that Andrew Jilani is the director of this project, so--, hope my boss has not been affected by () [laughter]

DS: But I think, you know, in your being interviewed-, I think--.

CS: Your role switched--.

AJ: You role switched, and you know-, I am thinking different things and-, er.....

No, but I-, I feel we are covered. If you feel--, sort of, you know--.

DS: Yeah? I don't--, pretty much--.

AJ: Because you have listened, and we have just talked, so--.

DS: Yeah, I feel like-, I mean-, you know, our main emphasis was on the community issue, and I think we hit a lot of different aspects--.

AJ: And the immigrant journey, you know--.

DS: We could have--, we could have talked the whole time about that. I'd have more questions for you, but-, I wanted to make sure we hit some of the ones that we're supposed to hear-, about the -, about the Chapel Hill community--, I thought that was pretty important.

AJ: Yeah. No--. I think that's--. Oh, yeah!

CS: You-, I thought, something you said earlier about the-, like-, when you were thinking about Pakistan that-, I mean, just sort of, maybe think about communities, and how do you-, you know, how do you feel you're a part of the community, like you mentioned that in Pakistan you didn't-, there were no symbols of hope--. Is that what you said?

AJ: Uh-huh!

CS: And--, I'm just wondering what role-, the--, what those symbols are for you? That might be harder to answer, but-, or what role do you-, does hope, and symbols of hope and-, does that play in forming a community? I don't know, if that's too abstract, but like, maybe in Chapel Hill I mean, do you feel like there are symbols of hope here?

Or do you feel those symbols are somewhere else, or could they be anywhere? And is that a basis of how do you connect with people, or look for opportunities, or--?

AJ: Yeah. Wow, that's a-, good question! Ahm..[pause] I think now-, you know-, symbols of hope, I feel, one has to create-, you know. For me, they are not static-, you know, any more. Ahm... I mean, at one time I thought, you know, that whatever symb--, they were hope-, you know, in Pakistan, that were taken away when my brother was arrested, you know.

CS: Hmmm...

AJ: You know that was-, had a very profound effect on my thinking about Pakistan. So-, and then how I see my brother struggling-, who lives there, you know--. And he has no hope, you know. I know that. He strives, he struggles, you know. So, I think one-, you know, wherever I think, especially for immigrants—and maybe I think this is true for anyone—but I see it in my life as an immigrant—and this is something I learnt from my brother—that, once-, you know, he told me once, he said, becoming an immigrant--. No, he said, leaving home is one of the most difficult things in life, you know. And he said, but once you have left it, then especially as an immigrant, we must learn to stand on our both legs. You know-, and that to me-, say that-, you know, I have to create hope-, you know, here! Can I be idealistic in, say, there are-, they may be-, in Pakistan now. Maybe yes, and no. You know--. And if I go to Pakistan, I would have to, you know, create again.

CS: That's right.

AJ: Symbols of hope--. Because I have-, changed, you know-, by my process of migration. [pause] Ahm....so I think, you know--. Does Chapel Hill have--? I think,

you know-, initially it was hard, you know. I did not know, you know. Now there are-, there are a few symbols of hope. Yeah. We have friends-, a network of friends and, you know, places and--. There are still many things lacking but, you know, there are--, hopes. You know, there is hope. I see in Chapel Hill, and I-, and if I decide to stay here--, you know, in United States for a longer time, I think there is-, there are possibilities of creating hope, you know. And now I understand the society a little differently also. I'm still learning to see-, ahm.. but-, but I also like to believe that if I choose to leave this country, that wherever I go, I will be able to-, you know, a sense of hope. [pause]

[laughter] Do I answer your question?

CS: Yeah. I mean, I did () that. ()

DS: Well, thank you both for your time. I appreciate it, and enjoyed it very much-, listening--. Very nice.

AJ: Thanks, Deepak. And Cara--.

(END OF INTERVIEW)