

Emily Gengenbach

Name: Hatim D. Ido

Location: Yazidi Community Center

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Interviewee: My name is Hatim D. Ido, and I'm married. I have two kids, uh, I'm an undergraduate student in Bryan college of health sciences. Um, I came to United States in 2013 and January, 2013. Um, the very first time I was in Chicago and then I moved to Nebraska on the same year.

Interviewee: I am originally from Iraq, from Sinjar city, North of Iraq.

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Interviewee: So I grew up there in Sinjar specifically in harnesser village. It's a village that is in North of Sinjar mountain. And I finished my high school there and, uh, my parents were farmers. We were living on the farms, you know, uh, like one mile from the village. And, uh, you know, the life was simple there, it was kind of, you know, simple, there were no A lot of big cities, all those stuff. Our, our home was like one mile from the village where I would go every day, you know, like walking to my school, coming back.

Interviewee: Was that kind of a shock. It was when I first came to the US, you know, my sponsor was in Chicago, West Chicago. And, uh, it was in middle of January, you know,

it was all snowing, you know, and where I came from, there were not a lot of snow. So it got a shock me on, you know, Chicago is a big city as well.

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Interviewee: So I was kind of shocked, you know, to be transferred from a farmer in Iraq, you know, to a Chicago.

Interviewee: Well, the culture, the very first thing is the culture. The culture is different from where I came from and, um, Yeah, everything is different here, but there is one similarity between Nebraska and where I came from, like the farming stuff and also those open areas. So like when I traveled from Lincoln to Omaha, for example, I see a lot of open area and I see, you know, uh, corn fields, you know, I see all those farmers. So I feel like that's close to where I came from other than that. But everything is different here. Like the system, the The culture, the people, I mean, everything is different.

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Interviewee: Well, the, I mean the language, the, you know, the way the, I mean the customer service here is kind of different for me. I mean, in a good way. So I mean, we don't, we didn't have this customer service, like back home. And the one we have here is awesome. I see, I see. That's a different one of the difference.

Interviewee: One of the challenges I had is like adjusting to the system, uh, like, uh, like I said, everything here is different. Like, you know, uh, Life is it's kind of scheduled

based here, like, you know, back home, we, we, I would call it, we had like more freedom. Like here, if you have kids, you have to have someone to watch them. If you leave the home or you have to take them to the daycare or a like, the school system is different here inside class, outside class,

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Interviewee: like, uh, So adjusting to these things, like the legal system, the, the, the traffic system, everything here around that's different.

Interviewee: So in Iraq, you know, if you have kids on, if you have family, like if you are working or something, if you have like one of your kid's sick, you can leave easily your job and go take care of your kid. But here, like sometimes there's a strict, more strict schedule where you can't leave your job or your, your school and go back, you know, take care of your family and all that stuff. And also at home, you know, you could have leave your kids with your neighbor or your, uh, one of your family members and just go to the work or school. You know, until at the end of the day, but here you can't because everyone else is working. So you have to respect their schedule as well.

5:00

Interviewee: I'm studying cardiovascular.

Interviewee: No, I have not. Uh, I am planning to visit because I have one of my sisters, uh, her, uh, but after I finished my school.

Interviewee: Well, one of the aspects that, you know, you could probably maintain your schedule. I mean, you're. Culture, sorry. It's been within Yazidi community, you know, being within, within my community, going to the weddings, going to the, our traditional events, all those stuff. It's kind of helpful for me to maintain that culture as possible.

Interviewee: I mean, there's some aspects, like I said, you know, uh, dealing with, with like the schedule here with the work, with the, you know,

6:00

all the whole system here. That's kind of a culture that I bring to my home sometimes too.

Interviewee: Well internationally, There is a, you know, the best way to connect with them is social media right now. And even before I came here, I used to have a connection with some of them. And we kept that connection, like, you know, calling by phone numbers, all those stuff. But after you know, these social media, that is the face. See the main connection between me and my friends around the world.

Interviewee: Course, and I think I became stronger because I came to the different world that it can or could dealt with, um, a experience, a new culture, new system in the world that taught me a lot.

7:00

Interviewee: Uh, uh, um, I've been stronger about my culture as well. I've specifically after 2014, when we, uh, went through a genocide by ISIS and that made me strong.

Interviewee: I do, but it's, it's hard. It's very difficult for us because both my kids, they were born here and, um, my older one is, uh, she's going to school right now, but it's, it's very hard for us to keep that. Culture or identity here, but we try, I try to, you know, take them to our weddings, traditional events, all those stuff, and also teaching them a language to try to at least keep, you know, a portion of that culture.

Interviewee: Yes, that's my plan. When I finished my school, you know, go back there and visit there for like a month or something that I would like them to go there and experience that culture physically.

8:03

Interviewee: Uh, most of them they're here. They came here in 2016, but I still have one of, I actually, I have two sisters that are in Iraq right now.

Interviewee: Yeah. Uh, yes, kind of, because most of those, uh, who came here after 2003, they were individuals who work for the U.S. army. And when you work for the U.S. army as an interpreter, you are eligible to bring your extended family members here. So most of them applied for their family members and they brought them here.

Interviewee: What originally brought me, uh, Yazidi community because, uh, I was in Chicago, you know, I was. With my sponsor. I was like the Yazidi family there. And after I figured it out, we have the largest community here in Lincoln, Nebraska. Then I decided to move.

9:00

Interviewee: And, um, just to keep some of our culture maybe.

Interviewee: I don't know yet. Maybe I will move because of the weather. Um, uh, all this gonna come when I finish my school because I, I have not decided to stay here or the whole life in Lincoln.

Interviewee: Well, when I came here, there were not any Yazidi culture center. And, uh, but if I was in a different state knowing no language English language, I mean, I probably would come here just because of Yazidi cultural center, because I know there was a Yazidi culture center, you know, in Nebraska who can take care of me, help me with the language also stuff.

Interviewee: My first thought when I came here,

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Interviewee: I, you know, I came by train from, uh, I mean from, uh, Illinois to Nebraska and I was able to explore all those like views. So when I came here first, I felt that I was in back home because. There is some similarities between here and back home.

Interviewee: It's very expected. I mean, isn't that going to surprise me. Because when you go to the different world, I have to, uh, expect that I will be experienced their culture and I will be affected by their culture. So it's kind of not surprising to me.

Interviewee: I'm an advisory board member right now, uh, in usually cultural center. And I'm also a volunteer with YAZADA overall, like international YAZADA.

11:00

Interviewee: That is, uh, an international Yazidi, uh, organization that is, uh, created after 2014, genocide, uh, YAZDA was created in a response to the genocide to try to prevent it in future, you know, prevent future genocides against easily as on other minorities.

Interviewee: Cause I think no one else has said that you're the only person who has mentioned taking it. Yes, because when I, uh, decided to move, uh, you know, I was in Chicago for three months and, um, my sponsor had to give me a ride, uh, to Chicago downtown. And then he, because I was not familiar with the system, whole thing, I didn't know anything about here. So he just, uh, he got my ticket on a plane, I don't know through which state to be honest, because I don't, I don't know, like the map here.

12:00

Interviewee: I don't know anything.

Interviewee: It was not Lincoln. To be honest. I'm not sure because when I first came here, there were some easily who received me there and the Yazadi drove me here. So I don't remember if it was Omaha or a city close to home because I didn't, I didn't know the place by that.

Interviewee: Um, uh, Watching those stuff, you know, on a, I'm kind of aware of what is happening in Iraq right now, there is some demonstrations who are going peaceful demonstration that are going against the government. They would like to change the whole system in Iraq because in 16 years or 17 years, there has not been any change in a good way in Iraq. It has been just. Going back going back, you know, you know, the whole system is corrupt. The government is corrupt. You know, even the people became correct

13:00

Interviewee: because of the system. Uh, there is no, uh, employment. There is no educational services. There is no healthcare services. So they, they, they said, you know, you know, it's done now we have to change something.

Interviewee: Before I came here, you know, I finished my school and I joined my college, uh, in medical technology, whatever Institute, it was like a medical lab here. I was in medical lab, like associate degree, and I got my first year done. Then before I do or start my second year, my visa issued and it came out. So I had to travel to the U S.

Interviewee: Uh, in, in, in school I'm in high school, you take one grammar class, but after he finished high school, I joined us army, uh, in 2008,

14:00

Interviewee: as an, as an interpreter, I stayed with him for four years. And I learned English pretty well.

Interviewee: Just in Iraq. I was in specifically in port of entry. There was a port of entry between Iraq and Syria, right on the border in North of Iraq. I was there.

Interviewee: So I came here March, 2013 and the genocide happened in August of 2014. So I remember it was nighttime here around 10:00 PM, something where. I saw a post on Facebook. It says, you know, Sinjar is gone that's mean ISIS took over. So I called my father and he talked to me. He said, you know, my father is my family. My whole family lived in the North side of the Sinjar mountain. And ISIS started on the South side. So they said, you know, my father said, ah, you know, there is nothing here, nothing yet, you know, it's okay.

15:00

Interviewee: I told him that you have to run. You are, you know, you have to find a way. To run our escape or go to them because I know ISIS will take over because there was some, you know, some ISIS attacks before August, which is, which was in June, in areas around Sinjar, where they were beheading people. So I knew if they get to us, you know, Yazidi it is they would do the same thing. So. And, um, they, they wanted to go to the mountain, but when they try to escape their mountain, they could not find a way to go there. They just took their way all the way to the Kurdistan.

Interviewee: Yes, they got out before ISIS came through and a couple hours. And even on their way to, to, to Kurdistan my, my sister families, they. Uh, they exposed some like, uh, shooting from ISIS,

16:00

Interviewee: but fortunately, no, no. One of them got hurt and they they got their vehicle broke down on the road. So they had to. Like, uh, take their kids and just climb, you know, with someone else. And they run with them.

Interviewee: Well, there were no refugee camps until that day, but when they went to the Kurdistan it's well, it was like a lot, 300.. 300,000 Yazidi. they fleet together.

Interviewee: Turkey's taken over and Kurdish, uh, land in Syria and everybody is blaming President Trump for that. To be honest because they think he, he pulled over and he gave them a chance to go there.

17:00

Interviewee: So, um, I, what I hear there is some, like, I would say culture or some cleansing happening there because Turkey's trying to, you know, uh, they kill some civilians and they kill civilians. Even yesterday. There was some, uh, airstrike on some civilians they killed about eight kids. And they're changing their, I think schools, they want to, uh, you know, change like the language and to be the whole Turkish system thing.

Interviewee: I don't have a very close friend who got, well, I had a friend who was a school school friend who got captured and killed by ISIS and my other friends. They were able to escape my family as well. When, when, when that happened first here in Lincoln, we all gather as a Yazidi community and we wanted to.

18:00

Interviewee: protest in Washington, DC I could not go because of my work. They did not let me to go. I was working in factory that time. And by my other friends, they went to DC, you know, the rally there and we were kind of happy. With a decision that President Obama made about authorizing an air strike on ISIS and he was able to break the seizure Sinjar.

Interviewee: Well, when I first was, when I first came here, you know, it was less intense as you said. Um, I'm in, I would be like, I could have tell like my parents, for example, or my friend more freely that, Hey, if you apply for U.S. visa, maybe you can be here. But after, after, uh, you know, like the travel ban, all the stuff happened.

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Interviewee: I am not able to like to tell that freely to my friends, because I know for sure they not going to be here, you know, everything's changed like the, the whole immigration system has changed. And I think, uh, I don't know if that makes some people to be, you know, to look at refugees, you know, with different vision. I don't know.

Interviewee: Their weddings.

Interviewer: They do have great weddings.

Interviewee: I mean, one of the most interesting about it probably it's their wedding. It's every like public, you know, everyone's gathering without invitation because when a wedding happened, everyone, everyone knows that they are invited kind of invited to that wedding. So they have a very, it's a very generous. Community and very successful community if they got their chance.

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Interviewee: Well, we, we as Yazda or the Yazidi cultural center, we've been working with Jeff sometimes since, since the genocide. And he visited Iraq as well. I think 2018, I think Jeff is one of the big supportive of Yazidi case, uh, since the genocide happened. And he's a supporter of, of other religious minorities in Iraq, to be honest. Um, uh, I think he's, he's a good. Uh, advocate for our case because he's trying to work out something for Yazidi. I think he's working on a bill.

Interviewee: Well, we, I mean, I think we wanted him to be more, maybe critical for the Turkish invasion on Syria, because there is some Yazidis and other religious minorities in Syria as well, who they are probably facing difficulties where Turkish and other, you know, uh,

21:00

Interviewee: other militia groups, not only Turkey.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, we, yeah, we, we standard with them on those, you know, Turkish invasion. So in Syria there was a rally or something here, Lincoln. I was on all of them who participated on, we signed a paper or something to support them on ask President Trump. To change his decision, you know, about the pulling out from Syria.

Interviewee: Well, that, you know, my friends are family member who they live in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Kurdistan is kind of independent region from Iraq right now. But in Iraq,

there were some difficulties to connect with the other people in Iraq because the government was blacking internet service in the whole. Controlled region. So, but right now, no,

22:00

Interviewee: I mean, I can, I can connect with the people who are in Kurdistan, but not the people with the Iraqi area.

Interviewee: I think Nebraska overall it's, it's, it's the best state that welcoming refugees because, uh, Lincoln like you said it's one of the, there is a big communities here, like, uh, easy. It is Vietnamese, all those Kurdish, you know? Uh, so that gave me a picture about Lincoln that becoming, or it's one of the most welcoming cities in the U S uh, uh, like we'll come here to refugees, to the U.S.