

Geri: We're filming a documentary and I was wondering if I could ask some of you...well, we can interview all of you. What does it mean to be Arab American—that's what the documentary is about. Is that all right?

Girls: My name's Angela Alweedan.

Geri: Oh yeah here you are. Where have you been?

(*Break in Video with same girls*)

Girl 1: And like I'll be like, got to get your where your from or whatever?

Geri: You can talk about Lebanon.

Girl 2: You can be like, "Say Hi I'm Maria..."

Girl 1: You go first.

Girl 2: No, I'm not doing it. Okay you can be first

Girl 3: What was the question

Geri: What's your name?

Maree: Maree Saad

Geri: Where are you from?

Maree: Dearborn.

Geri: And where's your family from?

Maree: They're from Lebanon.

Geri: So what does it mean to be an Arab American?

Maree: I think it's a great experience. Some people both of their parents come from same country. They don't get to learn much about other countries. It's good to have family from other countries so you get to experience things from other countries.

Geri: Have you found any discrimination?

Maree: Not too much because mostly in Dearborn it's mostly Arabs living with each other. So mostly no. But even if you do come across it, it's not something you pay much attention to.

Geri: How about outside of Dearborn?

Maree: You hear things outside of Dearborn but not too much in this area.

Geri: Well, thank you. Next! This is going to air on public television next year. I'll send you a letter...Okay, what's your first and last name?

Nola: Okay, my name is Nola Hashmeen. I'm fourteen years old. I'm going to go to Fordson next year. I'm Iraqi. And I like long walks on the beach...Okay, you can go.

Bob: Can you talk a little slower? (*Laughter*)

Girl: Is this being aired right now.

Geri: We're airing it later on. So what does it mean to be an Arab American?

Nola: is this a microphone. It means....Take it away Amanda.

Geri: what do you think about the conflict in Iraq?

Nola: I think it's not fair because they just hate on us because we're Arab. Like fir example, that guy on the rollercoaster back there made us get off because we're Arab. Tell them Nicole.

Nicole: We were, like, sitting there and I swear he was like, "Get off this ride."

Nola: "You guys are getting off this ride." And we're like "Because we're Arab?" And he's like, "Yup." And made us get off. It's discrimination.

Geri: So it seems like you enjoy being Arab American.

Girls: Of course!

Geri: Why?

Girl 1: Because it's our culture

Nola: Because we're unique and we're original and look how cool we are. We have a whole festival just for us. I mean, come on, we're special.

Geri: And could you tell us about what you're wearing?

Girls: Clothes, the scarf. (*Laughter*)

Girl 2: Okay I'm wearing Hollister...

Nola: My dad told me to wear a scarf so here I am

Girl 1: No. We wear a scarf because in our religion we're supposed to hide the way we look because the guy's not supposed to like you because of the way you look. It's supposed to protect us from the other stuff. I can't explain it...

Girl 2: So only our husbands are supposed to look at us.

Geri: Well, why are you not wearing a sari?

Girl 2: Because I don't want to.

Girl 1: Because she's not ready, but she's going to

Girl 2: I'm not ready. I'm not ready yet.

Geri: What makes you ready.

Girl 1: You're supposed to wear one when you're in 8 years and nine months. But sometimes some people don't feel they're ready. Because you have to pray and we have to dress right and you have to wear it and plan not to take it off later. So if you think you're going to take it off later, then that means you're not ready to put it on.

Geri: And what's your first and last name?

Girl 1: My name's Ayan Wilson

Geri: Thank you.

INTERVIEW 2

Geri: What's your first and last name:

Romy: Romy Weesa

Geri: Okay. And you're the owner of the store.

Romy: No actually, that's the owner right there. I'm just setting up right there in front of them so I can sell my product

Geri: Why are you here at the festival.

Romy: Well, I represent a company called Helio. It's a mobile device and they sent me here so I can get close to the Arab community and introduce the product to the community.

Geri: What is the sticker?

Romy: This is a Lebanese flag.

Geri: Why are you wearing it?

Romy: They were handing it out and I thought I'd support the community

Geri: So where were you from originally

Romy: I was born in Cairo, Egypt. And I've been in the states for about 23 years.

Geri: What does it mean to be Arab American?

Romy: Well to be honest, I don't feel a difference because I grew up here basically. I left Egypt when I was 10 years old. I just feel like a normal person. I don't see a difference. It's just you have more—I believe—that's there's more culture behind you. You get the support of the community and whatnot. And we kind of stand together so you kind of feel a warmth, basically.

Geri: So it's positive—very positive.

Romy: Definitely, it is. I mean, I'm sure there's other communities out there, you know. You got the Persians, you got the Koreans and they stick together. But the bottom line is they're all Americans and we all live in one city, one country, basically.

Bob: Do you think you're community gets a fair shake in the press?

Romy: Talking about positive or negative?

Geri: Either

Romy: Yeah, whether it's positive or negative, it just depends on the time. But yeah I think so.

Geri: Can the press do anything different to cover your community?

Romy: Show the good side of Arabs, not just the bad side.

Bob: What is that? What is the good side, if we were to show that?

Romy: This is the good side, for example. Show that the successful men or Arabs that have created a dynasty, basically, here in the states. Instead of showing the killers or the robbers or whatever you guys want to call it. In every culture there's the bad, there's the ugly and there's the good, basically. So I just hope they show more of our good side than our bad side. Because at the end we still all have to live together, basically.

Geri: Thank you.

Romy: No problem, my pleasure.

INTERVIEW 3

Man: This is basically a hundred percent Lebanese store—Lebanese style, Lebanese clothing. Everything is from Lebanon. Nothing is made here. Everything is like Lebanese styles, mainly.

Romy: That's a perfect example of what I'm talking about. An Arab American, very successful, has nothing to do with any of the bad stuff that goes around. He has his family. He has everything. He comes to work, goes home.

Man: Basically the owner is a college graduate too. He graduated from Davenport. He has a business degree. So basically he is a success. So if you guys want to shoot him there, you're more than welcome

INTERVIEW 4

Bob: Would you mind taking your sunglasses off?

Ali: Sure.

Bob: Thank you. We want to see your eyes

Geri: What's your first and last name?

Ali: It's Ali Monsur

Geri: And where are you from?

Ali: I'm originally from Lebanon.

Geri: And how long have you been here?

Ali: About 10 years.

Geri: Tell us about your story.

Ali: Actually this is one of our chains all over Europe and over the Gulf and the Middle East. This is my first branch here. And I'm going to open in a mall in Sterling Heights in the next two weeks. Actually this is one of the franchises in Lebanon—the private labels called X5. X5 by Blue McJeans. And we own the company in Lebanon and I just started here in like August. We do all kinds of jeans and sportswear for girls and guys, mostly for the young people.

Geri: A gentleman told us that this was the only pure Lebanese store.

Ali: It's a pure Lebanese store. All our product are like Lebanese designs and made in Lebanon.

Geri: What do you think of media coverage of the community?

Ali: Do you mean how they respond?

Geri: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Actually their response to us is very appreciative. Our store you cannot find them anywhere else in the U.S. So because they're unique and like special design and what the Lebanese—they're used to wearing in Lebanon. And in most of the area here they are immigrants from Lebanon more than 10 years or 15 years ago so they cannot find this one so they have to send them overseas from there to here. And here we put up all our specials and upgrade the products so actually the value—the value is great for them. So we're busy and our next step is to go to Americans to show our designs and our new model.

Geri: So you've been here 10 years

Ali: Yeah.

Geri: Here in Michigan?

Ali: In Michigan, yes, 10 years. But in my store here, just 7 or 8 months ago. I open up last summer.

Geri: What does it mean to be an Arab American?

Ali: What mean an Arab American?

Geri: Mm-hmmm.

Ali: I don't understand exactly what you mean by your question.

Geri: It's a very broad question. Does it mean culture? Does it mean tradition?

Ali: No it doesn't mean tradition. To be an Arab American means the same as the Europe American, the Russian American, the people who used to emigrate to the U.S. long time ago. I have my relatives who just came here a long time ago. To be an Arab American means I have background-background—Lebanese background so you ask me—I feel like I have two citizenship—Lebanese citizenship and American citizenship—so I feel both. I feel like I am related to that country but I still respect the country where I live with my community. So it means the same to me the Europeans feel when they just immigrate because my children are on this—they will be like a pure American after like 50 years or 70 years or 100 years ago they will be a pure American. They will have Arabic roots but they're not going to be like me—exactly

like me because I still remember my childhood. I still remember everything. But I do respect for both cultures—for this culture and for my country.

Bob: Do you have children?

Ali: No, not yet. I mean my children. I mean everyone will eventually have children. I'm talking about something in the future because I'm here. I will marry here. I will stay here. I will visit Lebanon. But it will be different for me and my grandchildren. They will be different. They will think different than I think.

Bob: Do you like American culture?

Ali: Yeah, I like the American culture. I like the way, with the civilization where they are. I like the way they set up the system. It different than my—not different than my country—different by the whole area. Because you're not gonna see here, like, a religion conflict. You're not going to find any of those things like we find in. We wish in or home countries—in our homelands—that we would come up to this point where the system—I'm talking about the system. If you asked me about some politics I will tell you different stuff. I'm talking about the system. The people stuff, how everyone goes and does their stuff, I like that. I like that and I wish at a certain point and time?

Bob: How do you feel about what's going on in Northern Lebanon right now?

Ali: Very Bad—very, very bad—that's hurt everybody and I don't know, maybe over there we are going into civil wars. The things we have very tough. And we have—opportunity—that's because nobody wins because everybody...And Lebanon is such a very small country. Such very, very small. Maybe like...one quarter of a county here—such a small country. And everybody has to do what they want to do in Lebanon. So this is the thing nobody wants to help anyone. Everybody says, "We want to help." But nobody actually wants to help.

Bob: Were you at the demonstration last summer about the Israeli--?

Ali: Yeah, for sure. I walked to the demonstration here to see the fire—just to see the fire because the people they were killing were small kids—small kids. Nobody of they call the Hezbollah army. Maybe they have 50 or a hundred people but we got more than 12 thousand people—innocent people—has been killed for nothing, for nothing.

Bob: So that's what the demonstration was about?

Ali: Exactly, that's the demonstration to this fire. Not to say we need to support Hezbollah. We never did that. But you know to cease fire—to cease fire of these innocent people. By the way they are not Muslim. They are Christian, Muslim, from all over because when you bomb Lebanon you're not going to know these people are Muslim or Christian. They're all over. Our kids they are all over and they have nothing to do with Hezbollah and different stuff.

Ali: Did you know anyone that was hurt that summer?

Ali: Yeah, my uncle. My uncle lost his feet. He lost them from here. He was sleeping with his kids and he got, like, one of the bombs and he lost his foot. So I have many many—but my uncle—that's to me directly. He's my uncle. And if you ask any of these Lebanese here—each one has someone related who has been killed or injured in this war.

Geri: Off topic but could you describe the style of clothing here?

Ali: Most of our clothing is Arab, Lebanese style.

Geri: So this is the Arabic style

Ali: Let me tell you one thing, the Arabic is different from the Lebanese. The Lebanese is way different than the Arabic. I mean the Arabic stuff is the people living by the gulf, the long stuff. That's different. There's some misunderstandings with the culture of both Lebanese and Arabic. The people who think that we don't wear sleeveless and show off our—no, that's different. For the Arabic lady or Lebanese lady—that's different. Because all this stuff is Lebanese style. So Lebanese style—I'm talking about the fashion. We are close to the European fashion. You know, the European fashion, this is our style exactly.

Geri: Some Lebanese women do wear hijab too?

Ali: Some of them. Not all the Lebanese. Some of the Lebanese, we—even the Muslim. Not every Lebanese wearing the scarf or the hijab—not every Muslim. Some of them. It just depends on how they want it or don't want it. Nothing they have to wear it. If they choose to wear it, they wear it. Ask my sisters, one of them wears it and one of them doesn't matter, both of them are still sisters. I mean these things, it's not like you have to wear it. This is something that's up to you, if you want it or you don't want it. So this is how it goes. And the style, it's different. They style in Lebanon it's about the country—it's about the culture. You have many religions, many cultures; this is one of the good things about Lebanon. You have people who wear their scarves, people who don't wear the scarves and they are friends and sisters and live next to each other and they understand each other and they respect each other. This is the way you want Lebanon to be, like free Lebanon, whoever wants to do can do whatever. I can show respect to others rights.

Bob: Can you just show us a few things here?

Ali: Yeah, of course. This is one if the styles that we have here. This is another style. I want to show you one thing. Maybe give you a sense of our style. That's like Arabic style-ish.. This is one of our styles. We have this style. It's pretty much like similar to here—to what they have here. And all this stuff. Here are some jeans here. The fashion is very similar to what they have here. They have the casual for the guys. Most of the Arab people they like the light colors, they don't really like dark

Bob: So did you say this was handmade too?

Ali: Yeah, this one. This stuff here they put it on. A machine cannot put this on.

INTERVIEW 5

Bob: Okay, I'm rolling.

Geri: What is your first and last name

Christina: Christina Arkood

Geri: And how old are you and where are you from?

Christina: I'm 14 and I'm Palestinian.

Geri: What do you think of the clothes in the store?

Christina: Umm they're really nice and they express so much feeling. They give off a lot of impressions and stuff. And maybe they express someone how they are and what's their personality and what they're trying to show to other people.

Geri: Can I ask why you're wearing your hijab?

Christina: It's kind of like a religious thing that you wear. It's like God kind of like told us once you hit a certain age, like nine years old, you're supposed to wear one and it's like really religious, so yeah.

Geri: Thank you. And if you could have your father fill this out because you're under 18. That's a consent form so you can be in our documentary. Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 6

Geri: Could I have your first and last name please.

Lebanon: My first name is Lebanon. Just like the country.

Geri: And where are you from?

Lebanon: I'm from Lebanon.

Geri: How long have you been here.

Lebanon: I've been here since '91. So 17 years now.

Geri: So what do you think of the clothes in this store?

Lebanon: Believe it or not, it just reminds me of the stores back home—just the stores overseas. These are traditional clothes, the same clothes that you see in Lebanon. And I've known the owner since I've come over seas. Ali is the owner—great person, great clothes, are affordable

Geri: How do you feel about the local media coverage of your community?

Lebanon: it's a nice thing to do. I guess you guys learn a lot of the... You guys would learn a lot off of meeting different people, different cultures. It's different for you guys, isn't it?

Geri: Does the local media newspapers and TV cover the community fairly?

Lebanon: It all depends on what channel you are watching. A lot of the channels that you watch aren't fair and some of them are fair.

Geri: And what does it mean to be an Arab American?

Lebanon: Well, nowadays, it's different now then it used to be. I hate to say it, but after September 11th a lot of things did change towards Arab Americans, especially being a Muslim American a lot of that did change but we still consider ourselves an Arab American and we're proud of it.

Geri: But what kinds of things change?

Lebanon: The way... Americans would look at Arab Americans—every single one of them—as a terrorist, and this is not true. They do look at us different as an Arab Muslim is a terrorist—every Muslim is not a terrorist. We are not terrorists. If you have brown eyes and black hair you're called a terrorist I guess. I mean I heard it a few times, but you just got to live with it. I guess this is the kind of world we live in today.

INTERVIEW 7

Geri: What's your name?

Christopher: Christopher Walters

Geri: And your title?

Christopher: Corporal.

Geri: ...Arab corporate translator people... Why are you here?

Christopher: We're here to find young men and women who are qualified to join The United States Armed Services and can benefit from the opportunities we have for them.

Geri: How have you been received today?

Christopher: Great. I mean, everyone's real friendly—it's just like anywhere else we go. There's a lot of people coming up to us, a lot of interest going on, a lot of people wondering what we have to offer them, finding out about the college money we offer and the various job training and everything.

Geri: Is the army facing difficulties trying to find Arabs? I'm just trying to get at your interest in this community.

Christopher: Well, it's the translator is a big part of this community, where Dearborn is, and the various demographics that it is. But it's not hard finding people who want to join the army. They're coming up to us. They're approaching us. And that's why we're out here.

(*Break in Video Image*)

Geri: So tell us about the translator program.

Christopher: The translator program is for finding the people who already have the language skills that the army needs and is putting them in as soldiers so they can be imbedded in the units and help out with what skills they already have. It's getting people who already know the culture and already know the language so it's more of a natural transition for the soldiers working with them.

Geri: How many translators are there?

Christopher: I don't know.

Geri: So tell us about some of the benefits translators would have by becoming a part of your program.

Christopher: The translator program specifically, they're going to be coming in as a higher rank. They'll be coming in as a Specialist E-4, which is a higher pay grade. They're going to be receiving language pays, which is based on their skills and what languages they speak—they're getting extra money for that. They'll going to also receive the GI Bill and the Army College Fund, which is the 72 thousand dollars for school. And they can receive up to a 40 thousand enlistment bonus for just joining. And they also receive all the health benefits and everything that a normal soldier would get.

Geri: How many Arabs are their in the armed forces?

Christopher: That's a...I don't know...

Geri: Do you have any questions?

Bob: Does the situation in Iraq affect the way people respond to you?

Christopher: Not really.

Bob: Could you paraphrase my question in your answer.

Christopher: Does the situation in Iraq respond the way people respond to us? No, actually yeah it does, people are more supportive of us. They come up to us; thank us for what we're doing. I didn't really receive that before but now that the situation is coming up, they're thanking me for what I'm doing and a lot of people, even if they're not qualified, are wondering what they can do to help.

Geri: So what is the status of the Army right now? Is it up or has it been down?

Christopher: As far as I know we're making our quotas. We're making our benchmarks for where we need to be at this point in the year.

Bob: What kind of training does a recruiter—are you a recruiter?

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: What kind of training does a trainer get?

Christopher: We go through a six-month course at Fort Sumpter, South Carolina where we learn how to process people, how to do the paperwork, where we learn how to determine whether someone is qualified to join the Army. We learn more of the Army programs, like what are the specifics about things we don't normally use, what people can benefit from joining the army, and then how to talk to people.

Bob: Are you here by accident because the festival's here or do you focus on this community on a regular basis?

Christopher: I live in Dearborn, I work in Dearborn, so I'm down here all the time anyways but I like to come out to events like this just to be with people and interact with the community.

Did you undergo?