

Interviewee: Zabak, Brigitte

Interview Date: February 25, 2012

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Brigitte Zabak
University of Houston Oral History Project

Interviewed by: Aimee L'Heureux
Date: February 25, 2012
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: Archstone Memorial Heights Apartment complex

AL: Okay my name is Aimee L'Heureux I am here at my house interviewing Brigitte Zabak and today's date is February 25, 2012. I just said your name but if you want to state it again for the record you can.

BZ: Not a problem it's Brigitte Zabak.

AL: And your birth date and where you were born?

BZ: August 17, 1977 and I was born in Houston, Texas.

AL: Okay maybe you can talk a little bit about your education, where you went to school, that sort of thing.

BZ: Okay I grew up in Houston. I went to high school in Bellaire at Bellaire High School. I did my undergraduate degree in Psychology at University of Texas in Austin and then I got a Master's in Social Work at University of Houston.

AL: And I guess we can come back to your education later when it makes sense about the high school experience. So maybe you can talk about where your parents and where your extended family are from?

BZ: *Everyone* that I am related to on both sides of my family is from Ramallah, Palestine. They immigrated; my parents immigrated to the U.S., my mom's family to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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AL: Why Tennessee?

BZ: I have, I still don't know. I have no idea. They I think they came over late [19]50s, early 60s (maybe even later than that). And then my father's family immigrated to Houston actually to the Montrose area in the late 50s. My grandfather actually came over to Houston when my grandmother was pregnant with my dad, so my dad didn't meet his dad until he moved here.

AL: Oh wow!

BZ: So yeah but they lived in Montrose and I think a lot... like when people immigrated from Ramallah they kind of, there were pockets of places that they went so Houston was a big hub I guess, the market... I don't know what the market was at the time. I think my grandfather (and I'm not 100% sure on this) at the time sold like he was a door-to-door salesman. I think he sold vacuums. But I guess the industry here at the time, there were obviously a lot in Detroit, like Jacksonville, New York, there are a lot in California like San Diego/San Jose area. But they went into grocery stores. They owned a bunch of... I think my grandfather owned one in the Denver Harbor area; a lot of them owned grocery stores or restaurants. My dad ran a high-end billiards company. He sold antique pool tables in the River Oaks area and my mom's family runs a really successful restaurant, hoagie shop in Chattanooga. So they do food. They do food.

AL: But not Palestinian food right?

BZ: No I mean there is, they sell falafels in Gyros and they are known for their Steak and Stack which is like the most popular thing on their menu. But they have like silly stuff like "The Camel Rider" and stuff like that, yeah like their old t-shirts (I don't know if their new ones but their old t-shirt was like a desert with like a camel). And they are

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pretty much like the only Arabs that live in Chattanooga because... you know who lives in Chattanooga besides I don't know. But anyway but yeah and the steak and stack is like a Philly cheese steak but in a pita. So...

AL: That's interesting like mixing the two.

BZ: Yeah it's... well because we have like beef shawarma like which my uncles here when they owned momma's poor boy and my cousin do, The Zabak's it's just like pita with like really thinly sliced beef with tahini and they do it with onions and like lettuce and tomato but my uncles do it like a Philly where it's like mayo, provolone cheese and beef so it's...

AL: But is it that same type of beef?

BZ: I don't know that it's the same type of beef. I doesn't taste like the same type but it's funny because it's just, it's the sandwiches that we would love, that we loved eating when we were kids and when we would go visit they would make us like 30 of them and we would freeze them and every time we wanted one we would take one out and put them in the microwave and eat them. So that's like kind of what they are known for. I mean everyone knows that they are Arab but the food like it's a hoagie shop it's not like, it's like a really elaborate deli I guess, it's kind of.

AL: So if they probably sold more Arab food maybe that community wouldn't even receive it well? Since they didn't have other people? I feel like Arab food is just yummy and everybody likes it.

BZ: It is...

AL: But maybe I don't know.

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BZ: I mean you notice it now. Like I notice it now when I got into, like when we went into, it's not like a Middle Eastern I mean the people that own Phoenicia are Armenian they are not Arab.

AL: Oh really I don't know why I always thought they were Lebanese.

BZ: No they are Armenian. So it's not really like the food that we eat. Like it's not the food that you would find if you went into like a home, someone's home but I noticed like it seems like the trendy thing to eat now. So it's like when you go to Mary'z [Lebanese Cuisine] or you go to like that place or you even go to my cousin's restaurant [Zabak's Mediterranean Café] like it's non Arabs that think it's that they are eating really ethnic when they go to these restaurants when you are really not. Like not that I think the Arab food is really accessible, but it's just really time consuming to make so like other than going to Abdallah's the bakery, they will do and Fadi's do too, they'll do like one dish and Mary'z actually does too but they are all Lebanese. They will do like one day a week or something they will do the "dish" of the day but everything else is like Gyros or shawarma or falafel.

AL: Sort of the easy stuff to make.

BZ: But it's like if you want mahshi [stuffed zucchini] or you want maftool [similar to couscous] or you want mulukhiyah you want whatever it takes a lot of time and effort to make it. It makes sense that it's difficult to cook it and sell it and make a profit from it, but it's so much better.

AL: Do you think it's hard for the restaurants to because I'm sure that the people that they employ as cooks may not even be Arab so do you think it would be something like that, like it would be hard to teach other people how to make these elaborate dishes?

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BZ: No, I don't think it would be hard because I feel like every kitchen, like in an ethnic restaurant probably isn't like the people who are cooking food probably aren't from whatever country and food. I don't know like café Peter or something like that. But no I think it's just, like I had talked to my cousin about like, "Why don't you serve mjudarah [lentil, rice, and salad dish] at your restaurant. It's really inexpensive to make. It seems like a great vegetarian dish to offer people." Like they said it's just hard because they are not equipped to make that kind of food, it would sit around all day and you obviously don't want to serve food like that to your clientele.

AL: Right.

BZ: So which is just sad because I think it would be really great if they served it. But just logistically it's difficult to do and product in season. Like yeah you could do cabbage rolls, you can find grape leaves to... you know you could buy the grape leaves from the store. We used to grow grape leaves in our back yards and the only time we had warak [grape leaves] was when we went into the back yard and it was in season and we picked it and did it ourselves.

AL: Wow!

BZ: And I didn't realize we had mulukhiyah in our back yard too. Mulukhiyah is like, I don't know what it is. I don't know what the plant is. I remember looking it up and I know I wrote it down in the blog but I don't remember off hand what type of plant it is again. But we specifically had that in our backyard too and you would pick it and put it in like a pillowcase and it would dry. Like you would actually put it on a big table and lay it out and just let it dry for days and then you put it in a pillowcase and use it. It's a very, it's very... they also make it you can buy it anyway that's totally going off hand.

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AL: What do you use it for?

BZ: It's a dish. It's like leaves so you cook it and like with lots of lemon and then you, and lamb or chicken it actually tastes better with chicken in my opinion. I mean you eat it over rice but it, the leaf itself when you reduce it it's like okra it's very slimy, it has a slimy consistency to it so you really have to be careful about how you cook it. Because if you cook it right the broth is actually really great because it's really tart and lemony and good but we couldn't find dry leaves anywhere when I was trying to make it so my dad bought frozen and that was just an enormously stupid mistake. It was like 10 times more... it's like gluey almost. There's something about the texture of the leaf that makes it like that. It is just not... my dad loves it I just don't care for the flavor at all.

AL: So what's the point of the pillowcase after you dry it?

BZ: It just like keeps it dry or something. I just remember always having like a really thick, like white bag that looked like a pillow case which is where you would keep the leaves and then like our stupid friends would come over and think that they could smoke it and you know stuff like that. [Laughs] You know and you kind of have to let them do it because it's just not worth it to be like, "That's food it's not like ... [Laughs] it's not whatever you want it to be it's just what we make food from but it's okay."

AL: Were these like...

BZ: Non Arab friends, yeah.

AL: Well that makes sense. Well lets I guess let's go back to talking about your family and maybe why did they leave Palestine at the time that they did?

BZ: Well my dad was born in '48 so that was like the year that the U.N. partition was signed and it just wasn't a good environment for them to be living in anymore so they

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left. I mean my mom was born in, I think she was born in '57 so around the time that they left was around the '67 war.

AL: So basically corresponding with the two big wars.

BZ: Yeah, yeah, so my dad's family immigrated at the end of the, towards the end of the [19]50s and I'm assuming he left like my grandfather, probably left around '49 or '50 to come to the U.S. and just worked and built what he could so that he could bring my grandmother and my dad over. Because my dad had three older brothers but they were all already living in the U.S. They were going to college and two of his three brothers served I think two if not all of them served in the army at some point. So they all...

AL: And why did they do that? Was that like an easier way to get citizenship or just for economic opportunities?

BZ: I don't know, I actually I need to ask them that question because I have no idea. They were stationed like one my uncles I think was stationed in Germany maybe. I don't know where the other two were but yeah my dad didn't, he had a medical condition that didn't allow him to. But yeah they all served and then they all came back and I know they all went to college, all two, only one of his brothers didn't, but the others did. They all, I think, one of them became a math teacher. The other opened a restaurant, two of them opened restaurants. So yeah that is what I was told was that it was it became too much of a hostile environment that's not where they wanted to raise their families.

AL: Yeah so when your grandfather came and was working to bring his family here do you think that they ever thought that maybe the situation would change and that they would be in America sort of...

BZ: Temporarily?

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AL: ...temporarily and that hope, did they hope to return at some point?

BZ: I don't know. I don't know the answer to that either. It doesn't seem like it.

AL: Yeah.

BZ: I mean everyone that I know that's kind of here like it was just the Ramallah that they knew the Ramallah that their ancestors built wasn't the same Ramallah anymore so it was like. I mean they still talk of it fondly and miss it but even now, like my dad's never been back since he moved. So he hasn't been there in 50, 60 well 50 years and he doesn't seem like he has the desire to go back because I guess he has the memory of how it was in his head and I don't know that... like I've heard other relatives like talk about how like they miss the way it had been it's just not like they don't want the new memory like they want to keep the old memory if that makes sense.

AL: Yeah that makes sense. I could see that.

BZ: Yeah and my grandmother like my grandfather died right the year before I was born so he died in '76 my dad said and my grandmother just... I don't think I don't know if it was in terms of cost or like if it just wasn't financially feasible to go back or if just life just happened and you know they just didn't go and we don't have any family that live there anymore so it's not like they were going, they could go and see friends but they weren't necessarily going to visit like immediate family.

AL: We already talked about this a little bit you were talking about the different hubs of sort of people from Ramallah and where they went and you said that one was Houston and so do you think they just chose Houston kind of willy nilly like there are some people here or do you think they had connections already?

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BZ: I don't I mean I remember asking my dad this question and I know he gave me an answer and I don't remember what it was but I think that some people had come because of somebody else and you know it was like, "So and so's here..." and they all lived relatively Clear Lake, Montrose actually was one of the areas where a lot of the Arabs have lived at one point which I think is pretty cool. But then oddly enough we ended up, a lot of them ended up and we as well, I grew up was like in the Meyerland area which is, I don't know if it was at the time but it is definitely now and was when I was like in high school and probably before, is predominantly Jewish. There is a very large Jewish community in that area which I found to be really interesting.

AL: Seems weird.

BZ: Well because we are much more similar than we think then we allow ourselves to believe we are. So I'm sure there is some comfort there. I don't know if they realize that when they moved into that area of town or not, but like where I went to high school was a large majority, a large number of the people that went to school there were Israeli and Jewish. So a lot of my friends growing up were not Arab they were actually Israeli, which made for an interesting experience like in high school. [Laughs] A lot of like questioning; like I had somebody come up to me and ask me, "I heard you were Palestinian" and I didn't shy away from it but it wasn't like I went around running around being like, "Oh I'm an Arab like whahoo!" But someone was like, "I heard you were Palestinian" and I said, "Yeah." They looked at me like really like in the eye and he was like, "You realize there is no such thing as Palestine?" I was like, "God bless are we seriously going to have this conversation right now." It was like in English class it was like before the bell rang or something. I was like, "Look ... [sighs] I'm not Jewish you

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don't want me to be Jewish anymore than I want to be, like you know, until you come up with a better term for whatever it is that I'm supposed to be like we're going with Palestinian. There's nothing else that I can say. I will acknowledge it if you don't want to acknowledge it I really don't care." It was absurdity. There was no context in it. It wasn't like I was provoking him or like anyone was having this huge conversation it was just like he heard it and was just like so offended by the thought of someone considering themselves a Palestinian that he needed to articulate it to me, like because I had never heard it before or something. So yeah, I mean I didn't get that a lot and friendships, friendships worked as long as we didn't talk about the fact that they got to go on pilgrimage to Israel like after junior year and I can't go back or like I'm scared to go back because you know it's, it seemed different. It seemed so easy for them to just go and like, they'd come back with their ironic t-shirts in Hebrew about beer and you know and I felt so close. Like I felt really close to the friends of mine that I had that were Israeli like it felt that we were the same people and I almost felt closer to them than the Arabs that I knew because a lot of the Arabs that I knew were Muslim and my family's Christian and I didn't grow up around Muslim Arabs so I will be honest I was pretty ignorant to it. My parents, my family wasn't super open to it so yeah. So it just it was a natural fit kind of thing if that makes sense. You know we were the same. The only difference was that we were supposed to not like each other because one nation was oppressing the other and the one that was oppressing thought that we somehow provoked it. I don't know if that makes sense. So it was an interesting way to grow up.

AL: It was an interesting high school experience.

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BZ: Yeah and I went to college with a lot of the same people that I went to high school with so it sort of, one of my old friends from high school was actually a film, she's a documentary film maker and the last film that she made was about the Negev and the Sudanese refugees that were entering into Israel from the Negev so it's really interesting like we acknowledge that we come from different places and her parents are actually very religious, but we are friends I mean it's just we come from two different worlds but I feel, I still feel like her world is the more privileged world than mine. So...

AL: That must have been hard.

BZ: It was I think I was in a different mindset like if I had been who I am now (which I can't be because I was a teenager back then) I was more like I was... I identified as a Palestinian and I identified as an Arab I wasn't ashamed of it, but I felt inadequate because I didn't learn, I wasn't taught the history of the Middle East like in school or by anyone I was taught by my family. My family is obviously biased so I felt like I wasn't learning real history I felt like I was learning personal history, which there is nothing wrong with but for the purposes of trying to have a intelligent, informed conversation with someone I felt lacking because I didn't live there. Like I didn't grow up in Ramallah but my friends did, like some of my friends did and even if they didn't their parents were like recent immigrants or they visited enough that they physically saw you know what occurred and I couldn't... I couldn't comment from anywhere other than emotion and so I just didn't. I took the stance of peace and you know just believing that it doesn't matter. Like nothing is worth fighting for that much that children die and people lose family and you know and peace doesn't exist and it was a really naïve way of looking at things. Not naïve it was an idealistic way of looking at things. You want peace

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I still want peace but I understand now why people fight for it. Like that peace is important but what's more important is basic human rights and when you are denied basic human rights like you have to keep fighting. You are not a second class citizen that's the thing that I didn't understand and the misinformation that I had as a kid too was not understanding that the holocaust wasn't necessarily... like I thought that somehow the Arabs were responsible for the holocaust like no one had said to me because I hadn't been taught those things I mean you didn't really learn that stuff really in middle school and there was a vague teaching of it. You are learning ancient history, it's not like modern history, it's not relevant history necessarily. It all connects but so I didn't understand it. I was like, "Do you hate us because...?" I didn't really understand really why it was happening. I just knew that the Jews had been persecuted. They underwent something that was horrific and horrible and that they didn't deserve, so my only question was, "Why else would you treat someone like that if they weren't somehow in some way responsible for that horrible position that you were put in?" But obviously the Arabs didn't have anything to do with that and I know that now obviously. But like that was my mentality back then, it just doesn't make any sense, like why if you have been treated so poorly by a nation of people who didn't like you based solely on your religion why would you turn around and like do the exact same thing to someone else? It just it still to this day does not register to me it doesn't make any sense to me, but you know, they didn't have countries backing them the way that Israel like you have, I mean you have the U.S. that's like, "Go ahead kill people and we'll stand by your reasons for it."

AL: We'll give you millions of dollars and planes...

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BZ: We'll give you money and your army can come and train our people to kill and oppress the way that, like it's just, but I also understand that the people are not representative of their government and I don't, I hope that other people can see that. I feel like people who don't understand Middle Eastern politics don't understand that, or politics in general, don't understand that the people are not the government and that not only are they being oppressed by the Israeli government, they are also being oppressed by their own government and that's like ridiculous.

AL: I don't know how we strayed into that.

BZ: Right, I don't know either it sort of comes with the territory when you are talking about Middle Eastern politics.

AL: Exactly. Well we can talk a little bit about cooking. You already talked a little bit about your cousin's restaurant Zabak's but maybe you can tell me how they started and why?

BZ: I think in the year that I was born, my dad and a couple of his brothers opened up a restaurant on Hillcroft. Hillcroft at like Richmond literally right next to Lee High School, it was called Mama's Po'Boys and so my uncle, my Uncle George started it. My dad like helped and I think one of their other brothers helped but it was really my uncle's restaurant. Like my dad did all the advertising for it. Like he I think he xeroxed a picture of my grandmother's face or something like that and it was a hoagie shop. So we actually back in the day sold hoagie sandwiches but also did like what they are known for is their falafel. So they did gyros they did shawarma they did burgers and whatever, but falafel is what brought everyone to this restaurant. It's our family recipe and he added a little extra something to it that just made it, it's just a really good falafel and I'm partial to

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it. I am I think my family's falafel is best but they owned that restaurant for 30 years and it didn't do amazing. I mean it supported their family but their falafel was, it was written up people came from all over Houston. Clint Black had been one of their patrons for years before he got famous, and just communities like vegetarian, it really was like the thing that brought people to Mama's and then in 2005 they had closed the shop, they were in the process of relocating it to where it is now which is Westheimer and Fountainview and both within 9 months of each other my aunt died and then my uncle died. But they wanted to keep it going so now it's run by the three remaining children. I had, their oldest sister passed away a couple of years before my aunt and uncle did so it's a labor of love because it's 30 plus years of a locally owned mom and pop shop. I mean they, my aunt and uncle ran it. They called them George and Kay. My aunt's name was Karima but it is just a lot easier to say Kay then it is to say Karima and George is pretty self-explanatory but they were great. It was this tiny little shop they used to have, they used there used to be a Droubi's as a couple of doors down from it. You know people in the area I think Omar [Afra of Free Press Houston and owner of Fitzgerald's in the Heights] when he was little his dad used to take him in there and they would eat. There's lots of stories like that of people who remember my aunt and uncle because when they were little, they remember this store, but a lot of people didn't put two and two together that this was... these were the kids of people that used to serve them and they all had really fond memories of not just the food, but how, kind my relatives were and it's the same now. Like when you ask people like if they go and eat at Zabak's, yeah they talk about the falafel they talk about how good the food is but they also talk about how

friendly the service is which is just something you don't get a lot anymore. So to be able

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to like a second generation restaurant that really was quintessentially Houston in that part of the city and the falafel is still the best it gets awards and gets written up and it's as good as it, it's not *as good* because it's not my aunt and uncle that make it but they still use the same like falafel little contraption that my aunt did and my cousin does it the exact same way just like with my recipes of my mom's she has the same kind of like book of her mom's that has all those coveted recipes in it. So I mean what you are eating is at least when it comes to the falafel maybe not everything else but hummus, the falafel like the sfeeha, the little spinach pies like that's you are eating what we eat at home like what we would make on Sunday mornings when we make a big breakfast there would be a big plate of falafel and white cheese and radishes and sumac and tomatoes, cucumbers, pita bread, zayt and zaatar you know like you are eating a little bit of our food history like culinary history and so I think that's what people connect to when they go in there. It's pretty cool.

AL: I've been there it still is.

BZ: It is very good.

AL: And they are so friendly, really friendly.

BZ: Yeah and they remember that's the coolest part like Sandra remembers and even Peter and Dante too, Peter's in the kitchen but like you know they can come in and people just talk to her like they talk to her about their lives and she asks and she cares and that's what people want. That's why they go back I think and because the food is good and I kind of really want to eat right now.

AL: I know you are making me hungry! So maybe you can talk a little bit about how you started cooking?

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BZ: So a couple of years ago (and this is going to sound morbid but I promise you that it's not) I just kind of woke up one day and realized that I was losing a lot people in my family. Like we have a really big family, people tend to live (with the exception of a couple) tend to live a bit long and I just realized that I had never learned how to make the food that I grew up eating and that made me really sad. Like it made me really sad to think that if I wanted to eat imjudarah or if I wanted to eat sfeeha or if I wanted to make shish barak or if I wanted to have ghraybeh like I didn't know how to make it and not everyone's going to be around to make it for me and most of my relatives don't because it's so time consuming. And I wanted specifically to eat my mom's cooking and you know she died when I was 13 so I haven't had it in a really long time and my dad's a great cook but he's a "short cut" cook. I mean, he can do it the long way but he doesn't have time for that the way my mom would have time for something like that. So I found her old cook book which is just a really old tattered notebook of recipes that she had written and I had one of my aunts translate it into English and kind of coupled with the *Sahtein* cookbook which is like the cook book that everybody had from back in the day. I just started teaching myself how to cook and I did it kind of like with the intention of because I want to be a writer so part of it was to force myself to write and then to cook because I do enjoy cooking and then hopefully sort of reconnecting with that part of my life and with my mom's memory because I feel like food was a very, very big part of my life growing up. It's still a very big part of my life now but it defines so much of my childhood, just the going to like farmers markets with my mom or like going to the grocery store with my mom or we make family outings take family outings like the whole family like they will be three cars full of people and we would drive to Kemah and they

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would (which I hated because I hated fish when I was a kid) but they would go get fish they would get snapper and shrimp and you know I'd throw up in the parking lot because the smell was too overwhelming. I hated... I had a really weak stomach. But it was fresh, everything was fresh. Like everything, like now this whole thing going back to eating local or whatever, it's not this new concept it's what we did 20 years ago it's just that we got so caught up in eating processed food and fast, fast, fast that we lost track of how things used to be and that's how I grew up eating. I grew up seeing fresh vegetables and helping to pick them. We'd go to farms and like pick strawberries and pick eggplant and pick squash and tomatoes and we had stuff in our backyard, and I missed that, but I didn't realize I missed that until I started doing it. Then it gave me a whole new appreciation for all the food I didn't like eating when I was a kid. [Laughs] That she put so much time and effort into make them that she probably didn't really want to make in the first place, I wished now that I had been more understanding of it as a kid but when I was a kid I just wanted to eat hamburgers and instead I had to eat like bamiyan rose which you know doesn't taste as good as a hamburger. It does now but back then it didn't. That's how I started...

AL: So that cookbook *Sahtein* can you talk about it a little bit like how, how does everybody know about it? Why is it so popular?

BZ: I think its popular because it's the only cookbook that I know of that is specifically has recipes that are like specific to Palestinian, Syrian cooking because I'm sure as you noticed even within regions of Palestine the dishes are very different. I really feel like the way that the Lebanese cook like Iraqi and Saudi I've never had food from anyone other than like Lebanese or Palestinian Syrian but it's all different. I don't know

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who, obviously it's from like '76 and it was Detroit. We have a lot of family in Detroit. I don't think that it was Ramallah that did it. It may have been but it was like the Detroit Women's and it says that it specifically....

AL: Oh the American Ramallah Federation Educational Fund sponsored it.

BZ: So that's probably why everyone had it because it was like directly... but it's a great cookbook it's like the only collection that I know of that's food that is specific to the food that we grew up eating. And I didn't... again I had a really narrow view of everything when it came to like Arab culture, Arab food, Arab everything because I knew it specific to Ramallah so I do still think that our food tastes better than a lot of other places but it's all subjective. I mean it's I don't know that anyone who isn't from Ramallah or who isn't even Palestinian would feel the same way about the food but they are tried and true recipes and they work pretty great and they taste really good. So you know I guess that's why I never even looked I assumed that that's what it was that there was some sort of Ramallah tie to it.

AL: Yeah so like you've heard of other relatives or friends or other people from Ramallah that used the cookbook?

BZ: Oh everyone owns, like every house, every house in Ramallah like every Ramallah household like every relative that I know owns at least one copy of the cookbook yeah and it looks like the one that I have with like the blue binding and it's probably got writing all over it and is really old. And all my aunts know how to cook. They don't need it. Like they don't need it to cook it's just kind of like that thing that you have because it's like pride, you know. I doubt that any of them even used it to learn

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how to cook. I know my mom didn't, but it's still just like nice to have you know to kind of preserve that.

AL: What are some of your favorite food memories or worst food memories, any food memories?

BZ: I hated... well I was a really picky eater growing up. I didn't and still don't like onions so my mom would have to make dishes for me. Like she would have to... I would have to eat them "pre" like whenever she would make like sahneya macaron like the baked spaghetti she would have to make separate for me because I didn't eat onions I would pick every little thing out. I actually didn't like tomatoes. I still don't like tabouleh, I don't eat tabouleh, I don't eat fowl, there were a lot of things that I didn't eat growing up that I didn't like that have changed pretty dramatically. The only thing I still don't eat is raw onion but I'm getting better at eating cooked onion. But, I mean, I remember I just remember not wanting to eat ... my pallet was raised like even, even though I was raised eating a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables I loved all of those things I'm actually a really grateful for my parents for having those kinds of foods around as an adult that I like all of that stuff because it really helps when you are trying to lose weight. But I mean, when I remember a certain dish I loved when she made macaron I loved when she made the lebaniera, the mansef which is like the, it was always one of my favorites, still one of my favorites it's a rice dish that is like Lamb and rice but you cook in a yogurt sauce it's just so ridiculous it's so good and I just and you put bread, you cut up bread and... I think that's the same thing, yeah. It is just so good and then sweets.

The biggest thing is probably the sweets. We used to have an extra refrigerator or freezer in our utility room and that is where she would keep, she would make katayef and she

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would make a bunch of it and put it in the freezer for whenever you wanted it. We always had like baklava and the ka'ak it's like the date cookies that I used to help her make because it's like a dough that is filled with other nuts. If it's nuts it's a dome and it's like a crumbly not sugary cookie at all and then it's filled with other dates or walnuts, like cinnamon sugar walnuts and then you sprinkle it with powdered sugar but they are very time consuming because the point of it is that you make the mound and then you take a pincher and you pinch designs into each cookie and something about that like when you bake them it browns and the texture of it and when you put the powdered sugar on it and it clings to it in just the right way. It does not taste the same way if you don't have those little pinchers on, like I don't care what anyone says because I noticed that if you get them from a lot of bakeries they don't have time to sit there and do that it's just not the same it's really not. So I remember like sitting with her and doing and making what I could do like that I would do with her and I loved sweet so like ghraybeh cookies were my favorite and everyone knew what my favorites were so if we were at my aunts or somebody, "I made you like bread" or "I made you cookies," or "I made you something and it was awesome" because I don't get that ever more. I never go somewhere and someone is like, "I made you this." It never happens and then she used to make a lot of really great non Arabic food like she loved Chinese food and she was really good at making fried chicken and egg rolls and yeah so it was those were and I actually wrote a story about it, it's nothing that but my favorite thing when I was a kid was Kraft macaroni and cheese because we didn't get it very often and it was straight up comfort food so whenever she would make and something that she did to it, like I've made box mac and cheese a million times and it never tastes the way it did when she would make it. There

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was something about the way that she made it that was just like, we used to eat them in these plastic, pastel like Tupperware bowls and just it was the greatest thing ever when she would do it. It totally doesn't taste like it when I do it now, but it was awesome.

AL: Is there anything that when you are cooking like maybe a smell or a taste of something that brings you back to a time in your childhood with your family?

BZ: Like when we were making the imjudarah earlier and smelling the cumin it was an automatic like spices, I think there's like 3 or 4 spices that are very specific to Arabic cooking which is All Spice, Nutmeg, and Cinnamon so when I smell those smells it's like automatically like remembering like basically everything because it's in everything. So yeah those smells specifically are a huge trigger and them probably like butter like the smell of semnah, the clarified butter it has a very distinctive smell to it and yeah just because it's, it's *if* you are doing it the old school way it's in everything that you make. A lot of people don't now because it's too fattening but if you do it real old school everything that you are making has it in it which is why it tastes so good!

AL So maybe you can talk about your blog a little bit?

BZ: The blog that I haven't been writing in for about a year. But so the medium in which I did all the cooking and the writing was through a blog that I took a long time to figure out what the name of it was, and came up as Zayt and Zaatar because partly it was a play on Zabak and partly because there are two things that go together kind of like my mom and I did but sort of, but not really, and I just love zayt and zaatar it's like my favorite snack. [laughs] I love it and it's in my house. It's in every Arab house at least in my family like I have a little container of zayt I have a little container of zaatar and it's sitting next to the bread bowl where all the bread is and it's just like if you are hungry

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and you don't know what else to eat you make like a zaatar sandwich. It's just great! It tastes really good.

AL: Maybe you can explain what zaatar is?

BZ: Zaatar is just thyme, it's dried thyme but it's like dried thyme mixture. I don't know what other...

AL: There's sesame seeds in it?

BZ: Sesame seeds like my dad in the past would add... like he adds other spices. Like he adds a little sumac, he adds I think a little oregano. He makes his own and would like toast it and then, have it. I'm perfectly fine with the way it comes in a bag but it's really just essentially just dried thyme and it's great. I don't know what the origin of it is. I don't know why someone decided that this was like the greatest snack food ever but Arab snacks are... and it just and it works so well with everything. Like you cut up a tomato, you cut up a cucumber, put a little olive oil on it, my favorite thing in the world when I was a kid was labne sandwiches with black olives or cucumbers and then with a little bit of zaatar on it. It was, one of my, and it still is like I just don't eat it as much because I prefer my home made labne to store bought. I don't have time to make that, so yeah, but it's a good snack, and it just reminds me a lot of being a kid. Like it reminds me of the bread that my mom would make bread and she would make the zaatar bread and I just have good memories associated with it. So anyway, but then so yeah, that was the blog and that's why I started it and it seemed to really resonate with people, on the level of food I mean I think partly it was that people wanted these recipes and you can't really I don't know where else... I'm sure if you looked you could find it but there are certain recipes that I like mishat which is like the first thing that I did which is basically like a

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fried cauliflower pancake. It's like egg, cauliflower, I think a little bit of onion and parsley, there's no onion and you just ladle it out and like do it like a pancake and it's amazing! So I noticed that I couldn't find a recipe for it. It's almost like you are spelling it phonetically and not everyone spells things the same way, which I noticed. So I forgot what I was saying...

AL: The recipe is sort of like the blog....

BZ: Yeah so I think part of is like somebody told me the other day, it was a cousin, she was like "I was looking up online for a recipe for something and I came across the blog I can't believe I didn't know that you did it." But right there it's for my generation like my cousins whose parents didn't necessarily pass down those recipes to them now they can like they can access it. But it was more than that, the memories that are attached to that food. That was just a huge part of my life and it stopped the moment that she died. It just you know my dad just didn't have the time to cook like that anymore. He had two kids to raise he had to work. Just my grandmother did on occasion but she was in her 80's at that point and she was struggling with her health, you know, on and off. I guess she died about 10 years, 9 years after my mom did. But she lived with us and she helped like take care of us. So yeah it was preserving my history but my history through food because in a lot of ways that's just how I relate to a lot of things is just through food. So and it's great and it's great that it's resonated with people who are like non Arab who married Arab men who wanted to cook for them or non Arabs that lost a parent like lost a mom resonates in it. That resonates with them what it feels like to try to reconnect and food makes sense I think in that respect because that's how for many moms that's how, one way they show love to their kids is the time and effort they put into the food that they

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make you. Because it's nourishing and it's keeping you healthy and helping you grow and all of that stuff. So I think it resonated with people in a lot of ways and it did me. I don't know how much it helped but I'm glad I'm doing it. And now I know how to cook stuff that tastes okay so that helps too.

AL: It's good all around.

BZ: Yeah.

AL: Okay so do you want to talk a little bit about your dad being involved in the blog? I mean he helps you right?

BZ: He does he helps me a lot and it's interesting because when he remembers recipes he doesn't remember them the way that my mom cooked them. He remembers the way that his mother cooked them and my grandmother was a great cook she really was. Like her baked spaghetti was by far my favorite. She did that better than anyone that I've ever known and I've spent my whole life trying to recreate the way that she did the spaghetti sauce. I cannot do it. Just like my mom's mom who is still alive, my grandmother on my mom's side makes the best pickles in the world and I have never been able to replicate that and my mom made the best ones too and they were obviously my grandmother's recipe but so again even in doing the blogging and the cooking it even resonated with my dad. It made him remember the food that he loved eating as a kid and I made him I'm trying to remember what I made him for his birthday because it was one of his favorite things to eat that he didn't get to eat very often and just seeing how happy he was like we saw Khalil [AbuSharekh] getting to eat food that he hadn't eaten in a really long time like he has so many memories of food that I know he misses eating but that other people cooked for him. And even though he is capable of cooking it for himself there is

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something different because again it was being taken care of. So it was kind of neat in that respect to see his view of it. It's also kind of overwhelming because you know he has a way that he wants to do it and I'm kind of stubborn about learning things and so I wanted to do it the way that my mom did it. But he's like, "You don't have to follow recipes. You don't have to do whatever..." But I feel like part of this project in a lot of ways was also learning to work with him in this capacity and kind of creating this food together which was something that we never did when I was growing up. So it's kind of like healing in some ways for both of us. Like maybe for him and his mom were just reconnecting with his culture through that food which is something that really a lot of it was food we hadn't eaten in like decades and it's what we grew up on so it was kind of nice to be able to do it together and to see him remember stuff and get excited. He's really excited about it because he loves cooking, he loves food. He really does and he's good at it but he has a very specific pallet and I think our pallets are kind of different so that's why it was really nice to do it, to learn to do it this time because now I know that I'm capable of doing it without him basically doing it for me so that was nice.

AL: This is my favorite question. Who invented the falafel?

BZ: I have no idea! We... when we were in high school, I would say Arabs I'm just going to say... if we are talking about the kind of falafel that my family, my family invented it ... the way that we eat it now because you don't see that you don't see the crisp dark brown super green on the inside falafel like most places that I see falafel I can't imagine eating falafel that's brown on the inside. It doesn't make any sense to me and in ball shape versus the flat anyway. But I remember when we were in high school we had... my school was known for like our foreign language program. They taught a

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bunch of different languages and we had an Arabic class and there was a Hebrew class and we had like international day and like all of the different language club groups were selling food that I guess their parents made or something like that and I guess Israel, the Hebrew club was selling falafel and like I just remember there being this huge thing where it's like falafel is not Israeli food it's Arab food and this sort of which seems to be kind of a contentious thing all the way around like when you see couscous and now I'm starting to see things like food that I grew up eating now has the word Israeli in front of it and I don't know. I don't know what I'm assuming we all eat the same kind of food I mean we're from the same place.

AL: Now.

BZ: I mean well yeah...

AL: But I guess if...

BZ: Matza soup and we don't... I mean we don't eat you know and our religions are different so we know when we are fasting we don't eat the same kind of food. So but yeah I don't know. I mean I'm gonna say because.

AL: Well I guess it depends on the timeline right?

BZ: Yeah.

AL: I mean before '48 there is no Israel.

BZ: Yeah so I don't know.

AL: I'll research that and get back to you!

BZ: I'd actually really like to know I mean I'm curious if couscous really like an Arab thing or is it more like a Mediterranean thing that we just happened to... I mean we only have like one dish that we even use couscous with. I don't necessarily see it as an, I

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don't see it as an Israeli, but I don't see it as like a specific Palestinian or Arab food either. I see it more as Mediterranean but I understand what's going on I just, really? I'm going to refrain from saying anything else. But I never really thought about it I guess. Like because that's really the only thing that falafel is Palestinian I mean it's an Arab food. It's really hard to try to, but if you notice like everyone makes Falafel now.

AL: Greek food and...

BZ: Yeah which I don't... and you know they are not trying to say that it's Greek food are they? It's not.

AL: I don't think so.

BZ: So I just find it interesting that falafel is sort of it's everywhere and then that's great because falafel is great but it's kind of like hummus.

AL: Who invented hummus? [laughs]

BZ: I did! [laughs] Unless it doesn't taste good there is such a thing as falafel that doesn't taste good, I wish that everyone would be more responsible about the hummus and the falafel that they put out into the world and I get that everybody's pallet is different but I mean you really can screw up hummus I mean it's possible. It's a very simple dish but it is very possible to make it taste not good, so yeah. I don't know if I answered that question.

AL: It's personal opinion it's just throwing it out there. So you talked a lot about women cooking but you talked about your family owning restaurants and your dad's cooking with you now. Is there a dish that is traditionally made by men compared to women?

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BZ: Off the top of my head not that I can think of but sort of like I think if there would be anything it would be a more meat related dish. Like I remember when I was young and this is actually why I didn't eat lamb for most of my life, it was Easter and they were roasting a baby lamb like outside and I was like, "That just is not right and I'm not eating it." But that was something that the men did or the men in my family did. But I didn't see I mean I saw them cook in their restaurants. At home my mom wouldn't let my dad cook so like he would come into the kitchen and try to like add spices to things and she would get mad and tell him to get out of the kitchen. So he wanted to help her and he wanted to cook she was just like, "Get out of my space and let me cook." My uncles and stuff, I remember them making like, like little things. Like my Uncle Victor would make olives or like they would grow olives and he would make them or they would make you know, but I would think if there would be anything it would be a more meat. I'm being really stereotypical right now but it would be like more like yeah... Not that I know of there wasn't anything really specific in my family that I could see that was...

AL: A lot of people I've heard say that their dad's never cooked much but they always made the breakfast.

BZ: Really?

AL: Yeah I don't know why that is.

BZ: That's... yeah I could see that like Sunday morning breakfast like... No, I still remember, like some Sunday morning was like the breakfast that we... my dad worked on Saturdays so he definitely didn't do that, but on Sundays it was either we ate a big breakfast or we like went to a relative's house and had breakfast, and again it wasn't traditional it was like you made falafel. You had jibneh and khobz [cheese and bread]

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and you had like fresh vegetables and if we made eggs it was like eggs with potatoes and ground meat. It was like left over stuff from something that they made from the night before whatever. But I mean I saw my uncles like make and prepare all the sandwiches and all the food; because on both sides of my family they cooked. But it was like when they came home, like our moms had been at home making food and like, that's what they did. At least with the families of mine where there were restaurants like they came home, they sat down. The food was there and ready. Their drink was like right there. It was different because my dad didn't work in food but we sat down and ate as a family versus like when you work at a restaurant everyone's you can't wait for them to come home because it's like 10:00, 11:00 at night. So they would just all sit around and sort of do whatever for them while they did dinner so yeah.

AL: I think that's typical for a lot of people.

BZ: Probably.

AL: So I had a question since we are talking about food I'm going to go to food and then we'll come back to your activism and stuff you've done in the community. Now I lost my page. So what is your relationship to food and does it come from your family or culture?

BZ: Probably a combination of both and I have a very, I have a very up and down history with food. Like I love food I always have. But I was also a really chubby, I was a fat kid like I just, whether it's genetics or because I ate a lot, I loved food and I really like sweets and I would just, it was always there and nobody ever told me to stop eating it, so I didn't. And food is a big part of my family and a bigger part of my culture. But when you grow older and you know you start to become a teenager being overweight

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isn't okay. So my relationship with food became like a battle of a battle to be honest. I mean I developed an eating disorder right... and I mean it also was my mom was sick and when she was really sick the only thing she ate was ice cream. She ate pistachio almond ice cream from Baskin Robins that was pretty much the only thing that she could eat at that point because she was so sick. But it was sort of a way, then it became a control thing because it was because I couldn't control anything else in my environment because my mom was dying and I didn't understand that so I just stopped eating because as much as they wanted you to eat and food was love and you know it was it was a way to show love. It was social... it was a big part of our every day. So was the purpose of being a girl which is to eventually get married and have babies and you know that was your role and that was what I thought my role was supposed to be was, you know my mom was 19 when she got married so I was supposed to you know get married fairly young too but I wasn't attractive. Like I wasn't, I was overweight and I was weird looking and I hadn't... I definitely had not grown into myself at that point. So I just stopped eating and it was surprisingly easy to do but then I couldn't maintain it so I you know bulimia became the way to do that because then you could eat in front of everyone and then make them happy and they would cook the food and you would eat it and they wouldn't say anything and you just go and throw it up and then you know, so you get to still look okay but you don't disappoint anybody. And then I struggled with that for a very, very, very long time. And sort of now I guess where I am in the food blog and everything is sort of coming back full circle where now I see food as something that's not an enemy and not something that you use to control or that it's, that it is nourishment and that it's fun and that it can be good for you and it can be a way for you to connect and to

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show the people that you care about that you love them in a kind way. So the blog really is sort of like 20 something years of battling with the very thing that keeps me alive you know and now I kind of have it on my own terms where it's mine and I can learn it and I can tweak the recipes to fit the lifestyle of eating that I'm trying to do now which is I've lost weight for the first time in my life in a healthy way and it's a really amazing feeling because when someone says you look good you can actually feel like you earned it versus like the struggle between being "a good Arab girl" and eating the food but not being the fat Arab girl like now I just don't care I just want to be healthy so I can love the food and make the food and share the food and not feel bad about it. So it's kind of cool it only took 34 years but I did it! So I'm glad like it's a really nice feeling to have now to be able to just be like, "It's okay that you ate this and you're not a bad person because you did or did not eat something."

AL: Do you think that's an issue that other people might struggle with particular...

BZ: Like Arab American women?

AL: Yeah.

BZ: Yeah I know that other women in my family have dealt with it and it's not something that you talk about. Even if you do talk about it it's like not even to acknowledge it I mean I told people and you just do not... it is not a conversation that I have actively with anyone. I mean there are people in my life that know (not a lot) but there are people that are in my life that know that don't know the extent of it. They don't know how much like work I did like personally and professionally to overcome it. And they don't I don't think anyone wants to know I think it's just easier not to know and I can see a lot of young women (especially with the way the world is now) and I would

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honestly think that the bi-cultural tension that exists for women now is probably a lot harder than it was when I was a kid because the world is such a different place now, especially with technology and internet and social media. The things that you have access to that I didn't have access to when I was young is I mean tenfold and even though we talk more about depression or we talk more about like mental health we don't talk about it in the Arab American community. I don't even think there is a word for those things in Arabic. I don't know them. They might exist I don't know what they are.

AL: They are probably new additions to the language.

BZ: Yeah, so I don't know if girls feel like they have friends that they can talk to more about it. I didn't have anyone to talk to about it. It's a very, it's a very lonely thing to go through because you have to I mean you have to keep it from people so that they don't worry. So and I mean on top of having to deal with like cultural restraints and religious restraints and like your cultural like "norms" and then the ones that the country that you live in that seem to always be like diametrically opposed like they just don't fit western culture and Arab culture don't fit together and I don't know, I'm assuming that parents are how they were when I was you know a kid but a lot of it was, "We are Arabs that happen to live in the U.S. but we are going to live like we are back in Ramallah" and that doesn't work because we don't live in Ramallah we live in the United States of America and it's not always easy to handle that and unfortunately for women I mean from an anthropological standpoint apparently our eating disorder is the male version of is what alcoholism is to men. I learned in some class some psych class when I was in undergraduate about addiction and how it's almost like we have the addiction is like "carbs" in the way that we manifest it for women is through eating disorders and men

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through alcohol and like the reason why I don't know for eating disorders but the reason why alcoholism didn't die off with evolution is it's because it actually it actually helps with procreation. Because it helps men in terms of personality and like charm and whatever.

AL: Beer goggles.

BZ: Yeah so anyway that's a little side that one of the few things that I remembered from undergraduate school.

AL: You said something earlier about going to a convention and seeing people... what convention?

BZ: It's the because we are like the Ramallah people are an American Federation it's like the American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine I guess it was that they did it as a way to sort of preserve our culture because we really are like this anomaly. I mean everyone who had lived at Ramallah at that time like we were all somehow related to each other we all come from like the same family tree or from four different branches of the family tree and each family like groups of families exist within them. So the beginning, the purpose of it was to sort of, I thought it was to reconnect with your family.

AL: Okay we're back on.

BZ: So I had thought that it was more like as a family. It's basically like a huge family reunion at least that's what I thought it was and then as I got older I started to see that it was maybe more as a way to kind of like "keep it in the family" like for the younger generations to meet other like eligible single people within your culture which I get, I mean every culture is like that. But it became less necessary over time because people just weren't marrying within our culture as much. Not that they weren't

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necessarily not they might have been dating or marrying other Arabs or like a lot of my cousins have married Italian men or Greek, there are like acceptable it's like on the gradient of you know what is okay and what is not okay. Like you stray a little bit this way, and that's okay but as long as and I mean it's really it's pretty overwhelming when you think about it because it's like they are telling you that your soul mate (if you believe in soul mates) but the person that you are meant to be with (which I don't think any of them believe in soul mates) but the person that you are meant to marry is from the place that your whole family is from you may or may not be related to them that isn't an issue for some (it is an issue for me). And that they like have to be Christian Palestinians from Ramallah which really narrows the pool down quite considerably and I had chosen not to... I mean for a really long time I was like this is what I want. It makes more sense. It's easier. Like I don't have to explain things I don't have to explain how crazy I feel like my family is to somebody who is a part of it but I and I'm being like a little whatever but you know obviously things are more modern now but I feel like there is this period of time where people were becoming a bit more traditional and were...and there's nothing wrong with that I mean honestly if I had met someone that was from my culture and was Christian and I don't really care about that stuff, but it's just easier sometimes then yeah it maybe would have been amazing. But maybe it would have really sucked because I know how men in my family were raised and I don't want to marry any of them. You know it was like when we were talking about gender there is a huge difference between the way that girls are treated and that young girls and the way that boys are treated. Like there were so many things that I wanted to do when I was young. Like I wanted to be a ballerina and I wanted to take dance classes and I really wanted to play the violin. Like

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the biggest thing I wanted to do was play the violin. I really could be like a world renowned violinist right now if I wasn't a girl because my mom would not let me play and I don't know what about the violin was such a scary like thing but the second that my brother wanted to play the trumpet, boom it was bought, he was playing it, he played in the band. Like I tried every year from kindergarten to 5th grade and she wouldn't let me do it ever. So it was like there were things that I wanted to do that creatively really that I wasn't really ever allowed to do simply based on gender and sort of the expectations of girls versus the expectations of boys, in my family specifically and I'm only speaking from my family not for anything other than that, was that they can do pretty much whatever they want and they are not going to get in trouble for it and you know "boys will be boys" whether it's dating or you know doing stupid things and girls kind of just you just have to be pretty and not fat and you know do what you're told and then get married and do what he tells you to do the rest of your life. [laughs] It didn't really seem like, and I didn't understand until I was in college and I was I think it was my junior or senior year and I took a social work class on feminist theory and understood that maybe you know, life could be a little bit different and I could live it not the way that I had been and you know it opened up a whole new world and I didn't know other Arabs at that time. I really didn't. I didn't know Arabs could be any other way then the way that I knew them until I had moved back to Houston after graduate school and after I had been living in Austin and I met Omar [Afra] and I was like, "Holy Shit! Arabs can be cool and they can do really cool creative things" and it's like and then that's when I met all of these other people and I was like this is the most unbelievable thing I've ever seen in my life. I remember thinking it really opened up this whole new world of stuff.

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AL: So do you think that because you said that people were becoming more “traditional” in a way? You mean people here?

BZ: Yeah like I noticed that a lot of I don’t want to call them cousins but like family. Like I noticed that they were starting to marry, there was a period of time where people were getting... weren’t necessarily marrying super young. They were kind of waiting. But it seemed like there was like this sort of resurgence of people getting married like in their early 20’s or like just getting married younger and definitely marrying within like... I mean I’m sure that never really stopped I just I guess because it was people I was related to because the majority of my cousins aren’t, close cousins aren’t married and they are like in their 30’s and 40’s now we are just for some reason none of us got married which is not cool! But, I don’t know what it is. I don’t know what aspect of that has made so many of us like single. But I just... it just seemed like it was very traditional, like it was becoming back tradition where like women stayed at home, had lots of babies in quick succession and like you know the men worked and it’s just I don’t know it probably had always been that way and I just wasn’t paying attention to it and maybe it was because I wasn’t at the age where I cared about being married but as I started getting older and paying attention to it more it just seemed like it was... there were less people looking outside of our culture to get married and more of them were like looking to stay.

AL: Do you think that could be like a way to hold on to that identity?

BZ: Oh absolutely! And I think, I mean it makes sense because if we, if we don’t marry each other and I don’t mean “family” I just mean if the community doesn’t, then it eventually dies. I mean we’re it. The people that lived in Ramallah now are not the same

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people and I'm not saying its bad or anything it's just different but it's not the Ramallah that my parents are from. It's not the Ramallah that like my family built. It's a different place. I mean in a lot of ways it's seems really cool. I mean it seems like the cultural, creative like epicenter of the Middle East which is pretty neat and I would love to go someday I have still never been but I won't, like I won't be going to see the place that my family grew up or where my parents are from it's going to be like a place that used to be somewhere that my family lived that doesn't anymore which is kind of sad. So I get it, it makes sense. But I don't know that I... I'm not opposed to it it's just not something that I'm actively searching.

AL: Yeah to each his own.

BZ: Yes.

AL: So is there anything else you want us to talk about that we didn't talk about yet?

BZ: We covered a lot of ground.

AL: We did. We can talk a lot.

BZ: I know I'm really good at it.

AL: Okay well thank you.

BZ: It's unfortunate that I can.

AL: Thank you.

BZ: You're welcome.

End of Interview