

MARISSA HOWARD: So, do you mind just saying your name?

MOHAMMAD JIHAD: Sure

MH: First and last name?

MJ: Sure. Hello, my name's Mohammad Jihad, owner of Springreens at Community Café, located in East Atlanta.

MH: So wow, that was quite a rush in there! Is that a normal Thursday at one p.m.?

MJ: So actually, Thursday is our lasagna special day. We do veggie lasagna, turkey lasagna, and chicken sausage lasagna every Thursday. But today it was actually a funeral, so—I think it was a graveside funeral, and so they just came in. But then also a school came in from—they're from [inaudible], so they're—the school—it's a Muslim school—I think it's [inaudible]. I think that's the name of the school. I'm not sure, but it's located in downtown Atlanta, so they came in. I totally forgot about them, so they said they wanted to come in and have lunch, so, typically it is like that. It's a rush, you know. You never know what you're going to have in the Community Café.

MH: I actually spoke to one of the teachers, and she was bringing her students here. Part of it was that her students got the word that the high school students came here, I guess a couple of weeks ago—

MJ: Oh, yeah, they did.

MH: They spread like wildfire, and so the middle school students had to come.

MJ: Yeah, I think it was probably a month or so, they came in, and like you said, it just spread. So yeah.

MH: One of the things that I thought was really beautiful that I overheard while sitting there was she said it was important to support the community. And I asked her what that meant, and she was referring to really this whole shopping center area. And so would you agree with that, or do you have anything else--

MJ: Yeah, so just to give you a brief history of the area, we—myself, I'm from the greater--the historic West End, I'm from that area, and so my family moved onto this side of town. They live off Columbia Drive, and I've got a house on Columbia Drive as well. But basically that plaza right there is a historic plaza for the Muslims. It's called the Atlanta Masjid. They own that area, and, you know, now, with all the gentrification and all the apartments they're building and everything going on in that

area, it's hard to get support, because, you know, from the outside looking in, you don't know what else is there. All you see is a big mosque till you go inside. But all you see is the big mosque, so a lot of people get deterred when they see a mosque or a big Muslim—just throughout everything, you know. So you miss what's actually inside, because you have a barber shop inside, you have a African clothing store inside, and then you have the all-girl salon inside as well as a restaurant. And so [inaudible]--

MH: No problem

MJ: So yeah. Where have we left off? Basically talking about the importance of support.

MH: Yeah, one of the other things, you know, I don't often go to lunch, see, you know, during the week, and I can tell you that downtown Decatur is not like that [laughs].

MJ: Yeah

MH, *laughing*: For lunchtime, I mean, the amount of just, you know, talking and greeting and meeting—I mean, how does that feel, knowing that—that's--is that what you envisioned your restaurant to be?

MJ: Yeah, honestly, I envisioned it as a place to become like, you know, just to relax, chill, and, you know, everyone—it's for everyone, you know, to feel comfortable being in this space. And me, personally, I love talking to people, greeting people, meeting people, just making sure that they're satisfied. That's something I'm big on. A little bit about myself: I used to work for Home Depot corporate, and so I actually was in, like, the Escalation Department, so my job literally was to deal with angry people [MH laughs] and make them happy. So transitioning over here, where I'm dealing with people and they're not upset or they're not angry, or if they do get upset, I can make them happy, but a lot of the time our customers are already happy. They're returning customers, they love the food, and if it is something they're upset about, usually it's something small, like, oh, I forgot to get the cake or a slice of bean pie or a drink, something simple like that. But, yeah, I love it. I did envision it this way. I wanted to make it a little bit better from what it is, but, yeah, I envisioned it this way [inaudible].

MH: So you had mentioned greeting, and I think that I couldn't help but overhear "As-salaam alaikum"—

MJ: Yes

MH: --all the time--

MJ, *laughing*: Yes

MH: --and to me, you know, it comes across that it's more than just "Hello."

MJ: Mm-hm

MH: And I know it means—

MJ: "May peace be upon you," yeah.

MH: --but it almost seems like it means more than that.

MJ: Yeah, so, no, that's generally what it is, it's just like, you know, when you're in a predominantly, like, again, Muslim community, when we're in this place, it's mostly Muslims that come in, but, honestly, like, I have so many non-Muslim customers now, so it's like I don't even get the greeting—I get the greeting sometimes, but, you know, I don't assume everyone is Muslim, so I say, "Hello, welcome."

MH: Yeah

MJ: But, you know, "As-salaam alaikum" is just that energy, that welcoming of "May peace be upon you," and knowing that, so you may hear it, or you may see someone, even, "Oh, as-salaam alaikum! How you doing?" [*Both laugh.*]

MH: It's all in the inflection.

MJ: It's all the energy you're giving, you transmit, you're giving them that energy. You could—

MH: And what's the greeting—

MJ: Ah, so "As-salaam alaikum" is "May be peace be upon you." And "Wa-alaikum as-salaam" is—

MH: "Wa-alaikum as-salaam"

MJ: --"May upon you be peace. May upon you be peace," basically. So you may hear that all the time, "As-salaam alaikum." "Oh, wa-alaikum as-salaam." It's a greeting, you know. Also giving that energy of "May peace be upon you," you know?

MH: Mm-hm. So you had also—one thing I was also wanting to ask, and you brought it up: bean pies.

MJ: Bean pies, yeah

MH: Can you describe what bean pies are?

MJ: So—[*Greets customer with "Hello."*] bean pies. It's more than just a piece of pie. It's love, it's energy. But no, seriously, it's something amazing. So it's a navy bean, it's made from navy beans and a mixture of other ingredients. But it's a dessert.

A lot of people taste it and say, “Oh, man, this tastes just like sweet potato pie” or some other type of pie. But bean pie is very delicious. I wish I had some; I sold out of them. I’d give you one, yeah, I wanted you to try it.

MH: I know that I see them all the time being sold at corners.

MJ: We got the best bean pies. So it’s—so they’re originally originated from the Nation of Islam, they, you know, started making bean pies out in Chicago. And, you know, everyone has their own twist to it. But originally it came from the Nation of Islam. They were selling bean pies and fish in newspapers. So, you know, you may see a lot of times people on the corner with bowties and everything like that selling bean pies, but honestly, I have the best bean pie. Hands down.

MH, *laughing*: Is it a family recipe?

MJ: So it was pretty much botched. So we heard how to make it, and we just made our own twist to it, honestly. At first, originally, we was getting it from the Pasha, it’s—it was an imam; he passed away, but his family kept on the production until they retired. And so we used to get it wholesale from them, and then we tried to make our own from scratch, and it didn’t work. And they were like, “No, you need to try this, try this.” But basically it’s a bunch of word-of-mouth “try this, try this,” and then we just added our own twist to it.

MH: OK

MJ: So yeah, it’s in the family now [*both laugh*].

MH: Is the restaurant a family business?

MJ: So, in a sense, it is. So, it’s me and my mother—

MH: Is she the head chef?

MJ: Yes, she is. So this—all her recipes. So originally Springreens, I envisioned it as a salad utopia. So there’s something now called Sweet Greens out—but in 2019 I envisioned Springreens as a salad utopia, so we were actually doing a salad bar. We could add spicy chili chicken, shrimp salad, all that good stuff and wings and everything as well like that. But at the time it did not flourish like I’d envisioned it, and so we had to—I had to go back to my blueprint and figure out what’s going on. So a customer actually came and said, “Hey, you know your mother cooks really, really good. You should see if she could come and cook hot food.” So I mentioned it to her, and she was like, “Yeah, you know, let’s try it out.” So we got a steam table, she started cooking the hot food, and after that it just--it blew up. Like, everyone was like,

“Aw, man, this is good!” Because her—honestly, all of these recipes she made, it’s like literally what I grew up on. Like everything, like from the beef ribs, the greens, and the way she cooks it, not only she cooks it with love, but she used, like smart—she don’t use harsh food. You know, everything is very fresh. You know, we hate canned foods, but, you know, again, if you can—if you have to use canned food, there’s nothing wrong with it. But a lot of times, people cut corners in the business point of view, they cut corners and try to profit more by using cheaper items and, you know, not just using cheaper items, not even eating their own food. You know, you go a lot of places, and you see employees bringing their own food from outside or going somewhere else to eat their own food. But here, you know, we—I love the food. I eat it all the time. I don’t even—literally, we close on Monday, and so Monday is like, I’m stuck between going to Chick-Fil-A or cooking at home, honestly, but—

MH: Well, the teacher I spoke to, she said that it tasted like home.

MJ: Yeah, a lot of people come in, they say it tastes like home-cooked food and smell like, “Aw, man, that smell like I’m back at home.” Asata, when she first came, she was like, “Aw, man, this feels like I’m back at home,” like, even the food, like when she tasted the food, she’s like, “Aw, man. This is amazing. Like, it tastes like something my grandmother or my mother cooked or anything like that.” She could tell it’s made with love.

MH: She also mentioned it’s organic.

MJ: Yes. Yes, so a lot of the vegetables—I want to say, before covid happened, a lot of the vegetables we were getting from farms, when you know, where you go to different farms, it’s a bread-and-butter farm we went to, this school up here, they have their own farm, the private school, so we were going to different farms that’s USDA-approved and getting the vegetables. And then also DeKalb Farmers’ Market, that’s the number-one source of our vegetables, we go there. We get to look at them, pick it out ourselves, you know, see what’s good, see what’s not good. And they sell wholesale, so it made sense. And they have organic stuff, so it made sense as well, so, yeah.

MH: But isn’t there, like, a deep belief with the Muslim faith about, like, eating healthy and—

MJ: You mean, is it—

MH: --with part of the Muslim faith of eating healthy, and is it all kind of intertwined with what you're cooking?

MJ: It is, it is. So everything is halal and kosher, and when I say "kosher," kosher and halal is both coincide with each other because it's a way of how the animal is slaughtered. It's not just shot down or suffering or anything like that. So it's halal, it's fresh. And then, as a Muslim, you know, you should always take in good. You know, you should never, you know, it's—as far as intoxicants, you know, they say you're not supposed to do intoxicants because you don't want to harm your body. You don't want to hurt your body, you know, kill your organs, or—you know, all of that stuff. So yeah, it do coincide with it as far as, like, eating good, eating fresh, you know, being productive, just, you know, helping your body, nourishing your body. Just a [inaudible] lifestyle.

MH: But this is a soul food restaurant.

MJ: Mm-hm

MH: And the reason we found out about it was because we did a "Soul Food in DeKalb" program—

MJ: Yeah, I love that. I listened to it.

MH: Oh, you listened to it! OK, cool.

MJ: I listened to it. I was like, oh, snap, that's Asata. Because I listen to NPR all the time, I actually—

MH: Oh, you heard--WABE?

MJ: WABE

MH: Oh, yeah

MJ: So I actually—one of my dreams is to sit down and talk to Lois Reitzes, because I just--

MH, *laughing*: She's pretty iconic.

MJ: Yeah, I never—I never, like—at first I never, like, listened to WABE, and then one day I just was driving down, turned it on 90.1, and I was like, "Oh, her voice is just so mesmerizing. I want to meet her." And then Rose—

MH: Rose Scott, yeah

MJ: --Rose Scott. And so it's been a lot of times we were mentioned. We were mentioned to Rose Scott by a good friend of mine named Peter. He worked down at

Emory, he's a professor—Peter Roberts. And yeah, I just would love to meet Lois Reitzes. But yeah—what was the question? I'm sorry, I jumped off topic—

MH: No, soul food

MJ: Soul food, yes

MH: So you serve soul food—

MJ: Yes

MH: --a little bit different than what, you know, what's expected.

MJ: Yeah, we think of soul food, a lot of time we think of soul food--and the customers tell me all the time, "Oh, it's soul food. When I'm thinking of soul food, I think of, like, sluggish, and, you know, I just think of bad things. Not to say your food is bad." Like one customer said, "When I say [soul] food is bad, but I just think about it as it's bad for your body and all that." And he said, "But until [sic; means "when" or "since"?] I started eating here, I've been feeling good, like I could eat your food and don't feel sluggish. Or you know, I can not eat all of it, put it away, come back the next day, heat it up, and it tastes the same as I ate it the first day, [inaudible] so I know it's fresh." And, you know, it's also good because, you know, a lot of our food helps lower the cholesterol as well. So instead—you know, when we think of soul food, we think about high blood pressure, but we shy away from adding a lot of seasoning, and it's better for you to add what you want to add to it. You know, so we give you the option, so it's not too salty or it's not too bland, it's just right. But if you want to add more, you could add more, but, yeah, it's not the same.

MH: Are people either disappointed or surprised when they find out that it's all vegetarian—or like, a lot of the sides are vegetarian?

MJ: Not necessarily disappointed, they love it. Because a lot of our customers actually get veggie plates. Like, looking at the sales, they love our vegetables. Like, it could be protein, but if there's no vegetables on the line, they be like, "Oh, do you have spinach coming out? Or do you have asparagus or—" They love the vegetables. A customer, he said he never—he never--he eats out, but he don't really--he cook his own food until someone else turned him on to us. And he say he just comes and get his vegetable plates and his soups and everything from us because they taste so fresh and are so good.

MH: So what is soul food to you?

MJ: Soul food, to me, I want to say when I think of soul food, like for me myself it's family life, you know. It's like—I can tell you what I envision. I envision a sunny day, you know, people are around, everyone happy. It's a feeling, you know. It's a feeling. It tells a story. It's a lot of things, but to me, I could say, to me, it's just—it tells a story of a people, you know. Not just like a certain group of people, but when you cook it, you know, a lot of times, a lot of soul food places, the recipes are family-owned recipes, you know. It's not anything that's bought. You know, you go buy a cookbook and you just look at the recipes and [inaudible], "All right, I'm going to start cooking this in my restaurant. But a lot of soul food, if it is a authentic soul food restaurant, a lot of the recipes is family-owned recipes, so you can feel that love in the food, if it's love, you know. So it's—I don't know, it's a beautiful thing. Soul food to me is just beauty. It's a lot of things [*laughs*].

MH: So what made you turn from Home Depot to this?

MJ: [*Aside*] All my phones are going off. Honestly, entrepreneurship runs in my family. Like literally right here, that's my sister's salon. So she's the one that actually—because I told her—so at Home Depot, I was on my way—I'm twenty-seven, by the way, so when I was working there, I was twenty-three—I was around a lot of thirty-four, thirty-five, forty [-year-old people], so I was the like the baby in the department. And I was in a really prestige department. And so I was on my way to get a promotion, it didn't work out, the supervisor pretty much didn't want me to leave or whatever, so I was just like, you know what? Yeah, so I just was like, you know what? He didn't—I didn't get that promotion, it discouraged me, so I say, you know what, I'm going to figure it out. I don't want to work here anymore, I don't want to climb the corporate ladder, and you know, I just said, I just sat down, I talked to my sister, and I'm like, "Yeah, I want to dive into entrepreneurship."

She said, "What you want to do?"

I said, "I'm great at managing people." [*Pauses to take care of business question.*]

Entrepreneurship, yes. So I basically talked to her, and, you know, she's like, "What do you enjoy doing?"

I said, "I enjoy dealing with people, managing people. I honestly want to try a restaurant gig out and see how that's going to go."

And she mentioned to me that this location itself, it was ran by two older guys, Brother Hussein [spelling?] and Brother Wali [spelling?]. And I came in, we sat down and talked about what I wanted to do, and basically we were able to buy them out so they could retire and, you know, come in and do my own thing as well as employ them so they could continue to work as well. I just tried it, I loved it, and being in the community doing it, and being able to help out the community by providing good food—and not just this community, because a lot of time, when people hear when I talk about community, they just say, “Oh, this is the community abroad,” you know? So yeah, I’ve been doing it ever since.

We did something special when covid first begun. We actually served—I want to say, about sixteen thousand meals.

MH: I read that.

MJ: Yeah, yeah—

MH: So it was for the Iftar—

MJ: Yeah, so when covid happened, right? Ramadan, it was all—and I was just like, damn, like Ramadan’s happening, the mosque is closed, the restaurant, it was closed down with the mosque, so damn, what are we going to do? And I talked to the leaders over there, and everyone was shocked; it had never happened before. So, you know, me, being the person I am, take-initiative type person, I say, “Hey how about we”—and it was not with them at first, I was like, this is something I want to do. So I talked to my mother, and I said, “Let’s just do a drive-through Iftar.” [MH laughs.]

She said, “Drive-through Iftar?”

I say, “Let’s—”

MH: There’s a certain ring to it.

MJ: Yeah, I say, “We’ll set something up where people would literally just drive through and pick up the plates and whatever they need and keep the movement since covid was happening and we wasn’t sure with anything. So it was like, yeah, and so we started Go Fund Me, was able to raise, I think, like \$60,000.

MH: Oh, my gosh.

MJ: Yeah, and we fed about sixteen thousand meals.

MH: That’s incredible. All free.

MJ: Free. Free of charge to—all we was asking was, hey, if you can donate, donate to the Go Fund Me so we could give food. Because we wasn’t just cooking like

the average—we was giving away beef ribs, lamb, baked chicken, fried chicken, like everything—it was like the meals we were cooking in here, that's what we were giving out for free, and to any and everyone. You didn't just have to be Muslim, if you needed a plate. Because during Ramadan, the mosque being open, it allows any and everyone who needs something to eat, come in, you know, get a plate, so that was something—it was amazing. After we did it that one time, it was just like, OK, yeah, that was a one-time—because, honestly, the magnitude of it, I didn't expect it to be that big. But it was huge. Like it was huge, and unfortunately we did have to dig into our own money to keep it, but at that point, it felt so good, I was like, I don't even mind, you know. Hopefully we'll be able to stay open, and—but yeah, we was able to stay open. We was able to provide the food, the support came back with it. So it was a beautiful thing, it was beautiful. I enjoyed it.

MH: Can you explain what Iftar is?

MJ: Iftar. So during Ramadan, you know, it's the thirty days that Muslims fast and pray, and you remember God and you do kind acts. And so we fast from sunup to sundown. So sunup, before the sunrise, we—Suhoor, it's like a breakfast, a mini-breakfast you want to eat. And then once the sun come up, you know, you no longer can eat until the sun come down. You can't drink water, anything. So when the sun come down, Iftar, that's the breaking of the fast. That's when you make prayer, and then you eat a little food, and then after you eat a little food, you pray, it's a prayer called taraweeh. And basically the thirty days of Ramadan is when the Quran was revealed, so each night we're praying, like, from the scripture, basically. But yeah, Iftar is at night when we break fast. And you know, everyone comes out. It's a beautiful thing. Hopefully this year—it's in forty-something days—hopefully you could come back and see. So this year we're actually going to be providing meals again, but it's not going to be a drive-through, you know, we're going to have people come inside the café, eat off the line, and it's all, I think, will be paid for. We'll figure something out.

MH: So are you going to tell them ahead of time when the beef ribs and the lamb are--*[Both laugh.]*

MJ: Yeah!

MH: --or is it going to be a surprise? *[Inaudible comment]*

MJ: Yeah, so it'll be a surprise. So like, even when we did the drive-through Iftar, we didn't mention what we was having, because it was like, when we said what it

was at first, everybody was like, “Oh, no, I want to wait until—” So we literally had cars parking all out in the street, like, “Oh, we’ll wait for this.” So yeah, it’s just, you know, come out, and you get—it’s guaranteed it’s going to be some good food. So once they had it—so literally for the first three days, people realized, “Oh, hold on. This isn’t just no regular food. This is actually good—this is what they’re cooking in the restaurant.” So that’s when everyone started coming out and was like, oh, yeah, let’s go get some food from there. So, yeah, it’s just going to be random days. It’s going to be all on the hot bar, so they’ll be able to see and choose. But this Friday we’ll have beef ribs again, yeah, this Friday.

MH: So Eid is the end of Ramadan?

MJ: Yes, yes. So Eid al-Fitr is after this Ramadan. So it’s two Eids—so Eid ul-Adha and then Eid al-Fitr.

MH: OK

MJ: So the big one is usually the Eid after the pilgrimage, the Hadj, that’s when that other big Eid is. And this one is like, I don’t want to say it’s small, because none of it is small, but this one is the gift exchange, it’s where you exchange gifts and everything like that after Ramadan.

MH: OK. So did you grow up—you just mentioned you live off of Columbia, but did you grow up in this area?

MJ: Yeah, so I attended—it’s a private school up the street called W. D. Mohammed. So I attended there from ninth grade to twelfth grade—I’m sorry, tenth grade to twelfth. I transferred at the end of ninth grade. I was going to Columbia High School. But, yeah, I basically grew up—I’m from the West End community, however. So we had events, they had—the Atlanta Masjid also had events here, so people from the West End would come over here. So I literally grew up, I grew up in this community, you could say. It’s beautiful how it’s changing. I just wish we could change with the change, basically. And that’s been my mission, being here at this location, to bring the people to change with the change. And by, you know, stepping out of the norm, you know, a lot of times—before we was here, there was another restaurant here. And it weren’t so open to, you know, outside people that wasn’t Muslim, and the outside customers that wasn’t Muslim felt that, you know, you could feel that? And, you know, my mission being here is to welcome everyone—any and everyone, you know. And I’ve been doing that—we’ve been open for four years now, and I have older Muslims tell

me, like, “Oh, man, you’re doing such a great job, man. I’m so proud of you. You’re doing such a great job. I love the fact that you have any and everyone come in.” You know, and that’s what it should be. It should never, you know, it should never be a deterrent, you know. Religion should never deter human beings, you know. Everyone should still love each other, do what’s right by each other. So, you know, I’m just trying to push that motive, you know.

MH: So why do most restaurants fail in the first—what is it? ten months? So—

MJ: Ten months, two years, yeah.

MH: So how did you—what do you credit your success?

MJ: Quality

MH: Quality

MJ: Quality. You know, you serve people the quality, they’ll come back, regardless. You know, because everyone—like you said, everyone’s opening up restaurants, but they fail literally the first six months, because their mind is about profit. “OK, I want to hurry up and make this dollar.” But it’s not about that. It’s about quality. Once you have a product that is selling, that is good, you get the customers, and you give them the product, and they’re “OK, this is a good product,” they’ll come back. They’ll tell word of mouth. You know, word of mouth is the biggest—that’s our biggest success, word of mouth. You know, you see we don’t have any like banners or anything like that—which I am working toward to get so more people could see us and be heard, but it’s hard. You know, it’s hard being in the position I am now in this environment, because, you know, we’re not—we don’t own the building, so it’s only so much we can do. But, yeah, word of mouth, quality—you know, you give anyone good quality, they’ll come back regardless. So it’s about the quality. You know, you’ve got to give out quality. And that’s been our success, you know. You taste the food--you tasted the food—

MH: Oh, yeah—it was delicious!

MJ: Yeah, so, you give out quality, you’ll have customers. But you give out bad food for a quick buck, they’ll never come back again, ever, you know. They’re going to remember, “I just spent such-and-such on this plate, and it tasted horrible. It didn’t have—” You know, I’ve been in situations where I’m like, “I just spent how much?”

MH: Yeah

MJ: And it's such now, being a restaurant owner and actually seeing the food and knowing how much it costs to do such-and-such, I'll go somewhere and—I'll go to a five-star restaurant, and I'll taste the [inaudible] and I'm like, "Yeh, this is—"

MH, *laughing*: Yeah—

MJ: It's like, this is, I know—

MH: It's so disappointing.

MJ: Yeah, I know this costs literally, like, eight dollars at Restaurant B but it's frozen or whatever the case may be, so my wife hates when we go out. I've learned to stop, though. At first, I used to critique everything, like, "Aw, this is—" but I've stopped. Yeah, it's quality. You've got to give good quality. You give good quality, the customers will come. So that's the essence of it, good quality.

MH: Have you had to adjust your prices with covid, and—

MJ: Definitely, most definitely. Most definitely. Now, I was actually reading an article, and it was talking about inflation, inflation being the highest in Atlanta, Sandy Springs, Roswell area than it has been in San Francisco in 2021. And so I definitely see the difference. And yeah, unfortunately, I have to. But you know, I explain to my customers, like, hey, you know, and now everyone is seeing it. You know, everyone is seeing it, from the grocery stores, from gas prices, from everywhere that the price is going up. And yeah, unfortunately, I had to. But again, when you have good quality, and people love the food—and I'm not saying you take advantage of the people, but at the end of the day, you still have employees that you have to pay. You know, this is their livelihood, this is my livelihood. I work for myself; I'm an entrepreneur. So, you know, I had to adjust the prices. But yeah, it's worth it.

MH: So what do you see for the future of Springreens?

MJ: Honestly, I see another location. I see another location, multiple locations. My thing that I want to do is not just have Springreens at Community Café but Springreens at Midtown or Springreens at Roswell Market or, you know, different areas and the same recipes—the same thing, the hot bar in the kitchen, and you know, eat off the hot bar. And you know, that's the number-one thing that people love about it is the quickness, you know, you can just walk through the line, get your food, and go. You know, you go to different restaurants, if you want beef ribs, it's not on the line. They have to cook it, wait twenty minutes, and you know, because a lot of that also because they sell alcohol, and so it encourages you to sit and drink, and then once you

drink enough, you know, your tastebuds is gone already, and then you're already thinking about something else. You know, it's just a hot bar, but I envision Springreens everywhere. Honestly, I want to open up two more locations.

We were looking to open up another location in Alpharetta before covid happened, but we was like right on the cusp of covid happening, and I was like, "Oh, covid." And I was just seeing how serious it was blowing up. I said, yeah, let's just hold off. Let's hold off for right now. But I do envision—it will be amazing if I can get some more locations open. I could just see giving out good quality food to the world, so that's what it's about.

MH: Do you see it staying in the family and continuing?

MJ: Honestly, I'll say the main components as far as, like, the recipes, you know, the blueprint, staying in the family. But I do honestly, I would franchise it out. Honestly, I would, because, I mean, it's—you get it—if you have a blueprint, it's easy just to copy that same blueprint, move it to another location, and keep it going. That's why you have so many McDonald's, Burger King, because they have a main blueprint they copy, keep it going on. I'm still working out the kinks and everything, since covid is happening. So we're steadily making adjustments, because, again, we don't know what's going on, you know. Until this thing gets back on, I won't say normal, because we don't know what normal is anymore. But once we have a steady pattern of what it's going to look ahead, you know, what we can look forward to, but, yeah, I [inaudible] to franchise it [inaudible].

MH: Has it—has it been good working with your mother?

MJ: Oh, it's been amazing, you know. I'm loving it every day. You know, I'm taking advantage of it every day, because, you know, a lot of people don't have their parents. A lot of people—my father passed away 2012. So being able to work with my mother, see her every day, come here and I'm seeing her every day, I take advantage of it, again, because everyone don't have their mother with them. So it's amazing. There's sometimes, like, being irritated, I'm like—"umi" is "mother" in Arabic, umi. And I'm like, "Umi, calm down!" or "Umi, we're at work!" or "Umi!" you know, but it's great. It's great, you know. There's some things—I could say there is some things I can't say to her, and she still pulls the mother card. Like, "I'm your mother." I'm like, "I know, but you're also my business partner." You're trying to do business, but it's amazing. I love it, you know. It's amazing.

MH: So is she really the boss?

MJ, *laughing*: Yes, she is. She's the boss. It comes—in certain situations, she's the boss. Yeah, she has the last say, so I let her have it. But honestly, we take turns, you know. If she feel a certain way about something, and she's very strong-headed about it, I'm like, OK, I'll get out of that. And then when it's my turn, I'm like, "OK, you remember I let you have that? OK, it's my turn." So, yeah. She's a great person, though. Great person.

MH: Well, I loved the experience in there, and I felt what you were mentioning about welcoming and so I'm so happy that Asata mentioned this, and this is a—I think this will be a great addition to our Archive Collection. You know, we're starting to interview different other restaurants. We interviewed—or I interviewed Wat's Crackin—

MJ: Wats Crackin—where's that?

MH: --on Candler Road and Wyatt's Barbecue and a couple of other restaurants. And so I think it's important to keep, you know, not just historical restaurants but restaurants that are here now and, you know, I think this is a community that historically we have not added into our collection, and it's great to be here and experience it and have the food—

MJ: I'm glad you enjoyed it.

MH: --and I don't want to keep any more time, but this is a great—

MJ: Yeah, I enjoyed it.

MH: Yeah, so thanks for doing this for us.

MJ: Thank you, thank you. I really enjoyed it.

MH: Yeah

MJ: Hopefully I can meet Lois Reitzes one day. [*Laughs*]

MH: We might be able to help you with that. [*Laughs*]

MJ: That'd be amazing.

MH: This is on the record, too.

MJ: Thank you

MH: So if this happens, we'll look back, and we'll be like, it started here.

MJ: Yeah, I enjoyed it. Thank you so much. And thank you, Asata, as well. I love Asata. Did she mention we was in the same program, a "Start Me" program? It was an entrepreneurship program right over here. Yeah, so that's where I met her, so we were actually Start Me ATL, East Atlanta. It's basically like an entrepreneurs'--build

a platform and, and you know, go through business plans and help them and fund them if they can, if they're using grant money. So I applied—someone mentioned it to me, and I'm like, "Oh, OK, I already have the brick-and-mortar, but I guess I can go." So I went there with the intention to build connections with people, other entrepreneurs and see how I can help them more, how I can use them, utilize them, their services like that. And I was able to meet Asata, and she's such an amazing person. I love her. So yeah, thank you.

MH: Yes. And—what else? I know just that she—I'll ask—

RECORDING ABRUPTLY CHANGES HERE TO MS. JIHAD.

[Background noise and conversation]

MH: I'm with the DeKalb History Center. We're in downtown Decatur and we are a... we're a museum and archives.

JAMILA JIHAD: Oh, really?

MH: One of the things that we've been doing recently is collecting oral histories. I have some from other restaurants, but we were suggested by Chef Asata—she suggested—

JJ: Yes, I know her.

MH: --that's what connected me to your son, and—

JJ: So you got him. So he could do it.

MH: Yeah, but you're the boss. *[JJ laughs.]* You're the chef.

MJ: I tell her you're the boss.

MH: So how's it been, working with your son during this whole process, you know, the restaurant and—

JJ: He run the business now, as well as myself. I'm very grateful, you know, because I love serving the community, always have some kind of charity organization. And so when we were talking about doing a restaurant—

MH, *to MJ*: Yeah, you're good.

JJ: --when we were talking about doing a restaurant, you know, it's like, you got to *[inaudible] [laughs]*. I saw—

MH, *to MJ*: It's the seventeenth, yeah.

JJ: So, I followed the lead, and I said OK. But the only way I would do it if we going to feed, you know, and healthy foods, you know. I know it's easy to get inexpensive products, but it's not healthy. So this was my biggest thing. If I can do

that, I want to, you know. Because, you know, so many fast foods went up over the years, before then, would have to eat, you know, Grandmama's kitchen. You didn't go to these different places, because that's the home-cooked meals possible. But since the '90s, the late '90s and the 2000s, the early part of 2000, we saw all food, fast-food chains just go up, and the mom-and-pops' restaurants become--and what I wanted to do was bring that back and Mom and Grandmother cooking. I'm a grandmother of [to MJ] fifteen now?

MJ: Fifteen

JJ: --fifteen grandchildren, and I can't imagine them not eating healthy, but just like anybody's children, right? So with that being said, the—I don't just cook for my family, but we have family meals, you know, every Friday or on the weekend. But since I've been in the restaurant, they have to come here [*laughs*]. And so I love cooking. I love serving. I love commitment, you know. And most of all I just—I'm just grateful to make sure that people are eating healthy. Have you had something to eat?

MH: Oh, my gosh, yeah.

JJ: You did?

MH: I had the veggie plate with the soup and cabbage and macaroni and cheese. It's delicious.

JJ: Oh, that makes me feel good. So it's like that. If you enjoy it, it will make my day.

MH: I was speaking to one of the teachers that came in with her students, and she said that it felt like home. And it was home-cooking for her. [*Background exchange between MJ, his mother, and someone else.*] We were brought here because of the soul food.

JJ: I was saying, did she meet her?

MH: Yeah, I'm actually going to call her.

JJ: OK

MH: Yeah, she said just to call her. So what is soul food to you?

JJ: Oh, when you're cooking from your heart, you know. People, when they think of soul food, they think of grease, you know, pork, all the—you know, when you think—every time I talk to somebody and I said, "We have a soul food restaurant," they say, "You got porkchops? You got pork?" Sometimes people come in here and ask for pork. I said no. We—for religious reasons, people don't eat pork. And for me, it's not

because of my religion. I'm highly allergic to pork. [Inaudible comment] I'm highly allergic to a lot of things. But soul food don't mean cooking pork and cooking chitlins and stuff like that, having greasy, you know, clog the arteries. Soul food means cooking from the soul and your heart, you know. That's really, really cooking from your heart. And so when you visit a restaurant like ours, who love people, chefs who love cooking, you know, they're passionate with it, you know. And love goes into your cooking, you can tell. That's what it is for me, you know. And really cooking from your soul.

MH: Did you grow up cooking with your—

JJ: Grandmother

MH: --your grandmother?

JJ: Yes. I used to watch her have family dinners all the time. They would have, you know, of course, they did have pork, but it wasn't like, you know—it was soul food, but it wasn't a lot of grease [*laughs*]. But she had her own restaurant.

MH: She did? Where was the restaurant?

JJ: Near the Cabbage Patch Town, where the end—you know the Cabbage—have you ever—they call Cabbage Patch Town? It's off of Memorial—

MH: Oh, Cabbagetown. Yeah.

JJ: So they're still calling it—yeah, it used to be over there.

MH: Oh, OK

JJ: So she had a soul food restaurant there.

MH: What was it called?

JJ: I can't remember the name, but I remember it being there. We used to go in, and the best part about it, being her grandchild, going in there and everyone knew Tommie Lou Hill. That was her name, Tommie Lou Hill. But she died in the '90s. But you know, I just, you know, I love, I love what I do. I love serving, you know.

MH: So were the recipes for the [inaudible]—

JJ: A lot of the recipes is my own recipe. I actually started cooking at fourteen. I remember the day my mother, she told me I had to go get a job because she got sick. You know, she had just had triple bypass operation on her heart, but she was like thirty-three, something like that. And I remember at twelve, I got my first job working at a convenience store in Kirkwood. We grew up in Kirkwood. And it was like, the store was on the corner of Howard and—what's that—

MH: Hosea Williams?

JJ: Yeah, right. Hosea Williams—

MH: Boulevard

JJ: Right. It was on the corner of Howard and Hosea Williams Boulevard, right down—[inaudible]. And so I remember going there bagging, up groceries for seven dollars, just on the weekends. Seven dollars, and I bagged groceries. And by the time I turned fourteen, my mother dressed me up—then, you didn't have to have a picture ID; you only needed your Social Security card. And she said, "Oh, you need to go get a job." And she looked at the paper, and she said, "They're hiring at Terrace Garden Inn Hotel"—that was at Lenox Square. "And you know, they're hiring at Terrace Garden Inn Hotel, and you're going to apply for a maid's job."

And I said, "OK."

And I went, and she said, "Just go and talk to them. Tell them you're eighteen years old." Of course, I was fourteen, right?

And I went in, and I looked at the boards, and they had a cafeteria server, and I applied for that job, and I got it. And the chef took me from there to the kitchen, and he started teaching me how to cook. But it wasn't food like soul food. It was like what you call, oysters, you know, seafood, you know, stuff that they—it wasn't little vegetables. I remember it as being made with broccoli and all, but no greens, you know. And so—and that's what, in the late '70s, no, middle '70s. You can hear me with this mask on?

MH: Yeah

JJ: And you know, all praises be to God, from there I learned recipes and all. And then I put my own twist on everything.

Then I started—when I got older, I started looking to—and this was age eighteen, looking into healthier, you know, seasonings and started working at my weight, because I became Muslim at eighteen. So by the time I got eighteen, I started going to health food stores with his father, who used to make the best bean burger. And he had his own restaurant at that time, you know. And so I learned how to work with different seasonings.

MJ: I forgot to mention that—

JJ: Huh? You forgot to mention what?

MJ: I forgot to mention my father had a restaurant as well.

JJ: Yeah. He did, he had his own restaurant and a restaurant on Clark College campus and a [inaudible] store. He was into food [inaudible]. So we used to compete in the kitchen [*general laughter*]. And so, you know, it's just like for instance, the cabbage, you had the cabbage. What was different about the cabbage, for you? You saw the cabbage. What was different about it?

MH: I mean, it tasted fresh—like it had more of a crisp to it, and—

JJ: How about the color?

MH: I mean, it was bright, and I assume—was that turmeric?

JJ: Yeah, turmeric

MH: Yeah, turmeric in it. Yeah, it was vibrant and—

JJ: So that's what it was. So you think about people's health, a lot of people have arthritis—

MH: And turmeric is perfect for that.

JJ: And turmeric is one of the things for that, you know? So I put turmeric in the rice, and I'll put turmeric in the cabbage, you know. I put turmeric in the meat. So, because I know that—I can tell you this. A young lady came here, and she said, "I can't eat nobody else's food. You know, rice and the cabbage don't have any—" She looked remarkable different. But before she was really heavy from the diabetes, and you know, now you should see her. You wouldn't recognize her. And she eat here [*laughs*]. So you know—

MJ: That was a miracle.

JJ: --that's real good. That's a good feeling.

MH: Mm-hm. But that's a lot of part of the Muslim faith, is bringing holistic and [inaudible] from within, too.

JJ: From within

MH: So did that influence your cooking? It sounds like you were already on your way toward more healthy cooking—

JJ: Well, that's--no when I was eighteen, you know, really when I first became Muslim at eighteen, and I can say yes and no, you know. Because I was already into that healthy, you know—I used to run track in high school and college, so I was already into that, you know. I ran cross-country, so, you know, it was that whole thing. But Islam will make you responsible, you know. That's what Islam did for me, made me more responsible. So when I cook and I say, "I have this," and if somebody come in

here because you say, “We got this type of food,” no hormones, no this, no that, and then all of a sudden you don’t [inaudible]. I have to give accountability for everyone who ate that. And I’m not going to be accountable for everyone who eat here believing what I’m saying, so it make you responsible, it make you accountable. And that’s what it does for us and the restaurant, make us honest. Make us self-conscious and thinking about—[*Aside to MJ*] I’m sorry for my back being toward you--making you more responsible, you know. So you know, as you see, we have a cross-culture of people coming in here—not just Muslim, not just Black, not just white. We’re here, all walks of life, you know. And they come here, and they look into being healthy. Well, one thing I like is for my vegetarians, you know, who can honestly say, “I can eat your vegetables.”

MH: I’m vegetarian, so it’s the same, yeah.

JJ: Yeah, so that’s a good feeling for me, to know that I can serve people who are vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian, you know there are so many names now. But it make me feel good.

MH: It’s part of the welcoming environment.

JJ: Right, mm-hm. And it’s—I sell a lot of vegetable plates, so I try to make sure I have a variety of different vegetables. Today I was caught off-guard. [*Both laugh.*]

MH: Yeah, it seemed quite busy today.

JJ: Yeah, one of my friends, she passed. And she used to eat here all the time.

MH: Oh, I’m sorry.

JJ: Yeah, and so, a lot of her friends who were my friends, they all came out and ate here. And so—and it caught me off-guard, you know, because I didn’t make it to the funeral. My intention was [inaudible], but then we had a classroom that came, and now they were all—[*laughs*]. But it’s, you know, it’s a beautiful thing. It really is. I can tell you that growing up, I was born and raised here, and I see a big change from when I was a child to now. And one of the things that probably hurt the small businesses is the cost of food. You know, every time I feel like we probably have to pay somebody off, close the restaurant early, cut back on this, cut back on that, God will open up another door for us, you know. And so because now food [inaudible], I want to be able to serve my customers the best. And I tell them, if I can’t—if it can’t be wild-caught, I’m not buying it. And sometimes I’m able to get wild-caught, and sometimes not. If I can’t get it, I’m not selling it. It’s easy for us to go out and get inexpensive items to

feed people. I refuse. And I mentioned that earlier, I refuse. So, you know, I'm very grateful every time I see a customer come in, I'm grateful, you know. If we don't make but a thousand dollars that day, I'm grateful, because I'm not going to miss what God don't have for me. And that's, you know, that's a part of my faith, is knowing that nothing not going to pass you by that wasn't meant for you, you know. If it's meant for you, it's not going to pass you by. If it's not meant for you, you know, you just give praises to God every time. That's what I try to do.

MH: You certainly say it in a greeting, and you hear it everywhere.

JJ, *laughing*: Yeah

MH: And it's a beautiful phrase that I think—

JJ: Yeah, "As-salaam alaikum," you know, which means, "Peace be upon you."

MH: Mm-hm, it seems like--what I was asking Mohammad was that it seems like it means more than that, depending on your inflection and how you say it, and it can mean so many things.

JJ: [Inaudible comment]

MH: I'm sorry?

JJ: I'm an author as well.

MH: Oh!

JJ: Yeah, [inaudible] [*Background conversation*] [Inaudible comment] You keep this. I give it out. So [inaudible] read it, and they donated it, and they [inaudible] give them out, so I give them out. And so I have three books I've written. So he [MJ] took me away from writing to here. [*Both laugh.*] I love writing, you know?

MH: Yeah

JJ: So I've authored three books. So I wanted to have some other copies of different ones, but you can find me on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, you know. It's not hard-copy, but you can get [inaudible]. But that's me. And also the project—I think it's got on the back, things that—yeah, it tells you more things that I used to do, you know. Yeah. So this is all my careers.

MH: And "Umi," that's mother, right?

JJ: Right. Umi's Place, when I first became Muslim and I had my first child--you know, I think it were more so my second child that influenced me to open up a clothing store for girls—no, not for girls, you know, for children. Because you couldn't—at that time you couldn't find appropriate clothes. So I said, "OK, we're going to open up

Umi's Place." So ideas just came, because when I married my children's father—May peace be upon him—because he died, you know—May God bless him—we were married for twenty years. You know, I've remarried since then, but one of the things that I loved was the fact that I really didn't have to work, as a mother, you know. I was able to stay home and raise the kids, you know, the children, rather. I was able to donate that time to the family life. And I came up with ideas. I got more creative, so all that—*[Returns greeting to a voice from the background]* all that came from creativity. That's all. So I'm very, very, very grateful. And so.

MH: So how do you see, now, with the Muslim community in Decatur, how do you think it's changed or grown or—

JJ: It's changed, you know. It changes, you know—they're doing a lot of building and all. People are getting older, the pioneers died off, you know. The younger generation's taking over, and so one of the blessings has been to hire younger people so they can see *[inaudible]*. Because a lot of people don't know, children today, they don't know how food is grown. It's not on the Internet *[laughs]*. And so the community itself is, for me, because I'm older, you know, and I'm just seeing a shift in that dynamic way from another perspective, ideas that younger people have. Such as yourself, you look very young *[laughs]*.

MH, *laughs*: I'm a little bit older—I'm older than your son. I just look younger.

JJ: Yeah, so, you know, even my son, y'all got other ideas, you know. And it moves sometimes too fast for the people who've been in the community, older *[inaudible]* who've been here for years. But one of the things that I'm grateful about is to see family life in the community. They promote family life. Don't get me wrong, don't think everybody's saints, because we're not. You know, everyone—everyone's not saints. But those who are, they show us. They show us in their actions. And they remind you of who you're supposed to be and what you're supposed to be about.

MH: Are you referring to your faith, or—

JJ: The faith, the community itself, you know. Even people who are not Muslim and got morals and values, they remind you who you're supposed to be. And if they see you are acting out, and, "You ain't supposed to be—" *[laughs]*. And they're *[inaudible]*, you know. And so to answer your question—what was your question again? *[Laughs]*

MH: How have you seen the Muslim community of Decatur change and since—

JJ: In what way?

MH: I know this is one of the oldest mosques in the Atlanta area, or—

JJ: Yes, yes.

MH: So, seeing how it's—you know this area from 1992, serving the Muslim community, to today, the Muslim community, how it's being served in this area, and how it's either changed or morphed or stayed the same. Has it grown? Has it decreased?

JJ: Well, it's grown a lot, you know. One thing about this area, this community [inaudible] Atlanta Masjid, I can say that this community, because of the school, you get a chance to see the younger people.

MH: W. D. Mohammed?

JJ: W. D. Mohammed. And by you seeing W. D. Mohammed [inaudible], that's the thing that—I've lost my train of thought. It's not the same, I guess they're about the same. We have a younger imam. He got a different type of energy thing [inaudible] all the people, which is a good thing, not a bad thing. I think the problem is that a lot of time our older people are not ready to change, you know. Just like when the computer came, with the phone thing. I remember when the cell phone came out. My husband refused to get a phone. He said, "I don't want it. I don't want it. I don't want it." There were no more pay phones and nowhere you could stop. He was like, "Get me a phone." In the airport, you used to take folks to the pay phone, you know, you used to. So you see the growth and development of us, my generation, is getting used to the community as it's changed, as it revolves around a whole 'nother generation—their thoughts, their ideas—you can't be complacent no more. You know, you got to—you either sit at home, get older, or you embrace them and enjoy them in their growth and trying to develop around along with the others, you know, the community, itself, you know, be enlightened. Like the 250 houses—apartments going up behind the mosque, the apartments on [inaudible]? [*Speaks to customer.*] Inshallah. Thank you, thank you so much. [*To MH*] "Inshallah" means God's willing, yeah. So we got to get, you know—so now, because we're right here in this community, and everything's growing around us, and we want to grow now, eventually we're going to have to make a decision to be a part of this growth and development.

MH: I think this restaurant is great. It's a lightness—and open and welcome to the rest of the community here.

JJ: Yeah, and that's the truth. That's the truth. And you know, people, they let you know, "We need you here. We need a restaurant." Every time I've said, "Aren't you ready to retire?" "No, we need you." [*Laughs*] So you're right, you know. It made a big difference. And so, it—and now we had to change our appearance, you know. We had to change our appearance, in a good way. We did a lot of work [inaudible]. And we still, you know, because it's not my building, but I want what I want [*laughs*]. And I want my people to be able to come—when I say "my people," I'm talking about the community at large—to be able to come in and be able to eat and feel good about coming in here in a clean environment, feel, you know—don't feel like they don't belong because they're not Muslim. But I treat everyone the same. Because the Quran tell us that's what we're supposed to do. And that's what I myself live by, the Quran, because you're supposed to treat people with kindness. You know, you're supposed to treat people the way you want to be treated. But if you don't want to be treated good, you ain't going to treat people good at all, you know.

So going back to the development of this—the only thing I can tell you, sweetheart, is that I got the whole [inaudible] family who are under [inaudible]. And they're young, and they, you know, [inaudible]. I have a son who's a truck driver for almost twenty years. He has his own trucking company. He's a shaker and mover. And then I have another son who has his own—what you call it—it's like an insurance company—he has his license for investing, investment license. He [rest of comment inaudible]. He tells me all the time, "Mom, you've got to get to the point where you're making changes. You've got to make that change." [Inaudible] what else can I do? And he said something to me that I—he said, "Stop giving the food way." [*Laughs*] I say, "I'm not giving it away." So what they did, they put me in the kitchen [*both laugh*]. He said, "You can't work the register." And you know, people come up to me, [inaudible].

MH: But isn't that part of—one of the Pillars—charity and—[*laughs*]

JJ: Charity might be, but when—

MH: Too much [*Both laugh.*]

JJ: He say, "You still have to pay the employees."

MH: That might be the next verse in the Quran, after it?

JJ: No, charity is good. It's what that's part of. But you can't give it away when you have to take care of the rent, take care of the employees. So I don't know prices.

You know, you ask me how much this is, I say, “Ask them.” Because [inaudible]. “Why we have to pay that much?” And then I realize, because I really don’t do the shopping. But when I start doing the shopping, I’m like, “Oh, my God, are you kidding me?” Ribs cost this much? “Are you kidding me?” I mean, I went to buy a bag of—a five-pound bag of scollops. Almost eighty dollars! I can’t make no more seafood gumbo. You know, I’m famous for making seafood gumbo. But everybody’s saying, “When are you going put seafood gumbo back on the line?” Y’all are not going to pay the price we’re going to have to charge you. We can’t. So that’s in with the small business. [*Sees imam.*] That’s our imam. You see him? He’s walking. You see him? [Inaudible]

MH: Yep. I don’t want to take any more of your time, but it was lovely talking to you.

JJ: I hope I answered most of your questions.

MH: Oh, you did.

JJ: Yeah, because I know [inaudible] [*Both laugh.*]

MH: Do you mind saying your name, recorded?

JJ: Yes, Jamilah Jihad

MH: OK, and—oh, thank you. So this will part of our permanent collection. With your permission, we’ll put it on the website. If you’ll just--yeah, he made his signature. If you actually just want to put your name—you don’t have to fill out your email or anything. Just your name—or if you just want to put your name next to his, and that way it can just—

JJ: Well, I appreciate your eating here. Appreciate your coming.

MH: Yeah, and I’ll definitely come back. The tea shop. This is on my way home for me. So the point is, I used to go to Publix, I used go to—we moved just slightly out of the neighborhood, but—

JJ: I’m not too far. When you want some good meals—

MH: Good. Like I said, I work in Decatur, so I take this way every morning. So I would love just to get a few photos. And now it’s empty in here. [*Both laugh.*] It’s quite the—

JJ: Did you get some pictures when there was food?

MH: No, not yet, but I can get them now. So I was commenting, this is—is it like this all the time?

JJ: On Friday, oh, my God. On Friday it is a scream.

MH: Is that when the—

JJ: [Inaudible comment] I mean, you're welcome to come by tomorrow and just take pictures, you know, snap some pictures.

MH: Yeah

JJ: Did you take some pictures before the line looked like this?

MH, *laughing*: No

JJ: Oh, my God.

MH: I wish I did. I didn't— I might come back. I'll have to come back.

JJ: Yeah, take some pictures. If you come early tomorrow, I have the line set up at 11:00.

MH: 11:00?

JJ: Uh-huh

MH: OK

JJ: You know

MH: OK

JJ: I'll have it set up between 11:00 and 11:30, you know. Either you come at 12, [inaudible].

MH: Yeah

JJ: [Inaudible] pictures to take.

MH: Do you mind getting a photo of you and Mohammad as well?

JJ: Mohammad [inaudible]?

MH: No, I think he's just left.

JJ: Mohammad! Come [rest inaudible]. [*Leaves, comes back.*] He said he you have an Iphone?. [*Exchanges comments with MJ and MH.*] [*Laughter*]

MH: I know, I'm one of those people—I don't [inaudible].

JJ: Look at you! What you doing?

[*Conversation around posing and setting up for photos*]

JJ: Nice meeting you.

MH: Thank you so much for your time.

JJ: And I look forward—if you come back tomorrow, take—

MH: I will. Actually, I should have—I'll think about it. [*Exchange of phone numbers*]

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by CS