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TAPE 19

Q: How you were born in Nazareth?

01:02:15:00

N: Um Should I start with my name, alright, my name is Nadar Elbanna my friends in the Palestinian culture call me Abu Jamil That mean is like other son this is for family or very close family Abu Jamil is like the other son My name is Nadar and I was born in Nazareth in 46 and um I remember before we were forced to leave Nazareth and I was 3 years old we live in big huge historical house that's my grandfather's house with 7 bedroom where I had my own bedroom with my brother before we leave Nazareth I remember not t distant of a memory was I had my birthday before we were forced to leave to Jordon and live in refugee camp in the Jordon desert east of ? I remember that my family wealthy family my father rich man um he owned hundred and 50 acres planted with olive trees and thousands of livestock sheep cows camel all these livestock and we lived in nice environment with family with neighbors before we forced to leave my family forced to leave in 1948 In 1948 we were stopped to legally exist as a state almost 1 million between 500 thousand almost 1 million Palestinian forced to leave Palestine and live in a refugee camp Lebanon Syria Jordon and um Egypt

04:47

N: When I visit my grandfathers house last summer after 55 years of being absent

Q: Grandfather's key

N: Give you my story of last summer

06:10

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N: Um last summer I visited my home I visited my grandfather's house when I flew to Nazareth and my aunts took me to the room where I was born and they give me my grandfather's house key and I have it here in my hand here. This is my grandfather's house key give to me this inspires me to the bone every time I touch this key this remind me my roots my family roots and the house I was born in Nazareth this also um this key there is a quarter of Palestinian currency is printed in 1935 and this quarters of Palestinian currency money in Hebrew English and Arabic and the date 1935 almost 12 years before Israel exists in 1948 so this gives us identity before 1948 where the money where the driver's license with that type of houses as Palestinian we have culture there so this is a key from my grandfather

7:55

CU key

8:38

I lived in Jordon for 5 years in refugee camp I finished my high school in Jordon I joined to the military college in Jordon so I graduate as Lieutenant in Jordon army and just from that time until now before I immigrated to the US I had no clue to go visit Israel, Israel is considered our enemy uh war between Israel and Arab countries so this is not allowed for any Palestinian who lives in refugee camps in Jordon or Egypt Syria or Lebanon have right or allowed to visit Israel but since I immigrated to the US in 1990 1995 I got my US passport and I joined the dialog and I have many American Jewish here so we started this conversation about peace I found myself encourage to think I wanted to visit my hometown and visit my family there I have my aunts there and my uncle and 37 cousins I know the names but I don't know the faces so last August I decided with my wife and we flew there with my 3 children and this is the 1st time I visited Israel I had many concerns and I was scared because this was suppose to be my enemy but I was an American citizen with my US passport and with my being a peacemaker with a vision of peace and um I belong to rotary club and I took two friends to the Jerusalem club and the Nazareth club and I visited my hometown after 55 years of being absent

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11:22

Wind chimes

12:00

I still have in my memories bad things from that long long time ago I spent 5 years living in refugee camp east of capital of Jordan Aman called Al Zarka camp? This is very very close to the Jordan desert I remember for the when we left Nazareth when we were forced to leave Nazareth in December of 48 and you could imagine the December time of desert in the middle east is really cold there is no wind or snow but at night the temperature is below zero it's clear sky but it's really cold we had 4 people my mother my father my brother and myself living in small tent in that refugee camp without and heat to warm ourselves the only I remember my mother would warm me she took my little foot and and put in in her chest to warm my little foot this was the only way I can fell warm in that ugly tent after I left my own bedroom my 7 bedroom where we was living in Nazareth and from that living miserable living for 5 years I still hate brown sugar because that kind of food they give us free from the UN agency, United Nations agency there was like over 10 thousand people living in that camp and my family is part of that family and the other things I remember and hated is the bad smell of powder milk I hate today that smell dirty dates, dirty dates you know sands and that sand comes mixed with dates and as a child teeth I can not so I have to swallow that date with sand because that is the only way I can get feed above all at midnight at night the hyena sounds there was a group of hyenas that went around that camp looking for any children or animals

15:06

Hyena in Jordan desert or in Middle East desert is a very dangerous animal in groups. Hyena is until today that sounds of hyena that scared me came from that long time ago from that memory when I hear that hyena I go to my mom's arms and my father's crying because the group of hyena go around like when I hear coyote sounds the hyenas were very close because we had no fence no guard to protect so they were very close we came close together for awhile my father took strong stick and walked around the tent to make sure there were no animals around us just people living in tent in desert so that that scared

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me until today one more thing within the 5 years this is an amazing memory I didn't know was the cat because in those 10 thousand people there is no cat why there is no cart because there is no extra food to lift the cat around the so when we moved to the city of ? I could see the cats but in refugee camp there is no cat because there is no extra food to feed cat living between people

Q:

17:07

We hear from our neighbor that I'm not sure if it was true or not but my parent tried to keep me away and stay inside because when you live in refuge camp there is no separate bathroom to go there is public bathroom if I told you every 200 or 300 people had a bathroom outside in the desert you can't believe that and the water is the same thing shower the same thing so we don't have that facility or utility for all our needs so when I need to go to the bathroom at midnight my father and mother have to take all of us to the bathroom outside so they tried to keep us very close to my father and mother they told us don't go away alone don't go to the bathroom by yourself because hyena will kill or catch children from other neighbors since we heard hyena sounds around the camp that keep us close to our parents at night when we have when the sunset we have to stay inside the small tent you can't go out especially in winter time

Q: How long were you in these conditions?

18:45

Can you imagine rich man living in big house he is suddenly owns nothing in miserable life this effects my family this has broken my family also. My father um died when he was 45 years by stroke and um after he lost everything his family his father's house his sisters his mothers still in Nazareth and he was forced to leave that hurt my family broken family between father and mother

Q: Tell me your feelings.

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19:56

It's painful for me every time but I understand your mission

Back to key

20:30

It was a trip of personal and rediscovery in which I reevaluate my values my fears and once again found powers and hopes I though I had lost this trip physically and emotionally demanding tears and um hopes tears and hopes frequently welling up in my eyes and my soul it was also a voyage of shear? and cries of joy when my two aunts sang a traditional Palestinian poem to me after 55 years of being absent yes 55 years of being absent of my lovely home town Nazareth the city of Jesus the city of peace Jesus peace upon him I become a different person after my incredible incredible homecoming with profoundly silent and deep feeling my aunts guide me to my grandfather's house to the room where I was born I was it was a miracle to find out small toy and a plane still hanging in the room where I was born and that was a gift from my grandfather for my birthday party still hanging that toys that was a gift from my grandfather my aunts also give me a key that key (pulls out key) that key for my grandfather's house that was awesome and touched me and inspired me to the bone it's still a break through ever time I touch that key and that really is what happened and Miko was able to stand beside me when my two aunts still singing that traditional poem. My two aunts my one aunt singing and the other listening and then it goes to the second my aunt and singing and listening and Miko told me what they say they cry I told him this poem that welcome with who can return back from place never will be hope to come back so he cried when he heard that and that was an incredible moment when Miko and his wife were in my uncle's house listening to what's going on

24:09

Q: Alfa, do you know that poem?

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Um I know but I can not sing it. This is for an old woman to sing it.

N: It says in English Abu Jamil that's me Abu Jamil you come back to your home you come back like we see sun rise again Abu Jamil when you come back you give us hope to see your face to touch you when we touch you we touch your father when we touch your father we touch your mother when we touch you we touch your family all living in the refugee camp welcome back to your hometown and the flowers now will bloom and the sun will rise again and we feel now the 55 years is 55 seconds like your mother and your father and with crying

25:50

Q: Why did you flee?

N: Um I was very young but what I hear that my father was not in Nazareth was in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv or something because he was a merchant man a business man and my mother and my brother were left in Nazareth s when it was happening fighting between ?? and the Palestinian people my father told my mother to leave to Jordon to leave and he will meet her in Aman my uncle and my aunts they still there but my father was scared and panicked when he was in Tel Aviv and he heard rumor when he was in Tel Aviv and needed to serve his wife and 2 children so he asked my mom to leave and any time to Jordon so that's what they told me and up to date I say if my father didn't feel like he panicked he scared you would find me in Nazareth now you would find me in with my family he panicked, killing rumors, civil war, you know all those things so father or husband like to protect his small family and get out of that situation just for temporary he tough this would be for a few weeks because my mother parents father and mom live in Jordon so we though we would go for visit for a short time he thought we would stay in refugee camp just until we have cease fire and then move back because between Aman and Nazareth 2 hours drive 200 km so 2 hours drive from city to city is nothing so he thought we would go for a few days and his godfather's house for a few days in Jordon house then go back to his house and business and live trees and livestock, he lost

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everything after he left they closed the border because of the border no in and no out and then my father lost everything and that's what happened.

Q:

29:20

29:54

N: I can tell one ay 30 years ago when I was serving in Jordanian army I was fighting Israeli army and I share with (stops)

30:12

(Starts again)

One day 30 years ago I was fighting the Israeli army and I was serving in the Jordanian army suddenly I immigrated to the US in 1990 I wanted to know what was going on in their mind the Israeli people or the Jewish people whose living here at that time I don't realize between Jewish and Israeli for my self Arabic term? Mean Jewish or Israeli but when I came here I realized there is a difference between Jewish and Israeli for myself I was raised in Jordon we respect Jewish we respect Moses so we have no problem with Jewish but our problem was with Zionist and Israeli not Jewish as a religion not a Christian or a Muslim these are three religion what we believe in this one so when I immigrated to the US in 1990 I wanted to now what's going on in their mind the Israeli people or Jewish people that are staying here I wanted to now there history their language and their fears I wanted to know the enemy as a possible neighbor friend or partner I wanted to know the people Israeli or Jewish who share with me citizenship the US citizenship I have my citizenship so I wanted to know these people I belong the same community the same country I swear to be a good citizen to have my US citizenship that I now have access to know I profoundly believe that many of the conflict Israel and Arab or Palestinians comes from the lack of knowledge of each other that's profoundly believing which create prejudice fears and stereotypes from each side after September 11th my fear has doubled than anybody else my wife my family we feel something that's touched us very deep what's happened who did that does not represent us it does not represent our religion anything that belongs to us here so from that time I feel I have a mission here in the US as a citizen as a businessman to protect our community like

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Jewish community to exchange our fear why they fear from us I remember after 9/11 local TV came to visit us in our Islamic center and make interview with me and ask

34:25

I said I condemned that and it affected me a lot to the deep I would do anything to avoid that again so I need to know I face my fear with my Israeli how can I face there is a big Jewish community here in San Diego and we have a big Islamic or Arabic community so we met Mrs. Doris.

BREAK

35:50

When I was serving in Jordanian army I remember the first time I faced Israeli army was in March 15th 1968 and Jordan River line between east bank and west bank called?? According to the village so there is hundred of Israel tents and helicopters they call phantom became to the east bank fighting Jordanian army and Palestine camp there was a camp that belonged to the PLO and March 15th 1968 I was in that battle serving in the Jordanian army and fighting against the Israeli I remember that it started before sunrise 4 or 5 o'clock until 3-4 in the after noon in Jordan side not in Israeli side not in west bank so they came against us on our side and they used all kind of weapons what do you call from the tank and my best friends (Name?) he is dying in that battle and before he is dying he was my best friend very close friend we finished high school together same middle college and we served in Jordanian army and her was very close to me and he was dying in my arms from the Israeli tanks and he is burning in my arms and I asked another soldier to bring from the clothes mud to to put in his burning to make the burning if this was the only way to get off from what you call napalm this was the only way to stop the burning, mud. He told me as he was in my arms he told me to my mom I love you and say to my fiancé Leila was her name I love you and he died in my hands so from that time I feel how much war is really painful and terrible and you face death face to face in that that's my memory from March 15th 1968.

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40:00

My name is Alfa Elbanna I born in Syria my father was a refugee from Nazareth also I was in Syria and I finished my school um until I married I went to Jordon when I went to school I went t normal school it was all the same students and there um refugee id and this is what I don't like it and also my memory I don't like any help from this school because I am a refugee Also something some memory that touched me when my father every every day when he go to sleep um he was say uh goodnight um I'm going to Nazareth this is what I feel how he missed his home until I go to Nazareth also my dad home I feel what he was miss and that time.

He say every night goodnight I'm going to Nazareth every night he dreamed he was in Nazareth When I visit Nazareth I remember that how he missed his home

42:26

Q: Was your father ever able to visit his home?

A: No, because no one in Syria can go to Nazareth or Palestine any place in Palestine.

42:50

Q: Were there family stories about your family leaving Nazareth?

A: Um I have also a relative in Nazareth still in Nazareth but all my family my father my mother she is from Syria all my brothers and sister also live in Syria and nobody visits Nazareth except me and this is what I enjoy.

Q:

43:43

My father left Nazareth in 48 and um he was married just 1 year with my mother and after that still in Syria living in Syria and he cannot go to Palestine anymore.

Q: Shame to be a refugee?

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A: Yes, yes because everybody feels um we live in Syria and um we share everybody for school and um for their land and should be and should go to our home not stay in our land and this is what I feel. (Nadar whispers)

44:55

N: What she say Alfa is correct but I prefer to say in Arabic that would be more powerful about how she feels shame about being a refugee in Syria if she says that in Arabic that would be a better message to the people who are listening to the camera.

45:30

A: I feel uh that the people in Syria look to us you came from Palestine and you share our land

45:35

N: Okay, let me say that the Syrian people the Jordanian people the Egyptian people looking to the Palestine refugee camp who came to live there is not a good welcome it's that's give to the refugee people shame to be living as a refugee in Syria, Jordan, in Egypt in Lebanon, even until today there are many many things for the Palestinian that they can not do or work or practice business there because they are refugee and the 2nd citizen to be refugee to be called Palestinian refugee the same passport like Lebanese or Syria but that gives the people of Lebanon to make the people living as refugee feel shame but since my wife Alfa born in Damascus in Syria and she don't like to mention she is refugee among other students in class because that means to other student you are down second citizen she tried to hide herself as a refugee in Syria but in her mind and soul her family she is suffering to be Palestinian but there is no Palestine as a state she is Palestinian with identity Palestinian with feeling Palestinian with family but she feels shame to be a refugee that kind of suffering of millions of Palestinians today living in these kinds of circumstances to feel shame as a refugee

47:47

A: And also we cannot move to um Lebanon or Jordan...

N: As refugee the Arab government as a refugee people they give them limited passport to travel just very limited the Palestinian whose living in Syria they can not travel to ?

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just 1 hour drive 2 hour they can not until today to are Palestine in Syria you can not so that gives the Palestinian people feeling we hate to...

A: That we are not equal with other people.

48:40

N: And that comes to my mind really something important that in Israel they have almost 1 million + Arab Israeli that is Palestinian Israeli I will explain that what that mean we say Arab Israeli that means Saudi Arabia Arab, Iraqi Arab, Kuwaiti Arab, Syria Arab, Jordanian Arab but is a Kuwaiti the same is Iraqi no that's why we have war in 1990 to make Kuwait free because the Kuwait is Arab not Iraqi so we can't say Arab Israeli it's Palestinian Palestine belongs to the same land this is Palestine if we say Arab they can go to another country you can go to Syria there are Arabs there so the Arab is yes but it's Palestinian. So in Syria and Jordan they tried to protect that Palestinian identity but there is too much difficult life miserable life feeling you are second citizen with your rights with your citizenship that's why my wife she tried to hide that when she was in school among the children but when she goes home she feels like she is proud to be a Palestinian and when her father goes to sleep the only way he can go to sleep is for him to say to his family good night I'm going to Nazareth that means before he sleeps he dream every night every night with hometown with where he was born this is so that his children remember Nazareth and she is the only one from his children his 5 children whose visited Nazareth you don't feel when she came from back from Damascus to Nazareth her brothers father mother tell us what's Nazareth everything is in Nazareth b/c they have this dream and Nazareth is just 2-3 hours drive from there you can see from west ? you can see Nazareth that's Nazareth you can see lights that's Jerusalem it's very close very tiny destination between but the feeling there is really big huge.

51:30

52:30

Q: Jamil

N: My son Jamil graduates form UCSD with honor degree actually all my children graduate with honor degree I'm proud I have 6 children Jamil after he graduated with um

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engineering after September 11 Doris Bittar with other group Arab people Christians and Muslims came to our Islamic center for protest to show our condemn from September 11 so he met Doris Bittar and actually she tried to invite me first but she recognized my accent and that my English language was not help

(Grandchild arrives)

54:09

So uh she tried to talk to me Doris Bittar and uh she is Palestine Christian and she realized my English language was not strong enough to invite me to dialog so I told her to talk to my son so she invite my son but I don't know what was going on then Jamil goes to the Palestine dialog for peace and he went 2-3 times 4 times and he don't tell us he went there with Israeli people with Jewish people he scared he thought I'd be mad he that I'd be angry he thought he knows my background he realize that I raised in Jordon in refugee camp where I lost my hometown so he though that if he told me that I would be mad so he tried to hide that until he found the right time that right time comes when my children Jamil Rana Camellia are attending to the seminars called Landmark education those seminars give power to self, team to self expression to feel comfortable so they invite me to that education and this is really awesome education for the people and Jamil after that told me that about I'm invited t meet Jewish people talk to them face to face about your story my first reaction that was okay that's fine is that Jewish or Israeli the Jewish I have no mind that is okay for me but he Israeli I have many concern and he said they are US citizens like us and they meet in house and with dinner and we talk and then he invite me there and I I go to Doris Bittar's and this is the first time we are sitting together in the same room Palestinian and Jewish and Israeli so this is the first time I meet Miko he is Israeli US American Israeli born in west Jerusalem my reaction just to tell you when I looked to Miko I said oh my god that man he is a spy

57:25

I have to be concerned about him he will watch everything I say I will be careful because I 'm still believing this kind of stereotype fear and I don't know what he feel for me but this was my feeling and then I realized suddenly after awhile that he put in his jacket flags of the Palestinian and Israeli flags together and I asked him and he said I am with peace movement my father General Peled was in peace um talking with Palestinians there

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and I am following my father's steps suddenly I discovered that his brother command the tank in March 15th 1968 fighting against me with his brother so coming between me and Miko and we begin talking and have conversation that conversation is not self conversation it's not between me and my self about Israeli or about Jewish now I have real conversation between two people me and Miko it's not just self conversation to create my drama story to feel victim about my fear about my my so have real conversation with people I feel when I was he is and other who listen to me with compassion just listening to me when they asked me what's going on with my family I see some tears I can tell them my, real tears I feel I am among the people educating looking for peace and we to know we need to educate themselves from our Palestinian image because they don't know especially the American Jewish living here they don't know about Palestine, they think you are Palestine you are terrorism but now as human being you have a story you have relatives and roots that makes a big difference from that time I become active with my wife my son Jamil my daughter Rana we become active this Jewish Palestinian dialog for peace from that time until today.

02:00:24:00

N: I learned a lot from that dialog. I call it story of journey from hate to love. That's what I call it for myself it takes me this side to this side those people they have fear about us they thought that we are like Barbarian people just to kill or to send out children dying for suicide bombing I learned they have stereotype among Palestine I realized

01:39

Tape Change