

# Transcript for *Dr. Khandekar*:

## July 17

*Hana Guoto*: @

*Dr. Khandekar*: #

*Hana Guoto*: (speaking Arabic) my name is Hanna Guoto today is July 17 time is approximately 4:30 thank you for being here on the behave of crossroad to freedom inspire 2014 Rhodes College and all of the partners

*Dr. Khandekar*: Thank you for inviting me

*Hana Guoto*: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself

*Dr. Khandekar*: My name is Alim Khandekar I am practicing cardiac Surgeon in Memphis I have been here in Memphis since 1975 and I first came here for training ??? Surgery since then I have stayed back to practice medicine

*Hana Guoto*: Where you from

*Dr. Khandekar*: I'm originally from (speaking Arabic)

*Hana Guoto*: What was the image of America in your country?

*Dr. Khandekar*: It was very advanced western civilization.

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*Hana Guoto*: What made you decided to come to America?

*Dr. Khandekar*: I came to America to train as a Cardio Vascular Surgeon

*Hana Guoto*: Did you came with anyone else?

*Dr. Khandekar*: Actually I came by myself I had a friend that accompanied me he also came for the same purpose he was training for internal medicine.

*Hana Guoto*: Had did your parents and family members feel about you leaving?

*Dr. Khandekar*: Well I think it was mixed feelings part of them wanted me to succeed, learn what I dream to do and of course they didn't want to see me leave them and unusually the idea was to get my training and go back so they are looking forward to that.

*Hana Guoto*: Did you have any trouble leaving your home country?

*Dr. Khandekar*: Yes I did, of course I was very excited to come here, but leaving my

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family, my home country and adjusting to the lifestyle of this country was difficult, but was exciting also.

*Hana Guoto:* Were there any immigration issues?

*Dr. Khandekar:* Not really I came in with an exchange ??? which is allows me to work as a doctor and subsequently I change that to permanent residence regent and then I became a citizen when time came.

*Hana Guoto:* What city did you arrive in?

*Dr. Khandekar:* I came from Philadelphia.

*Hana Guoto:* Why did you go to Philadelphia?

*Dr. Khandekar:* I started my training there.

*Hana Guoto:* What was your reaction when you arrived? Was it you expected?

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes well because we see images of America in movies and TV and also a little about it in magazines and books.

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It was a mixture of all of those plus, the reality that here you are in the midst of a new apple fair.

*Hana Guoto:* Did you feel like as though you were treated differently?

*Dr. Khandekar:* Overall I was treated very ??? As none of those people knew I was new here there were trying to be helpful most of the time but then there are people who are not very patient as well but in generally life felt positive about when I got here

*Hana Guoto:* When did you come to Memphis

*Dr. Khandekar:* 1975

*Hana Guoto:* Why

*Dr. Khandekar:* I came here to be train as a ??? Surgeon the inter west of Tennessee

*Hana Guoto:* What was Memphis like when you got here

*Dr. Khandekar:* Memphis in 1975 was very different city then we see today it was still a very small

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city in many ways culturally diversity wise ??? And the when I first came you know when you go back to the history we had civil rights movement was just finish Martin Luther King you know was killed here there was still quite of bit of racial divide I must say there was no intention but I could feel that there isn't definite distrust among the communities

*Hana Guoto:* Did you have difficult fitting in to the new society

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes and no I had the advantage of not either being black or white

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so I could took a mangle with both parties until we be very objective and which help and also there is a lot of inherited culture that existed in Memphis that I look familiar with which made difficult of me getting adjusted to the language was an issue accent specialty and they did not understand my accent and I was having difficulty understanding ??? I'm used to it now I can pretty much I can talk about that talk with the girls sometimes if I want to

*Hana Guoto:* Since at the University of Memphis was there a lot of Muslims there

*Dr. Khandekar:* There were some I was mostly situated with the University of Tennessee even though I had some friends who went to University of Memphis

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as a teacher some students there are not that many ??? From our part of the world

*Hana Guoto:* Now let's talk about Islam in Memphis at the time was there Muslim community in Memphis

*Dr. Khandekar:* There were few Muslims but there were not a community

*Hana Guoto:* Who were the other founders of ????? What ??? Did you go to did you start from

*Dr. Khandekar:* There was no ??? When I first came

*Hana Guoto:* How was founding of ????? When you came

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well when we first came to Memphis

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we did not know who the Muslims were so good time I got to know a few at my work and also outside work and during the ??? I got to know that they ??? is here it was not observer as you know as much as that time and then I was told one day that tomorrow is eve so somebody suggested that we should go pray and then they wanted to go to our apartment and pray and that was shocked and that suggestion that I told them that I do not think you can pray easily prayers in somebody apartments that night or in the evening we met and one of the Muslim brothers housing name is ????? In his house we had eat

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dinner when we met a few other Muslims I could probably remember ten all together some of them came from surrounding cities and we had a very nice time got to meet new people and that to me was a intently shown for a ??? Founded on after that we went to see each other more often than start talking about building something so we ??? meet at the some of the universities centers like university center UT also University of Memphis at that time it used to be called Memphis Tenn. University so we there in weekends we have

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we came to classes Quran classes we also started teaching our young ones about Islam about that time so we didn't have a ??? we was just thinking about

*Hana Guoto:* Who were the other people that were involve

*Dr. Khandekar:* At that time I remember Dr.???, Dr.??? He has passed ??? And his family ??? This is just a few of them I mean that was not that many at that time

*Hana Guoto:* How was ??? Islam founded

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well at that time it was not named ??? Islam which was ??? Named in a long time that after we

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had what we called Muslim Society of Memphis and Dr.??? And few of us we met several times and we decided to form an organization called Muslim Society of Memphis which later were able to buy a piece of property ????? first we had a small house we renovated and that property to make it a ??? And we were there for about four or five years until we were able to have enough fund and then we built a ??? Prison ????? Was built until 1983

*Hana Guoto:* Did you have any financing problems with the first process

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes we did

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Small at that time and we also the number was small and the we didn't have a vision about what's going to happen how many people we eventually have so the first ??? was started ??? house we had probably about fifteen out of twenty families that we used to come to have regular ????? of course we didn't have five daily prayer but we used to play (speaking Arabic) and eventually expanded to a five daily prayers and

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we also had a Sunday Islamic school for our children (speaking Arabic) school children to teach them and when that group grow a little bit we divided them into two parts into the other room which was basically you know like a kitchen converted into a room and then in 1982 we were very serious building we started collecting funds and we only had just thirty thousand dollars started building the ??? The ??? Islam started when thirty thousand dollars we had

*Hana Guoto:* What was the reaction of the non-Muslims communities like when you

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We're building the ???

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well it wasn't mixed feeling we had several vandalism in our ??? In the beginning whether it was ??? Or just vandalism to harassed us or take our property whatever that's enough subsidized ??? The neighbors never put up any big difficulty to us in generally very helpful and we tried to keep it very low profile to stay out of trouble as much as we could and tried to be friendly with our neighbors to them

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Our prisons in the neighborhood would not called any difficulty for them

*Hana Guoto:* Did you guys take any action about the vandalism

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well we notified the police but they don't nothing much happen about it except that we are more and more ??? we will take turns to watch the property for that nothing happens you know during our absence we will keep the ??? under lock key and come and visit and you know one of the thing that is interested to tell it about this and you have and you go to ??? Islam now you will see that's there is no windows everything is fixed and that was the reason we you know we want any vandalism to affect the ??? In any way the ??? Is built like a fort

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cause metal glass openings but the window that you can open

*Hana Guoto:* How did you finance the ??? With only thirty thousand dollars

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well I think I must say that it was finance by a lot (speaking Arabic) we started with the little amount of money and we had a Muslim contractor who was cooperate with us and as we built one ??? A time and we continue to collect donations from our monsters and even sometimes outside of us and Thank God during the whole process of building which took about more than a year we did not have to stop our building process because lack of fun

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because always the fun became available to us to continue the process to be able to finish building the ??? Pretty quickly

*Hana Guoto:* As the ??? Was being built what steps did and the other founders take to involve the Muslim community

*Dr. Khandekar:* We tried to reach out as many Muslim as we could there was other Muslims in Memphis who had been there for many years probable but they may not have been as close to the ??? So our job was to encourage them to come join our with our effort and be a part of the community so we can build a bigger community

*Hana Guoto:* How did you make them more active

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well by being friendly and by using our good –will

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*Hana Guoto:* Did you guys have any programs then

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes we know in addition to the prayer schedule and (speaking Arabic) and each prayer and some of the others Muslims festivities you know we used to have ???, weddings at the ??? Sometimes we try to people in the ??? And then and we also had funerals prayers and because we have a need for a barrel ??? Muslims we bought a few locks a barrel locks and a place in look at it month of Tennessee so we bought first about eight locks and then

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ten locks and twenty locks of course finally as the need grew a new cemetery was built

*Hana Guoto:* Did the rest of the community start growing

*Dr. Khandekar:* I think the growth wasn't sparks I must say first put ears between 1975 to about 1882 there was not that much growth community pretty much it means table we have some students come in go adding to coming and going away we also had about that time a significant group of ??? Students that were being train at University of Memphis and Memphis State at the time so

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that group was there and then that group finally move to Arkansas State in Jonesboro so we lost that big group of people at some point but you know time and expansion of Memphis more people came to Memphis and some of them stayed and some of them you know they ??? More students came more teachers came more doctors came the ones that came here most of them seem to stay here and made part of us

*Hana Guoto:* And how did that affect the ???

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well the ??? Grew in the students number of participants but with that you know complexity

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the roll out you know people had ??? A very close net group but with your people there were newer ideas the segments and it didn't hands us it made us stronger but also we had to go through some difficult times where there was you know difficult segments as well

*Hana Guoto:* How did ??? Activities and in prayer change from starting in the apartments and homes

*Dr. Khandekar:* Well I mean at once we started getting together even before we built our ??? We used to have regular prayer session at the universities centers borrow the room from them and so we would have our ??? Program eat program ???

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Over there instill the ??? Was built and then we had our eat pray at the ??? When the population grew we started renting areas other than the ??? To have ??? Prayers

*Hana Guoto:* Can you named some of the areas that you guys previously had

*Dr. Khandekar:* We went to fairground a lot we for several years we used to rent those ??? On the fairground to have a ??? Prayers we also had these prayers in a like a shopping center I mean that was you know for a while in than as the population grew of course now a days we have in big places like Cook Convention Center or this other center every center

*Hana Guoto:* As the years grew did the eat prayers every start over growing

*Dr. Khandekar:* Of course yes

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*Hana Guoto:* Now let's talk about a little bit about 9/11 and Muslims in Memphis at the time. What was your reaction in 9/11 attack

*Dr. Khandekar:* It was very shocking to all of us until 9/11 the Muslims community were growing more or least I notice in the community in general our interaction with the other communities were well they are a few Muslims who have a help one or two ??? In our town we are going to there would have some interactions but they will come visit the ??? Once in a while if they have any questions sometimes the students from Rhodes College or students from some of the local schools will come to visit when they want to learn about diversity or

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other world religions so then we will come to visit us that will be the most of the instinct for the interaction with other Muslims

*Hana Guoto:* Were you personally affect about 9/11

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes and no I mean I was depressed enough my ??? society of Memphis when 9/11 happen so I you know what I did I interact with the Law Enforcement people there be I Memphis Police and I also got some trading phone calls you know but nothing to the board really changing what I normally do but it was a it was a big shocked to all of us as a community what happened

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it was more disbelief somebody can do something like that but you know it changed a lot in a scene we also got to see two or three different groups of people one who were very supportive of us wanted to help us every which way in possible make sure that we our secret keys intact there were a lot of the neighbors came and wanted to guard the ??? cause there were some reports of vandalism some of them was obvious and now the cities we did not have anything real serious there was some stones thrown at us some stuff like that the ??? But nothing really major

*Hana Guoto:* Did you work with any others like faith groups such as churches or temples

*Dr. Khandekar:* We

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had some relationships with some of the churches they came forward and they came to visit us and we also visit them we had joined pray services and different different churches but we also have open houses in the ??? So that they can come in and you know see us in our ??? What we do we also had health fares and things like that to so the community as well

*Hana Guoto:* I know that you done some work with inter faith center how many years have you gotten to that

*Dr. Khandekar:* We just finish our eighty year

*Hana Guoto:* Have you been there all have you been to all those things

*Dr. Khandekar:* Yes

*Hana Guoto:* What was your involvement in those centers

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*Dr. Khandekar:* Well I was sort of all the sponsors must say of course I had lots of help from our community we started the program May 2007 I believe the first one I think at that time the war in Iraq was going in full swing a lot of violence a lot of people was being killed and a lot of Americans were also being killed Americans soldiers being killed so there was a (speaking Arabic) and this was about the time when there was a called from ??? Society of North America during the ??? To invite

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other communities for there ??? Or breaking bread while we discuss some common issues

# To Be Continue