

3-13-2011

## Khadijah Ali interview for a Wright State University History Course

Anna Carrera

Khadijah Ali

Follow this and additional works at: [https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history\\_oral\\_history](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history_oral_history)



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social History Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Carrera, A., & Ali, K. (2011). Khadijah Ali interview for a Wright State University History Course. .  
[https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history\\_oral\\_history/35](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/history_oral_history/35)

This Oral Recording is brought to you for free and open access by the History at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dayton and Miami Valley Oral History Project by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact [library-corescholar@wright.edu](mailto:library-corescholar@wright.edu).

**Profile:**

Narrator Name: Khadijah Ali  
Interviewer: Anna Carrera  
Author: Anna Carrera  
Date of Interview: March 13, 2011

Subject: Oral History Interview with Program Coordinator and Co-founder of Circle of Vision Keepers. She discusses her life, activism, and message.

Key Words: Paul Arnold

Recovery

Seven Step Foundation

Logo Therapy

Socratic Method

Ann Bass Academy

Robin Herman

Psychology of Incarceration

Circle of Vision keepers

Two Trees Inc.

Hanbleyca House Inc

Re-Entry

Ex-offender Advocacy

The Path to Service: An Oral History Interview with Khadijah Ali

Introduction to Oral history, Dr. Marjorie McLellan, Winter Quarter 2011

On March 13, 2011, I interviewed Khadijah Ali at her home on Woodman Dr. in Dayton Ohio. We conducted the interview in her living room.

Khadijah Ali was born in Chatanooga to a single mother who later moved to Dayton Ohio where Mrs. Ali would come to be raised. Her father was a local Dayton entertainer that she came to know later in her life. She experienced a lot of challenges in her youth she had to work through. At the age of sixteen she was raped by a gang and left for dead. After that time she struggled with addiction, crime, and incarceration. Mrs. Ali went on to overcome her challenges and thirty years ago began her community work with ex-offenders as part of the Seven Step Foundation. As part of the non-profit she was involved in event coordination, grant writing, group facilitation, and ex-offender advocacy.

## **KHADIJAH ALI-2**

Mrs. Ali went on to work with different organizations over the years including Alvis House, Ann Bass academy, and Hanbleyca House. She has done a range of speaking events, in-service trainings, and therapeutic group sessions. In the last eight years, Khadijah Ali has been a consultant, facilitator, and trainer for the: Ann Bass Academy with Ed Lampton and Associates; Circle of Courage Recovery and Re-entry support groups, including Women's Issues in Re-entry and Recovery (Hanbleceya House, Inc.); and Psychology of Incarceration Re-Entry Project for Probationers (Montgomery County Probation Dept.). Khadijah is a trauma and incarceration survivor.

Currently Mrs. Ali runs an addiction and ex-offender support group called The Circle of Vision Keepers: Circle of Courage. She is also a board member for Advocates for Basic Legal Equality Inc. (AVLE). She deals with client grievances and connects them with legal aid. She also collaborates with Two Trees Inc. At the end of May, Mrs. Ali will head a project involving the opening of a second-hand shop to support ex-offenders.

## **Oral History Interview**

**Name of the Project:** : Oral History Interview with co-founder and Program Coordinator of The Circle of Vision Keepers, Khadijah Ali

**Name of the project director:** Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography, Wright State University

**Archives or repository**

**Interviewee/narrator name** Khadijah Ali

**Interviewer name** Anna Carrera

**Others present**

**Place** 3401 Woodman Dr. Apt 108 Dayton Ohio (Interviewees home)

**Date** 03/13/11

**Length of recording:** 42:58

**Original format:** digital video recorder

**Keywords:** : Paul Arnold

Recovery

Seven Steps

Logo Therapy

Socratic Method

Ann Bass Academy

Robin Herman

Psychology of Incarceration

Circle of Vision keepers

Two Trees Inc.

Hanbleyca House Inc

**Indexed by** Anna Carrera

**Index**

### **00:00:00-00:06:31 Experiences growing up**

Khadijah Ali shares her experiences growing up which shaped her for her work. She recalls being the oldest of seven children. She shares how a life full of pain and suffering lead to her choices involving addiction and crime. She then explains how her path to recovery lead to her community work with others.

Key words: Paul Arnold

Suffering

Recovery

Seven Steps

**00:06:31-00:12:10 Philosophy of Attitude**

Mrs. Ali talks about her connection to the philosophy of Victor Frankl. She shares how she uses her own life experiences to continuously learn and empower herself and others.

Key words: Victor Frankl

Logo Therapy

Socratic Method

Rape

Coping Strategies

**00:12:10-18:29 Working through Personal Issues**

Mrs. Ali reflects on her intimate relationships and her search for fulfillment. She explains how she came to find that what she was looking for she could only get from herself- love.

Key words: Seven Steps

Addiction

**00:18:29-00:26:15 Getting Involved in Community Issues**

Thirty years ago, Mrs. Ali began her work and advocacy with ex-offenders. She began running programs in and out of prisons. She speaks about defining her own personal boundaries while empowering others (male inmates) to do the same. Mrs. Ali goes on to explain how her involvement changed over time working with different organizations. She reflects on working with teen mothers and their new babies.

Key words:Seven Steps

Ann Bass Academy

Monday Program

Prisons

**00:26:15-00:35:23Philosophy of Community**

Mrs. Ali speaks about her involvement with Hanbleyca House and Robin “Doc” Herman. She describes her evolution of community.

Key words: Hanbleyca House Inc.

Robin Herman

Psychology of Incarceration

**00:35:23-00:42:58 Philosophy of Empowerment**

Mrs. Ali concludes by describing her journey to personal transformation. She describes aligning her beliefs and her behaviors. She then describes how she empowers others by challenging them to take an honest look at themselves- their behavior and thinking. She goes on to share the impact her work has had on her friends and family. She also shares the lessons she has taken from her work and experiences.

Key words: Circle of Vision keepers

Two Trees Inc.

## **Oral History Interview**

**Name of the Project:** The Path to Service: Interview with Khadijah Ali

**Name of project director:** Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography,  
Wright State University

**Archives repository**

**Interviewee** Khadijah Ali **Interviewer** Anna Carrera **Others Present** **Place** 3401 Woodman Dr.  
Apt. 108 Dayton Ohio (home of Interviewee)

**Date** March 13, 2011

**Length of Recording** 00:42:58

**Original format:** Digital Audio Recording

**Transcribed by** Anna Carrera

### **Interview Transcript**

Carrera:

Khadijah, can you tell me about your childhood and experiences growing up?

Ali:

Well, I was the oldest of seven. It was four girls, three boys. My parents divorced when I was very young and we learned a lot about family values, you know, learning how to depend on each other. Really I refer to our family as a little mini community. You know, which really helped me in my journey in being involved in other communities. Just always trying to do things to help someone and being, feeling needed. You know, just everything that goes into being a family. Loving, helping, needing, disappointments, pain, doubt, death, life; all of that. Basically my mother raised me and she was a strong disciplinarian. As I grew up I kinda rebelled against that, you know, started asking myself all those important questions ,that people, that I continue to ask myself today. Even though we do have a better relationship now that we're both old. You know, you just kinda live and learn.

Carrera:

Do you feel that your experiences growing up have shaped you for the work that you do?

Ali:

Yes I do because it was a lot of suffering and pain and joy and love and everything that we experience in life. It's just that when I was younger I did not deal with issues. I held things in. And because I held things in, the ways that I dealt with different issues going on in my life , you know, was not in a healthy way. Can I tell about my rape?

Carrera:

You can tell about absolutely anything.

Ali:

At age sixteen I was gang-raped and I was basically left for dead and I was more afraid of telling my parents than I was of telling on the boys. And, as we all know, when you hold something in that painful that there's going to be a fallout in behaviors. Part of my fallout was alcohol drugs addiction eventually leading to crime, prison, and abuse. Some of the abuse was self abuse but also allowing myself to be abused. You know, I just chose a lot of abusive relationships. As I got older and started being more exposed to types of programs that would help me to take a look at my behaviors and wrestling with my spirituality, all those types of things, I now know I'm a survivor. Because for so many years I lived as a victim. But I know now I'm not a victim I'm a survivor because I'm still here. That happened when I was sixteen and I'll be sixty-two in May. I'm just really grateful for that. So yes, a lot of things that happened in my life, and it was many things, many people came and were in my life. You know, I can remember my first lady that I had as a counselor in drug treatment. She gave me the quote from Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true." And it must follow thou can't then be false to any man. All this time, you know, and every time I think about it it has a different meaning to me. At that time it was just that , okay, the truth is that I'm out of jail, I'm in a treatment center and whatever else happens, happens. Giving yourself up to chance. Not really planning anything or looking at anything being any different because my pain was so deep I didn't really think that my life would be any different. But as I have evolved through different relationships and marriages and children and wanting to start helping people who are going through the same problems that I've had myself- and many years of going in and out of prisons helping . Dealing with women with a ll types of issues, you know, divorces. And I'm basically finding out that all of the issues that we go through in life are because of behavior and our attitude about that behavior. The attitude about how we choose to look at it and deal with it. So, not knowing then, I kinda fell in line with the philosophy of Victor Frankl, who makes the statement, something to the effect that, "It's not so much the conditions that we go through but it's our attitude about it." You know, and unless our thinking changes then our conditions will not change. And so, really all these things were going on even before I was introduced to Victor Frankl about seven or eight years ago. But it just reaffirmed everything because I can just look back on my life, on the pain, and draw positiveness from that.

Carrera:

And thank you for sharing because all that is important, as significant things that lead to where you're at. So, your pain and your suffering, how do you think that adds to your work and what you're able to give now?

Ali:

Well, what it adds to it is the fact that I've overcome a lot of that. And not saying that I'll not experience more suffering, more pain, but as you get older and you experience things more and you change your attitude about the things that happen, to you, you look at it as a lesson. I choose to look at it as a lesson. Me and God argue every day. You know, sometimes days are good, sometimes days are not so good, sometimes decisions are good sometimes decisions are not so good. But, you know, I basically try to rely on that spiritual foundation and that experience base foundation. So, when I'm dealing with something and I'm wanting a positive outcome or I'm thinking, okay Lord I'm holed up into you and everything but everything just seems like it's going to hell. And I'm like, okay God what's going on, you know and stuff, and I'm okay with that. And so finally and I go through all that cussing and hollerin' and screamin' and cryin' I say okay, and what am I to learn from this? And that's basically what my overall attitude now is. What am I to learn from this? No matter what the situation is. And that is part of what I've been asking myself all my life. Without really asking myself but now I'm more conscious of it.

Carrera:

Yeah. What other things in your life do you feel like have shaped or lead you to your work?

Ali:

Well, basically the fact that, like I said, that I was abused. I was a rape victim. I've experienced jails prisons. I've been in unhealthy relationships. I've been in, you know, abusive relationships. I've been in good relationships. I've been in poor relationships and I've been in wealthy relationships. I've had just about every relationship person can possibly have. And even in all of those things, things have not always worked out where they have continued. Some relationships have continued but on a different level. Cause just like my first husband, I was with him for thirteen years, and he was an Islamic minister, and so I was like the Preacher's wife. So, my role being the preacher's wife and what I thought being a Preacher's wife was then is a lot different from how I view being a Preacher's wife now. Like, yeah you're supposed to be a positive example for the community, and all that kind of stuff, but guess what sweetie, I'm still human. And guess what, if you step on my toe three times I'm gonna cuss you out. You know, that's just the bottom line. And then I'm gonna say, what's wrong with you, you know, why you keep stepping on my foot? Cause you see it down there. So, we learn. We learn about things. And because I've had so many relationships that have been, I don't want to necessarily say negative, but have been unhealthy, that now I'm striving to be more healthy myself. Really it begins with me. I was just like that song, "Looking for love in all the wrong places", you know. That was me. Looking in all the wrong places. I couldn't get it from heroin, marijuana, cocaine, I couldn't get it from those men I was having sex with. I couldn't, none of that, because my soul was still seeking. And guess what, it's in me. The love that I was seeking for out there is in me. I

had to start learning how to love Khadijah first. And that meant I needed to make some behavior changes. It wasn't just about saying that I loved me it was about showing that I loved me. And, like I said, that's what shaped me into doing the things that I do today because I know that I'm not the only woman who's going through this in life. So, I feel like one of my purposes, I am at an age where most women who have overcome over thirty years of heroin addiction, most of them are dead. They're in mental institutions they're blind. They're ugly. I'm not saying that I'm not ugly, I've got ugly ways (laugh). Sometimes, me as a person, but I feel like I'm a beautiful person because this is what I tell myself every day. For so many years in my past I always looked at myself in a negative sense. So, now I know that beauty is skin deep, you know. And it's spiritually deep and it's behaviorally deep and it's the way you deal and you treat other people. And this is something that I want to share with other women. That they can change if they want to change. And that we're responsible for the decisions that we make. Most of the time when we're in a relationship we want to blame the other person but we don't really look at what part we play in it. And then a lot of times we stay in unhealthy relationships because we feel like we can't do any better. Okay, that's part of that self-esteem. That low self-esteem that so many of us, with our insecurities, the lack of, oh God, how am I going to pay my rent. Those types of things, but I feel like a woman can do for herself if she needs to. Yeah, it'd be nice to have a loving relationship where all those things are happening, but, let's keep it real. It's not going to happen every day for everybody. So, if it's not happening for me, guess what, I need to make my own happiness. Cause my attitude now is I'm single, I've been celibate for a number of years. And the only thing a man can do for me is compliment how I already feel. Outside of that he can put it in a thimble and roll it down Woodman, I'm not on it. I'm not on it (laugh). You know, you can't bring me no mess that I can recognize. So, I can recognize the healthiness is a person.

Carrera:

When did you first get involved in community issues?

Ali:

Okay, well, I got involved with it over thirty years ago with my first husband because he was a male ex-offender and it was working through a program called the Seven Step foundation. It was one of my first exposures to a program that dealt with prisoner reform. At that point, that was in the seventies, and they called it rehabilitation back then. Then it was re-motivation now it's re-entry. You know, but all of them have the same meaning. My ex-husband says that the name changes but the game is the same. They're trying to find ways to help people reenter into society and live a healthier lifestyle. But, what are the institutions really doing? So, I just took it on myself because I knew that I had overcome some issues. You know, I got involved with the Seven Step Foundation and at first I was a board member. And from being on the board they put me on as a staff member. I was a prison program director at Chillicothe Institution, at the

old Mansfield, and Marysville, and Junction City which is now closed down. And it really gave those women a lot of hope seeing someone who had served time with them come back in doing something positive. And that whole concept of pre-release, even though it wasn't necessarily copyrighted or anything, me any another lady who worked for the Alvis House. We were going back into the Institutions, we had the old parole system where you got parole and then thirty days later they released you. So we would go deal with that thirty days and out concept of trying to prepare that person for reintegration, re-socialization, and reintegration with their families. So that started like way, way back. We should have patented it because now they're using it and stuff. You know (laugh). And then we had prerelease classes where we would go into the institution and talk about the kinds of things that they were dealing with like what kinds of things would help you be more marketable for a job, or about drugs, or unhealthy relationships. We really tackled a lot of issues with the women and the men. Now the men are a completely different animal. Because as soon as we'd walk in there we'd get whistles and all that kind of stuff. And said, now how am I going to deal with this because I was a small, petite, you know, very colorful in my dress and everything, and I didn't want these men to think that I was coming on. And the superintendent, he had problems. He'd say well if you have problems you can't come in here. So, I just told the men look, I'm here to help you with your life, make some decisions, but if you think I'm in here looking for a man you can just get on out of here. I said because I'm not the one. And from that point on I didn't have any problems. As a result of that the director of the institution said I was more powerful than the men because he said I knew what I wanted in a man and that's what I would bring out in them. As far as being more respectful of women and how to treat them and not to talk to them in a negative way. They couldn't play those games with me because they knew I'd call them on it. And if I called them on it they knew that they might as well not even come back. So, he said I was more powerful than even the male prison directors that he had had in there for years. So, that really made me feel good because before I had always used men as objects and basically the same way that they were using me. But I had to change my thinking and my attitude before I stepped in there with all those handsome guys sitting up in that institution. Honey, cause I'm telling you when you walk through there it's just like looking at GQ. You really gotta have yourself together (laughing). I'll be like, oh Lord help me. You know and stuff. I'd say I'm glad I'm married.

Carrera:

Okay. So, how has your community work, how has that changed over the course of your life?

Ali:

Okay, well the only sense that it's changed it's been different programs. Because I went from the Seven Step Foundation and I did that up until the eighties. And then me and my husband broke up and I fell, you know how you are tested. Being tested in your behaviors that you think that you've got yourself together in. You know, try being married for thirteen years and think

that this is it and we're never going to get a divorce and then the next thing that you know you're breaking up. And you've based yourself off of that relationship. And that's what I had done. And as a result of that, you know, I backslid again. Because there was really not a foundation there. So, from that point on, when I went through recovery again, I thought well I've really got to start working on Khadijah. Not working on keeping a marriage together or raising step-kids. All those things are important, you know, but if I'm not working on myself, then what kind of meaning do any of these other things really have. What kind of meaning or substance will I be able to bring to the table. Because if those things are taken away from me, I still need to have me. So, this is what really helped and shaped me as far as having the courage to get involved with other agencies and continue the advocacy for prisoner reform. Not prison reform, because there's nothing I can do about how they run those prisons. When you're in the institutions they want to talk about the bad food and the way they're treated. I don't have anything to do with that. But, if you want to talk about what we're going to do when we get out and how our attitudes going to change. Talk about how these conditions are so bad that I'm not coming back so maybe there's some work that I have to do. So, the same things I was telling other people I saw again. That I needed to continue working on myself. So, as time went on I was involved with the Alvis House. I worked for them for awhile. That's a program for ex-offenders. Then I worked for Youth Advocate Services and I was able to keep foster children-girls with babies. We dealt with that bonding issue. With Children's Services, during that time, if the girl was pregnant they put the girl in one home and the baby in another and start visitation when the girl turned eighteen. But by then she's not really wanting to be a mother and the child has gotten use to the foster parent. So, I presented to Children's Services that there's a bonding issue there. She still needs to learn how to go to school become a parent as well. So, that was something that really strengthened me as a person- being able to guide these young ladies with their children. The only drawback, I don't want to say drawback, a lot of young ladies like to run away because of their relationships and what have you. So, I just made a rule, one of my disciplines for the group, was that if you run away then that's your choice and then your children have to go away to another home. And you will be separated and then the responsibility lays on you. It's not that I'm doing it, it's a choice that you've made because you've found something else more important to you at that time. And then as life went on I got involved with the Winner's Circle which is a program that deals with ex-offenders and re-entry and then I met Dr. Robin Herman through Hanbleyca House. It was at a time where I had just got out of the Monday program, which was like a behavior treatment program. I knew that I didn't want to use drugs anymore I knew that I was tired of making unhealthy decisions in my life with relationships. But I just didn't know how to go about it. Then I was still in that blaming stage. Then Doc introduced me to The Psychology of Incarceration and Hanbleyca House. And Hanbleyca House was a community. And it was a community of, some people were ex-offenders that were working on our lives. And we would come together once or twice a month

and we would discuss a problem and if somebody had a problem and if somebody in the group could help that individual they would let them know that. We would have the talking circle where everyone could go around the room and talk about their issues. And you'd always hear this good positive stuff and that other people were experiencing the same things that you're experiencing but they're offering you alternatives. And thus began my life with Hanbleyca House. And it has spilled over into who I am today. Right now I'm project Coordinator with The Circle of Vision Keepers. And we're getting ready to open a second hand shop because Doc Herman, God bless his soul, he died in 2009 unexpectedly from cancer. He was my bother, my mentor, my spiritual person. I mean he was just so much to me in so many ways. He was someone I could trust and that I could talk to about anything. I always kid cause normally when you're in a relationship like that with a man you also go to bed with him, but I never went to bed with him (laughing). You don't necessarily have to put that in there.

Carrera :

Alright. So, Hanbleyca House. What was it about the philosophy that attracted you to that organization? What about the philosophy is meaningful to you?

Ali:

Basically the philosophy of Hanbleyca House was, Doc Herman always said you belong if you feel like you belong. And I cannot really think of more than two people that we've ever had to ask to leave a group in the whole eight/nine years that we were meeting. Because of their inappropriate behaviors or their disrespect of people. It was an arena of community well-being and what community really means to each and every person. Because everybody has their own definition of community. But it wasn't just a definition it was a behavior. If someone was moving everyone would get together and try to be there. If someone was hungry, you know, we'd try to find food. Whatever the situation was- if you just needed to talk there was always someone you could talk to. It was always just really being supportive in a family way. And that was the basic philosophy that brought me to the group, made me want to continue with the group, and has me doing what I'm doing now. It's knowing that when you're around people that care and are supportive and as Doc always says, when a person asks you to do something you just try to do something- whatever is humanly possible. Part of taking care of others is taking care of yourself. It was a continuous growth because we had workshops and we did different trainings and it was just ongoing. It was such a spiritual and a behavioral growth for everyone who took advantage of it. I'd like to say that everyone did but let's keep it real everybody didn't. Everybody had their own motivations. I can honestly say that the core group of Hanbleyca House was love and caring. Doc also inspired me to get in college after forty-five years. I never thought I was college material. So, right now I have my chemical dependency assistant license but I'm presently going to Sinclair in the mental health and technology mental health studies. My involvement in Hanbleyca House has helped me in other areas of my life like

my family. With me feeling like a family with Hanbleyca House with the unhealthy problems I was having with my own biological family it has helped me strengthen those bonds. Everything that I've learned I can use in other areas of my life and I'm just really grateful for that. It's just really inspired me. It continues to inspire me. I just hope I can be inspiring to others. I just pray that I can let them know that being involved with someone, or being involved with an agency, we must be caring. Doc always said rational detachment. I mean, all those things that go into behaviors and relationships you know. It applies in every area of our life. And basically, this is what we try to teach or empower ex-offenders or empower people who come to us with behavior issues no matter what it is. It could just be someone whose come to us whose a kleptomaniac. Our group is just so diverse, like I stated, I'm Muslim African American. Doc was Jewish. When we where doing a presentation he'd be out there and then he'd say I'd like you to meet my twin sister Khadijah, and out would pop this little African American woman and I'm standing next to a white Jewish man. And I would crack up and he would crack up and everybody in the audience would crack up. But that's just how much being family is more than just biological. It's behavioral, it's caring, it's on so many different levels. That's something that I really felt with him and that's something that I just plan to continue in the work that I do no matter where it takes me. And plus I've met so many Beautiful people since I've been with Doc. The relationships have continued. I know the one gentleman contacted me and he was asking me about different people and it's almost like now, first Doc was like the catalyst for everyone to gather to, cause you usually have one person that's in contact with everyone. Now it seems to be me. And he was saying, "Oh well, you need to gather all Doc's little children and I said yeah honey, you can call me mamma Doc then" (laughing). You know, that's an honor just to be able to keep those relationships going. I've burnt so many bridges in my past and now it's about building bridges. Building lives, saving lives as well as continue with my own.

Carrera :

Can you tell me, how has your philosophy on how to really empower people changed over time?

Ali:

Well, the major thing is that I use to feel like that if I tell them why aren't they doing it than that would get me frustrated. If I am an example I'd think well can't they see it? And that can be frustrating. The last workshop that I went to, me him and Anna, was at Kettering hospital while he was getting hes treatment and there was a lady there who was talking about the life of Victor Frankl. And there's a Gertha quote that, "If you treat a man as he is he will remain the same, but if you treat him how he should be and can be then he will become what he can be and should be." So that's my basic philosophy. I'm still gonna treat that person with respect. Just because you come to me and you're a thief, I'm not gonna treat you like a thief, even though I know you're a thief. I'm gonna treat you in a way that you can be- in a healthy manner.

And that's my philosophy today. That's one of my major philosophies as far as what has changed. I've tried so many different things. I've tried, you know, even to enable people. We've even had that discussion in Hanbleyca House about enablement versus being supportive. My thing now is just how can I be supportive.

Carrera :

What are some of the challenges you've faced in your work?

Ali:

Some of the major challenges where, I have a lot of health challenges. I was working at an agency and I fell over a computer monitor and it was just when I started school, just when everything was changing, just when I found out Doc was sick. And to me it was just like my divorce finding out, oh God, all the things that I said I have together I'm finding out I'm not so together. The basic challenge that I have with all of that is just knowing there are going to be challenges. And it's basically what my attitude is about them. There's always going to be challenges, there's always going to be disappointments. There's always going to be death. There's always going to be life. There's always going to be suffering. But what is my attitude about it? And that has been my major-major challenge. Is just trying to balance all of that in relationship to me because I am just such a caring person. And I know that about me. And I want people to be well. Especially the people that I care about most. I really want them to be happy.

Carrera :

Yeah. What lessons do you carry away from your work?

Ali:

That everything is a lesson. That's the main thing. That everything is a lesson. That everything changes. And that, no matter what the lessons are, as long as you have a foundation of love, no matter what- whether you're getting it or receiving it, you know, don't be expecting it or anything. But no matter what someone else is doing that that should not change who I am as a person. And that also has to do with Victor Frankl. That no matter what my conditions are, I ask myself. Does that change who I am as a person, as a woman, as a Muslim, as an advocate, as a friend. That's the basic lesson that I've learned in life. There's always going to be conditions, there's always going to be problems, there's always going to be changes in environment. But does that change me as a person. That's my basic lesson.

Carrera :

How has this work impacted your life and the life of you friends and family?

Ali:

Well, basically it's strengthened it in a lot of ways. Because I'm finding my boundaries. And I'm

finding balance. Because most people who know me, like I said when I was younger I use to be timid and I'd take on stuff and be burdened down with others stuff as well as my own. Where as now I'm learning balance and it's really making my relationships a lot stronger with people. I may not know where there coming from, but they'll know where I'm coming from. And that's all I want to be clear is that people understand where I am coming from. Cause I can basically see where there coming from but is that really for me to try to figure out? I chose not to react I chose to respond in a positive way. And this is basically how my relationships are with people. It's strengthening in a lot of ways.

Carrera :

Thank you very much for sharing.

