

**Interviewer:** What country are you from and what does it mean to you?

**Halima:** I'm from Somalia. It is located in the Horn of Africa. It has a rich and diverse history. And Somali means a lot to me and it has a special place in my heart for several reasons. First reason is, it's where I have deep cultural roots and diversity, and it's a land of my ancestors, and it's traditions, and it's language. It's where all my identity comes from. The oral storytelling and poetry, and it's where my family's generation came from.

**Interviewer:** When did you come to the United States?

**Halima:** I came to the United States in 1998 and my family fled the civil war in Somalia. So they went to Kenya camp- That's where I was born. We came to the United States in 1998.

**Interviewer:** Do you know who helped you come over to the United States?

**Halima:** I think it was Catholic Community Service that helped us come to the United States.

**Halima:** What is the story behind your name?

**Halima:** I don't have a story behind my name.

**Interviewer:** What is the meaning of being welcoming to you?

**Halima:** Being welcoming to me is about creating an inclusive and open-minded environment. An environment where all people from all backgrounds and nations come together and learn different cultures and just being available to help each other and be united.

**Interviewer:** What's your favorite holiday?

**Halima:** My favorite holiday is a Muslim holiday called, *Eid* it is where all the Muslim community come together and celebrate the end of Ramadan.

**Interviewer:** What was your life like before you immigrated?

**Halima:** So I don't remember, I was three years old when I came here. But from the stories that my mom told me, it was hard because the refugee camp wasn't all sunshine and rainbows. It was hard because there was no access to medical and that stuff. And then before my parents went to the refugee camp there was a civil war going on, so they had to flee that and they wanted a better life for their children. So that's why we came here.

**Interviewer:** What's one of the biggest experiences that you had that changed your life when you got here in America?

**Halima:** One of the big changes was coming to the U.S. not knowing the culture and not knowing English, and I have to adapt to the environment- that was pretty hard. And coming to a state where the population were white and there was like nobody that looked like me. So it was hard to adapt and to fit in into the society and just learn from other people's

perspective, and their struggles, and how I can better help other generations when they come here.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me about your religious and spiritual beliefs?

**Halima:** I'm Muslim. So I pray five times a day and yeah.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me how you and your parents are alike and different?

**Halima:** My parents are alike, we share the same culture, same beliefs, and we came from the same religion. And something that we're different is I have an education and they didn't have the chance to get an education, so that's one of the big differences that we both have.

**Interviewer:** Could you tell me about your educational experience?

**Halima:** So I recently graduated with my Master of Social Work. So I have that degree. I love going to school. So I'm done right now and trying to figure out what to do next.

**Interviewer:** What is your 'American Dream'?

**Halima:** My 'American Dream' is to have a stable career and to do what I love and have access to health care.

**Interviewer:** What are your hopes for your community?

**Halima:** My hopes for my community is to have better access to health care. To come together and to be free from all the struggles they're having. And have free mental health access.

**Interviewer:** What's different between your culture and American culture?

**Halima:** There's a big difference. In my culture, they're very tight and they work together a lot. We celebrate two holidays, Ramadan and Eid, and that's the biggest difference because the U.S. celebrates so much holidays that we don't celebrate.

**Interviewer:** When in life have you felt most alone and most connected?

**Halima:** When I was in like elementary school because there was nobody that looked like me and I was like an outsider throughout the whole elementary school and I got bullied and harassed several times. Most connected is one I realized that there are people that look like me in this world. I was able to learn to love myself and just to educate people about my culture and my religion.

**Interviewer:** What objects tell the story of your life?

**Halima:** I think it is the traditional clothing. It tells us who we are and where we come from. Because our traditional clothes are very bright and colorful and it attracts people.

**Interviewer:** What are you grateful for in America?

**Halima:** I'm really grateful for education and having that opportunity to get an education and to be able to work and not have to worry about what's been going on back home. And I'm very grateful that my parents brought us here to have a better life.

**Interviewer:** If you had the choice to go back to Somalia would you?

**Halima:** It depends on the situation. If there is safety, there's no wars or anything, then I will go back and learn my culture and my language. So, yes.

**Interviewer:** So I have heard that there's a drought going on in Somalia. How do you feel about that?

**Halima:** It's very sad and devastating, and they don't have a lot of resources for them. And so they had to go buy things themselves. And it's sad to see how people are dying throughout this drought. So I wish I could do something about it. One day I'll be able to help.

**Interviewer:** Could you tell me about the Somali community in Utah, and in Salt Lake County?

**Halima:** Yes. So the Somali community here is very small. There's not a lot of big community here. But we are pretty much a community that loves our culture, and loves to celebrate when a person gets married. They're very kind and they're always welcoming to everybody. So if a Somali person comes to you, they will always welcome you to the house for food and just enjoy life.

**Interviewer:** What college did you go to?

**Halima:** I went to the University of Utah.

**Interviewer:** What is your favorite holiday or food memory?

**Halima:** My favorite holiday is Eid. It's a Muslim holiday. My favorite food is a traditional food called *Sambusa*.

**Interviewer:** What did you feel when you first came to America?

**Halima:** I was three years old, so I don't remember.

**Interviewer:** What is your job now?

**Halima:** I work at the Salt Lake County Health Department, and I'm a community health care worker. It's where I help the community get access to mental health, give them resources to different clinics, and rent assistance, and mutual aid, and all that stuff.

**Interviewer:** What traditions have been passed down in your family?

**Halima:** One of the transitions that has been passed down is during Ramadan everybody cooks together and then we eat afterwards. So I think that's a pretty nice tradition that is passed down to our family.

**Interviewer:** How was it for you being a health care worker?

**Halima:** It's been good. It's hard because there's not a lot of access to health care, and the health care system is not good right now. And it's so expensive just to get seen. So it's hard to navigate the healthcare system.

**Interviewer:** What do you think would change in the community if there was free health care?

**Halima:** It would change immensely. There wouldn't be a barrier or burden on a family because a lot of people don't believe in health care and they don't trust the health care system because of the prices and they don't know where they're going because of the language. I think having free access will help the family and community.

**Interviewer:** Are you in citizenship right now?

**Halima:** I am a citizen. So when we came, I was three years old, so my mom did the citizenship for me. So it was very easy for me- no test.