

A Journey Home Questions

Why Did she erase her culture?--Elias

I wouldn't say I erased it entirely, but I did bury it deep within myself to fit in at school. I wanted to relate to my classmates and I thought the only way of doing that was fully embracing American culture and abandoning Iraqi culture. We were not really taught about other cultures in school growing up, it was not until high school, college and eventually after graduation that I started to ask more questions about my identity. Luckily, I was able to rediscover Iraqi culture and adapt parts of both cultures into my everyday life.

Is her family alive today.?--Aileen

Yes, most of my family is alive today. Unfortunately, I lost my baba (dad) and my amo (uncle, baba's brother) to lung cancer after my first visit to Iraq. I am honored that baba got to see me go to his home country and meet his brother and the rest of his family before all of that happened.

What kind of bed do you sleep in?--Arianna J.

I sleep in a queen sized bed with a memory foam mattress topper! In college I didn't have a bed frame, but now I do LOL.

How did you survive?--Eddie

Immigrants are crazy resilient, we know not to give up even when things get hard. While a lot of curve balls have been thrown my way, and my family's way, I try to remember the hard times always pass and there are plenty of good times ahead.

How did the mom survive 3 wars without dying? -Bear

Resilience! She's a tough woman and never gave up no matter how hard it got. My family kept a low profile (except my dad, which

landed him in some hot water and forced us to leave Iraq). Mainly, we kept our heads down and tried to seek shelter and were offered kindness along the way.

Where did you hide in Iran, Turkey and Syria and did they treat you with respect? –Lena

We hid in the mountains of Iran, right at the border of Iraq. In Turkey we spent time in Istanbul. I'm not sure where we stayed in Syria. Mama said Istanbul was gorgeous. Iran was hard, my sister was born there and they refused to give her a birth certificate.

Why did you write this story? -Eloise

I wrote this story to pay tribute to my family's sacrifices and to keep a record of their own journeys. Growing up I always saw commercials for these American websites that told you about your family's history. I knew those websites wouldn't be able to tell my family's history, so I decided to write it myself.

How were you feeling when there was the war?--Emily

The war mostly made me sad for my parents and scared for my family in Iraq. I couldn't understand why people had to die, and to be honest I still don't understand. I think too much is sacrificed during a war, on both sides, but mainly where the violence touches ground.

Will you ever go back to your country again?--Angelina

Yes! I have gone back to Iraq every year since my first trip in 2019. It's great seeing baba's side of the family and being a part of their lives even though they live so far away.

Where do you live now? What do you eat? Are you a mom?--Quinn

I just moved to Washington D.C. from Lansing Michigan to start a

new job at a place that fights for the environment in court. I eat lots of things! But my favorite types of food are Mexican and Mediterranean. I am not a mom but I am an auntie to my sister's two dogs.



Why a sword?--Mateo

I just thought the sword was really cool.

Do you visit your family?--Gus

I do! I try to go back every year if I can.