

Interview Ferozan

D: Tell me a little bit about yourself and your ethnical background

F: My name is Ferozan and I am currently 36 years old. I am happily married and a mom of 3. I was born and raised in Afghanistan, Kabul, but moved to The Netherlands when I was 20 years old.

D: Why did you leave Afghanistan?

F: When I was eighteen years old I got engaged and got married 6 months later. After my marriage I stayed 2 more years in Afghanistan even though me and my husband were trying to get my paperwork done so I could move to The Netherlands. My husband already lived in The Netherlands and had a stable job. Unfortunately the paperwork took around 2 years and in those 2 years the war in Afghanistan became more dangerous by the day. I left Afghanistan for 2 reasons: my husband and the war. It became really dangerous in Afghanistan to a point that we didn't even have the guts to step outside our houses. It was too much of a risk and I couldn't picture myself living in a situation like that, let alone raise a child in that chaos. That is why I decided to move to Amsterdam, where me and my family would have a secure future.

D: Was the move from Kabul to Amsterdam hard? and what were the things you did when you came to The Netherlands?

F: When I landed in Amsterdam I was really nervous and didn't feel comfortable. The people around me were clothed differently and were talking in a language that I completely did not understand. It was all very new to me and I tried to adapt quickly. This didn't go as fast as I thought it would, but I kept trying and now I can't even imagine not feeling at home here. After 2 weeks of being in Amsterdam I started learning the language. I went to school 5 times a week and studied really hard. After one year I finally mastered the language and got my certificate. I eventually got my passport and became an official citizen of the Netherlands. By the time I got my passport I was 21 years old and had a two year old child. I decided not to work and eventually became a stay at home mom and I couldn't be happier!

D: What were your hopes or expectations for your new life here?

F: I didn't have a lot of expectations when I came here and to be honest I didn't even know what to expect. I didn't know how The Netherlands looked and didn't know how life would be here. At first I couldn't imagine living here because I grew up in Afghanistan close to my family. It was sometimes really hard not having my family around. I lived with a lot of sisters in Afghanistan, 12 sisters including me. I've always lived in a full and lousy house and really got used to that. Coming to Amsterdam it was just me, my husband and my little kiddo. It was really quiet in the house but luckily by then we had phones and we could call family and friends. In my spare time I would go shopping, but most of the time that would be a little hard since I couldn't speak the language very well and naturally had an accent. I mostly hoped for a life without the fear of going outside and being free in living my own way.

D; what did you lose from your own cultural identity?

F: Well, when I left Afghanistan I made a promise to myself that I will teach my children the culture and the language, which I eventually did. My children can speak farsi fluently and know a lot about the Afghan culture. We always celebrate the national holidays and I taught them that keeping our culture alive is one of the most important things there is ,since there won't be someone else to teach them. I hope that the war will be less dangerous than it is now, so me and my family can visit our beautiful country. Learning about the language is one thing, but actually visiting the country itself, is a whole another experience. I wouldn't necessarily say that I lost something from my own cultural identity, but I do miss a lot of things. For example waking up to the smell of persian bread and seeing people walking the streets in Afghan clothes. Me and my family already visited Kabul 3 times but alas we couldn't visit Afghanistan as a family since 2014. I try to make Afghan dishes as much as possible to make my children get used to the Afghan dishes and spices, and thankfully they love it! I also try to teach my eldest daughter the most famous dishes so she hopefully will pass her cooking skills to her own children. Passing down my culture is really important, because without learning about our own and each other's backgrounds, our cultures will disappear and our history will be lost.