

## **FHS Oral History Project – Mina Raky**

### **Description:**

Mina Raky was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1981. Mina recounted his upbringing in Cairo, specifically the challenges he faced as a religious minority practicing Christianity in a Muslim-majority country. His mom recognized his musical talents at an early age, and he attended the Conservatoire to learn how to play the piano professionally. Mina deepened his musical knowledge once he graduated from Helwan University in Cairo with a bachelor's in Music Performance. After college, Mina performed Christian worship music and passed out Bibles during his performances. Mina feared for his safety while performing these actions, given his status as a religious minority, and thus fled Egypt, emigrating to the United States, specifically to Maitland, Florida, in 2006. Mina described the similarities and differences in performing Christian worship music in Egypt and the United States. Additionally, Mina discussed how his minority status shifted from religion to ethnicity once he settled in the United States, with the legacies of the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks influencing such changes. Realizing that performing music proved ineffective for sustaining a family, Mina returned to school, graduating with a bachelor's degree in mathematics education in 2012, where he merged his passion for teaching with his love of math. Mina recounted his professional career in education, working as a teacher for several schools across Seminole County. In 2022, Mina graduated with a master's in education leadership from the University of Central Florida, allowing him to serve as an assistant principal in Seminole County for two years. Mina explained his current role of leading the Department of Educational Technology, and how the COVID Pandemic influenced this decision. Lastly, Mina shared his broader observations about Florida and its cultural changes for almost twenty years.

### **Transcription:**

00;00;00 - 00;00;14

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** [This is] Sebastian Garcia interviewing Mina Raky on May 21st, 2025, in Sanford, Florida for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Can you please restate your name, date of birth and where you were born?

00;00;15 - 00;00;17

**MINA RAKY:** My name is Mina Raky. Born in Egypt.

00;00;17 - 00;00;18

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Where in Egypt?

00;00;18 - 00;00;20

**MINA RAKY:** In Cairo.

00;00;20 - 00;00;28

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Can you tell me about your childhood growing up in the late 80s, early 90s in Cairo, Egypt. What was that like?

00;00;28 - 00;02;05

**MINA RAKY:** So the first, of course, for seven years, I do not remember much, but I remember when I was ten, we live in an apartment. So it was kind of like the housing settings in

here in Florida, but we were seventh floor. I remember school. My school was a Christian school, and that was where I received my education and my first language there was Arabic, second language was English. So most of my subject areas were in English, and I remember playing soccer a lot, biking around the streets. There was not any other type of form of fun besides, like, soccer and bicycle. Back in the 2000 or 1999, I was introduced to my first computer. And that was where I kind of get attached to computers and video games. Oh, now, I remember when I was five years old, my mom kind of like, figure out I can play music from a toy keyboard. I was able to make some tunes. So I went to the Conservatoire, which is a French music school to learn the piano. I remember, that was it.

00;02;05 - 00;02;08

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Were you an only child?

00;02;08 - 00;02;13

**MINA RAKY:** I have a sister. She is younger than me, four years younger.

00;02;14 - 00;02;16

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What did your parents do for a living?

00;02;16 - 00;02;32

**MINA RAKY:** My dad is a doctor. Now he is a professor. My mom was a teacher. A history teacher, actually.

00;02;32 - 00;02;35

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And what grades did she teach?

00;02;35 - 00;02;40

**MINA RAKY:** She taught middle school as well.

00;02;40 - 00;02;45

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What years were your parents born? Were your parents born in Egypt as well?

00;02;45 - 00;03;05

**MINA RAKY:** Yes, but not in Cairo. My dad like South Egypt, my mom, South Egypt. But South Cairo, like three or four hours South Cairo. They [were] born in the 60s. Both of them.

00;03;05 - 00;03;28

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And you know, you were around thirty years or so removed from when Egypt became independent from the British. I am just curious if there were any stories that, I know your parents also were, as you just told me, [born in the] 60s, so that was in the 50s. But if your grandparents are, I am just curious if your family ever passed down stories of that transition.

00;03;29 - 00;06;08

**MINA RAKY:** That is a good question. I love history, I know you do too. Let's start here. Egypt is not an Arab country. We are the Pharaohs. We have our own language, Coptic, that looks like Latin. That was what we spoke in the Coptic Orthodox Church, I remember from my childhood was my Coptic Orthodox Church. We speak Coptic. We did not speak Arabic. So Arabic came was Islam. Egyptian Arabic is different than the original Saudi Arabic. So we have totally different Arabic. I can relate this topic regards to your question because our Arabic is combined with Spanish words, English words, the Egyptian Arabic. So even the accent for Egyptian Arabic is different than the accent of the Saudi Arabic, because we have our original Coptic language that influenced the accent for our Arabic. Like now I have an accent because I speak multiple languages, right? So in Egypt, same thing. They learn the Arabic while they have a Coptic language with the original language. So like Puntalón. Puntalón is Spanish, but this is the Arabic word in Egyptian to use in the dialog.

So the stories, regards to the question you asked me, in some parts in Egypt, you could tell this is built by the French people. This is built by the English people. And you could tell like there is a big city just for Jewish people that they have, like they were selling gold and diamonds at the time in the 50s. My mom [was] originally Italian, so in north Egypt, in Alexandria, there were Italians, still till today, it is all mixed. It was Alexander the Great that built Alexandria. So it was kind of like it is all mixed. You could tell the history in Egypt anywhere you go. Egypt is beautiful in history. That is why I love history. The British people built a lot of, they did really good stuff in Egypt. They built all the trains, railways and the train tracks and they established a lot of, they built bridges, like, there is well known bridges in Cairo, actually built by the English people. And you can see the names is still on the bridges. Sorry I took too much to answer that question.

00;06;08 - 00;06;43

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** No, not at all. You know, to your point, Egypt does have a rich history, not only in its modern iteration as a republic, but even extending way back in antiquity. But since you mentioned it and since you told me that your mom was a history teacher, I have two questions. Even at an early age, were you aware of or enjoyed history? And also my second question is what type of history did they teach in Egypt?

00;06;43 - 00;07;47

**MINA RAKY:** So of course, history is different by grade level. Anywhere you go in Egypt, there is a history of the pharaohs. You could see the temples; you could see the pyramids. If they dig around down the road from my house, you find the temple, they find a tomb. They find something. You are physically involved and visually involved in the history in Egypt. So mostly the pharaohs was kind of like very, you could see mummies, when you go to the museum in Egypt, now there is a bigger one. They just built a new one, like a couple of years ago. And there is a history everywhere, man. Like, if you go to South Egypt, people live on top of tombs. When you dig down in Alexandria you could see, Alexander the Great was kind of like the Greek kind of history. So North Egypt, Greek history, South Egypt and Cairo is more into pharaohs and all that.

00;07;43 - 00;08;01

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Were there any larger political, social, cultural events or developments in Egypt during the 90s when you were growing up that directly or indirectly impacted you and your family?

00;08;01 - 00;11;20

**MINA RAKY:** So I remember somewhere in my childhood that when Egypt totally received the last part from Israel, Taba, Taba was part of Egyptian land, took by Israelis and now is returned back to. That was what I remember. As a Christian there were two kind of like—I think maybe ten, fifteen percent maybe of Coptic Orthodox and Christians overall. So the majority are Muslims. But when you go south Egypt, more Christians, maybe the numbers are not accurate because no one physically kind of like counted this. Maybe nowadays there are better numbers. But we were minorities. I am not against any religion, but minorities are always minorities. There were no rights in Egypt that will defend you. And here in America, any minority, their organization will defend them. But Egypt maybe now is different. I am talking about my childhood. So in the class, I was in a Christian school, all the people around me were kind of like for sixty percent were Muslims. While I am the only one who practice Christianity while, “oh, you look weird.” “Why you do this?” “Why you do that?” Well, what? Because Egypt's turn to be more a Muslim population country. So I got influenced with that because I had to study subject areas that would teach me Quran, which is, I do believe in Quran. I am Christian, I believe in the Bible and Jesus Christ. So why I am learning this? So I have been forced to learn stuff that I do not want to learn. This is one downside, but it was good to learn because at least now I know what the Quran is, I know what is in it. So I am knowledgeable. So it was good for education purposes. Now, I learned that, but the other thing was political was, it was the conflict between Egyptians and Israelis because Israelis, because of the land. Like back in 1967, that was when Israel took Sinai. But to be honest, I always hated how they kind of like in the media looks at Israelis as the devil. And I will be honest with you, man, like, you could tell this in the Middle East right now. I lived in Taba for a while, and I met with a lot of good people from there. I feel like they look like Egyptians. They feel they talk like Egyptians. The same culture, same thing. It was just politics turns everything to be they are our enemies. No, they are not. Politics creates conflicts. So I was always in that fight. Like, when I see any minorities, I fight for them because I was a minority as a Christian. So hopefully this answer your question.

00;11;20 - 00;11;28

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Yeah. Absolutely. So, after your primary, secondary education experience, did you attend college in Egypt?

00;11;28 - 00;12;08

**MINA RAKY:** So, yes, I did attend. I finished my first bachelor's in Egypt. As I said earlier, my mom figure out I have talents and music. And then, I went to Conservatoire, and then I took my first bachelor in learning more music academically, and I finished my first degree in Egypt in Music Performance.

00;12;08 - 00;12;09

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What university?

00;12;10 - 00;12;14

**MINA RAKY:** University is called Helwan University. It is in Cairo.

00;12;14 - 00;12;22

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And once you finished your degree, did you immediately start performing? Did you enter the workforce? What was ?

00;12;22 - 00;13;06

**MINA RAKY:** Very good question. I was actually performing while I am in college because as I said, I was musicians since I was five years old. So I was performing, mostly I was doing worship music. I accepted Jesus as my personal savior back in 1995. And then I involved into more Christian music, like worship music, production and performing and singing and all that. And then I started working as a musician in bands and gigs and all that.

00;13;06 - 00;13;19

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** When did you leave Egypt to the US and why? What were the circumstances that prompted you to leave your home country?

00;13;19 - 00;15;12

**MINA RAKY:** Since I was a kid, I was influenced by the US media, movies and media overall. So I love the country. I love the freedom of practice religion. Remember I was a minority. When you are in a minor, in anything, you try to find where you can be free and when you can take these chains away. Especially when I got involved more in worship music and I [was] being a troublemaker for the government, in a way that you are not allowed to go share the good news and the Bible and give away Bibles and all that. In Egypt you are not allowed to do that. So I would leave the country. So, I was not forced to leave the country. At the time I got married in '06 with my wife, still married, twenty years anniversary, almost. And we decided if we are going to have kids, we do not want them to go through what we are going through. So we moved. I had the opportunity to come to the US since '04, since I was coming here to perform, as a worship leader and musician and serving in the Arabic community, Arabic churches in here in the US between Florida, California, New Jersey, [and] Boston. I went everywhere. I got the offer to come as R1 visa, which is religious visa to come and serve. We took advantage of this opportunity, and we moved to the US in '06, after we got married like couple months.

00;15;12 - 00;15;15

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Florida specifically?

00;15;15 - 00;15;40

**MINA RAKY:** So I had two opportunities, either California or Florida. But at the time we talk about Florida is very cheap. Not like nowadays. California was always hot and expensive. And it was good to start in here—easier to start in here, I would say. And my wife got pregnant when we moved, and she gave birth in '07 to our first daughter.

00;15;40 - 00;15;42

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And here in Central Florida or?

00;15;42 - 00;15;48

**MINA RAKY:** In Maitland.

00;15;48 - 00;16;05

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How different and similar was performing worship music here in the States compared to in Egypt?

00;16;05 - 00;17;15

**MINA RAKY:** You know when you do something and you should not do, you do it while you are on fire. Why? Because you are not allowed to do it and sometimes you get in big trouble. This was in Egypt. Egypt, there is more freedom right now. I see change in Egypt. I see people's mentality change. We are talking about years ago. In Egypt when we were worshipping, you could tell everybody is on fire. Here in America, when you move in here, first it was diverse. Being like Arabic church, that means Egyptian church, that means anybody speaks Arabic, Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptians, you name it, Tunisian, Moroccans, people, converts from Islam to Christianity, diverse, diverse, diverse, diverse everywhere. So they came from a different school of warship. I came from a different school of worship, and I am trying to align with my school of worship. So there is not conflicts, but you get people to understand what you are trying to do. So keep like teaching them new ways of doing things.

00;17;15 - 00;17;32

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** In what ways did your perceptions about the US changed once you settled here permanently as an immigrant, especially since you told me how at an early age you were already sort of influenced by media? And so when you were finally here, how did that change?

00;17;32 - 00;19;30

**MINA RAKY:** You can sense my accent. My schools were all in English, but we [did] not speak American accent in Egypt. So when I moved in here, I got challenged with my accents. Of course, the dialog is different. You know, academic English is totally different than what we speak, and it was different. So I did not understand the accent. People speak too quick. This was a big challenge. So as anybody moving from a different country, the language barrier. So I was able to developed quick skills. I hit college right away, took English courses to write and to speak. At the time, there were not apps that teach you how to speak accents, iPhone came up after, very limited too, like it was only AT&T, nobody can afford that at the time. So yes, that was a big challenge. The culture as well. Like media is something media gives you everything shiny. They put makeup on everything. So when you get to that reality, it was different. You set high expectations to everything while some of them are very low expectations like to live in America I have to work hard to survive, to achieve. Of course in America everything is possible that gets your eyes to open. "Oh, I want this right. I want this house. I want to live in here. I want a lake view." You have to dream, it is eye opening. You know what I am saying? When you have eye openings, now you changing culture, changing your mindset. So this was challenging, so the first five years were hard.

00;19;30 - 00;19;48

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And in those within those five years and even after—you were a religious minority in your home country Egypt, here in the States, you are an immigrant. So that was another type of minority experience. So just talk to me about that.

00;19;48 - 00;21;57

**MINA RAKY:** So remember we came here in '06, '01 was September 11th. I look not exactly Egyptian because Egyptians are darker than myself. But I have an accent, and I speak Arabic. So everywhere I go “I am Christian.” It was very kind of like into “I am not a Muslim,” which now when I think about it, it was not right. I was trying to survive, I think, because people look at you as another minority. So like, I moved from a minority because I am a Christian now I am moving to another country being a minority because of my skin tone, trying to tell everyone I am a Christian, I am not a Muslim. It was upside down. Like, I feel like it was not the right thing. I get it. '01 was tough on everyone. I remember that day. I was sitting looking at the country that I love and adore getting hurt like that. It hurts me. It hurts me and one of the guys was Egyptian. I said, like, why? Why this happening? And afterwards, one of my best friends in Egypt got bombed from another—so I figure out, oh, it was not about being Egyptian. It is everywhere. That was terrorism. Because remember, prior to '01, we did not understand what Osama Bin Laden—I did not learn about that. I just got shocked in '01, and then in Egypt in '01 to '06 that I moved to the US, we were kind of like facing what America—keep bombing churches while people are praying. Two of my best friends died. So I felt moving to America convincing, I do not belong to them. It was very hard me mentally and emotionally. Because I have Muslims friends, and I respect them. I know they are not like that, but it was a conflict. So I had to explain to everyone, one of the biggest challenge when I moved to the US after September 11th. It was, “I am Christian.”

00;21;57 - 00;22;20

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Yeah, absolutely. And I am glad you shared that because I was going to ask how September 11th, sort of September 11th affected as you said everyone, and particularly for people of color, brown skin people. It was even more dangerous, the situation.

00;22;20 - 00;22;21

**MINA RAKY:** Yes, yes.

00;22;22 - 00;22;38

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** So thanks for sharing. You shared with me before we recorded how you have a second bachelor's degree in mathematical education. And you got that here in UCF, correct?

00;22;38 - 00;22;39

**MINA RAKY:** Yes. Correct.

00;22;39 - 00;22;44

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What year was that and what inspired you to go back to school and get that degree specifically?

00;22;44 - 00;25;36

**MINA RAKY:** So when I moved to the US, I said I moved to for ministry, but I was not funded, so I had to work. So, okay, the only thing I can do is playing music. But I want to build the family. So I start traveling a lot, between churches around the country performing, find gigs here and there. But I figured out I would not be able to sustain a lifestyle for a family. I want to have kids. My wife and I just got married, and I want to spend more time with her. Because first two years move into America, our marriage was [unstable]. Like, we were almost about to separate because, as I said, all the cultural challenges shock her as well, more than me, actually. So, I decided to find something else to do and I know I love math, music and math blends in the brain, I think, as science say. So I started I decided to be a teacher. I can help the country with this. I love math. I love this. It was a ministry. You know, teaching is a ministry. So I finished my first bachelor, and I graduated with mathematics in education back in 2012. So it took me some time. See, it took me some time to decide to go back from '06 to back to school, finish a degree. Then I became a teacher in Southwest Middle School in Doctor Phillips back in 2012. And then, since that day I am in education, became to be an assistant principal. I moved to different schools. We were moving from city to city, and when you first graduate, what are going to take a job anywhere possible just to put in your resume. And I graduated in December, so I want to find a job in December in mid-year, so any school open, I will take it. So that was why I was living in Seminole County. Always lived in Seminole County or by the UCF area, UCF, Orange County or Seminole County around Winter Springs or Sanford area or Lake Mary area. So this is where we were living. So I moved to other schools in Seminole County till I became an assistant principal back in—because to be an assistant principal, I have to have a master's in education leadership and be state certified. So I finished back in 2022 that, my master's from the UCF. And became assistant principal for two years. Now I am running a department in educational technology in the county office.

00;25;36 - 00;25;37

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** In Seminole County?

00;25;37 - 00;25;3

**MINA RAKY:** Seminole County public schools.

00;25;39 - 00;25;59

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And I am curious. In what ways do you think have you navigated being an Egyptian immigrant in the workplace, has that had any impact, influence, affect?

00;26;00 - 00;26;59

**MINA RAKY:** So that is a good question. So here in Central Florida, we are very diverse, color and culturally. We are very culturally responsive. You can see Spanish, African Americans, Middle Eastern, Indians, Asian and white people like we are everywhere very mixed really everywhere. So I did not face any challenges. Actually my best friends, she is African American, and I have other best friend, two white people, I have a Greek friend. We all kind of like hang out. And so I did not face any challenges in the workplace. Seminole County is very diverse. And we are like a small family in here, especially Seminole County schools. We are very family oriented. So we protect each other. We respect each other.

00;26;59 - 00;27;06



**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Can you describe to me sort of specific examples of what you have done in these leadership positions in education?

00;27;06 - 00;28;49

**MINA RAKY:** I will where I shine. I shine in technology, like education technology. As I said, I like math. And then prior to this, I was a musician, and I worked at Apple as a part time. Let me explain why I work at Apple. When I work at Orange County, it was not enough to survive. I had at the time, one kid. Now I have four. But my wife was not working. And making the teacher money was not enough. So I had to find another job. And they got me working at Apple in the genius bar. So I start picking up a lot of technology skills and IT skills, and I figured out I was good at it. And I have very good people skills and so I do good in customer service. So prior to me being an AP [Assistant Principal], I was working in information services in the county as a network specialist. So the best thing I shined was customer service and helping teachers to teach while make sure all the technology were working as well as they know how to use their technology. So this is where I shine. [And during] COVID, it was a big deal because everybody shut down in just a click right. Everybody is out of their business. So we need to get them up and running. So I invented this cross apps to get the teachers to teach from their homes. Teaching them how to operate, how to teach and be a successful and efficient as well as impacting the students education, not just being a cliché. No, I want the students to learn. So that was where I shine, educational technology.

00;28;49 - 00;29;15

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How have you maintained your Egyptian culture, heritage, traditions with your children who were born in America, but at the same time, how have you also taught them to be American, quote unquote, if that makes any sense? Just talk to me about that.

00;29;15 - 00;31;12

**MINA RAKY:** I will be honest with you. I do not need to try to make them be an American because they are American. They are born in here and they go to schools in here. They go to church in here. So there is nothing to teach at this point. It was what we kind of like trying to tell them is where we kind of, as their parents, our origin. They never went to Egypt. They do not have Egyptian nationality, but they know that their parents are Egyptians. But actually out my house—I will tell you something. It might sound weird [*Mina asked if recorder still had batteries*], but because I love here, I love this country, I belong here more than Egypt. Since I moved here when I was twenty some twenty-two years old. So I am here for almost twenty years now. I kind feel like I belong here more. So I care that they know we are Egyptians, but I do want to teach them much about Egyptian culture because I believe it will cause a lot of conflict for them. I believe they will live in here. They are living here. They will live in here. They are going to get married here. So maybe teach them some a little bit of Arabic. My daughter is going to turn eighteen very soon. I am so proud of her. She wants to learn Arabic because she want to help the CIA. She wants to learn law. And she want to speak Arabic to defend this country through some stats or analysis or whatever she wants to do, but she that is her mindset to speaks, write Arabic. So she's learning Arabic. She can speak good Arabic. But my other kids, they do not care much, to be honest. They understand. We speak Arabic at home, still Egyptian Arabic, as explained at the beginning not exactly “Arabic Arabic,” but at least some words.

00;31;12 - 00;31;28

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Interesting. Somewhat relatedly, since you have been here now for twenty years, do you think there is a better understanding of people from the Middle East, like Americans understanding people from the Middle East generally or Egyptians specifically?

00;31;28 - 00;32;38

**MINA RAKY:** So...sorry it is so windy, you can cut this out. So people from the Middle East, they are more emotional. They are emotionally driven, let's phrase it [that way]. Of course here in America you trying to find a phrase instead of saying a whole story and without getting to the point. To get to the point, Egyptians and Middle Eastern [people] are very emotional and emotionally driven. So when you are emotionally driven, you are very kind, very sweet, but you cannot control your emotions, which is a problem. And here in America, what I learned is we analyze everything. We try not to be emotional. We try to think about what we say, and we do without integrates any emotions in, especially in the workforce. So this is the difference. If you want to find the words—emotionally driven.

00;32;38 - 00;33;09

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Yeah, that is an interesting response. And I am sure also since we sort of initially frame this theme of the conversation with September 11th and we are going on almost twenty five years since September 11th, from your perspective, do you think relations between people from the Middle East and people here in the United States have changed, have improved, have stayed the same, worse, what do you think?

00;33;09 - 00;36;57

**MINA RAKY:** So, that is a very good question. And I will think about it with you right now in in stages because I am not prepared to—that is a very good question. Back in September 11th, when I moved in '06, people just look at dark skin, even if you are a Mexican or Puerto Rican and, like, “stay away,” unless they see a cross. You wearing a cross or something, and it [gave the belief] that you will not hurt them. So the hurt part was kind of like, makes people in American here put you on a side or stay away, please. And then Islam Muslims leaders in America after, I think for three years after September 11th, start explaining these are radicals Muslims. They are not like the Muslims. But to be honest, I studied the Quaran and what these people do is read the Quaran. So I get what Muslims read. Leaders are trying to put makeup on reality, which is okay, listen, if this is going to help us to live together, let's do it. But the point is, the reality is, since I studied the Quaran and there is some—they need to think about what is written in the Quaran and about what these people are doing, how these people are relating themselves to Quaran. That is where I think they need to look at. But I know this is not exactly related to the question, but nowadays, especially, I live in a small city, Sanford, Lake Mary. Everybody knows me. Everybody treats me as I am American. I do not have much accent. But still if you go to Arizona or some Midwest, there are still some people hurt because what happened September 11th is not easy. I was just watching a documentary about Bin Laden over Netflix and man, it is shocking. What happened is shocking. And every documentary brings point of view from a different perspective that gets you to think deeply on what happened that day and kind of gets you to meditate to what is the reason and how we may prevent this from happening again. So this is why I am saying my daughter when she sees stuff like that, “I want

to get into this. I know I can learn Arabic and learn right Arabic. I grow in a Middle Eastern culture a little bit because of her parents,” but she can help, so that was why I push her to proceed this career goals and, but there is no much in America, at least in Florida as we speak about Florida here, there is [diversity]. We see that not much damage has happened in the past ten years. God has protected this country. And God bless America as we as we speak. You know, I pray for this country every day for safety for our people. And I any radical, regardless of as Muslims or, you see, like, school shooting is nothing to do with radicals. It was just like kids that they take bad decisions, or wrong decisions to consume some like that. So now we will pray for protection and I think we are open minded to who might hurt us, who might not hurt us.

00;36;57 - 00;37;05

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How has Orlando culturally changed since 2006? For almost twenty years.

00;37;05 - 00;38;17

**MINA RAKY:** Oh my gosh. Wow. All right. So Orlando, it was always beautiful. It was always beautiful. I am still a musician. So I travel a lot to Europe. I travel everywhere in America and every time I come back to Orlando, I tell my wife, this is the best place on the world. Yeah, come visit Orlando, guys, or Florida overall. It has always been diverse here in Florida, but in a matter of real state, I would say everywhere is new developments, everywhere is new construction. Real estate market is going very high right now. My first house, I bought for 65K now it is 350K. Can you believe that? Florida is blooming. I see more into outdoors. Like, I see more events outdoors. I see more traffic. Florida is growing.

00;38;17 - 00;38;26

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Conversely, what challenges does Orlando face today?

00;38;26 - 00;39;31

**MINA RAKY:** Orlando is growing very fast and very quick. So maintain the roads, maintaining the I-4 traffic. The University of Central Florida is doing a great job here in Central Florida, Orlando for education. We have a very good university, [and] it is growing. I see the amount of students been [going] through the UCF is growing every day. Central Florida has traffic and roads and bridges and the developments. I-4 was a big development. I have been seeing this since day one since I came to the Florida saying, “Oh, we got to add more lanes to I-4 and we are going to expand that, expand this.” So they are much developments and more additions to the roads. And, as I said, the challenge is maintaining because the growth of the amount of people live in Central Florida, I am not sure how are they going to be able to maintain that. That is a big challenge.

00;39;32 - 00;39;38

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** From your perspective, how will Orlando's Central Florida change in the next twenty five years?

00;39;38 - 00;40;25

**MINA RAKY:** I believe Central Florida is going to be another LA, Los Angeles. Why? It is all the attractions and as it is cheaper here, it might become like another Los Angeles. And I mean how the real estate is going to explode. My wife is a real estate agent. So I see every day the changes, the market, we study the market, and we look at the analysis and what I like to [predict] and so Orlando will grow in a way that was going to be very, it already everybody comes to here to Orlando from around the world, but I am saying maybe another LA.

00;40;25 - 00;40;40

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** We have sort of discussed this throughout the conversation, but I have to ask explicitly, how has your Egyptian heritage influence your perspective on life generally and living in Central Florida specifically?

00;40;40 - 00;41;29

**MINA RAKY:** Oh. Okay. Let's talk about food. I love Egyptian food. I usually seek to eat Turkish Egyptians food because they are kind of close, Lebanese food. It is just like Middle Eastern food. And the other part of the question is in Orlando, specifically in the past, [there] were not much Middle Eastern food. Trying to find them around and now there are everywhere. There is a spot by UCF that I always like to go. But do you have like specific points in that question that you like to talk about?

00;41;29 - 00;41;51

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** No. This is my second to last question. So it is bringing it back to the beginning of the conversation, sort of like how your life in Egypt has influenced your outlook here. You know?

00;41;51 - 00;43;09

**MINA RAKY:** So the influence of me being an Egyptian living in Central Florida is, I influenced the church I am. I serve at Lake Mary Church. I am a worship leader for the Arabic minister in Lake Mary Church, which influences Central Florida. I go outreach, trying to find people that speaks Arabic to share with them the good news and the gospel. So this is how I influence, this is where I relate to Egypt. The only thing I still doing from Egypt till today is ministry. And I think God is using me everywhere in America, not just in Florida, for worship music, especially when I am learning sound engineering, taking a lot of courses of sound engineering and start having my own music studio that makes sounds for Middle Eastern worship. And we go outreach in Cincinnati, and we are in outreach events, and we go in the streets and sing in Arabic and or Middle Eastern. I will say like Arabic, Lebanese Arabic, maybe Egyptian Arabic because it is different songs, different culture, music, but close to each other. So I think this is how I influenced Central Florida center.

00;43;09 - 00;43;2

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Lastly, if someone is listening to this recording fifty or a hundred years from now, what do you want them to know about your culture and the state of Florida?

00;43;23 - 00;43;54

**MINA RAKY:** Egyptians are fierce. They are very stubborn, very smart, very creative, but very emotional. So that is why they get angry very fast, very quick. So, if you see an Egyptian

understand these facts. Very smart. Good mathematicians, they are very good mathematicians, good engineers. That is it.

00;43;54 - 00;43;56

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And what about the state of Florida?

00;43;56 - 00;45;03

**MINA RAKY:** State of Florida? If you hear this in a hundred years from now, right now, we are sitting outside in downtown Sanford. It is a hundred years old where we are sitting already, so probably going to be two hundred years old if you are listening this hundred years from now. It is beautiful. Trees. I wish to keep the trees. Stop cutting trees. I feel the cool. When you sit inside your car and turn on the AC, you cannot tell the outside. When you ride your bike and riding in between the sun and the quick change drop in the temperature between how is so hot to that cool and the breeze coming up from the trees, so stop cutting trees. I love trees now. And development in Florida is growing. So it is beautiful in here, man. Like the forests and all the trees and all that nature here in Central Florida, I wish they preserve that for the next hundred years.

00;45;03 - 00;45;08

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Mina, thank you so much for taking some time out of your day to share your life story. I really appreciate it.

00;45;08 - 00;45;14

**MINA RAKY:** Appreciate you Sebastian. It was really nice conversation, especially enjoying this nice weather outside.

00;45;14 - 00;45;16

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Absolutely. Thank you.