

**Houston Asian American Archive Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University**

Interviewee: ZENOBIA JAL GUZDER

Interviewers: TARA PATEL (rising fifth year); GABRIEL WANG (rising junior)

Date/Time of Interview: June 16, 2014, at 10:00AM

Transcribed by: TARA PATEL; GABRIEL WANG (edited by: Taylor Ginter 5/22/17)

Audio Track Time: 1:19:03

**Background:**

Zenobia Guzder was born in Bombay, India into a Parsi family, and attended a private school there. She then attended St. Xavier's college, majoring in English literature and history. She then immigrated to the U.S. following her husband, spending time in Toledo, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan before settling down in the Sugar Land suburb of Houston, Texas. Mrs. Guzder has two daughters.

**Setting:**

The interview focuses on the culture of the Parsi community in Bombay, India, particularly from the perspective of a young woman. Mrs. Guzder explains how these childhood experiences affected raising her daughters in the United States.

The interview was conducted at Zenobia Guzder's home in the Sugar Land suburb of Houston. The interview required around an hour and twenty minutes. At the beginning of the interview, Mrs. Guzder's husband can be briefly heard in the background as he microwaves and washes things in the kitchen. After the interview, Mrs. Guzder clarified that her name is pronounced with an 'uh' sound, as in 'cut.'

**Interviewers:**

Tara Patel is a rising fifth year at Rice University and has lived in Houston most of her life. She is one of the HAAA summer interns, and is majoring in History and Economics.

Gabriel Wang is a rising Junior at Rice University originally from Seattle, Washington. He is one of the HAAA summer interns, and is majoring in Chemistry. He is also pre-pharmacy.

Interview Transcript:

**Key:**

TP	Tara Patel
GW	Gabriel Wang

ZG	Zenobia Guzder
—	Abrupt stop, false start
...	Speech trails off, pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc) or interview notes

**TP:** This is Tara Patel.

**GW:** And this is Gabriel Wang. And we are here—and we are here today, June 16th, 2014, in the home of Mrs. Zenobia Guzder to interview her for the Houston Asian American Archive. Now, can you just, begin by telling us about your family upbringing, and your background?

**ZG:** Uh, sure. So, I grew up, uh, in the city of Bombay, in a Parsi household. I should say it was a privileged upbringing because my father was, uh, like a, you know, he was a goldsmith, one of the few, jewelers and goldsmiths in the Parsi community at that time. So, uh, it was just my sister and me growing up. And we had a delightful childhood, you know, I can remember times when our families came together for birthdays, we had aunts

and uncles, who just, you know, were there for us all the time, besides my mom and dad, and my sister. We had vacations, uh, in a small town north of Bombay, where we used to go in the summer, and just be surrounded by other Parsis. It was always something to do with the Zoroastrian Parsi community. I mean, though we grew in Bombay, and Bombay has a lot of other, uh, ethnic, communities. You know like, in school we had friends that were Hindus. I had—I had wonderful Muslim friends, Christian friends, Jewish friends, all kinds of people growing up with. But eventually, you know, when we had *family* get-togethers, it was always a whole bunch of Parsi aunts and neighbors, and uncles, and all of those people, you know, getting together and celebrating birthdays, and we would have 50, 60 people at times. [laughs] Catered events, and just, my—my mother would be working and going grocery shopping, and, just having a blast. We—we just had a wonderful childhood growing up, and I couldn't have asked for a better family to grow up in.

**TP:** Could you describe your neighborhood?

**ZG:** Uh, sure, sure. Unlike my husband, I didn't grow up in a very Parsi neighborhood. You know, um, I—I grew up in an area where there were different communities around us. Um, like we had Hindu neighbors, and we had, we had Christian neighbors, and we had, you know, it was—it was a mixed neighborhood. Unlike a Parsi *baug*, where my husband grew up, that was very different, you know. But it was a joyful neighborhood, very bustling. We lived right in the city of Bombay. You know, there were cars, there were people walking on the streets. It was—it was something like New York City, or, not even San Francisco, San Francisco is too tame. I would say more like New York City, very bustling, and busy, and, you know, cars honking, and just being surrounded by people, and the wonderful life around us.

**TP:** What were your elementary schools like, did you go to one elementary school, what was it like?

**ZG:** Yes, yes, in India, especially if you went to a private school, you know, I think most of us went to private schools. Uh, and the school was, uh... it was a, it was a school that was run by a Parsi board. But it was a school that took me from kindergarten all the way to high school. So we stayed in one school, you know. We didn't move just like children move over here. So, we had different teachers. I mean as we graduated from one class to the other, we did have different homeroom teachers, and different subject teachers. But unlike over *here*, the teachers came to our class, you know, versus us moving to the

different subject classes, we had teachers come, and impart their knowledge, and show us their—their graphs, or their charts, or their maps, or whatever, in our classroom. We were assigned a seat, and that's where we stayed every day. Our books went into the little desk that we were assigned. And, depending on how good we were, or you know, if we misbehaved, we were put in the front of the class versus the back, so that the teachers could pay us more attention. You know, so it was, it was a fun existence. I mean there were times in school when I didn't like certain teachers, and I'm sure I did something to kind of disappoint them. But, yeah we had the favorite teachers just like kids have over here.

And, um, on the whole, education was, I thought it was pretty good. Though we did a lot of, by rote. You know, we had a lot of things where we had to learn things by heart. Like we had recitation, poetry, and drama, and, you know, our geography, maps, and our school mathematics, like time table. I remember we had to memorize our times tables. Like you know, 2 times 12, and we went all the way to 20 times 12 and 18 times 9 and, all those kind of things, which our children over here never really had to do those things because they have a calculator. I don't recall ever using a calculator. That was like, 'what is that?' You know. 'Cause after I came to this country, I saw computers, calculators, in my days we didn't have, we didn't have computers. That was a foreign thing for me.

So, yeah, it was still—we still got by, we still passed our exams. You know that—that was very different, we had to go through examination, you know, in India. Like we had these quarter, every four months we had a test. And then at the end of the year, the tests, the test scores were calculated, and then we had a final exam at the end. That was calculated, and, you know, we got the result, and you either passed or you [were] held back. And I do recall some of my friends being held back, not because they were not good students, but they just didn't, I don't know, pay enough attention to their studies, or just were having bad days, or bad events in their lives. But, you know, our schools didn't hesitate to hold them back. And it was a private school, so the parents had to pay the fees again for that year. And, you know, it moved on. It was not state-supported, but as a private school we had to pay for the education. We, meaning parents did. It was not a whole lot. You know, not like over here. Going to a private school over here can cost a family an arm and a leg. It's very expensive depending on what kind of schools you went to, over here. But in India, I think it was, people could afford it, you know, even middle-class families could afford to send their children to a decent private school, and get a good education.

So, but education was very, very important. Maybe that's something about the Parsi community, you know, just to give our children good education. I think it's a thing about the country. Indians, as a culture, value, value, you know, education. That's the most important thing. Even if they have to struggle, you know, they won't eat a second meal, but they'd rather give their children books and extra classes and tutorials, and you know, send them for piano lessons, and send them for ballet, and send them to football classes, and this and that. But, education was extremely important growing up, and that's something we value even right now. With that's a culture we got back into our co—into the U.S., a new country, so. [laughs]

**GW:** And what type of languages do you speak at school, did you speak any English at all? In your private school?

**ZG:** Yes, yes, yes. I think most of the private schools we had in India were, uh, the medium of instruction was English, you know, English was the medium of instruction. But we did have, uh, subjects. You know, like, we had Gujarati, which we had to learn. Then we had Hindi, which was, uh, which was the language of the country, right? So Hindi was compulsory. Then, we also had foreign languages, like we were given a choice of French or Spanish. I chose to take French. But mainly the medium of instruction was all in English. So, that—that was no problem.

You know, but we did learn Gujarati because Gujarati is our mother tongue. At home we spoke in Gujarati, you know, with my parents. And the rest of our Parsi, Zoroastrian community spoke in Gujarati and English. It was more like a combination of, what should I say, uh, English with a Gujarati touch. [laughs] You know, few words thrown in for extra measure. But yes, we—we—we had the, we had the opportunity to, uh, switch between Gujarati and Hindi, because we had help, you know, we had help in the house like maids who once in a while came to help us with the cooking, or cleaning, or things like that. And they were more fluent in, um, Hindi and Gujarati, so we just automatically switched between the languages, you know, when we were conversing with *them*. But, that was just normal growing up and using a couple of languages. [laughs]

**TP:** Were you very close to your family?

**ZG:** Oh yes, oh yes, oh gosh, my family. I didn't know any better, I mean, I came here when I was 20 years old, you know, and I had never really left my parents. I was always with them, growing up, I—I mean, it wasn't a very large joint family. I just had my mom,

my dad, my sister, and myself living in our flat in Bombay. But we had never really gone away from them, you know, for any length of time. I mean, at the most if we went with our friends or we went for an outing, it could be for like four days, five days, and then we were back home, surrounded by mom, dad, you know, our aunts, and uncles, and neighbors and friends. But yes, my family was very dear to me, and that was one thing I really missed when I moved here to the U.S. You know, I remember many, many days and nights kind of crying and just kind of, just because I missed them, and it was—it was not that I was unhappy in my marriage, it was just that I missed my family so much! I just had my husband and myself, and, you know, we had moved into a small little apartment in Toledo, Ohio, when we came here after I got married.

So it was—it was hard, it was hard growing up and just kind of, you know, getting adjusted to marriage, getting adjusted to a man in your life, getting adjusted to a new country. And when I came here, it was in the dead of winter. Which was January, you know. And moving into a small Midwestern town of Toledo, Ohio, that—that was amazing. I remember my husband came to pick me up in the airport in Detroit, because that was the closest international airport, he came with a coat, a long, you know, winter coat. And there was snow all around. Yeah, it was like, ‘Oh my god, is this the way it’s going to be for...how long now?’ He said, ‘Only for four months.’ Four months? Surrounded by snow and cold. And growing up in the city of Bombay, which is so humid and you know, and so hot most of the time. I mean, it was different, it was different, it was big adjustment. And I think the reason why I was a little miserable the first year of my marriage life was because I missed my family so much.

But, you know, we made friends here, and I think once, uh, my husband got a job, he got a consulting job in Detroit, which was a little bigger city, this was the second year of our married life. We had a whole different, uh, experience. Because, you know, I mean, we had American friends, and of course we had our, we had our Zoroastrian friends. There was a bigger Zoroastrian community around us, which kind of welcomed us, you know. That’s—that’s the thing about the Zoroastrians, once they know that there’s a new family that’s moved in, they will always kind of reach out and invite you, you know, to make you feel a little more at home. Because I believe, they too went through the same experience when they came into this country, so they can relate to you. So right away it’s like there were new aunties and uncles inviting you over to come and have lunch with us, come have dinner with us. And then you just kind of networked, you know.

And then my first daughter, our older daughter was born and then of course you kind of

tend to gravitate towards families who had young kids too, around the same age, and then I think life was a little bit better. Once, you know, we settled down in the suburb of Detroit, it was Bloomfield Hills, and we had, we had good neighbors around us, and we had a small house with lots of property around us, I remember that, which the kids had fun playing in. And, you know, you just kind of grow up, and then you have a new role in life, you know, you're a mother, so you start thinking more about, uh, you know, relating to your children, making sure *they* are happy, you know, whatever needs they have. You go ahead and forget all about your loneliness, and the sacrifices you have to make, and sacrifices you have made, and, you know, that all just vanishes, and you just do what you have to do. I mean you've adopted a new homeland, right? You have made the choice to come and settle down in a new country, with a new culture, new people around you.

But, it was—it was a wonderful transition. But I remember in *those* days I used to call my parents very often and we used to write long letters, and, you know, they used to call me and we exchanged recipes on the phone, and... [laughs] Oh, those were wonderful days. But, uh, those were hard days too. Just—just being so young and so unprepared. I didn't know what to expect, you know, when I came to this wonderful country. I mean, I just happened to marry a man who lived in America and, you know, we wanted to come here, he wanted to get me here and I was prepared to do that and we just came here and made a new life as immigrants. But actually my husband was already here; he came as a 19-year-old, you know, to study. So, he had been here for a while and he had finished his graduate degree and he had become a chemical engineer and he had gotten a job. And on one of his trips back home, when he'd come to visit his family, you know, we met, and... you know how it progressed, got engaged and got married couple of years later. But that's the reason why I—I came to this country, and I just love it now, it's our home.

But we'll always have the immigrant experience, you know. And, I just want to be able to let my children know that, you know, growing up as first generation Americans, it was hard for us. It was hard. But, uh, it—it's still good because we were able to bring different cultures, you know, into our existence in this new country. We were able to relate to our Indian culture, plus our Parsi culture, our Zoroastrian roots, you know, we had the religion, we had the cultural background. We had values, we had a different set of morals. Um, I remember my father was, was extremely... I should say rigid, rigid about making sure that, you know, our family kept very good morals and had good integrity. Because, uh, he was blessed with two daughters, you know—two daughters? And somehow in our culture he just felt it was such a big responsibility. And I remember

growing up, very many times, you know, him telling us, 'I have two daughters, and I have to get you married into good households,' you know, so we have to have the best kind of, you know, morals and integrity and—because otherwise, nobody's going to want my daughters.' [TP and GW laugh]

It's like, you know, when I tell my children these things, they're like, 'Mom, what are you talking about?' I said, yeah that was, I do remember talking to my dad and my dad just telling us, you know, because he had a business to run, right, he was a goldsmith of the Parsi community in India. So, of course I mean, you know, he has a business to run, and he absolutely wanted to make sure that everything was ethical, and, you know, he sold the best jewelry, and the best gold and things like that. But the important thing was having a good moral background, having good integrity and having good values, and those were the important things which he really thought was going to give his daughters a chance to get into good families when they get married, you know, so those were values which he imbibed in, and he—he made sure that his children also had good values to follow, and I think we kind of, we kind of felt that was so important.

You know, I would never have thought of marrying a non-Zoroastrian. Just because, because of the way my parents raised me. I—I was too scared to disappoint them, you know, honestly. Whereas my kids over here, they both found non-Zoroastrian spouses. [laughs] So it's amazing! I mean, though we raised our children with the same culture and the same values, of course, it's not the exact same thing because, you know, they were born raised here, they had American friends around them, they grew up with children that were similar but still different, you know, so, they've grown up the way they've grown up. I'm sure they're wonderful children, they're beautiful adults. But they found life partners in white American boys, and they're wonderful human beings. That's what's important, you know, that's what we've always told them, just find good human beings. It doesn't have to be Zoroastrian or non-Zoroastrian, just good people who you are comfortable with, who you're going to spend the rest of your lives with, make sure that, uh, you just practice good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. You know, that can be practiced in *any* religion. Doesn't have to be the Zoroastrian faith, or the Parsi faith, or anything just—just enjoy your lives, be good people be productive, you know, help the society you live in, and, uh, and be very, very thankful that you've come to this country and, you know, you were born and raised here.

This country gives you so many opportunities and you can be whatever you want to be, which unfortunately, was not possible growing up in India, you know, there were always



restrictions, and always, um, barriers, especially for young women. Growing up we couldn't just go out and do anything we wanted to do. Whereas with our children over here, we've told them, whatever pleases you, you know. If—if art is what you like, go ahead, go and follow your dreams. Our older daughter is an artist, she's a brilliant artist. I mean, I don't think my parents would have encouraged me to follow an art degree growing up in India, because you can't really do anything with it, you know, it's almost like saying 'starving artist.' Whereas, over here, she went to NYU and got a degree in Fine Arts, but now she's a schoolteacher, you know? So, and she loves that. She loves teaching, she loves art, so she uses both her passions. And she's made a wonderful career for herself. [someone sneezes in background] So I think the opportunities that they get over here are so varied and so vast, and we just have to go and, you know, grab them and use their, their, uh, what should I say, their upbringing, the way they were raised because we have given them values from our old culture, our old heritage plus the religious values, the morals they grew up with. That has all kind of helped in making them who they are. So, we're just—we're just happy the way things turned out. [laughs]

**GW:** Can you speak more specifically on the restric—the restrictions and barriers that you mentioned, um, for young women in India?

**ZG:** Uh, sure, sure. Uh, well, let's see. Um... I think when I was growing up, uh, the women were expected to maybe get a college degree, go to college for four years after high school, and then you were supposed to find husbands, you know. [laughs] Well, or—or husbands were found for you. [everyone laughs] You know, I mean, we, growing up in the Parsi community, were not as restricted in, you know, dating. But at the back of our mind, we always knew that our parents expected us to marry fellow Parsis, or fellow Zoroastrians. I mean, that was a given. And my sister and I would not even question, you know, the fact that eventually we would get married to fellow Parsis, you know, that was just a thing that we did. Maybe—maybe it was because we didn't want to disappoint our families. We didn't want to disappoint dad and mom, you know, because we loved them so much, and we saw how many sacrifices they had made for us, and they just expected us to marry other Parsis. And, you know, good families; that was the most important thing, you know. So, uh, that—that was one thing.

So, I know after high school, I went to college. I was allowed to go to a wonderful college. I got admission in St. Xavier's, which was one of the top-tier colleges. But, after four years I got a degree in English literature and history, and then, you know, fortunately I met my husband and that was the time I kind of got married and came here. But I'm

thinking, even if I was over *there*, I don't know if my parents would have really encouraged me to continue on with further studies. Maybe they would have. But in our case it was different, because my sister kind of, you know, inherited the business. We had the business, so I'm sure in my case my father would have expected me to kind of join the business, since we didn't have any brothers, or he didn't have any sons. So that's what my sister ended up doing. She—she kind of, you know, after college, just was encouraged to go into the business end of it, and, but she's doing very well, and, um.

So—so there were restrictions, but growing up in a Zoroastrian Parsi community I think we had more, uh...uh we had more Western values. I think our values were not... typical Indian— Indian values. You know, we did go to the movies. We did go out on dates, you know, but uh, even there, there were restrictions that were placed on us. If—if you went out for a date, it had to be with a *group* of boys and girls. You couldn't go out alone, oh no, that was a no-no. [GW and TP laugh] I remember once, I don't know if I should tell you this experience, but once my father actually ended up in my college at 10:30, because I was not home by 10. And he goes up on the stage and announces, 'Zenobia Cooper, you are wanted by your father.' It's like oh my god, my whole world fell apart. It's like, I'm with a group of friends and we're supposed to be out having fun. And I told my parents I'll be home by 10. But, 10:15 came around, I was not there, so guess what dad does. He marches into my college, and announces my name on the stage and says, 'wanted by your dad.' So, I mean, you know, it's like so embarrassing! But you just did those things, because you respected your parents and you just followed their wishes and, you know. You just went along and it was nothing wrong in that, but I'm just thinking the way we grew up was so different and so... so structured, you know? I mean, we had the love of our parents, we had the good nurturing, we had respect, we—we had wonderful holidays together. But we just didn't disobey our parents, you know it just something we didn't even think about doing. We just followed their wishes. So, um, so that was one thing, you know.

But, uh, culturally I think we were quite world-minded in the sense that, uh, we were not allowed to maybe date one-on-one. But even if within our culture we were introduced to other Parsis, they would not expect us to say yes or no right away, they would still want us to go out on dates and get to know that person, you know. But still it was like structured from family to family. It's like okay, my family knows this family, and they've already done all the background in—inquiries, you know, like okay, this—this child is from a good family, well-raised. What is her character like? All the aunties and uncles

would go and ask, you know, they would kind of network and know, what kind of a child is this growing up. Or, how—how is her behavior right now? You know, they would have their little network of friends and, uh, other family members who would kind of let them know how that child is growing up right now. I mean, has she become like a bad apple or, is she kind of smoking, or is she kind of drinking, or is she kind of flirting with a lot of boys? You know, those kind of things would—would kind of come out eventually. If, uh, if your parents have set you up with somebody, and they want you to go out, they wouldn't introduce you to that kind of a child. You know, they would introduce you to the right child from the right background, right family hierarchy, right social strata, everything would be there, and then yes, go out with this child, and hopefully, you'll click. You guys will, you know, love each other, or maybe grow to love each other. But at least initially like each other. Because the families are perfect, you know, so now go ahead and date each other, and hopefully it'll all work out!

So that was the culture we were raised in, you know. But over here it's so fascinating, because when I tell my children that they just laugh [TP and GW laugh], and they say 'Mom, that was all your days, and all the old country and, I understand you're—you're kind of worried about us, but, you know, you have to give us the, um, you have to give us the, the freedom to, uh, to understand that the way you've raised us, the foundation that you've given us, hopefully *that* will help us in finding *our* right mate, you know, you have to let us now take things on our own. You can't kind of guide us, and, you know, be on top of us every stage of our lives. You have to let us go and you have to let us do our own thing! We—we appreciate your concern, we appreciate the way *you* grew up, but this is different, this is America, and you've raised us to be strong, independent, productive human beings, and we are going to do just that.'

And sure enough, [laughs] one of my daughters is in New York, and the other one is in San Francisco, you know. So they're both very different, but they are both independent, lovely, productive, passionate, compassionate human beings, and I think, I think it has something to do with the culture that we bring from India, our Parsi community, the religion, the way we kind of raised our kids, I think that has all come together. It has helped us as an immigrant, first generation immigrant to shape our children's destiny and future.

**TP:** I'm just going to backtrack a little bit, to clarify some things. What age did you enter college?

**ZG:** Uh, I entered college at 16.

**TP:** Okay.

**ZG:** Mm-hmm.

**TP:** And did you complete your degree in India before you came to the U.S.?

**ZG:** Yes I did, yes I did. I got a bachelor's degree, Bachelor of Arts in English literature and History.

**TP:** Okay, thank you.

**GW:** Can you just talk about what your college—college experience was like? In those years?

**ZG:** Uh, sure. As I said, I was allowed to go to a co-ed college, you know, which itself was a great thing for me because being raised in a very closed and very, uh, protective kind of background, I almost thought my parents would send me to an all-girls college. But I was thrilled that, I think since I got accepted to this good college, you know, and it was pretty close to where we lived. Um, uh, I went to co-ed college in India called St. Xavier's, and it was—it was a wonderful experience. We had friends from school, of course, we made some new friends, because, you know, kids from all over the city come to these colleges in India. Well, some come from all over India, you know, depending on what career they want to choose.

So ours was, uh, a college that specialized in the arts and the sciences. So if you wanted a degree in say accounting or economics, you wouldn't get that in this college, you would have to go to another college, you know, so you have to get accepted. So your grades in high school would give you the, uh, the acceptance into those particular colleges. I wasn't accepted into the first two or three days, because they would take all the first-class students and I was a higher second. So, you know, my acceptance letter into that college came like four days later. But I was holding my breath, because that was my first choice, you know, so, so, that was great, it was a great college and we had wonderful professors, and you know we had a big dining room where we used to hang out. Got some classes, not attend all classes. I mean, you know, we did all the things, fun things that college kids do.

Uh, but, uh, I—I do remember thinking that, uh, college life is so different from school

life, because I went to an all-girls school, you know, which was very close and confined. And we went to school at a certain time, came home at a certain time. Then we had tuitions when we were in school. Tuitions meaning there was a lady who came to tutor us, you know, in—in our weak subjects like math, or Hindi, you know, the subjects like Hindi and Gujarati which we had to learn, and science. So I do remember just coming home from school, having a snack, and then getting ready for my tuition teacher. That was every day, every day a tuition teacher came, so we had school from say 8 o'clock to 3 o'clock, then came home, uh, had a snack and got ready for my tuition teacher. And then she was there with us for one, one and a half hours. You know, we would do all the homework that was supposed to be done for school next day, we did it with her. And of course she gave us extra homework, you know, so after she left we still had to do some homework. But those were the days, we just did that. I mean, we didn't even question anything. And then, um, it was dinnertime. We went to bed, and the next day the routine started again.

But I remember Fridays were the days we went to visit our relatives, you know, that was the day our mom kind of dragged us to visit her sister's children, or she would visit her sister or her brother. And she came from a large family, you know, she was like, there were five sisters and two brothers. So between all those sisters, it's like, you know, every Friday we used to do that, go visit our cousins. We had fun, you know, we kind of talked with them, and we read books and, while the moms were visiting. And then on Saturday what we did was go to my father's shop, and we just sat there and chatted and saw the customers go in and out and, and I think on certain days mom and dad decided let's go out for dinner, so that was a highlight. Otherwise dinner was every day at home. So, once in a while they would take us to the club, used to belong to a little... club, you know. Club is a big scene in India. People belong to these, these little clubs. Like, you know how we have a Sweetwater country club over here?

**TP:** Yeah.

**ZG:** So they had the—that was club scene. So you just go out and relax, and order food, and they have a pool there, and they have tennis courts and things like that. So we might end up going and having dinner at the club, or go to a nice restaurant. Or sometimes mother would say, 'No, we've got food at home! We're not going to waste anything, so let's just go home and finish our dinner.' So I mean, those were the kind of things. And we were just happy, just a normal childhood. And Sundays maybe, I remember the television came, oh that was a big thing. I was like 13, I was 13 or 14, and the first black-

and-white TV came out. And we used to sit in front of the T.V. and watch movies on Sunday evenings. Mmm that was a big thing, you know.

But as—aside from that, uh, so—so that's why college was so different, because we had boys, we had girls, we could kind of choose our friends, you know. We had—we had different communities, not just Parsis, Zoroastrians. We had Christian friends, I had Muslim friends, I had, um, so many, so many wonderful people who I met in college who, uh, I did keep in touch with for a long time. But um, you know, then life happened. [laughs] But, uh, but just different backgrounds they came from, and just kind of getting to know all that, it was so fascinating. I think my college years were beautiful. I really enjoyed college. Uh, we had different professors, their style of teaching was unique, you know, some of them would lecture, some of them would kind of be very, uh, focused on getting you involved in classroom discussion. So, it was great for me to know all these things, you know, growing up I would say in a very protected environment. But yeah, college was great and then from that experience coming to this country was very different too.

**TP:** Can you explain that? [G W and Z G laugh]

**TP:** What were some of the cultural differences...

**ZG:** [Overlapping] Um...

**TP:** [Overlapping] ...you saw when you came to America.

**ZG:** Well the first thing I noticed was since we came into a small town, you know, we—we—I came into a small town called Toledo, which I'm not sure if you know where that is, but that's, it's right on the border of Detroit, Michigan.

**TP:** Yes.

**ZG:** And Toledo, Ohio. So—so it's a small little town, it's not a village, but it's a decent-sized town. But, um, so—so coming from a city like Bombay into Toledo, was in itself different, you know, because it's a small town, there were no cars. There was no hustle, bustle, no traffic. No cows on the road. [laughs] You know, and no, no people kind of honking. [G W laughs] All—all that was so different, but I—I should have expected that, I mean that's...

But then the other thing was the, the weather, I mean, coming from a humid Bombay

weather into the cold, uh, long dreary winters. In the beginning I was fascinated with the snow, and it was so magical, and wonderful and glowing and beautiful. Then after a few days [TP and GW laugh], after a few months, after so many months... Oh my god, when is this going to melt? Is this ever going to leave the roads, and can I see some greenery? [laughs]

So it was different just kind of getting used to all that and not having your family around you. Not knowing what to cook. I remember I made a big mess with my cooking fiasco, you know, uh, because I know when my mom came to know that I was going to be living abroad, she kind of gave me these very quick cooking lessons. So more than actual practical cooking, I used to take notes, you know, just take notes and just kind of write down the recipes. But that's never fun, right, I mean, unless you practically know what to do, when to heat the oil, or when not to keep the blender running for an hour and go take a shower, which I did. [everyone laughs] Ah, those kind of experiences I still remember. Burning the curry I s—made for my husband one day, [laughs] you know, but yeah you learn—you learn and live. You live and learn. You live and learn.

But yeah, just—just that. So, missing the family was very kind of lonely. Just not having neighbors you could kind of knock on the door and, you know, ask to come over, or 'Can I just come and join you for a few minutes?' Yeah. Because my husband used to work and he used to be in sales and marketing at that time, so he travelled a lot. So that—that was a very big thing, I didn't really have him around every night, you know, every day when I came to this country. So, that adjustment was difficult. But eventually, we all worked through it and we do what we have to do.

**TP:** Have you lived-

**ZG:** Yes.

**TP:** ...sorry, have you lived anywhere else in the U.S., besides Toledo and Houston?

**ZG:** Uh yes, we were in Detroit...

**TP:** Okay, yes.

**ZG:** You know, the year we moved from Toledo was when my husband got his first consulting assignment, and that happened to be in the city of Detroit, which is much larger than Toledo. And we also had a Zoroastrian community over there.

**TP:** Yeah.

**ZG:** A small, a small Zoroastrian community, but nonetheless, they were part of the same Parsi culture. Because most of those Zoroastrians were from India, you know, so they were Parsis, who had migrated just like us, uh to—to the U.S.. And I remember, uh, their husbands used to work for the big three automakers, like General Motors and Ford and Chrysler, you know, so that's the reason why they were in Detroit, and um, yeah. So we lived in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, which is a suburb of Detroit, for 18 years. For—because that's when my husband got his job, and then we, you know, he had his consulting, environmental consulting business there, for 18 years. And, uh, we just recently moved to Houston, like in 1999. So our children were born and raised in, um, in Southfield, Michigan. They were born in the hospital in Southfield, Michigan. So they've always considered Michigan to be their home.

**TP:** Did you work during that time? During your time in Detroit?

**ZG:** Uh, well, as I said, my husband started his own business, so, um, that was—that was another thing, we just kind of expected me to help with the business, because I wasn't a professional in the professional sense of the word, you know, I just had my undergraduate degree, and... Maybe if I was a doctor or an engineer I would have pursued my own career, but since I wasn't, you know, I think the next best thing would be to help my husband kind of cultivate his business and be the eyes and ears, you know. So, uh, I just ended up helping out whenever I could, because we worked out of our house for many years, a couple of years, you know, until he got established, and *then* he moved into an office in, um, in Southfield. So, it—it was a good thing because my kids were born the same year he started his business, so I was able to kind of help him out, as and when I could, because, I don't know, I somehow felt being a mother, good mother was the most important career in my life. I—I don't know, I just very strongly feel about being a good mother. So that has always been *the* most important thing, and then helping my husband with the business.

So this kind of gave me the flexibility of, uh, you know, coming home when the school bus came home, go—leaving in the morning after the kids went off to school, and um... I—I remember, even in those days, uh, we used to visit India every school vacation. You know, like the children's school was out on Friday and we used to be away on our trip on Saturday, off to Bombay. And then I lived at my in-law's house for a little while, my parents' house for a little while, and, you know, so the kids had a fascinating time



growing up in India, my kids love India, even right now, you know. And we actually sent them to school, boarding school for two years. Two, three years they were in, in the mountains in India, you know, to a wonderful boarding school, which we thought was great experience. I wish my parents had sent me to a boarding school, honestly, because I grew up to be a little spoiled and a little, very, kind of, you know, sheltered. So a secure, happy boarding school would have really made me a little bit more independent and outgoing, I think. It would have helped in my earlier years. But I—we gave our children that experience, growing up in the mountains in India. But they came home every vacation they got, and my sister was there, helping them out. So, yeah, all in all, uh, my girls love going to Bombay, to visit their grannies and grandpas, you know. Right now, our—my parents and my husband's parents have both passed on, but when they were growing up they were both there. And my sister, and her children. And it was a great experience for my kids growing up like that, too. And I was fortunate enough to be able to give that to them, you know.

**GW:** Um, going back a little bit, you mentioned a lot of difficulties in immigrating to the U.S. and adapting to the new culture and the new environment. What were some of the ways in which you coped with these changes?

**ZG:** Uh... I think once, uh, I realized, uh, you know, I had to make a life for myself in this country, I quit thinking about myself and moping and just feeling bad and sorry for myself, and just realized, you know, that I have to adapt. Uh... [pause] Knowing the language, I think was a big plus, you know. I can't imagine somebody coming to this country and having to learn the language. That would be a very big hurdle to pass. So fortunately, that was something which I didn't have to deal with at all, because that [English] was almost like my mother tongue, you know, and the accent was not difficult to follow or pick up. So, that—that was a big, big blessing, having the English language, uh, fluency.

Then, um... uh, the other way I remember adapting was, uh, trying to, uh... start driving. My husband was very helpful in getting us a second car, and, you know, making sure that I learned how to drive. And that kind of gave me independence, and, uh, made me feel a little bit more comfortable, uh... I was not cooped up at home all day, I could kind of go shopping, or go to the grocery store and just walk up and down the aisles, and check everything out, and just different experiences like that. And then once we moved to Detroit, I had more flexibility with taking my kids, you know, for mommy-and-tot classes, Gymboree, and just going and visiting friends. And I think that—that was

another thing, having your own car and just being a little bit more flexible and independent that way. Plus, um, uh... [pause] I—just the, just the fact that we were able to experience, uh, the cultural things that the city offered. You know, going to the parks, doing the fun things. We have to get out and do these things. You can't just sit at home and keep moping and moaning, especially because I wasn't working. You know, like a normal person who comes here would have to start working and get a job, and you'd be involved in that. But in my case, I—I didn't have that 'til my husband started his own business, and even then, I was working from the house. So I think that also kept me involved.

But—but we have to make a—a concentrated effort to—to go out and do what the society and the city offers. You know, like taking classes, or just going to the library, reading, I used to love to read, so. Uh, following up on, uh, you know, maintaining friendships, getting involved with the community. Uh... I—I—I do want to say that, I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but we did tend to gravitate more towards our own, our own culture and own community. You know, like being with a Parsi group for weekends, maybe we used to go out bowling, all of us used to go and play volleyball together. Or, when the kids grew up, we had these Zoroastrian classes, um, in Michigan. But since the community was not that large, we met at each other's houses, you know, so we used to have basement gatherings and try to involve our children uh with, um, just giving them education on our religion, our faith, our culture. And then of course having a Parsi chai, which is a Parsi tea, all of us would end up having nice Parsi tea together, and maybe some snacks.

Because, I don't know if you know this, but no gathering in a Parsi household is complete 'til the food is served. [laughs] Unfortunately or fortunately, but that's, that's a very good cohesive thing, you know. We, we love to eat our Dhansak and Curry Chawal and Kolmi No Patio, and all these typical Parsi food, which I think we have managed to give our children the liking for as well. Because as growing up, I know they'd used to go, 'Oh yuck, not that again!' But now it's like, 'Mom, can you get that curry packet for me? [TP laughs] Can you just, just get it home? We'll just make it over there, if you can just get me the masala,' you know. So, and when they come home, they always ask for the typical Parsi food. So, it—it's good that we have been able to give them some culture. I think, I think growing up in India has given us that, uh, flexibility of being able to impart, uh, impart the love of, you know, the Indian culture, the Parsi culture, the friends, the food, the family, the religion, it's all a great experience. [laughs]

**TP:** Did you teach your daughters Hindi and Gujarati when they were growing up?

**ZG:** Uh, well, I didn't teach my daughters Hindi, because, uh, Hindi is more the language of *India*. But, uh, I did try to—we did try to teach them Gujarati, because my husband and I speak in Gujarati amongst ourselves. Of course, we speak in English too, so we go between both the languages. But the children grew up, uh, hearing Gujarati in the household, as well as English. So, uh... when they were little, they used to speak a lot of Gujarati, actually speak it *and* understand it. But unfortunately, as time grew on, you know, not being surrounded by, uh, Gujarati-speaking family members, they kind of have lost the ability to speak in Gujarati, or at least let's say, *fluent* Gujarati or *good* Gujarati. They still speak *broken* Gujarati, but they claim to understand everything [GW laughs], you know. I think they understand most of everything, but not everything. [laughs] They still do understand Gujarati, because when I and my husband talk, they always say, 'Oh, we know what you're saying!', you know. And my younger daughter even tries to speak the language, however broken it is. So, yes, yes.

Um, unfortunately Hindi, no, because I think Hindi is more for households that watch a lot of Hindi movies [GW and TP laugh], like Bollywood movies, and somehow I was not too much into the Bollywood culture and watching those movies. So that's why maybe they didn't pick up the Hindi movie, Hindi language.

**TP:** What brought you to Houston?

**ZG:** What brought us to Houston, good question... As I said, my husband had his own engineering consulting business uh, in, uh, in Detroit. Southfield, Michigan, to be exact, for many, many years. And, um, the reason why we moved, uh, was because he had another opportunity to continue with his business in Houston, and the reason why we chose Houston is because of the weather, because of the Parsi community, the Zoroastrian community. There was a, there was a center, there was an actual cultural and heritage center in Houston, which we figured would help us, uh, in our golden years, you know, [laughs] to be kind of be together with people of our similar background, our, uh, who would understand our cultural heritage, and just kind of, [who] we'd feel more at home with, in our retired years. So that was the other reason.

And, uh, I think Houston was a wonderful place for, uh... settling down in eventually, because, uh, the standard of living is, you know, very reasonable, it's—it's not a very expensive city. Plus you have the warm weather that we grew up in in Bombay. We had

our community and you could buy good houses. And I think my husband had the opportunity to continue with his business being in the heart of the country, versus being in Florida or California, which would be like on either coast. Um, so all in all, uh, that was the reason why we chose to move to Houston.

**TP:** Did you come directly to this house?

**ZG:** Yes we did. When we moved to Houston this was the house we were getting built, and this was the house we moved into. This was in 1999. Mm-hmm.

**TP:** What factors made you choose this particular neighborhood in Houston?

**ZG:** Ah, that's an interesting question. Uh, you know, we had friends that had moved to Sugar Land many years ago. Uh, and she was instrumental in getting us to check out the neighborhood in this area. Because Sugar Land was, uh, multicultural, they had, uh... I would say a lot of other ethnic communities there, and uh, I think our center, our Zoroastrian center was fairly close by, that was also one of the reasons. Because I remember initially when we looked at the areas, Woodlands came to mind, it's such a pretty area with lots of trees and, you know, greenery, and just a different outlook. But unfortunately, it wasn't very close to our Zoroastrian center, and most of our friends tended to live in this area. And as I said, we had a doctor friend who had moved here a couple of years ago, and... Um, I think—I think it was just to be close to our people. That's the reason why we chose Sugar Land! [laughs]

**GW:** Did you face any difficulties in moving to Houston?

**ZG:** No, not really. Moving to Houston, I would say none at all! It was fun, it was so easy to adjust, because there's so many different, you know, cultures and ethnicities, and, um, different kinds of people, different colors of people, different wonderful, uh, backgrounds where they come from. So it was... [TP sneezes] I would say, quite easy, adjusting to life in Houston. Bless you. [TP sneezes again] Bless you.

**TP:** Thank you. Do you put a lot of value in living near people of different backgrounds than yourself?

**ZG:** I think I do, I think I do. Because, you know... we are a multicultural, global society. I mean, that's what United States is all about, we're a big melting pot. You know, there is no true, white American or black American or Indian American, unless of course you

talked about the native Indians, you know, who are originally from here. So, uh... I—I believe that it's important to respect and grew up and just be aware of, uh... different cultures and different backgrounds and different ethnicities, and just be more globally connected. And the best way to do that is to, uh, learn and observe and converse with people who are different, yet similar, you know, in our country.

**TP:** What are some of the cultural differences between Houston and Toledo and even Bombay? ...and Detroit, sorry.

**GW:** [Overlapping] And Detroit, yeah.

**ZG:** [Overlapping] Cultural... differences?

**TP:** Yes. [pause] Like how does life here compare, how are the people here compared to Detroit—

**ZG:** Oh, compared to Houston—uh, Houston compared to all the other cities...

**TP:** [Overlapping] Yes.

**ZG:** ...that we've been in. Okay, um... I think the main difference that springs to mind is, um... we have many more cultures, you know, many more communities than when we were in Toledo or even Detroit. Detroit was more, I would say, black and white. Uh... Toledo was more lilywhite, you know. [laughs] At least, in the 80s, when I was there. But coming to Houston, it's, it's like, it's a big melting pot of different cultures, different ethnic backgrounds, different languages. We hear Vietnamese being spoken, you know, besides, uh, of course Spanish, we're surrounded by Spanish-speaking people, which is a great thing, and [whispers] I'm trying to learn it. [everyone laughs]

And of course there are lots of Indians, but even within the Indian community there are so many different backgrounds, you know, from the north, people from the south, people from Bangladesh and Pakistan, and you know, South Asian communities. And it's just, it's a wonderful melting pot, it's a wonderful, uh, getting together of, uh, different ethnicities, where— where people bring their own background and their own strength, you know, into communities for, uh, just kind of, uh, growing, you know, just learning, just being part of a whole world background, world community. This is a great experience, you can do that in Houston versus other cities, I think, so far, in the U.S. [laughs]

**GW:** Do you feel like—[clears throat] Sorry. Do you feel like you identify more strongly as Indian or as American, or both equally?

**ZG:** Um, after living in this country for almost 35 years, I would say I identify strongly as being an American, *with*, with Parsi roots. More, more Parsi roots than Indian roots, you know. But uh, but this is our country, and this is who we are now. We've raised our children to be Americans, and, uh, I mean, I—I am so grateful for growing up in India, because that has made me what I am today, you know. Because I've been able to get the best of both cultures, the Indian culture, the Parsi culture, and mix it with my American life, you know. I—I believe that has helped in the way we've raised our children, too. We've made them see the benefits, you know, of being brought up as American citizens, but at the same time, give them the values from our old country, which are so wonderful. I think India has some great...strong points, you know, growing up in that culture. Not that American culture is bad, but there are certain things in the American culture, which I would love to change. [laughs] But, you know, maybe our children can take the best of both worlds and make a great life.

**TP:** Would you be comfortable saying which parts of American cultural—culture you're not a fan of?

[Pause, TP laughs]

**GW:** You don't have to if you don't—[laughs]

**TP:** [Overlapping] You don't-

**ZG:** I don't think that's gonna be politically correct to say that right now. [everyone laughs]

**TP:** That, that is perfectly fine.

**GW:** That's fine.

**ZG:** Thank you.

**TP:** Have you ever worked while you're in Houston?

**ZG:** Um, I worked from—yes, yes, yes. I—I was a substitute teacher with the Fort Bend Independent School District for quite a few years, and at the same time I was helping my

husband with his business part time. But aside from that, no, I've just worked at being a good mom. [laughs] Yes.

**TP:** Why'd you choose to be a substitute teacher?

**ZG:** Uh, Why did I choose to be a substitute teacher? Uh, because it gave me the flexibility of, um, teaching on my own schedule, and I love children and I love to impart education, and also gives me an idea of, you know, what little minds are thinking and how they're growing up, and just fascinating to see them cultivate their knowledge of the world. Because it was just the elementary school kids that I taught, so, it—it was just something I enjoy doing, and that's the reason why I became a substitute teacher. Mm-hmm.

**TP:** Did you want to work for the extra money, or just to...?

**ZG:** No, just to pass my time.

**TP:** Oh okay.

**ZG:** Just to pass my time, yes, yes. Fortunately, in our case, with God's grace, we—we, we were comfortable, you know, money-wise.

**TP:** Yes.

**ZG:** But just wanted to give a little something back to the community, and learn from them too.

**GW:** Um, you talked a lot about, um, going back to India when you were raising your daughters. Uh, do you visit India often now?

**ZG:** Uh, you know, I love to visit India, and I *did* visit India almost every year, 'til my parents passed away. My mother passed away two years ago, so I just haven't been able to bring myself back to go there, because I think in my heart of heart I know I'm going to miss her, it's going to be lonely in the house. But I do intend to go back again, maybe this year or next year, to visit my sister and my cousins, and a couple of my aunts and uncles who are still living. But yes, we, we enjoyed our trips going back to India when the children were growing up.

**TP:** How has India changed since you immigrated to the U.S.?

[Pause]

**ZG:** Um, well, India has grown bigger, population-wise. [everyone laughs] You know, uh... uh, I—I—I don't know what to say. Right now, they've got a new government, so hopefully it's going in the right direction, but, uh... I—I wish, I wish some things would improve in India. [laughs] Hopefully, hopefully, uh... it's just the culture, I think it's the, it's the culture and the population, you know, it's just like growing so much, and there's only so much space for people to live in. And I think, uh, unless the standard of living of the poor people comes up, y-the middle class should become bigger, unless that happens I think there's always gonna be strife and, you know, just.... People are just not going to want to go *back* to India, you know, if you want our culture or our generation to go back to India there should be a promise of a better life...So, let's hope with the new government in place, things change for the better. [laughs]

**TP:** Do you... do you think some U.S. immigrants from India eventually *want* to go back to India?

**ZG:** I'm sure, I'm sure there are a few families and a few youngsters who may want to go back and at least *work* in India for a couple of years, if not to settle down. But it would be a great experience for them, I would love for my children if they wanted to, to go and stay there and experience a culture and live there for a few years, or... Wouldn't mind if they chose to do that, as long as there is opportunity and growth for them, and they can, you know, give back to the society without feeling frustrated. [laughs]

**TP:** Now, on a similar note, how do you think Houston's changed since you've been here? [Pause]

**ZG:** You know, I don't see the change.

**TP:** Okay, that's fine.

**ZG:** I don't see the change. I think it's... it's becoming bigger, there are more people who *we* know who are wanting to move here, from our friend circle and our community circle. So I think that's a good thing, because there are still job opportunities over here, the real estate didn't fall, like it did in other parts of the country, you know, it still maintains the balance. Life is, uh, good because the standard of living is pretty high, it's not expensive. Um, you can get decent wages if you work hard, but that's—that's the story in all different cities in, in America. But, but I think Houston has a more comfortable life, you



know, when you stay here you don't have to worry about the weather or the snowstorms or driving or bad roads, which, you know, we were kind of used to living in Detroit. But I think Houston is a positive, wonderful city to live in.

**GW:** Do you have any hobbies now that you do?

**ZG:** Um... [pause] Hobbies in the sense of—well, I've just been kind of involved with, uh, my hu—my daughter got married, so that last year was busy, just kind of getting together all that. And next year I've got another wedding to plan to—plan for. But, uh, no, what I would really love to do once all this is settled is, is help the community. You know, like help with Meals on Wheels, or, um, the... I do belong to the Child Advocates, you know, Fort Bend Child Advocates against abuse, child abuse. So, so I would love to give back, uh, and help with volunteer organizations for different causes, women's shelter and abused children, and you know, those are my goals to really want to work full-time. I wouldn't even mind if I had the time to work full-time for them, in a volunteer way.

**TP:** Do you spend a lot of time at the Zoroastrian Community Center?

**ZG:** Um, yes, yes we do, we—we try to go to the Zoroastrian center for, um, the cultural events, for their, uh, religious events, uh, for get-togethers, um... I think it's a very good thing that we have the Zoroastrian Community Center, and it's a physical building, you know, where we can go and meet other Zoroastrians and speak in our Gujarati language and just joke with each other, and, you know. Uh, it's—it's such a good thing because they have classes, religious classes for different age groups, which we unfortunately, growing up in Detroit, did not, you know, 'cause we're such a small community. But right now, um, to raise your child over here, if you want to give them the cultural and religious background, this would be a great way to do it, you know. So, uh, we—we try to go to the center as much as possible. But we're not like crazy about, you know, we wouldn't feel that if we missed a couple of events, we're like out of the community, or we just feel like, 'Oh my god, what's going to happen to us.' No no no, we just feel connected, we've got other friends, and, you know, we get together and play cards, and joke about, and eat our dhansak, and just have a great time. So yes, the community is—is a great thing to have. I do—I do think that's a plus, living in Houston.

**TP:** Are most of your friends in Houston Zoroastrians?

**ZG:** Yes, unfortunately or fortunately, most of our friends are Zoroastrians. [everyone

laughs] Yes, yes. I'm not sure our children would feel that way, you know, they've got so many friends. But they don't even necessarily feel connected to the Zoroastrians, or at least not all of them, you know. That's just the way they were raised, so, it's a good thing.

**TP:** Do your daughters plan on raising their kids Zoroastrian?

**ZG:** You'll have to ask them that! [everyone laughs]

**TP:** Okay. [laughs]

**ZG:** That's a question I tried to ask them but I get no response so far, so we'll see. [laughs] I hope they bring both the cultures into play, you know, because their husbands are from the Christian background, so, uh, hopefully. Though my younger daughter wants a Zoroastrian wedding, my older daughter didn't, you know, she had a very non-denominational kind of wedding, but, uh, we'll see. So, hopefully, at least they'll have the...if not the religious background, at least they'll bring something of our culture into raising their children. And of course, good words, good thoughts, good deeds are always a must for all the religions, so, you know. Even if they don't necessarily practice every aspect of the Zoroastrian religion, as long as they kind of imbibe the morals and the big tenets, you know, the faith, I'll be happy. [laughs]

[Pause]

**TP:** What would you like people...how would you like people to remember you?

**ZG:** Uh... [pause] Meaning in—in, um... Are you referring to my friends, or my family? Or the community at large? What kind of people are we talking about?

[Pause]

**GW:** Anyone—[laughs]

**TP:** Anyone.

**GW:** Maybe just in general, or it can be, you know, in the personal sense.

**ZG:** Okay, okay, because for different people I would like to be remembered in a different way, you know. [everyone laughs]

**TP:** Okay.

**ZG:** Yeah, for my children I would love to be remembered as a great mom...

**TP:** [Overlapping] Okay.

**GW:** [Overlapping] Yeah.

**ZG:** ...who loved their kid—who loved them more than anything else in the world, and who tried to give them the best life with the best motivation and inspiration and goals in mind. And for the rest of the community I guess I would just like to be remembered as a good person who was always fair and just and compassionate, kind, and tried her best to be a productive... member of the society.

**GW:** Mm-hmm.

**TP:** Okay. Um, as you know, this is, this interview is going to be used toward research about Asian American immigrants and their life in Houston. Is there anything else that we haven't touched on that you would like to add to this interview?

[Pause] **ZG:** Uh... Now, are we trying to document, like, a unique cultural legacy of Asian Americans as *global* citizens?

**TP:** As global citizens, *and* as Houstonians.

**ZG:** Oh, okay. Houstonians is a big part.

**TP:** Yes.

**GW:** Mhm.

**TP:** This archive only works with Asian Americans in Houston.

**ZG:** Oh, okay. Okay. Okay. [pause] Um... I suppose as, uh... you know, coming from the Indian culture, our legacy would be a little different, you know, compared to other South Asian communities. So, I believe the... I believe the... [tapping on the table] the focus which I would like to present would be just the, uh, the hard-working, the... the—the persistence, you know, the 'we have to make it' kind of goal that we bring from India, you know, would be very familiar, and even similar to other South Asian communities, you know, whether they are in Houston or any other part of the country. But still, in

Houston I think it's more focused because we are so many different cultures, especially from South Asia, that have chosen to live in Houston.

But, uh, just those facts should be, you know, concentrated upon, especially for our children growing up here, that life wasn't easy for all of us, you know, when we moved from the old country. But we still chose to, you know, be so determined for our family's sake and for our children's wellbeing and for giving them a better life, that we were willing to overcome and sacrifice whatever came our way, whatever came our way in order to make it in this country. You know, in order to be able to provide for a better future for our children. Um, in order for them to become world citizens, good American citizens. Because we love this country, you know, we love America, and we just are so aware of how much more it can give us, you know, how much opportunity is there, if you're willing to work for it.

So, so I think as an Indian citizen originally, I just want to make sure that our legacy is there where our kids *know* that we *were* willing to work hard, we *were* willing to put in a lot of effort and productive years, and just persistence and hard work, and just—just our *goals* for there to settle down and make this our homeland. And those inner, good qualities will always stay with us. And I hope our kids can continue, you know, giving those qualities to *their* families and it continues for generations to come.

**TP:** Okay, perfect.

**GW:** Yeah, I think that's it.

**ZG:** Thank you very much!

**GW:** Thank you so much!

**TP and ZG:** [Simultaneously] Thank *you*.