

Life History Interview

Dance and Culture 1010-007

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Bravanese, also known as the Barawani- are a tribe of people that belong to a larger tribe in Somalia, known as the Somali Bantu. Such tribes are located near the southeastern area of Somalia. The Barawani people derive from a mixture of different cultures, such as, Swahili, Somali Bantu, Portuguese, and Cushitic, which originates from the Arab languages mixed with Portuguese. The Barawani people speak many languages- majority speak Barawani (different dialect of Somali Bantu), or Swahili. Other known languages include Arabic, Oromo (form of Cushitic and is very popular in east Africa) and, Somali Bantu.

A 25-year-old Barawani male, born in Somalia, raised in Mombasa, Kenya, was my interviewee. I chose this culture because it has had a large impact on my life, connecting to majority of my close friends, children, and community groups I work with. I chose him because I knew who he was personally and we have a strong connection between one other. I asked if he would like to come over my place to make Sambusas together while I asked him a few questions about life in Africa, as well as life in America, surprisingly, he agreed. He does not speak about his life and constantly shields personal facts about himself but he trusts me, and knows I will not down talk or creates any changes about his life and culture- I was excited to hear this from him especially because no one knows how he feels, it is a mystery.

Prior to the interview, I memorized majority of the listed questions from the text. While thinking and planning my tactic for conducting the interview, I decided reading, the asking questions word for word, and jotting down notes would not allow him to open up. Quite honestly, he would have just said the hell with the whole conversation, because not many people are willing to share this type of information- as well as allow himself to express and another goes on to have it written about for a school grade. I put myself in his shoes and thought about the

interview and how it will make me feel that the interviewer is not frankly interested in my life and feelings, but more so asking me such things and finding interest, in order to receive a grade. With that said, I made it a heartfelt conversation, not only for him, but for myself as well because I do care to know about oneself deep within. Nonetheless, the conversation was a complete conversation in which one was expressing himself to a close friend without the interviewing spotlight, judgment, sugar on top, nothing- it was all real.

A young boy, in his teen years, is told “get your things together, we are moving to the United States this week” anxiety, excitement, sadness and fear, is now what this young boy feels. He does not want to believe it is real, yet the other half of him knows it is nothing less than the truth. His mother was a nurse, caring for those wounded from the violence, wars, rebels, and attacks between the Somali people and those entering from surrounding countries, searching for refuge. Surroundings of the people were worsening by the minute and families were leaving their homes, belongings, and loved ones to find security. His mother worked very close with the U.S. services for refugees, allowing her the opportunity to receive fast help with visas for her and her children to Utah, reuniting with her brother and sisters families. “We were very fortunate to have these privileges that others did not. Especially to be reunited with our families- what are the odds of that?” He stated.

Now residing in Salt lake City, Utah, his life has changed. He says, “I have become an American, the American we use to talk about in my country.” He has graduated high school, attends college, and has a good job, an apartment, a nice car, his immediate family from Africa, and an 8-year-old son now.

The Bravanese/Barawani people are very religious Muslim people that put religion and family first. Their strong religious ways affect everything else in their lives in many ways such as food, clothing, appearance, dance, and music. The families of these people consist of blood related relatives and consider everyone family. The Barawani people of Somalia are very friendly, giving, and trust worthy. Families consider Neighbors family so they share food, clothing, and services such as baby-sitting any time. "The difference of America is that people are not so friendly," He says. "There are always people who are in desperate need, and seek help. But, those surrounding people are too cold, some greedy, ego-centric, and closed minded, - many are not so trust worthy." He made also made a comment about "not being able to have your American neighbors be a part of your family, and do such things like allowing them to watch over your children because you will never know what they do. Especially because of the stories you hear on the news and people harming one another." " People of the Barawani tribe are very close and kind and caring so there is a lot of trust and honestly so they are able to become a part of your family very easily."

The food of the Barawani in Somalia, also ties in with the Muslim religion. The food is very basic and is usually the same every meal. The food consists of the main meat- chicken or fish, with rice, beans, adding many fruits and vegetables. Since they are Muslim, they do not eat pork. Not only is the food they eat different, but also the way they eat food. The Bravanese people eat only three times a day for breakfast- in the morning, lunch in the afternoon and dinner in the evening. Meals are not to be of waste, if there is food, people are to eat it- as expected, especially breakfast; it is required always because they believe it is the most important meal of the day. When they eat, it is always with the family- never alone, so you must eat! When the Barawani people eat, it is on the floor in a circle with the family silently and uses only the right

hand, always. The time to eat is silent because it is a time for you and your body to connect and appreciate what you have.

The clothing appearance of the Barawani is also due to the Muslim religion. The women wear a Hijab every day and anytime they step outside of their homes-, it is necessary. The Hijab is a head wrap, which covers women's hair to hide it from men, only the husband of the woman can see her uncovered. With the Hijab, the women are to cover their bodies with clothing at all times, the only body parts that can show are their hands and feet. The appearance of the women must be mysterious and hidden so that the inner beauty is seen. The county believes women should wear Hijabs and cover their bodies because men need to see the inner beauty of a woman, if he does, he should love her for her inner self-beauty, never the outer. Men are free to wear whatever clothing they want except for Fridays they wear a Hamis. The Hamis is a white gown like dress that covers their bodies. In some countries, men wear a Turban with it (a male head wrap). The colors of the Hijabs do not matter for the women they are free to choose in Somalia. On the other hand, in Somalia, the males Hamis must be white, representing purity like god.

The Bravanese are very religious, and pray many times a day for nearly an hour long. As I have learned religions affects their lives in many ways. The tribe does not celebrate as many Holidays as Americans do. The biggest celebration the Barawani celebrate is EID, End of Ramadan. The Ramadan is an annual ritual for Muslims after the month of fasting has completed. The Muslim people eat but only when the sun goes down and do not eat when the sun is up. Almost every night during Ramadan, there is a family feast, when it is the End of Ramadan, then the people of Barawa celebrate with their family with dancing and food- this is Eid.

Dance is not a very social thing for men and women again due to their religion. Dance is a not a very common thing with the Bravanese tribe of Somalia. Dance is an important part of life in the Barawani culture, but usually in private settings and only with the same sex. Celebrations are usually where all of the dancing takes place. Weddings are also an important time the Barawani people dance. There are two separate parties for marriages- one for the women and one for the men. Women have a party with family, friends, dance, and feast only amongst other women. The same rules apply for the men- only men attend. Men and women are not to dance together in a public setting because they believe that should happen in the privacy of your own homes. Music is always very different. Music in Somalia is very common but the amount of famous people is not. Anyone in Somalia can be famous by simply paying someone to write a song and the payer will sing it, then the people listen. However, the famous phase does not last long because there are always new songs with new artists. Music is usually very slow, singing about love, religion, and relationships.

“I have experienced an enormous culture shock when moving to the United States.” He has lived mostly in Utah and Seattle Washington, while visiting Minnesota on many occasions. He believes that in other states, like Seattle, people are all different. “It is nice to see differences in people such as religion, ethnicity, language, and backgrounds. I enjoy seeing differences in people because it was not like that in my county, - most people are the same. However, it was harder to relate and become close to many people because we have different values beliefs. Shockingly, many people are willing to try.” He describes majority of the people in Utah are Mormon and had found that they have not been very open-minded. “The people who are not of the Mormon religion are not as welcomed as those who are. Yeah, I am use to people with the same religious beliefs, as it is in my country, but there is a different approach. In Somalia,

people of all religions and beliefs are welcome into homes and not looked down upon but here in Utah, I feel that is the case.” He states.

Living in the United States has changed the mind and life for a 25-year-old Barawani male. Surprised by the different religions, food, family values, music, dance, clothing’s, and work- He believes that the U.S. is a good county and has many opportunities but the people here are not very in tune with culture, religion, family and values as his. He ends the topic by saying, “we, as the American people are too caught up in life, and money that we forget what is important. We do not see the little amazing things that are happening at every moment in the day around us. If we just took an hour out of the day, (like they do in Somalia) for lunch, shut down all stores, and take time with the family and ourselves- we would find that the world doesn’t have to be so stressful, it can easily be peaceful, we just have to find it within ourselves and not material things.” People in the United States and Somalia are very different but he loves both places in many ways. There are many pros and cons in both Somalia and America- so he often goes back home to visit, but resides in the United States because he has now started his own family here.