Ravinder Manku

Interviewed by Polly Sonifer On December 17, 1998

PS: Good evening. How are you?

RM: Fine.

PS: Good. Thanks for coming out to do this. Tell me a little bit about yourself, where you were born, what your family was like when you were born, those details about your early life.

RM: Okay. I was born in Nairobi. Kenya is my birthplace, and I lived there until I was about five or six years old. I lived there for a while. I was born in 1966, and from 1970 to '73, my dad moved to Zambia in Africa, and we lived there for three years. Then at that time it was me and my brother. I'm the oldest of three, I have two younger brothers. We lived in Zambia for three years, and then after that we moved to Canada in January 1974. So I've been living in Winnipeg, Canada, since January 1974, which is where my family is. That's where I basically grew up, went to school, all that. My younger brother was born a year after we got there; he was born in '75. So me and my brother next to me were born in Nairobi, and the younger one was born in Canada.

PS: So what country was your first citizenship in?

RM: We were British citizens, because at that time people born in Kenya still retained British citizenship, so I was a British citizen at that time.

PS: Tell me your parents' names and what they were doing.

RM: My dad's name is Ajit Manku. When we were in Kenya, my dad was a teacher for a while, and then he used to teach drafting. That's what he used to do. Then when we moved to Zambia, my dad worked as a city inspector for the City Council there in Zambia. He had a three-year contract. He worked with them for three years, and then after three years he decided to move to Canada just because of all the political stuff going on, instability, and also because of more educational opportunities. But he could have renewed his contact, but he didn't. So then he moved to Canada.

While he was in Canada, for the first little — I would say from 1974 to probably 1985, my dad worked in the drafting area, but then that occupation kind of became obsolete. Then he went back to school and got his teaching degree. So ever since 1987 to now, he's been teaching in junior high school. He's an industrial arts teacher. He's a drafting teacher, teaches drafting, woodwork, and that kind of stuff.

My mom didn't work when we were younger, but for a while when we were in Zambia, she used to be a secretary, so she worked in an office for a while. Then when we came to Canada, my

mom worked in a factory for a while, like a sewing factory, and then she was pregnant with my brother, my younger brother, and then she quit working and stayed at home and looked after us.

Then when I was about, I think, probably around eleven or twelve years old, my mom got a job working in one of the school divisions in Winnipeg, and she does cleaning. So she's been doing that ever since. So that was, I think, back in 1976, '77. So she works as — she cleans in a school. She worked in several schools at the beginning. Right now she's working in a junior high school and she cleans in the evening. She's always worked part time, usually four hours in the evening, so when we were growing up, she usually worked from four to eight and was home during the daytime. She's still doing that and probably will be doing it for a while, since it's been almost over twenty years now she's been doing that. She hopes to retire at some point soon.

PS: And your mom's name is?

RM: Surinder Manku.

PS: Tell me about your family's religious background. How was it that your parents came to be living in Africa?

RM: Well, my parents were born in India, but they were quite young when they moved to Kenya. They were just less than a year old when my grandparents decided to move to Kenya. I don't really know the real reason why. I don't know. It's not something that I've ever asked about or whatever, but I just assumed it had to do with the job situation or something, but I've never really explored that.

But, like I said, my mom and dad were quite young when they moved, so they basically grew up in Africa. They went to school, their high school, and they got married there and everything. And when my grandfather moved there, he had a carpentry shop, and my dad worked there while he was going to school and everything. So my mom and dad spent most of their childhood and part of their adult life in Kenya, and most of my aunts and uncles, they were born there.

PS: So was it sort of like a little Indian community?

RM: No. What happened was, back when the British were controlling India, from my understanding, they were building a railroad in Africa, so they were bringing all these India people over to help with the railroad. So there's been a large Indian population always, and most of them tend to be business people. So over I don't know how many years, there's been a huge population of Indians living there, so that's where a lot of my family spend their time, my dad's side and my mom's side and my grandparents and everything. And there still is now, but just depends, like with the political situation of the country.

One of my aunts lived in Uganda. I don't know if you're familiar with it, but in the 1970s, when Idi Amin, who was the President or Prime Minister at that time, he was kicking people out of the country. My aunt, she had just gotten married at that time, and she was in a refugee camp for a while, but then she left. Ever since then, she lived in England, so she's been there since the early

seventies. So a lot of people have left. A lot of my relatives ended up moving from Africa, and most of them are now in England because of the unstable situation and everything. So I have some cousins who were born in Kenya, but were raised in — they're all basically living in England.

PS: Did your family keep in touch with relatives back in India?

RM: No. See, my family's kind of — we're kind of displaced from there. I mean, my grandfather, when he was alive, he used to go and visit. My grandparents do have some kind of connection there, but we never really kept in touch with anyone — because I wasn't born there and my parents never really spent a lot of time there, and most of our family was in Africa, so that's kind of where our roots are. I mean, my parents do have relatives there, but we've never really — and my parents have never been back since they were little, and I've never gone to India at all.

So I don't really have much of a connection to the country itself, because I've lived all over, so that's why I don't — when people talk about it, I don't feel like I have any connection to India at all. Even my parents, they don't really feel like it at all, because we didn't grow up there or anything. We don't really keep in touch — my family is all over the world. Most of my relatives live in England, and then I have relatives in Australia, and then I have family in Canada. So that's why we don't really feel like we have a connection with the country.

PS: What language did you speak as a young child?

RM: I grew up speaking Punjabi, but then when I went to school when I was five, because I grew up with the British system, I started speaking English, and I've been speaking English at home. I mean, at home we speak English. My parents used to — growing up in Canada, they tried to get us to learn Punjabi, but we just kind of never felt the need for it, because we were growing up in an English-speaking country. So we've been speaking English. We speak English in my house, except my mom and dad speak in Punjabi. I can understand it, but I can't really speak it very well. It's kind of broken, so I don't even have the proper accent to speak it.

PS: Do your parents read and write Punjabi?

RM: My mom reads and writes fluently, because she learned it in school. My dad, he speaks it fluently, but he taught himself how to read it, so he's not as fluent as my mother. He doesn't know how to write it. He just never learned. But he knows how to read it. He taught himself. But he doesn't know how to write it. My mom is the fluent one in the family.

PS: So that language connection has been pretty much lost. Are your brothers the same as you?

RM: Actually, I've probably retained it more than my brothers. They can probably understand it, but I think I know more than they do.

PS: Because you're a girl. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, probably. [Laughter] But like my grandparents, my grandparent who are alive, my grandfather can understand English pretty well. He can recognize letters and he knows numbers, and he can understand a lot of words. You can have a conversation with him in broken English, whatever. But my grandma, she doesn't really — she knows a lot of words, but she doesn't know sentences. So communication with them is a problem, because we don't speak the language. I can get by with them, but usually it's like my mother kind of translating in between. Usually when they call, I'm like, "Here, Mom. You can talk to her." [Laughter] Because I don't feel like I can communicate with them that well, so I don't really talk to them so much.

PS: Where do they live now?

RM: My grandparents live in Winnipeg. They moved to Canada in 1980, so they've been living there. They lived with my uncle for about ten years when he used to live in Halifax, and now he's in England. But then my uncle moved back to England, and then they came to Winnipeg and stayed with us, because they were getting older and stuff. So they've been here since 1990.

My mom's parents, my grandfather, he passed away four years ago. He was fluent in English. You could have a conversation with him. My grandma, same thing, she kind of knew a few words, but not really. But she died a long time ago; she died in '86. So I didn't really know her that well because I grew up in Canada.

PS: Do you have any favorite memories that stick out from your early childhood when you were in Kenya or Zambia?

RM: Let's see. Well, one thing I do remember is when I was growing up, I grew up with all of my family around. We used to live in this one place, it was a real community where there was this compound where different neighbors and friends all lived together. So there was always somebody around to play with and stuff like that. So I remember that, as compared to when we came to Canada, we didn't have all that family around or friends around. It was really different in that sense. So I do remember that a lot, just having people around all the time, growing up with that.

PS: And they were all Indian people?

RM: Not just all Indian. Well, most of them were. I was quite young, so I don't remember exactly. But most of them were — yes, a lot of them were Indian. We had black people working for us. They were servants, so we had that, too, but I think most of them, I remember they were Indian. So we had that real community spirit.

PS: Were they also all speaking Punjabi? As little children, pre-schoolers, you were all speaking Punjabi together?

RM: Probably. See, I don't remember. I was too young to remember those things, so I don't really know. I mean, the friends that I had in school, I used to speak English with them, and I

think it was my mom said until I went to school, I used to speak Punjabi at home, but then once I went to school, I started speaking English, and ever since then I started speaking English.

PS: And the school that you went to, was that a public school or private school?

RM: You mean the one in Kenya or in Zambia?

PS: Both.

RM: I think it was a public school. I mean, when I was in Zambia, I did grade one and two. Two grades I completed. I mean, I started off in nursery school in Kenya. I was three years old or prenursery, whatever you call it. And I think the school that I went to was a public school in Africa.

PS: Were there African children in that school?

RM: There was African, there was white, there was Indian, mixed of all different types.

PS: As a child, how did you perceive that? Was there any cliquishness? Did the Indians not associated with the Africans or the whites? Was there any division like that?

RM: Again, I don't remember, but I don't think so. I don't remember any particular memory that's stuck in my mind where I felt I was separate from everybody else. I think as kids you don't really always pay attention to that. But I mean, I didn't feel anything. I enjoyed school.

One memory I have of myself when I was in school, I loved to write stories. When we would have writing time, I would be the one to write the longest stories in class. So that's what I remember, and I always used to do really well. It was like creative writing. So I would always have these long stories that I would write, and I just remember that I used to really like writing. And I still do, so that's kind of interesting.

PS: When you moved to Zambia, you still went to the public school?

RM: Yes. I did grade one and two over there.

PS: It was the same there? You just enjoyed writing, and it was a mixed —

RM: Yes. Actually, the writing part, I remember that from grade one. I remember that from grade one and two. So, yes. It was — I'm trying to think. See, I don't really have any memories from my schooling days that really stick out. I had a good childhood, but I can't think of any memory that really sticks out in my mind in terms of my school.

I do remember one particular incident, which was we had to put on this play. I think I was in grade one or two. We used to do these concerts. I was asked to be in this concert with these three other Indian girls, and we were expected to do an Indian dance. I remember the teacher asking us to do this or whatever. I remember I didn't want to do it, but I was forced to do it. Then the

teacher had given me — and I had to wear this costume or whatever, and I had this jewelry that the teacher had given me to wear. What happened was, somewhere along the line I ended up breaking a necklace or something, and I remember this teacher was really mean. I remember telling her, and she got really mad at me, and I remember her slapping me because I had broken the necklace. I was really scared, and I remember just being resentful for being in that play. I just didn't want to be in this dance. I still have a picture of myself in that particular dance. But I remember that. I remember that particular teacher slapping me because I'd broken her jewelry or whatever. So that still kind of sticks out in my mind, actually. I remember that.

PS: Did you know Indian dances, that you could just do on the spot?

RM: No. They taught us. This was a cultural show they wanted us to do, and they taught us how to do it. But I just remember I didn't want to do it, but I had to do it.

PS: Was this teacher an Indian woman?

RM: Probably the teacher who taught us, but the teacher who hit me, who had taken the jewelry, she was a black lady, I remember that. But maybe I don't remember exactly what this teacher was like, but I just remember a teacher hitting me. So I don't remember exactly, but I remember that particular incident.

PS: So then for third grade you went to Canada.

RM: Yes. When I came to Canada, see, the school system was kind of different. I had just finished grade two there in December. Then when I came to Canada, the principal put me in grade three. I actually think they should have put me in grade two, because according to the age, I was younger. But they put me into grade three because they thought that I did well in school there. So I got bumped up to grade three, so I was seven when I came, and I'd just turned eight, because my birthday is in March. We came January 24th, is when we came to Canada. Then, yes, I got put into grade three.

But my brother, Tajinder, who is next to me, he had just finished grade one, and when he came to Canada, instead of putting him into grade two, they put him back into grade one because they thought he would be way too young. So they bumped him back, which didn't really make that much of a difference, so he ended up doing part of grade one over again.

PS: But you were the smart one.

RM: [Laughter] Yes, it's really weird. But I think he turned out to be the smarter sometimes.

PS: I bet it was a big difference being in Africa, to being in Winnipeg, Canada, like the weather and the culture and the language.

RM: Yes. The weather was a big change, because I had never really known winter when I was in — I mean, I grew up in a tropical country, so I didn't have any concept of winter. So that was a

big shock. We came during a time when it was one of the worst winters in Canada, it was freezing cold, so that was kind of a shock, just getting used to that and having to wear all that stuff.

Then also I didn't have any problems with the language, because I already knew how to speak English, and my parents knew, too. But I remember particular incidents in grade three, because I grew up with British English, so some of the words I used to use, kids used to make fun of me. Like when I would say "catsup," in England we'd say "tomato sauce." We don't use "catsup." And then words like "eraser," we use "rubber," you know, those kind of things. They didn't understand. So I remember getting teased about that a lot. I do remember particular incidences of that when I was teased in terms of how I spoke. So that was one thing.

Yes, I think those were the main things, in terms of just adjusting to a new school and everything. My parents weren't too happy with the school that we went to. When we first came to Canada, we were kind of living in the inner-city part of Winnipeg, you know, where there was a huge immigrant population. So most of the kids attending the school were — I mean, there's a large immigrant population, so it was an inner-city school. In grade three I didn't really have any problems with the teacher, but in grade four my parents — we lived there for about a year and a half, because my parents didn't like the school. They just felt that we weren't being treated well.

I had this teacher in grade four that didn't treat me very well. He was really horrible, used to yell and everything. So after a year and a half, my mom and dad decided it was better to move out, and then they moved more into the suburbs and bought a brand-new house and everything, and to a better school. So we only stayed there for a year and a half and then we moved. When I was in grade five, we moved to the house that we now live in, which we've been living in every since then. So that was a better experience for us.

PS: The immigrant community that you were in, was there a lot of Indians in that?

RM: No. In the area that I grew up in, in Canada, ever since grade five and the house that we lived in in '75, I was practically the only Indian student there. I mean, when I was in grade five, six, I mean, there was hardly any. There was maybe one. I mean, throughout my school years, junior high school, high school, I mean, there is hardly any Indians at all. There's very few. So in my junior high school we had four, five hundred kids, there's probably a handful. Same as when I was in high school, even in my classes, I was usually the only one. If you look at my yearbooks, you'll see. So I didn't have much of an Indian community in my school.

PS: How was that for you?

RM: Well, it was difficult, because when I was growing up, I really rejected the Indian culture. My parents tried to instill the values in us, me and my brothers, but I just really resented it, because I was being torn between school, my friends, and what my parents were telling me, because my parents were very strict with me. I grew up in a very strict household, and especially being the only daughter, my parents were really strict with me and with my brothers, too, worse with me, because they didn't want me to get into drugs or anything like that.

So they were very strict with us. When I was in high school, I was not allowed to date, so that was really hard. So while my friends were going out to dances and all this kind of stuff — like I remember in junior high school, we used to have these dances every Friday night at the Community Club, where my school was, and I was never allowed to go because my parents were worried that something bad might happen to me. Then even when I was in high school, I was not allowed to go on any of the field trips. Like the camping field trips they have during the summertime, I was not allowed to go on those because my parents were worried that something might happen to me.

My younger brother next to me — the age difference between me and my brother Tajinder is only a year and a half, and the younger one is nine years, so it was quite different. He was allowed to go because he was a boy, but for me — and I really resented that. I used to get into battles with my mother about , "Why is it I have to do housework and why doesn't Tajinder have to do it? Why do I have to learn cooking and he doesn't have to?" Because my mom, when I was twelve years old, she used to really force me to like learn to cook and do all those things, and I would get really resentful, so I would get into these arguments with her. So there was always this conflict about how I was expected to act as a girl and how society expected me to act and stuff like that. So it was really hard.

I remember, because I wasn't allowed to do certain things, you know, the dating part never really bothered me. I don't know. When I was in school, when I was in high school, I never really cared much about that. It didn't bother me that my friends were dating. I think what bothered me most was that I was not allowed to go out with my friends, but I never — I don't know, maybe I was just a strange teenager, but I never worried about boyfriends and all that kind of stuff. I never really cared about that, because I was more into my studying. That was important to me. I think it's because of the way I'd been raised, that it's important to get good marks and do well and all that. So I never really cared about the dating aspect of it, but I guess I wanted to go out and stuff.

And just also like the other thing that really bothered me in school was my parents were pretty strict in terms of religious. I don't know if you're familiar with the Sikh religion, but we're not allowed to cut our hair, if you're really traditional. So I wasn't allowed to cut my hair, because I had long hair, and I really resented that, because all my friends, they'd cut their hair and get perms and all that. My dad, he would totally refuse. I remember when I was in grade eight one time and I asked him, "Dad, can I get a perm?" And he said, "No," and I remember being really upset and everything. And I always used to wear my hair up. I mean, I wore braids until I was eighteen years old, first year of college, which is so funny when I think about it. But I basically resented all that, but I never really went against my parents. I never did anything bad. I was a good kid. I always wanted to please them.

PS: Just seething on the inside.

RM: Yes. I mean, I'd get mad and stuff, but then I guess I just learned to push it aside and said, "Oh, okay. Whatever." I used to get mad. Then I think it was not until I got to college where I started developing my own sense of freedom and then sort of rebelling sort of subtly, you know,

not just outright and stuff. But it took a long time to get to the point that I am now in my life, and even now I'm still — thirty-two years old, I still fight those cultural battles and stuff. My parents changed a lot, too, but when I was growing up, it was hard. But even though it was difficult, I would say that I had a pretty good teenagehood, because my parents were really — I mean, at least I knew my parents were there to support me, compared to some of my friends who grew up, their parents never supported them or never cared much about them. And I think my parents tried to do the best that they could. Now I can understand better why they did the things that they did, even though I think some things they could have done differently, but I accept it more now. But, yes, it was kind of difficult, and it was hard for them, because they had to fight two cultures.

PS: Say more about fighting two cultures.

RM: What I mean about fighting between cultures is the Western values as opposed to the Eastern values, so there is a real dichotomy. My parents tried to instill the Indian values, or Eastern values, what do you want to call it. And then the society I was living in was pulling me another way. So that's what I mean by the struggling of the two different values, you know. So that was challenging, you know, growing up. I think, as a person living with two cultures, I think it's still a challenge for me, you know, because even now, I try to do things I want to please my parents and at the same time I live in this society and I want that sense of freedom and stuff, so I still fight that kind of thing, you know.

Just the other day, my mom was making me feel so guilty about not coming home and all this kind of stuff, and it's always been with me like I have to do what my parents say, you know, and I didn't want to go home and stuff like that. So it's still fighting between the two cultures or whatever. Maybe that's not even just a cultural thing, just parents in general. You know what I mean.

PS: But there is an extra element.

RM: I think so. The family, it's really — because, you know, in the Indian culture, the family is so — like you're tied into the family so much, you kind of lose your individuality in a sense. So I feel there's this expectation, obligation for me to go home, you know, and I don't want to.

PS: You don't want to go home because?

RM: Well, I just got married this year, so I want to spend time with my husband. We want to go away and just be by ourselves. Like I think my mom — I had a conversation with her. I explained to my mom, "Mom, I'm married now. I just can't come running home whenever I want to," you know. And I said, "We want to spend time together because we don't have much time." I had to explain that to her. I mean, I think she's still thinking I can just come home, and because every Christmas I've gone home and stuff like that, and it's different. So she says she understands, but sometimes I really wonder what she does understand. But I think it's just she's a mother and, you know, she just wants us there. So it's hard, I think, for her to strike that balance.

PS: So while you were in high school in Winnipeg, you said there were very few other Indians.

Did you ever experience anything that you would describe as discrimination based on being Indian or being different?

RM: I did have some incidences of being, you know, teased and stuff when I was in school. Not so much in high school, but in junior high school I was. When I was in grade seven, grade seven was a horrible year for me. I didn't like junior high, period, especially grade seven, because I used to get teased all the time. One particular incident I can tell you about. There used to be this black boy in my class. I still remember his name — Paul Girard. He used to tease me in school. He'd call me "Paki." I don't know if you've ever hard that racist term or not, but in Canada sometimes when they refer to a brown person, like an Indian person, they'd use the word "Paki," meaning Pakistanian, you know, so it was a racist term that they used. It just meant, when they called you that, that they think you're from Indian. It's taken from "Pakistan," "Paki," but basically means you're a brown person from India or Pakistan, whatever. So that was the term that they would refer to me as, and I used to get called that sometimes, used to be called a "Paki." Sometimes when I'd walk down the street or whatever, kids would call me that, you know.

I remember this particular boy. He called me that, and I remember crying one time, and the principal coming in and saying, you know, we shouldn't be saying things like that or whatever, which I just thought was so ironic, because he [the boy] is colored himself and he's calling me that. So I remember that being pretty devastating and stuff like that. And like I said, when I was in school, sometimes I'd get called "Paki," you know, walking down the street or walking down the hall or whatever, you know, they used to be racist or whatever. So I remember that particular incident in grade seven.

But I never really had any other major incidences like happen in high school, except, like I said, they'd sometimes call me those racist terms or whatever. But high school was pretty good for me. I liked the high school I went to and stuff like that. That was okay. But one thing that was really hard for me when I was growing up as a teenager is that I really tried to disassociate myself from being Indian.

When I was in high school, I remember just really rejecting myself being Indian. I hated the color of my skin. I always wanted to be lighter, you know, and I used to be embarrassed by the food that we would eat. I would never bring something Indian, you know, for lunch, I would just be so embarrassed, because I just didn't want people to smell my food and stuff, and also, with my dad, like my dad wears a turban, he still does, and so, for me, it was kind of embarrassing. I didn't want my friends to see me with my dad, if we were in a store or something, because I didn't want to be teased and stuff like that.

So it was like I would try to think of ways where I could just totally avoid people seeing me in that context or whatever, because I just wanted to be totally not associated with being Indian. I was just kind of embarrassed, I would say. So I do remember that, and just not being able to cut my hair, and all kinds of things.

PS: How long did your hair get to be?

RM: Oh, it was up to my butt.

PS: Okay. Does it wear off at the ends after a while, or stop growing?

RM: Yeah. Hair, like it grows to a certain length, and then you get the split ends, and then it just keeps — it doesn't grow anymore because it just becomes dead, which I think is so unhealthy, but, you know —

PS: Well, I see that your hair is short now, so something changed somewhere. Okay. So how were your grades? You sounded like you were a good student.

RM: Yeah. I mean, I did pretty good. I was not like, you know, honors student or whatever, but I usually got As and Bs. I was like a B, B-plus student, I'd say. Yeah. So I did pretty good in school. I didn't have any problems or anything. I mean, I had problems in chemistry. Chemistry and physics were not my strong subjects, so I did have some problems with that. But then I got tutoring and stuff like that.

For example, when I was in grade eleven, I had a lot of problems with chemistry, so my mom and dad were really involved with our school. In high school they would go to all the parent-teacher conferences. Most parents, they avoid it, whatever, or they don't go because their kids don't want it, but my parents were always involved with my school, and they always talked to the teachers. So when I was having problems with chemistry in high school, my dad and my mom went and talked to the chemistry teacher and said, "You're not helping our daughter enough," or whatever, and they're like, "What's the problem?" So he offered to give me extra help. So he did, and then my mark went up, because my parents were concerned that I was getting Cs or whatever. So then after that, I did much better. So in those subjects I did sort of have some problems. But I did okay, though. I mean, I got Bs, whatever. So I did pretty good in school.

PS: Was there an assumption when you were in high school that you would go to college?

RM: Oh, yeah, definitely. There was no question even asked. When I was growing up, my dad always assumed that I would be a doctor, is what was assumed of me ever since I was little, "You're going to go to school, so you have to take all the sciences and all the academics to get into college," or whatever. So there was the assumption. My dad always believed — now when I look back, I always think it's brainwashing. [Laughter] So I think I was brainwashed to believe I would be a doctor, but it didn't turn out that way, because when I got into college, I spent two years of my undergrad in science, and I realized it was not for me. I just was not good at — I liked biology, but I didn't like physics and chemistry, and I didn't really do well in it. I mean, it was different compared to high school. So I had a lot of problems in my first year of college, because I realized I was not a science person. You know, I did pretty bad. So my dad was really upset with me.

Then in second year I took, again, all the sciences, but then after first semester, I just dropped all the sciences, and then I just took some arts courses and just figured that I'm not going to be a doctor and I'm not going to be in this faculty, you know, the science faculty. So my dad

suggested to me, "Why don't you go into teaching." I mean, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was basically just doing what my father did, which seems to have been a pattern in my life many times. And I never, ever thought I'd be a teacher. I wasn't interested at all. So he said, "Okay, go into education."

I'm like, "Okay." So I applied for education, and I got it, and I did double degree. I got my bachelor's in education and then I got my bachelor's in human ecology, which is home economics. I'm just teasing you a bit. So I did that, and not really knowing what I was going to do, but I graduated. I got both degrees, and stuff like that, so my dad was happy with that. But I never used my home economics training. I never went in that direction, and I had no interest in teaching in a public high school.

So when I left college, I was twenty-three, and then I worked in education, but I ended up going into more like adult education. So after I graduated from college, I worked with a program in Canada for like — it was like a GED program for sixteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. These are kids who had dropped out of high school. I worked as an instructor there, and I really liked that, and that sort of kind of led me into kind of what I'm doing right now in adult ed.

So I always liked education, but I've been in education over the past ten years in my career, but always in a different capacity. I've done teaching. I've done research, evaluation, and all that. So, education is — I like the field, because it's working with people. And that's one thing I've realized, I'm a very people-oriented person. So that was a wise choice, but, like I said, I've just taken different aspects of it. I've done different things in the area of education and never in a public high school, because I just decided I did not want to work in a public high school, I wanted to work with adults. So I did language teaching.

I went abroad, and I taught for a while, and then when I came back, I went and did my master's degree, and then I decided to do research and evaluation, which is what I'm doing now. But I still want to do teaching because I still like teaching, especially working with adults, immigrants, and all that kind of stuff. So that's kind of like my passion, to do research and evaluation and teaching all together. So that's where I am in terms of my career right now.

So right now I'm a graduate student at the university. I'm working on my Ph.D. in adult education. I have about a year and a half left, and I want to eventually, after I get my Ph.D., I want to do consulting where I can evaluate programs, I can teach, and all those kinds of things. So I think in terms of my career, I've satisfied with the direction it has gone. So I'm happy with that. So I guess something came out right, but, again, it was not my choice; it was my dad's choice. But everything I'm doing now is my choice, but it didn't work out that way. But I'm glad, because I couldn't see myself as a — I could see myself as a doctor, but just to get to that point and then just the lifestyle of it, I don't think it would be suitable for me. I don't think I would have — except for the money, of course. I'll never be rich doing what I'm doing.

PS: Let's go back to college. Tell me where you went to college for your undergraduate work.

RM: I studied at the University of Manitoba, which is in Winnipeg.

PS: And your major there was education and home economics.

RM: Yeah. I started off with science as — you know, the first two years I spent doing science, and then I graduated with my education degree and my home economics or human ecology, whatever you want to call it.

PS: What was college like for you?

RM: I enjoyed college. I didn't enjoy the first two years of my life in college, because I think just that transition from high school to college takes a while, and it's like you have to grow up and nobody is telling you what to do. So I think that adjustment was something that was really difficult for me. And then, also, the expectation that my father had of me. I think, when I look back to my college days, especially my first year, I think I went into a depression, because I used to be — I would come home and I would just be depressed all the time. I'd feel so worthless. I'd literally just walk around like a zombie. I was just totally depressed. I had no confidence in myself and my abilities, and my relationship with my dad was not the greatest, because I was doing bad, and he expected a lot more from me. I would just feel like a loser, because I wasn't meeting his expectations.

And that's always been a thing, like always trying to please Mom and Dad, you know, trying to meet their expectations. It's something I've always grown up with, and I still struggle with it now, too. But I used to get really depressed my first year of college. I just hated it, and I used to always get into these fights with my dad about, you know, like me doing really bad and stuff like that. So that was hard, but then once I got into education, that was much better, because I found that I liked it and I was doing well in my subjects. So I would say probably the last few years of my college life were better, because I knew the system, I knew how to play the game, and I found it more interesting.

And then also I made a lot of friends that kind of helped me grow up a lot, you know. So I had this one friend that I used to hang around with a lot, and she — see, I never used to talk to guys when I was in high school. It was not until I got to college when I really started noticing men, you know. Because she always had lots of men friends, she had more men friends than female friends, so I used to hang around with her a lot, so that's when I started becoming more aware of men and stuff like that. So that was a big change for me, you know, in terms of getting along with the opposite sex. I mean, if you compare me to the average Canadian or American child, whatever, or college student, I think I was a late bloomer in that sense, you know. Because twenty, twenty-one, everybody had had a relationship and all this, but I didn't do any of that stuff or whatever.

So I didn't really start becoming aware of it, and I used to get scared, though. If there was a guy I liked or whatever, and I would talk to him or he would talk to me and express and interest, I would get scared. I would get this defense mechanism where I would be really scared, because my mom had always put this fear in me of men, you know, and so I would always be scared or whatever. Because there was a couple of guys that expressed an interest in me when I was in

college, but I just literally — you know, when they'd come and talk to me, I'd be rude to them because I would, you know, put on this defense mechanism. And I did that a lot for a long time, because — just the way I grew up. My mom just never encouraged me to talk to men, not even so much as relationships, but more like — and I think it's just in the Indian nature to do that, because she never had any experience with dating. She just got married right out of high school. So she had no concept of that. So I think she was just kind of afraid that something would happen to me.

So that was hard, and that was something I had to struggle with for a long time. And I don't think it was until I was twenty-four years old and went away. After I graduated from college and a year after I graduated, I went off to Japan for two years. I was in an exchange program (the JET program), and I was teaching there for two years. So it was not until I got there. That's when I became more comfortable talking with men. I had more friends and stuff like that. So that was a good experience for me because it really cut the ties with my parents and it gave me a chance to grow up. Because when I was going to college, I was at home and everything, and I didn't have a lot of responsibility, and I wasn't independent or anything, because I basically lived at home, and my parents did everything for me and all that stuff.

And even when I was at home, and going out was such a hassle, like coming home at twelve o'clock. I mean, I remember one time when I was like twenty-two years old, my mom yelled at me because I came home at twelve midnight. She'd just get all mad and everything, and I was like an adult. In this society I would be considered an adult. So instead of trying to cause any problems, I just — I'm like, "Okay. I'll be home at eleven," or whatever. It was just not worth the tension. You know what I mean? So I just said, "Okay. Fine. Whatever."

So I just never bothered trying to go out and try to do things. I mean, I'd go out, but I'd make sure I'd come home at a — because every time I was out and I'd stay out late, I'd be like, "Oh, my God. Mom and Dad are going to worry. I have to go home." I would be always tense. And, you know, it's really funny. When I got back home now, I still find myself getting back into that mode. It's really weird. Maybe now it's different because I'm married, so my parents consider me an adult, but even when I go home, like when I was single and I lived here and I would go, I would regress back to that old — and that's one reason I don't like going home, and that's one reason I didn't want to go home this time, too, because I hate that. It makes me feel like a little kid again. My parents treat me like that.

PS: Most of us do that, actually, if it's any consolation.

RM: I know. I know. It's just —

PS: You're always your parents' children.

RM: Exactly.

PS: No matter how old you are.

RM: And even when they come here. It's so funny, you know. I've lived here by myself for the past three years, and when they would come here, again I would resolve to be in that mentality, you know. Like when I was living by myself, when I was here, I mean, I'd go out at ten o'clock, no problem. I would just come and go whenever I please. But when they were here, I had to go back to being the child again and not go out after dark or anything. It was not worth the hassle. They were with me for a week. Okay, fine. I can deal with it. Then I just wanted them to leave. [Laughter] I don't know if it's the Indian parent mentality thing or it's just — it just bugs me sometimes, you know.

PS: It's parents in general, I think.

RM: Yeah, I think so. And I'll probably be like that with my kid, too, but

PS: Oh, heaven help you.

RM: I hope not.

PS: So tell me about Japan. What did you do in Japan?

gram. It' RM: Well, when I was in Japan, I was on this exchange program. It's called the JET, the Japanese Exchange Teaching program. What happened was, they recruited native speakers, and most of the people who went on this were just like college graduates. So most of they are twentythree, twenty-four, my age at that time. So they recruited these teachers to go over. The qualification was, you had to be a native speaker and you had to have a college degree. They didn't care if you knew Japanese or whether you had a teaching degree or anything like that.

So I went over, and I was placed in Nagasaki. I was there for two years and I worked in a high school. Nagasaki Technical High School is the school I worked in, and also there was a junior high school I worked in called Iwaya Junior High School. So what happened was, I was sent over and I worked with the English teachers there, the Japanese English teachers, and basically my job was to — in many ways it was kind of boring, because I was just treated like a little tape recorder. I would go to the classes with the teacher, and they'd want me to read this passage, just so that the kids would be exposed to a native speaker, you know, and then they would repeat after me. They had this book, and I would read, and they would repeat after me. And then the teacher would sometimes get me to ask questions and get them to ask me questions about Canada and all this kind of stuff. So it was kind of like I acted like an ambassador of Canada to these kids. So it was just to give the kids an experience of being with a native speaker, because many of them had never had any experience.

Also, in Japan, English is taught from grade seven on, and many of the kids who learn English, they can read and write, but they can't speak. So that was the whole purpose of this program, is to encourage these kids to speak. But, you know what? I don't think it really made that much of an impact, because I'm there once a week, these kids see me. I'm how much of an impact many times I felt like I was just kind of like a display piece, because they would be like, oh, you know, like this native speaker — I mean, I used to get stared at all the time in the school because I was the only foreign person there.

I was treated really well. I had great teachers, and all the teachers I worked with were these older men, like my dad's age, and they treated me really well, like their daughter or whatever and stuff. So they were quite respectful of me. And they understood the cultural differences and all that. So that was kind of interesting. So I would spend four days a week at this high school, and then I'd spend one day a week at this junior high school which was just across, like on the corner. It was very close. And they provided me with all the living accommodations and everything, and I was paid a salary.

I never had to work on Saturdays, because at that time they had to — you know, everybody had to go to school on Saturdays, but I only worked five days a week, and I never had to work on Saturdays, and I got all this holiday time. So it was great because I was earning money, and then I could travel. So I traveled a lot while I was there.

PS: Around Japan or other places?

RM: Oh, all over. I went all over Southeast Asia. I went to Australia. I went to Africa. So it was a great experience, so I got a chance to travel a lot.

PS: But you never went to India?

RM: No, I didn't. I never went to India.

PS: That seems curious, because it's fairly close.

RM: Like I said, I never had any interest in — the only time I was in India was when I was flying to Kenya, I was in the airport for six hours. That's it. I never was interested, really. I guess because I grew up with — like I said, like I didn't really grow up with that connection there. But I traveled around there.

PS: And when you would travel, would you go by yourself?

RM: No, I had a group of friends that I traveled with. They were other foreigners. Most of the people on this program were Americans and also there were some British, Australian, Ireland, all the English-speaking countries. So I had a really good group of friends that I got to know really well in the two years that I was there. There were five females, and we're still good friends. We met in 1980, and we still maintained our relationships.

There was one male in our group, and my friend Beverly and LaDonna, they're both African-American, they're from the United States, and my friend Lily, she's from Australia, so I don't see her much. And then my friend Paulette, she's Filipino American. Those three I still keep in touch quite a bit, and then my friend Patty, she's from Canada. She's Chinese, and she lives in Vancouver. And then my friend Judith, she was from Ireland, so I don't see her that much. And then my friend Brent, he's from South Carolina or North Carolina.

So we would travel as a group kind of thing, two of us would go or three of us would go, whatever. So I always had a group of people to travel with. Like I said, I developed pretty good relationships with them, because you needed that, living in a foreign country. You needed that connection or whatever.

PS: Did you have any social connections with the Japanese people?

RM: Yeah, I did, in my school. I still have some Japanese friends that I keep in touch with. So I did, I mean, I associated a lot with — I had a lot of Japanese friends as well, but it was really hard in Japan. It's really hard to make friends with Japanese people because of the culture. They're very kind of — they don't like people to get close to them, and if you're a foreigner, you'll never be Japanese, they'll never treat you like a Japanese person. So no matter how long you live there, you're never considered one of them, so you're always considered an outsider, no matter what. So it was really hard to penetrate into the society there. But I did have some people who are very close to me, and, like I said, there's a couple of people I still keep in touch with. And my students were great. I mean, I had a really good time with them.

Overall, it was a great experience because it taught me a lot about myself and I became a lot more confident. That's kind of like when I came out of my shell, that experience. I knew that when I went to Japan, that that was going to be an experience that was going to affect the rest of my life and it was going to be a real break from my family. Because it was. When I came back, I mean, I was a different person. It was one of the best experiences I have ever had in my life, and I'm really glad that I did it.

PS: Did you see your parents at all during those two years?

RM: Yeah, I did. The first year I was there — see, my intention was only to go for one year and come back after a year, but then I felt after a year I didn't really — I was just getting used to it. I had just gotten used to it, and I didn't feel like I was ready to leave. So then I decided to stay another year. So during that summer, my first year, I came home for a while, and, you know, I didn't really want to come home, I wanted to travel, but again it was that obligation of my parents. They wanted to see me. Even just making the decision to stay was like major anxiety, "Oh, my God, my parents are going to freak out on me," and stuff like that. But then they were fine with it.

I came home, and I think that kind of helped, coming home and discussing it with them. But I remember I was twenty-five at the time, when I came back and I spent the summer with my parents, then going back, I remember my dad driving me to the airport, saying, "Don't stay another year, because you have to come home and get married," and all this stuff. And I was like, "Oh."

Anyway, two years was enough for me. I was getting bored by the end of the second year, because everything was just routine. My job, like I said, it was not very challenging. So I just got bored. So I knew that two years was enough for me and it's time for me to come back and figure

out what I wanted to do.

PS: So you came back.

RM: I came back, and then I wanted to go back to school to get my master's degree, because I felt like I had taken two years out of school, two or three years, for my bachelor's degree, but I felt like I needed to be challenged again, and I wanted to go back to school, and then I became really interested in ESL [English as a Second Language], you know. So that's what I wanted to do, I wanted to teach ESL, so I figured I should get the training for it.

What happened was, I left Japan in June of 1992, June or July, and then instead of coming home right away, I traveled for three months. I traveled around like — because I figured it was a really great opportunity for me, and I went to places where I had friends and stuff, friends and relatives. So I ended up going to Korea, and then I spent some time in Africa and then in England, where my relatives were.

So I traveled, and then I came home in October of 1992. Because I came in the middle of the school year, I couldn't go back to school. I was so bored until January of the next year, so I just kind of tried to keep myself busy, and I worked part time. But I just was kind of going crazy because I wanted something to do. So finally in January I went back to school, and I did what's called a post-bac degree. I got a certificate in training to teach ESL, and I finished that in the spring. Because I had kind of started it before I left, and then I just decided to come and finish it up. So then I came back and I finished up.

But in between that, I was looking for an ESL job based on my experience, and I managed to get a job with this community-based language program through the government. So I worked there from '92, I got that.

PS: And that was in Canada?

RM: Yeah. And I worked in this program for three years, and basically what I was doing was, this program was for a period of five months every year they would hire these teachers to come in and teach different communities. So the first community I worked with, I worked with a group of senior citizens, East Indian senior citizens, and I used to go twice a week and teach them English and everything. So that was fun, but it was a lot of work. I used to prepare the lessons and everything. It was a challenging group. So for three years I taught in the community-based language program.

PS: So that was in Winnipeg?

RM: Yeah, in Winnipeg.

PS: And you lived with your parents?

RM: Yeah, I lived with my parents. The whole time I was in Winnipeg I always lived with my

parents, and I taught in this program for three years. So I taught different ethnic groups. I taught Indians, I taught Filipinos, I taught Spanish. What else? Yeah, I think those are the major groups that I worked with. So that was kind of interesting. That's when I discovered that I really like teaching and I really like adult education and everything. So I thought literacy is what I really wanted to do. So after being in that program for three years, in 1993, then at that point I decided to go back to school and apply for a master's program. So then I did. I decided I wanted to do my master's in adult education, and at that time that was a new program in Winnipeg, in 1993. That program just started. So I applied, and I got into it. So I went back to school full time during 1993, like to September of that year, and so I did that for a year.

But I had this advisor who was really — I didn't like him. He was just really mean. So then I did that for a year, and then I got accepted into this program for the summer of 1994 where I went to the Dominican Republic and I taught English for three months. That was through my graduate program. So I went with five other students, and we were there for three months and taught English. That was fun, good experience. And I was working in a language institute, and I was teaching junior high school kids, and I was teaching adults English. So that was kind of challenging.

Then I came back. I came back to school in the fall of 1994, and I actually didn't want to leave the Dominican Republic because I was just getting used to it, but then I realized, well, I'd better come back and finish off my degree. I didn't think my parents would be too excited about me staying for another three months there, but I had a couple of friends who ended up staying for a year and a half.

So I came back, and I went back to school, but then when I came back, I just had a lot of hassles from my professors. I was in the process of trying to get my graduate committee together for my thesis, and my advisor was not very helpful. My whole department was just not very helpful, so I just decided — and I realized that I didn't want to be in Winnipeg. I was just sick of it. I didn't want to be near my parents. I just didn't want to be in that school. I just didn't like the University of Manitoba after that, and I decided it would be better for me to go elsewhere to work on a master's degree than the same school I'd gone to for undergrad. Like I said, I just had a lot of hassles with my department. They were just not very cooperative, so I just thought, "Forget it." One afternoon what I did was, I'm like, "Forget this. I'm not going to stay here."

So what I did was I went to the library and I looked up all these universities and decided, okay, I'm going to a university in the United States or in Canada. So I went and got all these addresses, and I wrote to all these universities to get applications and stuff. So I applied to a bunch of universities. I applied to a couple in Canada, in like Vancouver, and then a bunch of them in the United States. So then I got accepted at the U of M. And then, also, there was one other university in Kansas that I got accepted, but I didn't really want to go there.

So I got accepted into university into the master's program in adult education, and I decided to go there because, one, it was not too far from home, and, second, I got reciprocity with Manitoba. So it would save me on the cost. So up to the point until I found out that I was accepted, I was just having major anxiety attacks about wanting to leave and not — I basically just told my

parents, "I'm leaving. I'm not staying in Winnipeg. I hate this place, and it's time for me to move on." I was twenty-nine at the time.

So finally I got accepted in the spring of '95, and then I moved to Minneapolis in '95. June 11, '95 is when I came here, and I did my master's degree in one year. I was a full-time student. My intention was only to stay in Minnesota for one year and then go back to Canada and look for a job elsewhere. I was not going to go back to Winnipeg. I was going to go either to Vancouver or Toronto. Winnipeg was just dead in terms of career prospects and everything, because even when I was there and teaching ESL, I was trying to get a job in a community college, and I was really involved in the ESL community over there, with the teachers and stuff, all the professional groups, but it didn't get me anywhere, and I really resented that because I had all this experience and nobody wanted to give me a decent job. So I'm like, "Forget this." And I just felt professionally it was not going to get me anywhere. So that's another reason I decided to leave Winnipeg. So I came here thinking I'm only going to stay for a year, but —

[Tape interruption]

I started working at Search in June 1996, and ever since then I've been there. So I applied for the job there. I started working as an intern, and then this job opportunity came up, and they're like, "Well, are you interested?" So I got the job.

Then I had to go through the hassle of applying for a visa. I was on a student visa, and then I had to go through the hassle of applying for a temporary work visa, and that was really stressful because my work was not very cooperative in terms of giving me information. It was a real struggle the first little while I was there. But anyway, I managed to finally get that done, and I got the temporary work visa, and then my lawyer was saying , "Have you thought about applying for a green card? Because based on the work that you're doing, it would be very easy for you to get this, because you could go under what's — " the category is called the National Interest Waiver, and that really cuts down the process and the time of getting a green card. So then I figured, okay.

Then I decided I wanted to stay in the United States because the opportunities were really good here. So I decided to go through that process. So I applied for my green card last year, in the fall of '97, and so I'm still waiting for it. I'm in the final stage right now, and I'm just waiting for the final approval. So hopefully by Spring I'll hear.

But like I said, when I came to Minnesota, I never thought I would end up actually living here. So I've been here for three years, and professionally it's been great, because I've done a lot of things that I wanted to do. Even in terms of the school it's been great. I had a very good experience at the University of Minnesota as opposed to University of Manitoba. I just hate that school. If they asked me to pledge money, I would just like, "Forget it." I hate it. I have nothing good to say about that school.

But University of Minnesota, I had a very good experience. I have a great advisor. So I was very happy with my school here. So professionally, my life has been pretty good. I mean, once I left

Winnipeg, my life just really opened up kind of thing, personally and professionally. It was great, you know, kind of thing. Because even when I was in Winnipeg, like in terms of dating, there was no prospects there and stuff. That was another reason I wanted to leave, because I wanted to have more of a personal life, and it was really hard living with my parents. So coming here was a really good decision for me, I think, just really broke the connection with my parents.

PS: When you were doing your work at the University of Minnesota, what was your living situation then?

RM: I had an apartment. I lived on my own. I basically lived on my own for the past three years when I was here. I had an apartment close to the university. I paid on my own because I had a research assistantship. My parents helped me out a little bit, but I had made some money before I came and stuff. So I did fine. I mean, it was hard, but I never felt like I didn't have money. Then I got a job working. So financially I was basically independent, and if I needed help, my parents were there, but I never really had to because I was doing all right. So it was fine. It was great. I loved living by myself. I loved the freedom, and then once I got a car — I just got a car last year. It was great, because then I could come and go whenever. I didn't have a car the first couple of years. But it was great. I think it's been a good experience living on my own.

PS: And you said you started dating when you came to Minnesota?

RM: Yeah. When I came here I met — see, I always wanted to like — one struggle for me was if I ever decide to settle down or to be in a relationship, do I want to be with an Indian man or do I want to be with an American man. And that was always a struggle for me, and I chose to go with the route of finding somebody in my own culture, because I think it's just easier. There's issues, but the issues, like the cultural values and stuff are similar, and you don't have to explain a lot, but if it's somebody from another culture, there's more issues to deal with or whatever.

I was really involved in the Indian community when I first came here, so I had all these Indian friends, and I went out with some of these Indian guys and stuff, but I just never found anybody that I really clicked with. I could be friends with them, but I could never see myself in terms of a relationship with them. That was kind of hard. I didn't really find anything very interesting there. So it was kind of tough. So I had to look outside of Minnesota for that, where I met my husband and stuff like that.

PS: And how did you meet him?

RM: We met through some friends. He came over here. I met him last year in September, and he came here for a conference of whatever, and he had some friends here. These were mutual friends of ours, whatever, and I was invited to a party and stuff, and that's how we met. We just started talking and stuff like that, and then we just connected from there. When I met him, I thought he's a great guy and everything and stuff, but I never really thought about a relationship or whatever, but then he called me and stuff. So we had a long-distance relationship for a while, and then things just worked out really great. We would fly back and forth and stuff like that, and then we decided to get married and stuff, and it was in March we got engaged, and then I told my

parents about it.

My mom knew about it from the beginning. I had told her about him, and she was fine with it, but I didn't want to tell my dad unless something came out of it. In December of last year when I went home, I told my dad, "There's this guy that I'm seeing, I'm interested in him, and we're thinking maybe we might be interested in getting married," or whatever, and so he's like, "Okay." He didn't say anything, whatever.

So in February we decided that we wanted to get married, and then in March my mom came here and we got engaged and stuff like that. Then in May of this year we got married. We had a court marriage here, and then in August we went back to Winnipeg, and we had a traditional Indian ceremony. And he's Indian, but he's not Sikh, he's Hindu. He came here for school, about seven years ago, so he came here to do his master's degree. He's a computer engineer. So he's been working for the past five, six years.

PS: So he grew up in India?

RM: Yeah. He grew up in India and came here as a student, and then he got a job here. But he has no interest in going and living in India. He wants to stay here, because this is the society that he feels most comfortable in, and this is where he wants to stay. So that was kind of interesting. Even though he's from India, it's like he's pretty — it's like he kind of grew up here. He's very open-minded and not as traditional as some of the other Indian guys that I dated here. And that's what I wanted. I wanted someone who was not traditional and was liberal in their way of thinking and stuff like that and could accept someone who had lived in a Western country and kind of had the Western values. He's very much like that. So it worked out pretty well for both of us.

PS: So have you met his family? Are they still in India?

RM: Yeah, his family is in India. He doesn't have any family here. Actually, we're planning to go — I've talked to them, and I write to them, you know, my in-laws and stuff, and we're actually going in February of next year to visit.

PS: So they didn't come for the wedding.

RM: No, they couldn't. They were invited and stuff, but it's really hard because his mom and dad are not really feeling well, and so it was really difficult. And then his grandma lives with them. So there's nobody else, and she's ill and stuff. So it was really hard for them to come. They felt really bad and everything, but we're going to go home, we're going to go and visit his family in February. We're actually in the process of arranging our tickets right now. That's what I've been doing the last few days, looking into airfares and stuff. So we're making this plan to go in February. Because also his dad is not feeling well. He's got cancer, and it's not spread or anything, but you never know. So that's another reason we're going and stuff like that. So it'll be the first time I'll get to meet his family.

And he has one sister. She's married. She's older, and she had an arranged marriage. She's got one daughter six years old, and they live in the Middle East. They live in Muscat. So she's been married for ten years. So I e-mail her regularly. So I do have some sort of relationship with his family.

PS: What part of India are they from?

RM: They're from Andhra Pradesh.

PS: So they don't speak Punjabi?

RM: No, they actually speak — they speak Hindi, and their other language is Telegu, is the language that they speak. I don't — I mean, I don't understand that, but I can understand some of Hindi, but his mom and dad speak English very fluently and so does his sister.

PS: Do you speak with them on the phone at all?

RM: Yes, I have. I've talked to them many times, but we tend to write more. It's kind of hard to talk to them on the phone because I don't really know what to say, because I've never seen them in person. So, you know, "Hi. How's the weather? What are you doing?" It's easier to write things, and I usually tell his — you know, I just tell his parents what we're doing and how things are going. The letters are very — I don't go into a lot of detail about stuff because I haven't formed a — I mean, I have a relationship with them, but it's not that close relationship yet, because I haven't seen them face to face. So I have to be careful, guarded, in terms of what I saw and stuff like that.

Once I see them, I think it'll be — but they've been very nice to me, and they're very happy for him, and they were really excited when we got married, and they were just really sad that they missed it, and they were really happy that we did the traditional thing and stuff like that. So it's — so far, it's okay.

PS: Was there any issue at all with you being Sikh and him being Hindu?

RM: No. My parents basically — now they just don't care. I mean, they're just happy that I'm married.

PS: She finally got married. [Laughter]

RM: Well, my brother who's next to me, my sister-in-law's Canadian Portuguese, and my niece is half Canadian, half Indian. So, I mean, what are they going to do? I mean, that was a real blow to them when my brother went and married a white woman, you know, kind of thing, so at least with me I've married someone in the culture, even if he is not Sikh. So it's not an issue. And for my younger brother it's like — I mean, we've broken all the rules, so whatever.

PS: He's the lucky one, right?

RM: Yeah, he is, because he didn't have to go through — you know. But for me it was really hard, too, because, you know, my brother, he ran off and got married, and it was really disappointing to my parents, because they didn't see his marriage. Because my brother got married when he was twenty-three, and he's thirty-one now, so he's been married for eight years. So for a long time my parents never talked to him because of what happened.

When he was twenty-two, he came — this was just before I was going to Japan. He came and told them that he wanted to get married, and he had just been accepted into his master's program, and he was going away to school, and they were really upset with him, "You should go to school and finish off," and all this kind of stuff. So he told them, "Okay. I'm not going to get married." But then I guess — I don't know whatever happened, he just ran off and got married.

PS: They already knew the woman he married, though?

RM: No, actually they never — no, they refused to meet her, because they kept thinking, "Okay, he's going to go to school, and she's going to be here." She was in Winnipeg, and he was in Waterloo, which in Ontario, and they were like, "He's going to break up with her." Because my brother dated Maria, who's my sister-in-law, ever since he was nineteen, when he was in the second year of college. That was his first girlfriend ever, his first and only, because that's his wife now. So when he tried to — and even me, actually. When my brother was dating her, I didn't — he hinted for a long time, and then people would tell me, and I'm like, "No. I don't believe it. My brother wouldn't do something like that," but he would be sneaking around. And I was not very supportive either because I was like — like my parents, I was like, "He shouldn't do stuff like that," or whatever.

Then finally he did break down and tell me, and I was really kind of hurt, "How can you do this to our parents?" and all this, but then I said, "You're my brother, whatever, I'll support you." But I really — when I look back at it, I wasn't really supportive of my brother, because I was very much worried about my parents and stuff like that. He went through a lot of hardship.

So anyways, he ran off and got married to Maria. But during that time, he finished his master's degree and he finished his Ph.D. He was twenty-five when he finished his Ph.D., because he went straight, you know, bang, bang, and he's doing really well. He's a professor now at the university, and he's only thirty-one. He's got tenure, and he teaches electrical engineering. So, I mean, for someone thirty-one, he's accomplished a lot. Most people who would be at the point he is would be much older than him. So he's done really well for himself.

So my parents have really changed their attitude a lot, and they're very proud of all of us now. So they've had to overcome a lot of their way of thinking and stuff like that. So that's taken a lot of time and stuff like that. And then once my niece was born — I have a three-year-old niece — that really changed a lot of things. Now they're like they want to be with their grandkid, and they don't want to cause any kind of — so now it's really different. My mom gets along with Maria really well, and so they like — "Oh, she's as Indian as can be," because she's really family-oriented. Because, you know, the Portuguese culture, they're very much — she's very family-

oriented, and she's very — you know, looks after the daughter, and my mom is very happy with that.

So it turned out really well, but it's just such a shame that we lost so much time, you know, in between. So for me, when I got married this year, it was like I didn't want to have the traditional wedding, but I did it more for my parents because they had missed out with their first child, I mean, with one of their kids, so I felt this pressure to do this. So I did it. Again, it's pleasing my parents. But I'm glad that I did it. It turned out to be fine because my parents and I struck a balance. We took a lot of shortcuts and didn't do all the traditional stuff, but at the same time they were happy and I was happy, and I'm glad that I did the whole thing or whatever, but again, it was that pleasing Mom and Dad and all that kind of stuff.

PS: Did your parents have an arranged marriage?

RM: Uh-huh. Yeah. My mom and dad were like — my mom was eighteen when she got married, and my dad was twenty-three. My mom was engaged to my father when she was fourteen years old. She could never see him, though, because, you know, the families liked to keep the separation back in the old days. And then my mom and dad got married. My mom and dad have been married since 1964. They got married in August '64. So they've been married for — it's going to be thirty-five years next year.

PS: From your perception, are they happily married?

RM: Yeah, they are.

PS: I've heard many times people who have arranged marriages say that love follows marriage, you don't love each other when you get married, but if you spend enough time around each other and your parents have made a good match for you, then you will learn to love each other.

RM: Right.

PS: Would you say that that's true for your parents?

RM: Yeah, I would say so. I mean, I think they're very happy. I think they're lucky, they managed to find — you know, because some of my friends that I've had conversations with, they tell me their parents also had an arranged marriage but they're not happy, but their parents are not going to get divorced, because they've been married for so long. But I would say, looking at my mom and dad, they are very happy. I don't see any type of problems with them.

PS: When you thought about marrying for yourself, did you ever think of having an arranged marriage?

RM: No. No. Never.

PS: Say more about why that wouldn't be acceptable to you.

RM: Because I grew up in Canada, and I knew what the other side was, and I didn't like — I'm not against arranged marriages for other people if that's what they choose to believe in, but for myself, no, because I wanted to meet the person and I wanted to get to know the person, because this is a person I'm going to spend a lot of time with, you know. So I didn't want to just like — and the concept of arranged marriage now is more like arrangement in the sense of arranged to meet someone, and it's your decision whether you want to pursue it or not. I was fine with that, but — I mean, I think that's fine, but I was not fine with it for myself, because I didn't want any of my parents' interference. Because when you go through that process, your family is so much involved, and I just — I couldn't see myself in that kind of situation.

My parents did try to set me up with a couple of guys when I was twenty-six, twenty-seven. There's one guy — like when I was twenty-six years old. This is when I came back from Japan. There was this one guy in Calgary, you know, and he came with his family and they drove all the way to come and see me, and I remember they told us to go downstairs and talk to each other and see whether there was any connection or whatever. So I went downstairs, and I talked to him and stuff like that, and I just — I felt so — I mean, he was fine and everything, but then when I came upstairs and his whole family was sitting there, I just felt so — it was too tense for me, because it's like here I am sitting across from this person, and do they expect me to make a decision about this is the person I'm going to marry and I don't even know this person? I hated the process, because it was just too emotionally draining, you know. Because they expect you to — like — and I'm sure there would have been pressure, even though my parents said, "We're not going to pressure you, and it's your decision." I mean, I can just see it from the family's perspective, and I just was sitting in the living room, and his mom was just staring at me — and I just hated it. I just hated the process for myself.

And then I went through it a second time again. This time when I went with my parents traveling through Canada and we met this one family, and I thought the guy was very nice and I was willing to give it a chance, but then he didn't want to come, and I think the thing is, he just agreed to the process because his parents were bugging him, and I think he actually had a girlfriend. He was a teacher, and he lived away from his parents, so he used to come and visit them, and I think he already had a girlfriend which he never told his parents about. And his older brother, I remember, was married to a Middle Eastern woman. So his parents wanted him to marry somebody within the culture, but I think he already had a girlfriend and was just kind of hiding it from his parents, whatever, and just agreed to it so his parents would get off his back. That's what I think, anyways.

After I went through the second time, I just told my dad, I said, "I'm not going to do this." I said, "I have no interest in doing this. If I want to get married, I'll find somebody on my own." So they never pushed the issue after that, because I was pretty adamant about that. And my dad did go around looking. I remember he made a trip to Toronto and was looking at some families, and I was just like, "Forget this."

And then one time, also, just before I came to Minnesota — this was in '95 — my mom — they wanted to introduce me to this guy from Boston or something, and this guy had agreed to meet

us in Grand Forks, and I was in school at that time, and I was studying and stuff, and I had no interest. I mean, every time my parents would bring up the subject about marriage, I'd get really resentful. I mean, my back would just go up, and I would get so agitated, and I would just like, "No, I'm not getting married. Leave me alone." I used to get very defensive. I just hated it. So when they wanted me to meet this other guy, I just said, "No. I'm not doing it." So they were kind of mad at me, but they eventually let it go.

Every since then, ever since I moved here, they stopped saying stuff to me. They just left it up to me or whatever, but I know that they did worry about it, because my mom would like — when she'd come and visit me here, she'd like, "Well, have you met anybody? Have you seen anybody?" And then I remember having one conversation with her a couple of summers ago. She's like, "Well, you know, your dad is really worried that you're not getting married, and he just wants you to settle down." I was just like, "Mom, what do you mean by settling down? What do you mean by — like whatever." Because I knew they worried about it, but they stopped saying stuff about it because they just knew there was no point in it. So that was kind of interesting.

But then finally this year — you know, last year when I met Shandu and I told my parents that I met him and I told my dad about — it was just really weird. I had told my mom that I had met this guy, and I said, "He's really interesting," or whatever, and she was happy about it, but I never told my father because, like I said, I wanted to see what would happen, and I think I also felt I was ready for marriage at that point, too, because I'd been living on my own for three years, and I'd done everything that I wanted to do, and I was ready to have a partner, you know, which is kind of like what I was kind of looking for. And then Shandu came along, and it worked out well.

When I told my dad last Christmas that I met this guy and I showed my dad a picture of him, and my dad was like, "Okay. That's fine." He never asked me any questions. He never asked me questions about his family or anything, and I was really disappointed in my father's response, and I think maybe for my dad it was just a shock that, here's my daughter and she's actually thinking about marriage. Because finally, after the vacation went on, then he started opening up and asking me more questions about it, because then I started talking about Shandu more and said he's like this and that and blah, blah, but I was really kind of — and I said, "Dad, how come you're not asking me about me about him?"

He's like, "Well, if that's what you want to do, that's fine with me."

I was expecting more of a reaction from him. So finally then I think after he got over the initial shock or whatever, then he did ask me a little bit more about him and stuff like that. But because of the distance and stuff — like Shandu lived in California and I was in Minnesota, so he didn't really have a chance to meet my parents, but he did have a conversation with my parents when he came to visit me and talked to my dad, and my dad asked him, "So how do you feel about her?" blah, blah, blah.

So I think in that sense, like the way we got married is kind of like in the Indian way, because we

didn't wait a long time. After five months we got engaged, and that's usually what happens in the arrangement process. Usually — well, it usually happens after the first time you meet the person, you decide whether you want to get married to them, but with us, we got to know each other a bit and stuff like that, but we didn't wait a long time. I always used to have this impression, oh, I'm going to date this person for two years, two or three years, but, you know, I just felt, I'm thirty-two years old, I know what I want. I'm like, okay, this is a guy I can see myself with, so just do it. My dad was like — I said, "Dad, so when do you want me to get married?"

He's like, "Well, as soon as possible."

And I was like, "Yeah. You know what? I agree with you, too, because I know what I want, and we both agreed to it, so why not?" But if I was twenty-one, twenty-two, I wouldn't have made a decision like that in such haste, and I really did think about it before I did, because, for me, marriage is really important.

I think one reason I waited so long is because I wanted to do a lot of things, and I didn't want to be like "tied down." Some of my friends, too, that I had grown up with or whatever, none of my friends got married really young except for one of my friends, and she was the same age as me. She was married at twenty-three. She got divorced before she was twenty-nine. So I saw a lot of my friends getting divorced. A lot of my friends in their mid-thirties, they're already divorced. I have three or four friends. So that really made me wary of marriage as well.

PS: Think twice, huh?

RM: Yeah. And so I just used to think of marriage as a trap. You know, I used to have very negative impressions, views of marriage. I think I still do sometimes. I see it as a way of sometimes being tied down and stuff, like your independence is gone. Now I'm a very independent person. I just do things. I just do whatever. So I used to think of a long time of it as being like a trap, because I would listen to my friends' problems, and it always seems like— it just seemed like unsolvable, and I just always had this negative impression of marriage, and then when you see your friends getting divorced so young, it makes you think twice about it.

And these were not — these were my friends who were from different cultures and stuff like that, and I saw some of my friends who had married people not in their culture getting divorced, so that made me think twice about, do I want to marry someone from a different culture or whatever? So I'm glad that I waited so long to get married and stuff like that.

PS: When you think about the future, what do you envision? Your husband, he has moved here to Minneapolis?

RM: Yeah. He's moved here to Minneapolis. The main reason he's moved here is because of our green card situation, because I can't leave my job until my green card is complete. So now he's on my application. And we don't know how long it's going to take. So that was a really tough decision, because originally we were thinking like okay, after we get married, I can move to California, which is what I wanted to do, but my green card — that's sort of been like the thing

that's kind of been keeping me here. Because I'm basically tired of Minnesota, and I'm ready to move from here, but I have to stay here because of my green card. So that's really added kind of like stress in our marriage as well, because we're not only dealing with the adjustments of living together, but it's just like he doesn't want to be here because, career-wise, it's a bad move for him, because there's nothing here for what he does. He's a graphical computer engineer, and everything is in the Silicon Valley. So that was really hard for him to come here, and it's like an issue in our marriage, too, and stuff, so it's like we both don't want to be here, but we have to be here because of this particular reason.

PS: So does he have a green card?

RM: No. He's on my application. That's the reason he moved here. So once we get our green card, sometime next year, then we're going to move from here.

PS: So has he been able to find work?

RM: Yeah, he's working. I mean, finding a job was not a problem, because he's in computers. But what he's doing right now is not what he wants to do, because the market for what he wants to do is not here in Minnesota. Yeah, so he's not too happy with being here, but we can't do anything about it right now. We're just stuck in the situation.

What was the question you asked me? You had asked me something before that about my husband.

PS: That he's working here.

RM: Yeah, he's here.

PS: Well, when you think about the future —

RM: Oh, you asked me about the future.

PS: You want to move to California.

RM: Maybe not necessarily just California. Somewhere else in the United States. Somewhere where there's more cultural diversity than compared to Minnesota. That's one thing I don't like about this place. Somewhere on the East Coast or the West Coast. I love California for that reason, because of all the diverse cultures there. Or Seattle or somewhere, but definitely not Minnesota, and definitely where it's warm, too, because I don't like the cold. Because I grew up in the cold, and I hate it. So somewhere warm.

PS: And we're having nice winters.

RM: Yes.

PS: Wait until we have a bad one.

RM: Not nice enough for me. So I eventually would like to move out somewhere different from here. I mean, Minnesota served its purpose of me the last three years, but now I feel like I'm ready to move on somewhere else.

PS: And when you think about the future in terms of five years from now or ten years from now, what kind of a picture do you have? What's your life going to look like in five or ten years?

RM: Well, I'll have my Ph.D. by that time, before that, and then I'll be working — my goal is to like work as a consultant, be my own person, self-employed. So I'd like to have my own company where I'm doing consulting as an evaluator, you know, evaluating different programs, people hire me for contracts and that, and then at the same time I'd like to do some teaching, maybe work at a university and teach a course or two as an instructor, or even teach ESL in the evenings, which I've done. So that's kind of what I see myself in terms of my career, establishing my career and working as a consultant. So I see myself working as a consultant and as a program evaluator and teaching as well. So that's where I see myself. Established, you know, somewhere, wherever I end up.

PS: How about personally? Where do you see yourself? What will your relationship be like? Where will you be living? Things like that.

RM: I don't exactly know where I'll be living, but hopefully somewhere where it'll provide us both with opportunities for a career, because we're both very career-oriented and ambitious, as far as that goes, and well established in terms of having a house and cars and all that kind of stuff, having our own house. So established in that sense. And then, I don't know, in terms of kids, I'm not sure. Sometimes I say yes, sometimes I say no. But for me, at this point and five years from now, my career is definitely very important for me, so I see myself as being established. And in my relationship, to have someone who will support me in whatever I decide to do and I do the same thing. So a friend kind of thing is what I'm looking for in terms of my relationship. That's important to me.

PS: So kids may or may not be a part of your plan.

RM: I don't know. I've never really been interested in kids, even when I was younger and stuff. Sometimes I do think about it, because I'm thirty-two years old, and the biological thing does kind of affect me, but then there's always adoption. And we've talked about that, too, and that's something my husband has talked about. He thinks it's a good idea to adopt because there's so many kids out there. But I think, for me, personally, too, I'd like to have my own child, at least one, and adoption is a possibility, but I don't know.

But I just — as far as kids go, I just — I don't know. I've never really had an interest in them. But I have found, though, since I've gotten married, I'm more inclined to think about it sometimes. I don't know what's the reason why, but I do sometimes think about it, and I'm like, you know, maybe it would be a good — and I do worry about it sometimes because I think if I

do want to have a child, maybe I should have one before thirty-five or whatever, but then there's so many things I want to do. I know that right now I'm not ready for a child, because I don't think I'm mature enough.

PS: A late bloomer. [Laughter]

RM: Yeah, and like I said, I've just never really been into — and I have a niece, so, for me, you know, that's pretty fulfilling as well. I mean, she's there, and then when she misbehaves, her parents can take her. So I don't know, as far as kids go, I guess that I've never — we've talked about it, and he's not interested in having kids at this point. So it's just something we've left open in the air.

PS: Is he the same age as you?

RM: He's three years younger than me.

PS: Let's talk a bit about your spiritual practices. You said your family was Sikh. How did you express or learn about what it meant to be Sikh? Or maybe you didn't. Just tell me about that.

RM: Well, my dad was like — my mom and dad were pretty religious, especially my dad, like when we were growing up. So we were expected to go to the temple every Sunday and participate in the services and everything. When we first moved to Canada, my dad was very involved in the Indian community, I mean in the Sikh community. He was the president, and he used to do the newsletter, and he was really involved in the Sikh temple there. He was actually one of the first founders of one of the Sikh temples in Winnipeg. Because when we first came, there was none. So he was kind of like one of the first people that were really involved in it. So he was really involved. So we kind of learned a lot. And he tried to have classes where they taught the language, so me and my brothers would go to that and stuff like that. So he was quite involved in it. Because of that, we were quite involved in the religious community and stuff.

But I remember, as a child growing up, I never liked it. I always felt — I hate going to the temple on Sundays, and I just didn't enjoy it at all. I just felt like it was forced. And then at home we had our Holy Book. So we had a separate room with our Holy Book, and we would like — my parents would do prayers in the morning and in the evening, and usually in the evening, we were expected to listen. I never understood it, because it was in Punjabi, and I didn't understand that level, you know, of the scriptures or whatever. So my parents were like — expected us, especially my dad, he really tried to teach us to do that, to listen to it and stuff, but I just hated it. I mean, I just never cared for it, because I never understood, and I found it boring.

Then when he used to try to make us learn Punjabi and take us to the classes and stuff, we just like — both me and my brother just resented it and hated it. And I think that's where I've kind of developed a dislike for it. Even now, like when my dad says — when we go home, my dad tells us, "Let's go to the temple," and I'm just like I don't want to go, but it's a major issue with them. They're not as bad — I mean, now they're not as religious. I think once we were in college and stuff they didn't push it as much, and now they don't, but it is still important to them to maintain

that and stuff like that.

PS: Parents are like that. It's their job.

RM: I know. I know. So it's an issue that I just don't like discussing with them, because when we go home they want us to go to the temple, or when they come here, they want to go, and they're like, oh, we should go, and I'm like, "I don't want to go." I don't understand it, and I don't — I oject Rha don't really consider myself to be a religious person. I believe in a spiritual being, but I don't necessarily follow any religion or whatever.

PS: Is your husband active as a Hindu?

RM: No, he's not.

PS: So for you and your husband personally, you just don't do anything

RM: No. I mean, we believe there's a lot of — we think there's a lot of good in it and stuff, and we do believe in a God, whatever that is, but we don't — it's not so important in our lives, not at this point anyway.

PS: Are you and your husband involved in any Indian associations here in the Twin Cities?

RM: No, we're not at this point. I was before. I have been like — while I've lived in Minnesota, when I first came, I was really actively involved. For one year I was with the Asian-Indian Women's Association. I was there for a year and a half. I did volunteer work with them. I was doing their newsletter and involved in whatever community events they had, and I volunteered, and then I just did volunteer work. If there's some kind of cultural show, I've helped usher and sell food or whatever. Or if there's some dance performance or singing performance, I've volunteered to sell tickets. So I have had that kind of involvement in the community. But I haven't the last little while. I haven't really been actively involved so much, but I've always had some sort of connection, and that's how I met a lot of the people I know here, through — and when I came here, when I was at the university, I belonged to the Indian Student Association, and I helped them do their newsletter and stuff. So I've done stuff like that.

PS: So when you think about who your primary social group is right now, is it primarily Indians or Americans or both or —

RM: No. I have a very diverse group of friends. I have — like when I first came here — it's really funny how my circle of friends has evolved. But when I first came here, I was totally into the Indian mode. I was like, all my friends are going to be Indian, because I was I didn't get that in Winnipeg, because I didn't really have any Indian friends my age. So I was like, "I'm just going to totally get into the Indian circle." So all my friends were Indian, but then most of my friends who were Indian, they came from India, and so in many ways I didn't fit in with them because I didn't grow up there, and they used to talk about India.

And just their values and stuff were like — they were more traditional. That's why I never got along with some of those guys, the guys that I dated, because I just found them to be too traditional and stuff, and I was liberated in my thinking. So I would hang around with these people, and they were great people, but I just never felt a connection with them.

And then my group of friends changed a lot. I started hanging around with — I have a lot of American friends. I have Indian friends, too, now, but my Indian friends that I feel most comfortable with are people like me who have grown up here and have some of the Indian, but they're more Western. So I have American friends, I have Spanish friends, I have black friends, I have quite a variety of friends from all different cultures, and I have felt that most of my friends are well traveled. They understand cultures and all this kind of stuff, so I find that I tend to get along better with people who have that perspective, and then even the Minnesotans I get along with, my Minnesotan friends here, they've traveled and they kind of understand the diverse perspectives. So I have quite an array of friends. I wouldn't say one particular culture. It's all kinds.

PS: And so right now you work full time and you have a marriage and you have your friends.

RM: Right.

PS: Say a little bit more about what you're doing at Serge Institute and what Serge Institute is.

RM: Serge Institute is a research company. It's a nonprofit company, and they do research on adolescents and children related to like — they try to make their research practical. So I work in the research and evaluation department, and I'm a research assistant there. What I do is I work with clients, a lot of community-based organizations that deal with youth, and I help to evaluate their programs so that they can make the programs more effective.

I do things like — I do focus groups, I do surveys, I develop surveys, and take that information and then write up reports and make recommendations of how programs can be improved, and then try to make their research practical so that the client can use it. So I worked on various projects like evaluating reading mentoring programs related to youth and stuff on service learning, all kinds of things like that. So I'm very much involved in the evaluation and the research part of that where I take the study, conceptualize it, figure out what instruments need to be made to gather the data, then I go out and collect the data, analyze it, and write up the report. So it's basically the major steps that I do at Serge Institution.

But Serge is not only just research. It's also like we have training where we go out and teach people about our assets model that we have and show people who are working with youth, giving them sort of tools to work with in terms of helping the youth in their community, and then we also have a publication department which takes our research and the work that we do and makes it into publications and curricula that different organizations could do. So we're really into trying to help youth who are troubled, not necessarily just youth who are troubled, but youth in general.

PS: Are there any other community activities that you're a part of right now?

RM: Well, I was doing some ESL volunteer work this fall, and I was working with Hobb Learning Center, and I was volunteering once a week and tutoring these Vietnamese students, adult Vietnamese students, and teaching them how to speak English because of my background, my ESL training. So I was doing that for a while. The other thing, I'm involved in school. I'm doing my Ph.D. I just finished my course work. I'm doing my prelims in the winter, so I'm really heavily focused on that. I took a break from school over the past year, but now I'm ready to go back and finish up.

You know, I like to do a lot of different things. I like to learn, so I like to do different things, like last year I took up yoga, because I was very interested in learning that philosophy, and I'm really into the outdoors. I like to go hiking. I like spending a lot of time outdoors. I like going for walks and canoeing and all this kind of stuff, and I like doing a lot of physical stuff, because that's important to me. So I spend a lot of time doing that. I mean, I work out regularly, so I spend time in the gym during winter, and then in the summertime I tend to go out.

Most of my vacations usually — like when I go somewhere, I like to go out into the wilderness. Especially over the past three or four years, I've become a real outdoor person. Maybe it's because I'm living in Minnesota or something, but I like cross country skiing and all this, which is really unusual for an Indian female, because most of my Indian friends, especially the ones who come from India, they have no interest in doing outdoor stuff. They're just not into physical exercise and stuff like that. So it's kind of different. Because then sometimes like when I would go out with my Indian friends, Indian guy friends, they were always surprised that I was interested in such stuff like that, because I've gone hiking with them and all this. And even Shandu was kind of surprised, too, that I liked to — and that was one of the things that we both like to do, you know, kind of thing. So, I like doing stuff like that. So I'm pretty active in all kinds of things. I like to do different things. I like to keep active.

PS: Passing on cultural values. When you think about the values that you got from your parents, which ones do you think came through the strongest?

RM: I think the one especially about the sense of family. That's really important to me. That's something I would want to pass on to my kids or whatever, that sense of family, that your family is the main backbone, and if you ever need any help, your family is the first group of people that you turn to and all that and really very — because my family's very close and very supportive and stuff like that. So for me that's something that's been instilled in me since I was a child.

And then the other thing is the value of education. That was something my mom and dad really stressed in me and was always important, because it'll help you financially, economically, and give you a sense of independence, especially being a female. That's really important. So that is really important to me, the value of education. Those are the two main things that I would think that my parents have really instilled in me.

And then, just like to be a disciplined person. I mean, my mom and dad were very strict with me, but I'm really glad in a sense that they were because it's made me who I am. So if I have kids, I

want to be flexible with them, like to let them do what they want, but at the same time find a balance. I think that's really important. My parents did some things right, but then I think there's other things that they could have done better.

PS: All parents are like that.

RM: I know.

PS: I think that's most of the questions that are relevant at this point. Are there any things that you wanted to talk about that I haven't asked you about, any things that you think would be important for the people who might read this many years from now?

RM: Just one thing. In terms of growing up in this society, one of the things that I struggle with still is — you know, I grew up with two different cultures, and it's hard, because you have your parents pulling you one way, and you have society pulling you another way. So it's really hard to find a balance, and I think it takes a long time to actually do that, and I think now I feel satisfied as a person in terms of where I found a balance, where my parents are happy and I'm happy. But I think it takes a lot of work, and it's really hard. I mean, it's very hard. I think like if I'd been raised in India, it would have been probably easier for me in a sense because I would have just kind of grown up in a homogeneous culture. But here it's been really a struggle, and it's been hard for my parents, too, because they've had to come and change their values and stuff like that.

But I consider myself — I don't consider myself Indian, totally Indian, because I'm not, because there's many things that I reject about the culture, and there's many things I've kept, and I don't consider myself to be American or Canadian because there's things about that that I don't agree with and I've rejected. So I feel I have the best of both worlds because I can adapt to both cultures. If I'm in an Indian group, I can be that way. If I'm in an American group or Canadian or whatever, I can be that way. So I think in that way, for me that's kind of unique, because I can understand both perspectives. I think that's really great, being able to have that type of view. So I just think that's important for people to know.

PS: So you see that at this point in your life as a real advantage.

RM: Yeah, I do. I really do see it as an advantage.

PS: But when you were growing up sometimes you didn't see it that way?

RM: No, I didn't. I just saw it as a drawback. It was a struggle, because I didn't realize it, but now I really see it as a plus point, because living in this society, when I'm with my American friends and when I talk to them, I can understand their point of view more or less, because I've grown up in this society, and I know what the norms are, and then in the Indian culture, or I would say Eastern cultures, whatever, like Thai or Chinese or whatever, I can understand their perspective, too, because it's very similar to what I grew up with.

Like when I was in Japan, in many ways I felt at home there, because a lot of the things that they

did was very similar to what I had grown up with, like with arranged marriages and they did that, and the closeness with the family, which is what I grew up with. But sometimes my American friends, they couldn't really understand that. But I felt a real connection with them. So I think e I wo pectives an appropriate the pectives and the pectives and the pectives are a second and t that's kind of neat, being able to connect to people like that, and I see that as a plus, not only in my personal life but my professional life as well, you know, with all the types of people I work