

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Christine Maged Nassif

Interviewee: Rania Fahmy

Date: October 3rd 2011

Place: Rania's Home

College: AUC graduate '85

Time: 18.44 mins

Rania: Hi, how are you?

Christine: I'm good, how are you?

Rania: I'm fine.

Christine: Can you introduce yourself?

Rania: I'm Rania Fahmy, Im an AUC graduate, '85, economics major.

Christine: Okay, Rania can you tell me how AUC affected your life?

Rania: Uhh, I didn't know that AUC was affecting my life when it was happening, i just knew about it when I started working...umm.. I didn't umm.. in AUC when, when we change, when we finish school and joined AUC it was the first time for me ever to, somebody to ask me about my opinion about anything, because uh, back in school no one was uhh.. our school system didn't allow this. They just gave us the information and they told us of course all the "**road**" **system** and stuff that we all know about, uhh.. and in, in at home, we're also not used to being asked our opinions about stuff. So it was the first time for me to be asked uh, to uhhumm debate on issues, to make presentations... uhh.. to analyze uhh and for me this was ss... some kind of like a culture shock. And this changed when I overcame the culture shock, it umm.. really uhhmm.. sunk in uhh.. after a while, and then when I started work i started using all these skills that I learned in, in at AUC, in uhh in work, in different kinds of skills, like uhh.. i started working in a bank. In the research department, so I had all the.. the basics, strong basics of research. And then how to uh.. uhhhmm make presentations in meetings, uhh.. and then afterwards in, in management, when Im.. now Im managing an organization, so it all accumulated like experiences together. It all started in.. not in school, but in, in, in AUC.

Christine: Okay, can u tell me a bit about your li.. your work, your career?

Rania: Uhhmm... I started working in a bank, uh, i majored in economics as I mentioned and it was the.. the least thing that I liked, I hate economics..uhhmm.. I, I took it because it was the fashionable or the 'in' thing, the 'in' major in.. at that time.. and uhh because, also because umm, my parents, umm. really pressured me abou.. because this is the only thing that sh.. they knew. that uh.. graduates either worked in, in, in a bank or in a.. some kind of a.. a practical.. uhhmm.. not a practical.. a school of practice like medicine, or like pharmacy or s.. or engineering or stuff.. bass uhh.. uhh in when i started umm.. working in a bank, i hated it, i worked in a bank for three years, bass I ca.. I really, uhhmm built some experiences, some skills like uh, *cough* I was in the research department in the bank, and then uhh how to deal with uhh.. a manager that I didn't like, how to really be patient and uhh.. and to hunt for jobs and to uh. work on side jobs while I was working mainly in, in the bank. Until I found a job at the American Chamber of Commerce, and I used I wrote articles, I wrote stories uh.. business stories, and economics, and legal, and health, and all kinds of uhh.. umm of themes in the monthly, in their monthly magazine. And then I edited, other, other articles, well known writers, and uhh, it went on for three years and then I started freelancing for umm for some years uhh.. like six or seven years in economics in economic, like economic research and studies and umm.. uhh i used to take projects from the beginning to the end uh researching and editing and and.. uhm and doing fieldwork and field studies. And then I left all this and decided that Im not going to fight anymore with something that i really hated. like uh it was ten years and I didn't, I didn't um I discovered that this is a really lost battle. I I didn't *mumbles* need to prove to myself that I'm good in something that I

hated, so umm.. I left all this and I started taking Montessori courses, the educational course, and uhh.. all the doors of ahh.. getting into the world of childhood and education just opened uh.. wide open to me. And I started working in the educational field ever since. Uhh... uhhmm... so I started giving like for eight years ub..uhh... workshops in uhh science workshops in schools, and in uhh in all kinds of events.. schools and all kinds of schools too. Uhh... hands-on science.. ex.. uh. uh.. experiments. fun science, just to make kids love science.. when they're when they're young. ehh... and i opened up a business from this for several years and then afterwards I started working with, just two years ago, I started working with street children. And this is uh.. this job I love because all the accumulated experiences that i gained from school, from AUC and from all the things, I cashed on them in the street with.. working with the street children, because in a managerial level, you can do whatever you, uh .. you want uh.. w.. broadening and introducing new programs for the girls.. because I work mainly with street girls.. not all kinds of children.

Christine: Can you tell me a bit about the organization your working with now?

Rania: It's ahh.. it's a .. an organization serving uh... street girls, we have a shelter uh.. we have now 85 girls in the shelter and we have a reception centre in another place... uhh.. that .. uhhmm.. welcomes uh girls who come during the day and then go back to the street or to wherever they came from, during the day.. its a day ca.. it's a day reception centre. And uh its completely different than the shelter. the shelter there are girls growing up with us. Of course all the girls have, or most of the girls have their.. their families, so it's uh, its very complicated, it's not like your working in an orphanage; where you have- you are the world of the child. No, there's, there are another world,

ehh.. the world of the street, and the world of the parents, when they go on visits. So we have to battle with all these variables. Like uh.. to work with the childr-- work with the families, and work against the street and against the lures of the street, because the street has its own uhmm.. attraction. The girls are completely undisciplined because they come from total freedom to a disciplined uh, atmosphere that they have to do so. And we try to provide them with so many options in life so that they they... the main thing that we want them to be is to become visible... the girls become visible, to themselves and to society. Because society does.. does not accept them as they are. Fa we try to provide them with options in life so that uhmm.. educational, and rehabilitational- so that they can choose either to fa-- to complete their education or to work, or get back to their families. But to get back to their families, we have to work with the family. So the family can be better off psychologically, and umm.. economically and.. socially. So that the girl when she decides to leave us, and we have an open door policy- she can leave us whenever she wants- when she decides to leave us, she can leave us- she leaves us in an atmosphere or an environment that is better, slightly better than the one that she left us with. Uhhmmm... So its its all about the girl being sure of herself *cough* she likes who she is and she does not only have the two options of getting back on the street and getting married at the age of thirteen, yani we're trying to provide this .. it's it's uhh.. its a total life with all the complexities of provi-- of managing a, a whole system legally, uhmm.. *mumbling* health-wise, psychologically, uhh.. taking care of the education, providing education..uhh so it's umm.. all kinds of programs for the girls, so it's um its a handful. *laughing*

Christine: Okay, that's interesting.

Christine: Umm.. Tell me, I I know that you were part of uh.. the revolution, when it was happening, uhmm.. I want to know if that affected your work in any way, or affected the girls in any way.

Rania: La'aa [No in arabic], we, i I know that it affects the girls, not because I'm part of the revolution, or not because of course there are many many other people who are much more involved than I am. Or I'm.. I've been during the eighteen, the first eighteen days of the revolution.. uhhh... the revolution affected the girls whether *aahh uhh* whether it affected them uhhh... because I was part of it or not. It affected them because the girls on the street are not any safer after the revolution than they were before..uhh.. because now they, they more.. players are going in, on the street now, not only the leaders of the street and the gangsters, uhh now the police, during the first few months of the revolution the police was not there..

Christine: umhmm.. *(agreeing)*

Rania: The The.. mmm... so of course they were left, the street girls were left prey to all the dangers of the street, without anyone stopping them.. aahhh.. after, when this.. when the police came slightly back, they came with a force, and with a stronghold again on the girls. And they started arresting them and accusing them of being thugs.. on the street. because they were.. like cleansing, they were going on a cleansing ub.. ahh.. missions on the streets, so it was, the girls were taken victims during this.

Christine: Okay.

Rania: Fa [So, in arabic] uuuhhh... the reception centre girls were always complaining that the police now are more fierce, are fiercer now than they were before.

Christine: umhmm.. {*agreeing*}

Rania: And, uh at some instances, they would take the girl, and they would uhh uhmm.. force her to become, to seduce a thug and to uhhh to seduce him in a car for example so that they can arrest the thug or the criminal.

Christine: Hmm...

Rania: Fa they were used by the police too, fa this is, this is part of our work to try to reach all government agencies in charge or that negatively affect the girls, and should try to change their uh.. umm.. stigmatizing and stereotyping of the girls.. and to change their attitude and uhh.. the way they treat girls on the street, so this is part of our awareness campaign that we're w.w..working on too.. uhh.. umm.. you want to know something about the revolution itself?

Christine: Umm.. About your personal umm.. your personal experience, I know that ..

Rania: The revolution is the best thing that happened to me.. uhh..

Christine: How so?

Rania: Because uhh.. I used to join protests and demonstrations ever since the "Kefaya" ["Enough" in arabic] movement started in 2004, Kefaya movement is the the.. the movement, the first movement that said 'no' to Mubarak and his son.

Christine: Okay.

Rania: Uhh, and then of course as we all know so many other movements started.. umm.. so I've been in this, in this ever since the.. for seven years now. When I, I uhh I joined the revolution since the first day, uh, the 25th of January, and I knew about it from my son, from my seventeen-year-old son. He told me that there's a very big event on facebook, and there are like 82 thousand people joining... and it's going to be a big thing during the... the anniversary of the police .. bb.. uhh.. its a national holiday..uhhmm.. fa

I thought it was a big thing and I have to go.. but then when my younger son told me that he needs to go to shoot, to uhh shoot some footage on a.. an art assignment at school, uhh.. live footage, I was scared. I mmm.. of course every time I go and join a demonstration I was scared.. but this time I was really scared because my son was going to be with me. fa I told him no, I'm not going. So he said no, but I need to really shoot for ten minutes, to go there for ten minutes, and.. w.. ahh.. actually to tell you the truth, we didn't think that we would spend more than half an hour there.

Christine: Okay.

Rania: So we went there, parked our.. the the car, and it was the first time for me to see such a big mob, a crowd.. and with uhh chanting and the.. b.. the slogans, the slogans didn't start at first with uh.. people want the ousting or the downfall of the regime.

Christine: Mhmm.. *agreeing*

Rania: It didn't start like this, all they were asking for is: dignity, and uhh uhh.. bread, this is the slogan, bread, dignity and social justice.. uh or equality and social justice. This is the first slogan. And then during, throughout the day, it evolved into something stronger, and you can feel the mob being uhh.. getting uhh bigger and bigger. So we spent like five hours, my son was going to get arrested by uhh.. uhhh.. national security? Security forces, (esmohom eih amn el dawla?) Stray security forces...uhh in plain clothes, in civilian clothes... they grabbed him by the feet and they were going to arrest him and I screamed, and then they found out that he's still a child, so they left him. and then at that time, he was very scared and he wanted to go home, he's sixteen. Fa I told him umm 'no', you can wait for me in the car.. and uhh.. I'm going to uhh.. I bb.. it was like a magnet.. you, you cannot leave, yani I felt I cannot leave that day, it was

like you felt that it was like history being made in front of you. I didn't know that this was the day of the revolution, and it's going to be a historical day in Egypt's history..

Christine: uhmmhmm.. *agreeing*

Rania: Bass [But in arabic] I felt it was a completely, completely different thing. Fa [So in arabic] some.. I cried after this incident.. and ehh.. naturally, and I was scared and ehh.. ubb ahh.. I grabbed him by the hand and didn't leave him for a second, but I didn't want to leave. So we spent like five or six hours there, we left at 8:30. And ever since I've been in the revolution in.. in Tahrir Square.. everyday. Yani we used to go everyday, either with the kids, we we went in the 'Day of Fury' of the 28th of January. And my older son was uhh was lost.. he got lost from us for four hours.. we didn't, we couldn't find him.. Uhh.. and my younger son, the one that got arrested was about to die. *smiling*

Because uhh he got suffocated from the, from the tear gasses and uhh.. foam.. white foam came from his mouth and nose and uhh.. ahh I didn't know how to help him.. uhh.. and my husband had uh.. he's a heart patient so it...it it was a day... it was a difficult day.

Christine: Uhhmhhmm

Rania: But then it ended, it ended out fine..uhhh.. but then I didn't want to take them anymore. Yani I didn't want to take the kids with me anymore. *sniffing*

Uhh.. Fa umm ... we used to go, my husband and I, we used to go everyday.. during the curfew days we used to go and we used to spend, we used to go and uhh.. to stay even after curfew hours..

Christine: umhmm...

Rania: Ahh.. and we were there when, when we heard that Mubarak is.. is stepping down.

Christine: Okay.

Rania: We were in, in Tahrir.. and we uhh.. celebrated with people and so on.. So it was uhh.. It was the best day, the best times ever! in life *laughing*

Christine: Thank you Rania.

Rania: Thank you.