

“FASTING WITH FAMILY”

FOR LESSON

*Eid and Ramadan
in Brooklyn*

NARRATOR Zeinab Bader



STRONG Tell me a little about when you came to the U.S. and you were starting your own family, how practicing your religion changed.

RUN TIME **3:16**

BADER Okay. When I came, I told you there's no Muslim around me. There is a — it's — I'm living in a Christian country. It's — I was feeling that religion, as you see, celebrating the Christmas, the Easter with my kids, okay? All occasions, the Fourth of July, Memorial, all occasions. I feel it — the need — I need — and my kids need. My life, it changed. In 1987, my whole family came. And when my whole family came and reunited, now the religion became a — present in our life. First with the kids, they start fasting. You're talking about 1987. The oldest one, she was seven. We start fasting, you can say, at '89, '89 or '90. In '89, she was nine years old. They want to fast, because they saw my family fasting, and they have the attention, like, every day one invite us for [inaudible] breakfast. For — we call it a breakfast, okay? And we — every week, we make big, big one for the whole family, you know? It was amazing. Plus, our friends.

And my friends, not my family, my friends too, when they find out — like, because I'm not wearing scarf, I'm not — doesn't show I'm religious, they are so proud that I make my kids fast. It's not I make them or I force them, they want to fast. And my kids was fasting and they go to Catholic school, and the principal of the Catholic school, she congratulate them and she was so proud of them. This is a big impact in my kids. Like, they felt there is no difference between the Christian and Muslim. And half of their friends until now, they are Christian and they celebrate with them at Christmas. Like, they buy them gift and they — for each other.

And we start celebrating Ramadan, celebrating the holiday. How? Like, with all that – Muslim women, like, through the association, we used to do party for them. And then we start taking our kids to McDonald, to Coney Island rides. And then we take them to the one near Bay Parkway. I don't know if you know – it – that is near – there is one in Bay Parkway, too. It's small, like, rides for the kids. We take them there. All of us, we take all our kids, we buy them ticket. It was empty. Nobody there. Like, it's full of our kids. And every year, we take them to – mostly to Coney Island, to have rides, or we take them to movies, and then we go to restaurant to have dinner. It became bigger. Like, it start – older sister, with the kids, with the husband, all of us, we go have a dinner, which it – or lunch. This is – we – how we start celebrating, and – but we – like, we are not conservative, like, you know? We do what we have to do, but we don't go extra.

BIO Zeinab Bader was born in 1956 in Tyre, Lebanon, and immigrated to the United States with her husband and infant daughter in 1980. After settling in New York, she volunteered for several years as a teacher in an Arabic school run by the Palestinian Women's Association of New York. She resigned in 1991 and spent several years raising her children, and then worked as a health insurance specialist. Bader also served on the board of the Arab American Association of New York and organized their Mother's Day celebrations for several years.

CITATION Fayaz, Mohammed, Excerpt from oral history interview conducted by Zaheer Ali, October 22, 2018, Muslims in Brooklyn oral histories, 2018.006.52; Brooklyn Historical Society.