



# FATEMA

“ Everything was there and everything was there.

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## ARRIVAL

I personally could not bring anything when we came from Afghanistan.

[But] I have a ring . . . a ruby stone. It is a gift from my father and . . . a symbol of the homeland and the family. I remember the day that my father came from a long trip and gifted this ring to me, and I was so happy. This ring reminds me of those memories and makes them fresh, and I take that feeling everywhere with myself. I wear it because holding it in my hand makes me feel relaxed; that is, whenever I feel anxious or, for example, feel a little distant from the homeland or family, then I wear that ring.

Every time I talk to my family, especially my father, who I miss a lot, my father always asks “where is the ring I gave to you?” I know he is joking, and also he wants to know if I still have it or do not have it with me. Because I am someone who easily loses everything, everything. If I have something with me always, then it means I love that person so much, and they are so important to me.

[The ring] gets people’s attention, and when people see that they start asking me . . . where I am from. And I always talk about myself and where I come from and about my ring.



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With the informed consent of participants, interview transcripts have been adapted here in narrative form for clarity and efficiency with a commitment to retaining the intended meaning.

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## SUPPORT ON CAMPUS

I was on a campus before so it was the same thing. [They] had a very good gym facility. I am a person who gets relaxed by working out in the gym. I always wanted a place where I could have a gym close to my house – gym or swimming pool. And the good thing, or luckily, is that memberships in all of these places were free for us [during] the time that we were on the college campus. I really like the gym [on] that campus.

For me, I was preparing myself mentally and physically, so I was always in the gym or in my room. People could only find me in the gym or in my room because I was always in the gym. The good [thing] about it was that everything was open for 24 hours. You could use the gym for 24 hours if you wanted. Or [the] game fields if you wanted.

*It is a kind of security that you feel emotionally and mentally, spiritually secure; and one type of security is that you feel physically secure. More than physically, I feel more emotionally and mentally, spiritually secure and safe in that place, that I could go anywhere, anytime that I wanted, and I had this feeling that I would not be attacked by anyone in here.*

Every new person who just arrived . . . who brought nothing but a few clothes and needs everything, we can say that we had everything there [on campus], from, for example, even a dental bag, toothbrush, which is the simplest thing, to kitchen materials. Everything was there, for example a bed, for example a blanket.

Everything was there and everything was there.

"I wear it because holding it in my hand makes me feel relax"



"I have a ring that besides what I can say, can be a symbol of the homeland because it has a ruby stone. and the fact it is a gift from my father can be a symbol of the homeland and family!"



## NOT WITHOUT ITS CHALLENGES

When you immigrate to a new country, they are not going to prepare a red carpet for you.

I am grateful to those who did give me hope and supported me and said that one day you will stand on your own feet and you will have the opportunity as a person who was born here. Those sayings had an effect on me . . . giving me hope for the future, because at that time nothing was clear: we did not have any ID, social security. I even did not know how to apply for a job, did not know what else we need[ed] except our resume. Those times were so hard.

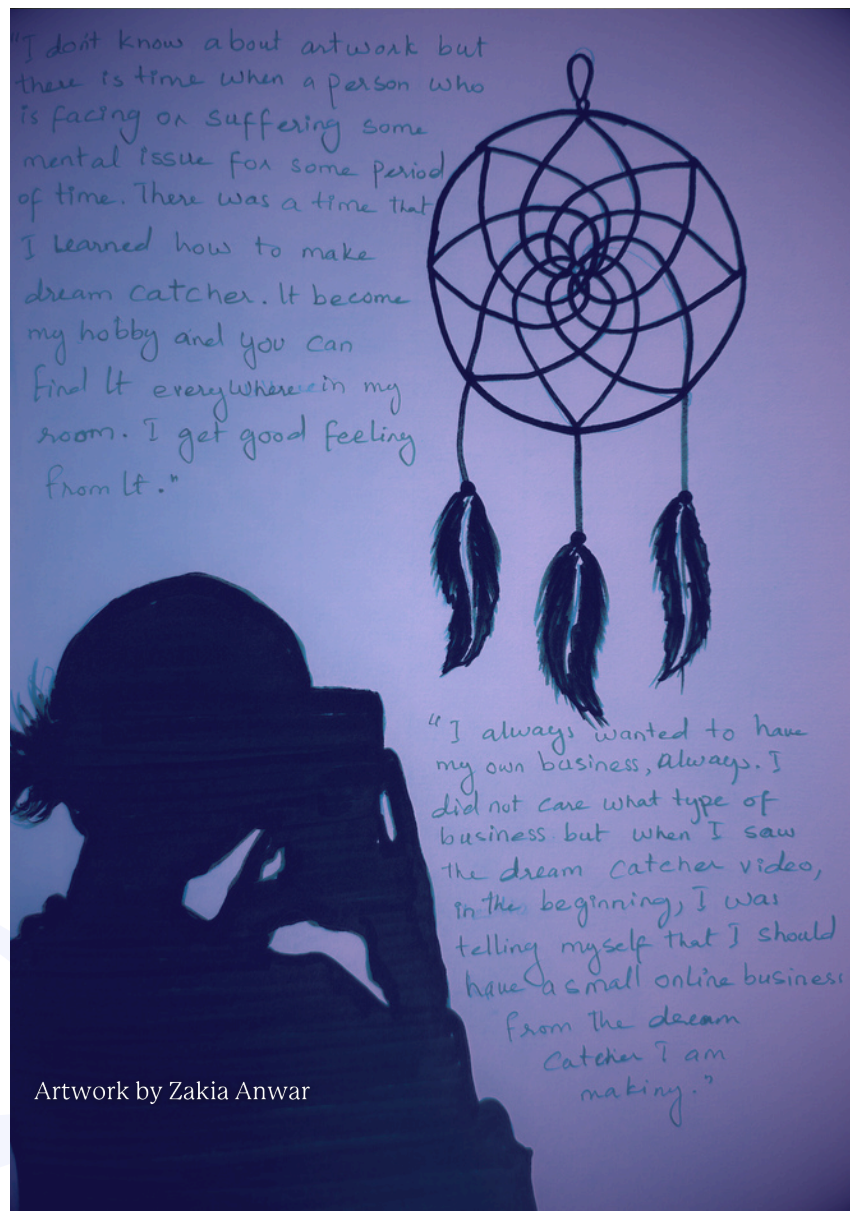
There is a time when a person is facing or suffering from some mental issue for some period of the time. There was a time that I learned how to make a dreamcatcher. It became a hobby for me, and you can find it everywhere in my room. I get a good feeling from it. It is so fancy, but I like it. It was just something to make myself busy with. I like my dream catcher though it's not artistic, but I am so happy I did something, and it is kind of a preoccupation.

I always wanted to have my own business. Always! I did not care what type of business, but when I saw the dreamcatcher video, in the beginning, I was telling myself that I should have a small online business from the dreamcatcher. But when we came here, we did not have time. I still make it but just as a hobby, just when I have time.

## CREATING LASTING COMMUNITY

[We arrived] during the summer vacation. Obviously we didn't have any students, that is, I personally did not see the students, but . . . all of us were immigrants, immigrants who were people like me . . .

*There were refugee families in that campus; I do not know how but we had Arabic families, we had families from African countries, and we did live in one place and had greetings with each other and were saying salaam to each other.*



Artwork by Zakia Anwar