

ANONYMOUS
AN ISRAELI-ARAB PSYCHOLOGIST

1.

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

I was raised all my life in an Arab village, in the northern part of Israel. Up until the age of 18 I lived only in the village. And I didn't... I barely visited other places where there were Jewish people.

Now I live in Tel Aviv, for three years. And before that, I was in Beersheba [a city in southern Israel] for my studies.

2.

SO YOU ATTENDED SCHOOL IN ARABIC? BUT DO YOU ALSO SPEAK HEBREW.

Yes, yes. I did school in Arabic.

And only when I started doing my studies at the university did I start using Hebrew. And I didn't even have good Hebrew. We had lessons at school... I knew the letters, I knew words, but I... I didn't really use it, I didn't get to. It was, you know, something just on paper. Even in the classroom, the teacher didn't speak with us in Hebrew. So, it was always just on paper until I was 18.

And then I had to use the Hebrew language and it was so difficult. I understood some things, not everything, but to communicate myself in Hebrew was... so challenging at the beginning of my studies. And that was, also, like, the first time that I really got to be around Jewish people in my daily life.

3.

WOULD IT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO DO THE SAME UNIVERSITY DEGREE IN ARABIC?

In Israel, I think maybe there are some... not universities, but sort of academies where you can study in Arabic. I don't know if they have all the subjects. I don't know how useful they are if you want to find work afterwards... to have a career in the subjects you learned. In Israel all of the universities are in Hebrew.

If I compare myself to my brother and my sister, both of them study in Jenin, at the American University. You might study in Jenin, but still, at the end of the day, you are living in Israel. You want to work here, in Israel. And when they finish their studies, they will have to take the

Israeli exam for a job. And this exam is in Hebrew. You cannot take it in Arabic. It only exists in Hebrew.

And now they have this challenge of studying Hebrew after they finish their academic studies. So another positive aspect of studying in an Israeli university is that you also get to study the Hebrew language.

4.

AND WHILE YOU WERE IN SCHOOL, DID YOU EVER LEARN THE ANTHEM?

No, not at all. We didn't study any... We didn't hear any songs. Not Palestinian, nor Israeli.

I mean, I knew that the anthem existed. But I didn't know the song. I didn't recognize it. I knew that it was supposed to be important. But I didn't have any situation in my life where I heard it.

I remember I just listened to it once, on YouTube, like... I just looked it up: Hatikvah. So I only listened to it on YouTube that one time. But, up until now, I didn't get into any situations where I had to listen to it or participate in singing it.

5.

DO YOU KNOW IF THE JEWISH STUDENTS THAT ATTEND JEWISH SCHOOLS, DO YOU KNOW IF THEY LEARN HATIKVAH IN SCHOOL?

I guess they do?

6.

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL, THE FACT THAT THEY ARE TAUGHT SOMETHING THAT YOU WEREN'T?

It's kind of complicated. I mean, maybe... Not really excluded, no... But because I have this internalisation that... I will try to explain. Like, for example, when I walk in the street and I see billboards, and they say, in Hebrew, something like: "Let's not devastate, or destroy, things that we built together". And, you know how the situation is in Israel... For me, it totally talks about what the Jewish people built here together. Do you understand me?

7.

BUT THE ARAB CITIZENS OF ISRAEL, THEY MAKE UP ABOUT 20% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, RIGHT? AND ISRAELI-ARAB CITIZENS HAVE THE SAME LEGAL RIGHTS AS JEWISH-ISRAELIS. ISRAEL EVEN HAD HEBREW AND ARABIC AS ITS TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, ALTHOUGH THIS CHANGED IN 2018 AND ARABIC IS NO LONGER AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE AND NOW HAS JUST A "SPECIAL STATUS".

Yes. We have passports...

I mean, I have this internalisation that, okay,... Israel, it's the Jewish land. This is the reason why it was created in the first place. It's like... Jewish people came from Galut, the Exile. They ran away from, I don't know, whatever catastrophes they had. They just wanted a place for themselves. This is the beginning of the story of Israel...the modern one at least.

8.

HOWEVER ISRAELI-ARABS ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF THE ARABS THAT ALREADY LIVED IN THE TERRITORY OF ISRAEL BEFORE THE OFFICIAL CREATION OF THE STATE. THEY WERE ALREADY THERE. HOW DO YOU SEE THE FACT THAT THE ANTHEM ONLY EXISTS IN HEBREW?

For me it's just rational... It's just rational because Hatikva is a nationalist song in Hebrew. It can't be any other way... I explain it rationally in my mind. It's not integrative in its essence. I mean, I would be surprised if it was in another language. I would be surprised if it wasn't just in Hebrew.

I can see the bigger picture. All of this just comes together. It's just the narrative, the political strategy to change Palestine and turn it to a Jewish land. I understand that politically or even intellectually, Palestinians are excluded.

I don't think that things will... well... things always change. I'm just saying that this is what it is at the moment.

I'm not a nationalist. I don't feel any emotions about nationalism, even the Palestinian one. I don't really feel this urge to belong to a specific group. I don't sing the Jewish anthem, nor the Palestinian one.

This is a feeling that has changed with time. When I was younger, I used to listen to some Arab nationalist songs and get enthusiastic about it. But, with time, I just understood that it means nothing to me.

I think that there are some things in life that you can control and there are some things that you can't. And I don't really have anything to do with those... Nationalism, in its essence, it's exclusionary.