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Palina, Sarah

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Interviewee: Sarah Palina
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison

Transcriber: Mary Maxwell
Date: November 6, 2008

Dr. Mark Naison (MN): We're here today with Sarah Palina, which is gonna be her name for this interview. Who came to the United States and the Bronx from Algeria through France and we're here at the home of a interviewer and translator for the Bronx African American History Project, Karima Zerrou. So Sarah could you tell us a little bit about your family and how you grew up in Algeria?

Sarah Palina (SP): Well my family, mostly my grandparents, came to France. They get a job off [inaudible]. And they lived in of course in the suburbs of France in Lyon, which is more the south, and then they had my parents. My mom, my dad was Algerian but they've been trying to raise them in more in a Western way. Like to integrate the country, you know France. So my dad speak Arabic, but he never taught us Arabic.

MN: Now were you born in France?

SP: I was born in France.

MN: Okay, so you were born in France. In what city?

SP: Lyon.

MN: Lyon?

SP: Yes. He met my mom, she is half French, half Arabic on the Berber side. And I grew up in Lyon mostly. At first I was living in a nice neighborhood and then moved to a less nicer neighborhood.

MN: Now, you know, most of the people here won't know very much about Lyon. How big a city is Lyon?

SP: It's actually the third big city of France.

MN: So what is it, half million people? Or more than that?

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SP: I'll say I have no idea. I'm not big on numbers.

MN: Okay, so you grew up in Lyon. Describe the two neighborhoods, the first one you grew up-
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SP: Well, the first one it was more of the, I'll say the upper class, like I had a house, we had like everything we needed. And then moving to the other neighborhood, is more like the Bronx or Brooklyn.

MN: It was apartment buildings?

SP: [inaudible] Yes. People are different, the social class is different.

MN: Were there gangs where you lived? Or it wasn't that tough?

SP: It's not that big in gangs overall in France but it's what you can call bad neighborhoods. In terms of fighting, violence and never had any gangs I saw but--.

MN: And was it mostly immigrants in that neighborhood?

SP: Yes.

MN: Where were the immigrants from?

SP: Mostly from Algeria, Morocco, Tanesia, or more in the South of Africa.

MN: And were there any French people, who were you know, old time white French people in that neighborhood? It was almost all immigrants?

SP: Not really. Very few if there were.

MN: And what about the schools you went to? What were they like?

KZ: First you have to explain why you moved from one neighborhood to the other. There's a reason behind all of this.

SP: Because my parents get divorced. So they get divorced and then my mom has to take us four kids and live in an apartment where she could afford. Which was in a not nice neighborhood.

MN: So there were four of you?

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SP: Yes, four kids.

KZ: Hard to handle that.

MN: And you were the oldest?

SP: No, I was the third one. I was 7 years old.

MN: 7 years old when this happened? So it must've been pretty traumatic?

SP: It was, it really was. Yes. Especially for her, she had four young kids and she had to fight for us to have a house and food and clothes. You know.

MN: Right. And what were the schools like in the new neighborhood?

SP: It was, it was different, if I may say. The people were of course different. And I actually liked it because I found more people of my background. Which I didn't know who I really was at this age. So one day I found out they were Arabic and then I found out that I was Arabic, and said well this actually where I belong.

MN: So you ended up feeling more comfortable there than in the upper class neighborhood?

SP: Yes, there's no doubt.

MN: Now was your family Islamic? Or did they practice?

SP: My dad was, but he wasn't practicing. My mom is not practicing either.

MN: Okay, so you grew up without attending--?

SP: I grew up with more spiritual guidance than any commitment into the religion. But then as I grew up I--. From my cousins and from my friends understood the principle of Islam which I liked. And started to learn more about it and being twisted in it, and turned myself into a Muslim.

MN: And are you involved in the religion in the U.S.?

SP: I am. I am.

MN: Okay, very interesting. Now was this a neighborhood where there was a lot of like hip-hop culture?

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SP: Yes, yes it was. You know, at first when I was growing up I wasn't listening to music, like dance music, house music, and this is a funny story. I remember one day I heard my brothers playing a recording in their bedroom, which was Tupac Shakur and I fell in love with it. Like this is it.

MN: At what year was this? How long ago?

SP: Oh my God, I was probably 9 years old.

MN: So what year were you born, so we can place you?

SP: In 1983.

MN: Okay, so you're listening, have you said you were 9 years old when you listened?

SP: Yes, 10 or something like that.

MN: Yes, so it's the early '90's when you heard Tupac and then you just—?

SP: I loved it, I really did. And from now on I'm not his biggest fan. But the whole time he was number one to me.

MN: Now did the kids in your neighborhood dress in hip-hop style. Did they wear the baggy stuff?

SP: I did too.

KZ: She was a tomboy.

SP: I was a tomboy. I had the baggy, I had the sweats, I had the caps.

MN: Are there any pictures of you from that time?

SP: I think I do, but I have to go after this and--.

KZ: She even was a boxer.

MN: You were a boxer? Kickbox or regular boxing?

SP: Regular boxing yes.

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MN: It's interesting because my secretary is a boxer, she actually fought golden gloves. So that's interesting there, there was a boxing gym in your neighborhood?

SP: Yes.

MN: And they took young women as well as men?

SP: Yes, actually my neighbor was a Tanesian guy, and he did the Olympics in box.

MN: So he's an Olympic boxing coach?

SP: And he was kind of [inaudible] to it, to young kids in our neighborhood. So a lot of the time I would just go there after the box. And a friend of mine would tell me like I was a good, sharp hit. And he even told me you should do boxing.

MN: And how old were you when you started boxing?

SP: I was 13 yes.

MN: So were there other girls who boxed?

SP: Yes, they were my best friends.

MN: So that became like you're little--?

SP: Yes. It lasted only 2 years and then we turned to hip-hop so we started dancing hip-hop.

MN: So you became like a B-Girl?

SP: And then I was a b-girl, I was in the group. And we were even rapping and they were like these guys, they were rapping.

MN: So you were background singers? And dancers?

SP: Yes. We were dancing too, yes.

MN: So did you do any rapping?

SP: We did actually some scenes, went to a festival.

MN: What was the name of your group?

SP: Section 38. Because 38 was the zip code of our neighborhood.

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MN: Because it's very interesting you're saying that, because I spent some time in Berlin where the immigrant neighborhood is Voitsberg and the zip code is 36, so everybody wears Voitsberg 36 shirts. So you're Section 38?

SP: 38.

MN: Do they have shirts which say Section 38?

SP: No we didn't.

MN: But that's the name of your group?

SP: Yes.

MN: Do you have any pictures of that?

SP: I don't think so. Somebody may have a tape of us doing some scenes, but I never had a chance to see it.

MN: And you sang mostly in French?

SP: It was French.

MN: It was French.

SP: It was.

MN: Now did you use any English terms like gangsta or--? Or it was all just straight French?

SP: Yes, maybe money.

[Laughter]

MN: So you sang like R&B style?

SP: R&B yes. They were rapping--.

MN: The R&B group in the back. And how many guys were up front?

SP: There were like four or five guys.

MN: And this is all from your neighborhood? Section 38.

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SP: It was from the town yes. There was like a town with like four or five different neighborhoods. And we met like in the center of the town, like in a high school of young kids.

MN: A community center?

SP: Yes. That sounds just like Berlin.

MN: Now was this like a suburb of Lyon? The town? Or it's part of Lyon?

SP: It's like a suburb, yes.

MN: So the immigrants live in the suburbs in Lyon, like in Paris?

SP: Right, yes.

MN: Now was this, what they call, you know, we call public housing, but some people call social housing? Did you live in public, in projects or--?

SP: Yes. It is.

KZ: Yes, it looks like the Harlem projects, the same buildings.

MN: How tall were they? How many stories?

SP: Like, it depends, from three and the biggest ones 18 floor.

MN: And what floor did you live on?

SP: I was always the 2nd floor.

MN: 2nd floor, okay.

KZ: So your mother was getting help from the government? Single women, because your dad wasn't helping?

SP: He wasn't helping.

MN: He wasn't helping, okay. So all your, your younger, your brothers were younger, than you?

SP: No, actually I have a big brother, 4 year older than me and 4 year younger than me.

MN: Okay so the two of them were the ones playing Tupac? Yes, especially the big one. It was kind of more in, in like a thug mood, like being the bad boy.

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MN: Okay, so that's what Tupac, was the way people would say construct your thug or your masculinity? So that's how you wanna be tough?

SP: And he was a teenager at the time so exactly that.

MN: Right. Now did you, what are the type of schools like in France? We have, we call elementary school, goes to what age?

SP: We have elementary--.

KZ: Until 5,6, 5,6. 6 you go to--.

SP: Yes, 6, then another school until you are 11. And then another one, which is high school until 17. And then you start college.

MN: Yes, now did in your neighborhood did a lot of kids go to college? Or they tended more to drop out and go to work?

SP: Mostly drop out and go to work, because they need money. The financial need--.

MN: So people were really poor? Well not like here?

SP: In France we are luck we have the social government that helps a lot.

MN: So you can go to the doctor or the dentist?

SP: Here it's impossible. You can't.

MN: And if somebody, they, you know, needed food, they could get money for food?

SP: You can get money for food and we have some like Red Cross type of associations, you can get some food. I actually, volunteered to one of them when I was a kid, it was very scary. We helped pack food and people were coming and like and getting packages.

MN: So you think that it's more humane in France than in the United States?

SP: It is, it definitely is. There's no doubt.

MN: Now, did you like ever imagine you'd end up in the United States?

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SP: Well that was an old dream, back in my mind like deep in my heart I always knew that I would travel one day, it was like too crazy, but at the same time I knew it could be possible and I made it. I mean it took some time, coming here.

KZ: Maybe before we get to the states, can you tell us about how you renewed the relationship with your dad, after how long and before you left?

SP: Well this, like I was 6 or 7, 7 when they get divorced so my mom raised us. But of course they went into court and then he had a right of visit. So every weekend, every no, one weekend we stay with my mom and every other weekend we'd have to see my dad. He remarried by the way. You know, a man's, especially in our background, can't live alone. So he brought a woman from his country, he never saw her. It's kind of arranged marriage. So based on a picture he saw her and is like okay, I'm ready to get married. There's no love up to this point. This isn't marriage to--.

KZ: Why do you think he did that?

MN: So it's really frowned on for a man to be single in your culture?

SP: Yes, because first of all, he always had his mom doing things for himself. Food, you know, wash his clothes and doing--. He cannot handle.

MN: So he didn't know how to cook, he didn't know how to clean?

SP: No, no, my mother always did she never worked. She always took care of us in the house. So when he find himself alone he really, really get depressed. So he had, it was an emergency to bring the woman in the house.

MN: So he got married to have somebody to cook and clean for him?

SP: Practically. And like they say maybe love can grow after the years you know.

KZ: You went there every weekend--.

SP: And we could see. And not that I liked it, I mean--.

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MN: What sort of work did he do?

SP: He was working how do that--?

KZ: Construction.

SP: Construction, outside yes. Building houses.

MN: So you didn't like the woman that much?

SP: No, I didn't. Well she didn't like us. Really, we were kids, or course we give her a chance we don't know who she is. If my dad liked her, then she might be good, but she wasn't good to us really. We were not her kids after all, she was 30, 30 years old and in time she wanted to have her own kids. And she did, they had 3 kids together and from now when she had the kids, who were really not in like my sights, you know.

MN: So how did you end up you know, getting a relationship with him other than just seeing him?

SP: There not really is a relationship.

MN: It was just, he just went through the motions.

SP: He's like a guy that I have to go see every weekend. And pretend to be his daughter. It is, it's sad to say, but it is.

MN: No, it is sad. So you had this dream of coming to United States and did you know people in the United States?

SP: No, I didn't.

MN: So you didn't have any relatives you didn't have any friends?

SP: No, I didn't. I did not even speak English at the time.

MN: And you didn't learn English in school?

SP: Well, the basics. You know what we learned in school, high school with our first language you know.

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MN: So how did you end up getting here and how long ago was this?

SP: That was about 4 years ago. The whole thing was that I was in France and I was trying to find a job. I just wanted to work, the summer at the beach and then [inaudible].

MN: So you wanted to have some fun?

SP: Exactly. Working with, so the idea was to me to work as a front desk representative in hotels in the beach and in the mountains. So I applied for so many jobs, at least 20, 25 and they all turned me down because I couldn't speak English. And I was surprised because they had a lot of customers from other countries.

MN: Part of the requirement was that if you're gonna work in a hotel you should speak some English?

SP: Exactly, especially front desk.

MN: Now did you go to a school to train yourself for hotel work?

SP: No because I had a diploma, which was from your first, in this field, which was the front desk representative. It's like secretary and other things. So it was basically qualified for job, except that--.

MN: You didn't have any English.

SP: So based on this, being turned down so many times I just decided okay, this is it I'm not gonna find the job that I want, not that I'm asking a lot. But I just had to go and learn English. So my mom was like you should just try to go to London, England.

KZ: Our parents always want London.

SP: And I was like no, it's too close to home and I need something to really change landscapes.

KZ: But why do you think you wanted to leave so much?

SP: And also because at the time my mom getting married, so she left, she wasn't living with us, she was more with her husband, and I was living with my two brothers.

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MN: In the same apartment?

SP: In the same apartment, where I kind of maid. And I felt like kind of smothered.

MN: Smothered, yes I could see that.

SP: You know being in the middle, the girl, the only girl. I was being overprotected my whole life. And at this point I was like this is enough.

MN: So they'd watch out if any guys were interested in you?

SP: Yes. At some point in my life I couldn't have a boyfriend. It was impossible. Especially the bad one we into it, don't even think about it. Do you have the little brother that was gonna follow me to see if I was gonna see some guys and then report to big brother, that's gonna take--.

KZ: But it's surprising because your mother was white French, I mean even though she has half of her Berber, but your father wasn't around so you would think they're more liberal, but the neighborhood--.

MN: Was so tough they didn't trust the other boys?

SP: Exactly. I think they would trust me, they would not trust the guys because they know how men are.

KZ: Especially in those area.

SP: So it's like tough sometimes.

KZ: So you wanted to get away from it?

SP: Yes.

MN: Mother, big brothers--.

SP: Everything, from the spirit of France, from the brothers, from the lifestyle. To get something new and give myself another chance.

MN: So how did you manage to do this?

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SP: Then how I manage, like I said I had no money and couldn't speak English, no relatives are here. So I went make a reception website and I found this program called the au pair program, which actually is an exchange program. So the thing is you're going to country, the United States, you live with the family, American people, and you take care of the kids, in exchange of English lessons and a small salary. It's for a year. And they pay for your ticket to come here and you have room and board. So it's like this sounds like a good thing, let's try that. And I applied for it, I did through the whole process, and then actually, they arrange it all to come and do these things.

KZ: They didn't mind that you didn't know much English, or they didn't know?

SP: Well, I had an interview with some agency because of course it was through an agency, and I had the basics, but I could defend myself sometimes, you know. So she was like I think you're gonna learn very fast and you can do it.

MN: And the fact that you had worked with kids, had brothers and had been around kids, you know, make them see you as somebody who could do it or--?

SP: No, I actually always loved kids. I've been like surrounded with kids like my whole life, brothers and sisters and then nephews and nieces. So it wasn't really a big deal for me to take care of a kid. And it was only one kid and was a baby, so it was easy.

MN: So where did you end up getting your first job?

SP: It was in New Jersey actually, for a year. And a nice family, very nice, they were 50 years old family, just had a baby. And they're very nice.

MN: So they were 50--?

SP: He was 50 and she was 47.

MN: Did she give birth of was the baby adopted?

SP: No she gave birth.

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MN: She gave birth at 47?

SP: Sort of a miracle yes. That's how I see it too.

MN: And so you enjoyed that time? Or--?

SP: It was, it was kind of hard at first because it was the understanding between us, was difficult. The language level like, sometimes I couldn't understand what they were saying. And especially they had a son who was 14 years old and he would talk a lot about slangs. So that mentality where I could not understand any--. He was talking to me and I was like looking at him like, what did you just say? So I'm like this. The mom was the one that I could understand better. She was making efforts at least to--.

MN: And did you go to English language classes also?

SP: I did. After 6 month, I didn't go straight I had, because I wanted for us, familiarize myself in the environment. But after I did, I took so many English classes and I wouldn't say they were bad, but there were some people in the class, they were in the states for like 6 years and I was there for 6 months and I felt like I could speak better English than them. So I wasn't thinking that I was going forward.

KZ: It's often the case for Algerian; they have very easy adaptation into language.

SP: I guess so.

MN: So you picked it up quickly?

SP: Very quickly.

MN: Now did you make friends outside of the family when you were in New Jersey?

SP: Well actually I had some, some people from the same program that I was into. Au pair. We came here the same day, I think like 3 French girls, and they were also in New Jersey so we could meet up in the city sometimes.

MN: Did you go to clubs and stuff, and bars?

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SP: Yes. The first week I get into the city, I'm like oh my God. I came on Wednesday, the Thursday night I was in the club.

MN: So this was like what you wanted?

SP: And you know what, this is a story that I'ma tell you. I came in the New Yorker Hotel, which was midtown. 34th St, and 8th Avenue and I get into my room which was 18th floor and I stood up at the window and saw New York and it's craziness and I was like just, blown away, like wow. This is where I wanna be, this is where I wanna live forever. I just loved it, I really did, I fell in love with it, like instantly.

KZ: So when did you leave Jersey, how long did you stay in Jersey?

SP: I stayed for like a year. And in between, I had a friend, I made a friend in the Bronx, they were French, they lived in Riverdale. So she get me into her house for like 7 months. The time that I found something else.

MN: So you were able to live there?

SP: I was, she was very nice. She didn't even charge me for it.

MN: That's amazing.

SP: That's a true friend.

KZ: How is Riverdale?

SP: It's quiet. You know, it's like houses, it's quiet. It's part of the Bronx, but it's a different part of the Bronx.

MN: What street was it?

SP: What street was it, I can't recall.

MN: Were you in a big apartment building?

SP: No it was the middle, the city houses. It's them things close to each other.

KZ: Like brownstones?

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SP: Yes. It wasn't too far from there.

MN: Subway?

SP: Subway station. The subway train station.

MN: So then were you looking for other au pair work?

SP: I was looking, yes, for something where I could like because I wanted to go back to school.

To get a diploma, getting a degree. And I look at ads and one day I found an ad, the lady was looking for somebody to take care of her kid and she was pregnant. So I apply for it, we had an interview and she said okay we can try it out.

KZ: But how did you maintain to stay here, paper wise?

SP: She, the lady that I met, then we had an agreement, is that I can work for you but the thing is that I cannot be illegal.

KZ: No before you met her. During the month--.

SP: I had a tourist's visa, because the program that I was into, was like a year and when it ended, I could for 3 months--.

MN: A 3-month tourist visa, so you had three months until you found something else?

SP: Exactly.

MN: But then eventually you'd have to get something. Get a green card?

SP: Yes. Either visa or a green card or whatever. To be legal.

MN: So this woman--?

SP: I met with this woman and we start talking and she was a very helping woman. So we decided that she can sponsor me and get, student visa and I can stay with her and work for her, like on the side. So I was doing work for her and then I go to school on the side.

KZ: But there's a funny anecdote.

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SP: Yes, she's Israeli. Like and she though I was Jewish at first. She though I looked Jewish and my name is Jewish, so then she really though like, only I lived with her maybe 3 months later she found out that I wasn't Jewish. I was Muslim and she was really surprised. Because you know how Jewish and Muslim people, sometimes don't get along. She was like oh really? Like oh you're so cool.

MN: Gee what a surprise.

SP: Yes, exactly. And then she had to tell her mom. Mom Sarah is Muslim. Like what a premier, I would've never though of. You know.

MN: Now where did you find mosques to go to when you were living in Riverdale?

SP: I don't, I don't go to the mosque.

MN: So you just practice on your own?

SP: Practice on my own, exactly.

MN: Now, so where did this family live?

SP: She live in Long Island.

MN: Okay, so in other words, you found the family in Long Island, when you were living in Riverdale.

SP: Yes.

MN: And then moved to Long Island, and she got you a student visa?

SP: Exactly.

MN: And so you could go to school. And where are you at school?

SP: Now, I go to school in Nassau, Nassau College.

MN: At Nassau County Community College?

SP: Yes.

MN: So that sounds like a pretty good.

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SP: I've been lucky, I'm not gonna lie. I've been very blessed.

KZ: So what're you studying?

SP: I'm studying media; I'm a media major. Communications.

MN: Now do you see yourself more in the written end of it or the film and technology end of it?

SP: Written and face-to-face interview. Like we're doing right now.

MN: So you wanna be on television? I was interviewed the other day about the election. So why don't you interview me for a minute?

SP: So how do you feel about the winning of Mr. Obama?

MN: For me it's a great dream to come true. Because this is something we worked for, for you know, during the '60's, during the civil rights movement and we tried so hard to overcome the racism, and it seemed like even though we made progress in terms of changing the laws, we never thought we could change peoples' hearts and minds. So the idea of, you know, white voters electing a black president, it seemed like something that might happen a hundred years from now, not in our lifetime.

SP: And it's great. I don't want to be pessimistic, but you remember I have been to Mr., Dr. King, being assassinated. Do you have like in the back of your head, the same type of feel that might happen to Mr. Obama?

MN: See because everybody I talk to is afraid that he's gonna be assassinated, I have the attitude, don't think negative thoughts. You know, let's concentrate on what we can accomplish and if you think positive thoughts, positive things will happen. There's this great movie called Field of Dreams with Kevin Costner, and there's in a line in it, if you build it they will come. That if you imagine, something really positive then maybe you can make it happen. So many people told me during this election, he can't win. They're gonna steal the election. So many people said the Republicans will steal the election, I said we can't think that way, let's make it so

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they can't steal the election. Let's make the victory so big that little tricks won't work. Let's not just beat them, let's destroy them, and that's what happened. So even, this whole assassination thing. Believe it or not the black student organization for black history month wanted to bring a program on assassinations. And I said no, don't, that's crazy, it's almost like, it's almost like you want him to be assassinated so you'll be, it'll confirm your worst fears. And my thing is, we've done something amazing let's do more amazing things. So that's my philosophy. I don't wanna hear about assassination and conspiracies, I want to hear about what we can do so that people, you know, who lose their jobs will have other jobs. What're we gonna do so people who can't get loans will be able to get loans? What're we gonna do so that people can go to college? You know, what're we gonna do to make our cars more fuel-efficient? What're we gonna do to, you know, that's my philosophy. Talk about the positive.

SP: Those are great answers.

MN: Now how did the two of you meet?

SP: It was from Eva, our friends.

KZ: Yes.

SP: And I was actually at her birthday party. So I met her on the birthday.

KZ: Yes, pretty much she came on my birthday with a friend and yes, she was so crazy. She's such a party girl. She was so funny and you know, we became friends. After that, and even though you're in Long Island we were able to keep this--.

MN: Do you still sing?

SP: Not really, no.

MN: Do you still dance?

SP: I do, I do dance.

MN: But have you ever tried to get a job as like a video dancer?

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SP: No. Actually I've been offered one day to do it but it couldn't fit in my schedule.

KZ: So this whole thing that's going well for you, why are you so confused about if you want to stay or if you wanna go back?

SP: You know why? Because I was thinking about my future, like okay, job wise in the future it's going to be very hard for me to get a job. Because in the fact that okay, I speak English, but American people are better than I am. Language wise. And utilizing a bit, we have to talk and write and I'm not perfect yet in the language. So this is a factor. And there is another factor, which is, finding a man, in the country, which is really hard. I want to one day settle down, get married and have children but it's very difficult to find a boyfriend that wants to accommodate to you.

MN: So this is a problem, more in the United States than other places you think?

SP: Yes. Because it's different. The men here, especially in New York, I feel is, they don't want to be committed to somebody.

MN: Well, I mean, I think you're right about that. I have a son so, you know and, you know--.

KZ: She's very traditional so--.

SP: Yes, very.

MN: You know, I think that's an issue. But I didn't realize that it was more an issue in New York. I mean all I know is that with my son, who's you know, very handsome, and smart and you know. He would go to interviews, you know in a business thing the older guys would put their arm around, don't make the same mistake that I did and get married. Wait until you're at least 40. But somebody snagged him. He has the most, he never had a girlfriend until he was 27, he always was, you know, player, you know the whole thing. And then he met this amazing, beautiful woman, who dances with a Paul Taylor Dance Company and they moved in together. So, you know there's hope.

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KZ: There's a lot of women that I know who left New York because of that social thing.

MN: I mean I can see based on, you know, I know so many bright beautiful young women, and the guys won't commit.

SP: See that's the problem.

MN: And you know, but on the other hand, that may be changing. I actually think the economic crisis is gonna change some of that. That people are not gonna just have the money to throw around on the \$500 dollar bottle to be Mr. Bigshot in the bar. That whole scene--.

SP: It's true because we don't have that in France. France been in a crisis for so long. Unless you're a drug dealer in the streets, you don't throw out bottles like this. So they like to be rather with a girlfriend and having a relationship, be at home going to the movies, do cheap things, and then once in a while they'll go out with the guys and spend. Not as common as it is here.

MN: I mean I know from just my daughter and my son and the way they spend money, it wasn't like when I was younger, when my wife and I, because we didn't have. You know, and now people are not gonna have that money to throw around. You know, the showing off and it costs money to be a player. You know if you're gonna have 3, 4 women in a week, it's expensive.

KZ: And I was gonna says, which year are you in already? In your studies?

SP: 2nd year.

MN: And then you're gonna go to a 4 year college?

KZ: That's what I wanted to say. I'm thinking that the 4 year, when you reach your bachelor, you're gonna feel more comfortable about being in the media. Because right now you're reading a lot, you're not writing a lot, it's gonna be more intense with a bachelor, and if you go for master even more.

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MN: I think that in some ways, you're background and accent will help you, once you become more confident in English. In other words you have a little bit of an accent. But who would've though Barack Hussein Obama could be President of the United—.

SP: That's true.

MN: Think about that.

KZ: No, but just now, you didn't even speak English when you came here and you're able to get through an interview.

MN: We're in a global world. You know, New York, would not be thriving economically without people from all over the world living here. European money has kept Manhattan afloat for the last 3,4 years. You know, and so I agree with Karima, I think wait until you graduate, and you know, also, you know there are many--. I think the man picture, you know my wife and I always said, Eric why don't you have a nice girlfriend? And finally he met somebody, and he just met her at a bar. And things clicked, and she is so wonderful.

MN: Well she's originally from Connecticut, she travels around the world. She's one of the principal dancers at one of the major dance companies. She got him. And you know, we thought he was ungettable, you know, so and he says now all of his friends, are starting to have serious relationships. He's gonna be 28, you know he's a Yale graduate, he does very well, he's handsome, all of his friends are athletes from like Yale and all of them are finally settling down, and in college they were--.

SP: How old are they now?

MN: 27, 28, 29.

SP: I'm 25 so I guess--.

MN: But I do think that, you know--.

KZ: But compared to me you don't go home a lot. How long haven't you been to France?

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SP: No, it's been 2 years that I didn't go home. I'm going for the holidays.

MN: Now, you're going to Lyon?

SP: Yes.

KZ: So you're family came, but you can't go?

SP: My family came when I was too busy, and I miss it, yes I do. Sometimes it's good to see, you know, everybody, my aunt, when she left. They said [inaudible].

MN: But I mean I think you're in a good position, getting the education this way, and also having that music background and you know and you know the dance background. It's an advantage.

SP: Could be yes.

MN: So think, think positive thoughts.

SP: Right, stay positive, stay optimistic. I'll let you know how it goes.

MN: Okay, did you have anything else that you wanted to say that you haven't said?

SP: No, I think we talked about mostly everything. Also yes, maybe something that I wanted to add, [inaudible], if I want to settle down like I said, I would like somebody to be [inaudible], in my own background and I feel like it's difficult here too. I've know this, in the United States, but so far here in New York, I didn't meet a lot of them, maybe 1, 2, but that's it. Some good ones, but a lot them they're not themselves, they too Americanized now, you know it's either New York affects you in a positive way, or in a negative way.

KZ: I think Sarah, because she's young, so I'm talking for her right now. No but I think because you never were in a relationship, since you're here, so you think maybe you need, like the one. But you really don't need the one, you might need just a relationship, because I know how it is when you move here from afar, from home, it's just you need this person to fill up the blank, from the family from, you know to push. You know the close people, they're not here, so you

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need somebody really close that you wanna love, and love you back. So it's mostly maybe your relationship, not like your regular married.

SP: Which is hard to find again.

MN: Yes, I mean I think that if you have a relationship with somebody, and maybe it doesn't have to be a Muslim, it just has to be a good person. Yes, and I think that finding a good person and somebody you can trust, because that's the hardest thing is finding somebody you trust.

KZ: And plus I'm sure you're gonna change your mind when you're in New York City, living like us. Alone, doing your own thing, you're gonna feel differently. Because you're in the house with a couple and kids. So you feel like you're in the setting of, okay I'm missing something.

But when you're independent and alone you might just do you.

MN: You know it's, I'm always again, I always look on the bright side of things and you know sort of, it's worked for me so--.

KZ: But it's funny how an Algerian girl who wanted to leave France to come here, so it's a lot.

The pressure we have back home.

MN: Here you have freedom and the thing is freedom is sometimes scary.

SP: Too much freedom?

MN: Yes, but it's also good.

SP: It's about finding a balance.

MN: You have to, you know, you have to have, you know, some roots where you feel comfortable, you have to have a place you can go, where there are people you love and people you trust, and then you go deal with all the other things out there. All the excitement, but you have to have some place to come back to, where you feel like people understand who you are.

And if you can find that, then New York is the greatest. Anyway, well thank you very much, this is very interesting.

Interviewee: Sarah Palina
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison

[END OF INTERVIEW]