

Laboni, Myrtle Village Green, Bed Stuy, Brooklyn
November 13, 2021

Rachel (00:00):

So, will you please tell me your name, your age or your age range, where you grew up, where you live now and how long have you been a member here at Myrtle Village Green?

Laboni (00:20):

My name is Moreom Parvin. Most people know me by my nickname, Laboni. My age range is between 40 to 45. I live right here and also I have a place in Queens so I'm both place. Both boroughs resident, Queens and Brooklyn. And what else you ask me?

Rachel (00:52):

Where did you grow up?

Laboni (00:53):

Oh, I grew up in Bangladesh, in Dhaka Bangladesh.

Rachel (00:58):

And when did you come here to New York?

Laboni (01:00):

I came here in, I guess, 1999. I forgot that. 1999.

Rachel (01:09):

And how long have you been a member of Myrtle Village Green garden?

Laboni (01:15):

Myrtle Village, I believe, it's a while. It's really a while. I don't remember exact year but I'm a Green Card member since, I believe, 2000. I believe before 2000.

Rachel (01:35):

So since you came here basically.

Laboni (01:38):

Yes, right after I came in this country, after that. So right after I came here, I had a relative here. She's also our member. I'm in a big home currently. She's the COVID positive in the hospital.

Rachel (02:00):

So sorry.

Laboni (02:01):

So she is the one who came here who got the place to live here on the Park Avenue. So she notify us, this is the place we can grow because we used to go in the Greentown in the Gates Avenue. There is another project there. So we work there until I believe 2015, I guess, then after that we give up. We have few of them, I think, more than five people we are in the part of that project, in the Greentown. And from there, I wish I remember that day but somewhere I write it down but I don't remember.

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Rachel (02:53):

And how long have you been gardening?

Laboni (02:57):

As I mentioned, [inaudible 00:02:59] and I started the Green Thumb.

Rachel (03:01):

But in your life were you gardening before that?

Laboni (03:02):

Oh, gardening. No, no, no. In back home we had a pot like this, flower pots. From there. I believe we were... It was part of our life. Never was like that, no. It all always was our part.

Rachel (03:20):

So you learned how to grow food when you were a kid from your family?

Laboni (03:26):

Yes. Yes, that's true. But here, when I came here at the beginning the first year, I didn't know how to go to get the Bangladeshi vegetables. So it was really hard that time to get it, Bangladeshi food. So that time that forced us to get involved with this one and this is the fresh organic vegetables, right? And sometime if we can get this in the market, it's very expensive.

Rachel (03:26):

Yeah.

Laboni (04:03):

I don't know if you have those pictures, the red emeralds, Malabar emeralds. Those per pound is sometimes \$4, sometimes \$5, sometimes is a \$10.

Rachel (04:18):

Wow.

Laboni (04:19):

And it's very expensive. I wish you were here in the summertime. You could see there's all leaves are here, red color.

Rachel (04:26):

I think I saw it actually. I came here in the summer. Yeah, Taya showed me around the summer and I think I did see that.

Laboni (04:32):

That is the red emeralds. They're very popular in the Bangladeshi community, Asian community and very hard to find here. And even though sometime we get, but it's expensive for some people to afford it. If sometime people need those three, four pound to feed people, a family but you can't.

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Rachel (04:55):

So you started gardening to get the vegetables that you wanted that were from back home in Bangladesh. You're actually not the first Bangladeshi gardener who I've talked to who said the same thing.

Laboni (05:09):

Okay.

Rachel (05:11):

I've talked to a few Bangladeshi people who garden here who say, "I started gardening here because I wanted to get the food that I could couldn't get here."

Laboni (05:21):

Yeah that's true. And for me, that was very expensive and I couldn't afford it, the vegetable I needed. Now, if you go in now in the market you can get those vegetables because some people growing those vegetables in Florida, opposite New York. Bangladeshi, Chinese, they are doing this kind thing. But that time we didn't have that access so that was only our resource to get Bangladeshi, vegetable food.

Rachel (05:53):

Wow. That's cool. I think most people born in the US don't think, "Oh, if I want something I could just grow it." I think that is not a way that many people in the United States think about their food.

Laboni (06:15):

And another thing. The same time I want to introduce after Hawaiian fast. Of course, that was the first intention to get food for myself. What I cannot buy it or which is not available here but after getting involved with the Green Thumb and the Myrtle Village, I wanted to teach other people because the American, I mean, everybody is American who have a citizen, right?

Rachel (06:47):

Right.

Laboni (06:48):

But most of here who live here, they don't know how to eat certain thing. Even though they know potato, okay, bake potato.

Rachel (06:57):

Yeah.

Laboni (06:58):

Bake this thing, that thing but there is a various option. They don't know how to cook it. Sometime the food is available they could... When you came here in the summertime, you might saw the green, big pumpkin leaves, right. Long ground leaves. We could use that, we could eat. We could use leaves with the fish, we could salt it. They didn't know that but I'm glad, now, lot of my neighbor here, they know

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how to use. Even they didn't know. They didn't have any idea they can use those leaves. Scams but I believe I ask them, "Do you like it?" And most of them say, "Yes, I love it."

Rachel (07:48):

Yep.

Laboni (07:49):

Only one person told me, "No, I don't like it."

Rachel (07:53):

At least they were honest.

Laboni (07:55):

Yes, that's true.

Rachel (07:56):

So Laboni, I'm going to ask you the question that I ask everyone, it's kind of the framing question for this whole project which is, when you think about global warming what do you think about and how do you feel?

Laboni (08:09):

I feel very scared for next generation. I don't know how long I'll be lived in this world because life is very short. But for next generation, what we are doing? We are cutting, chopping, we are building big building, right? We are destroying the green places when we need it for our mental health, physical health, right?

Rachel (08:38):

Yeah.

Laboni (08:38):

But we just looking for the profit, nothing else. That's the reason we are destroying, cutting trees, building things. And now you see we are getting cyclones, hurricane because of this reason, right? And in order to stop it we have to grow a lot of trees. And in my country that was, I believe, around 2000. I saw a video in YouTube, it says after 35 years, Bangladesh will be underwater. Part of New York will be underwater, multiple be underwater. Why? Because the global warming, right? And in order to stop that what we have to do, we have to plant lot of trees. So in my country, scientist was telling, "Don't cut the big trees, plant as much as you can plant." So in my country in the coast area, we start putting the plant. Now it's getting bigger and bigger, bigger and bigger. And we need to take care but a lot of people doesn't know how to trim the plant but they're growing because at least they're doing to set this world, right? And here, yes, we can see last couple years we can feel it. The [inaudible 00:10:29] is coming.

Rachel (10:29):

Yeah. What kind of changes have you noticed over the past 20 years that you've been here in New York?

Laboni (10:41):

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Lot of tall are building with the glasses. It look good to see, right? And the same time, I also noticed there's a lot of people planting the trees. That's good part. But what happening does look like is one part of the city, people are take caring, other part of the city, they are not. That's really bothering me and it is totally depend on the City Council member who's supposed to take care of those kind things.

Rachel (11:26):

Talk to me more. What parts of the city are not being taken care of and what parts are?

Laboni (11:31):

I can because I work in the Queens. And as I mentioned to you I'm also the Queens resident. In that place, let's say in Jamaica, if you ever get a chance to visit, if you take F train, last 179, 169 persons sating. This is the all last station. If you go there, you'll not find these kind tress, you'll not. If you go after getting off from this train, if you go more farther, if you go toward Long island you'll see there is a chains. But if you go right hand side, that is called South Jamaica, you might see and there's people in the resident is a black, brown people. And you could understand why there is not lot of trees there. If you go Hillside Avenue, as I mentioned, you'll not find anything from Van Hoek Expressway to until, oh boy, oh boy. That's okay.

Rachel (12:53):

Oh, here. Let me do you want to-

Laboni (12:55):

No, no. You can get it. I just want to... Oh, okay. Oh, you have it?

Rachel (12:59):

Yeah. Oh boy.

Speaker 3 (13:04):

Here we go.

Laboni (13:14):

Okay. Sorry about this.

Rachel (13:16):

No, that's okay.

Laboni (13:18):

So you'll not find any tree but if you go in the left hand side, there is a different, private houses there in the left-hand side. It'll take you toward Long Island Expressway by the Queens hospital and everything else in the longer trees and everything. It's depend on the, as I mentioned before, is depend who is representing you in that area. They have a lot of obligation but they're not doing their job. So in order to stop those global warming issues and everything we need to work together. And I don't find that rhythm in the city, city counselor, sometime in the assembly member. That time I get frustrated.

Rachel (14:16):

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Have you noticed changes in weather or seasonal patterns that affect your growing seasons?

Laboni (14:26):

Yes. Now winter time, we don't need to wear coats sometime.

Rachel (14:32):

Yeah. It's November right now and you and I are wearing... I'm wearing a sweater and you are wearing a light tunic.

Laboni (14:39):

Summer t-shirt.

Rachel (14:40):

Yeah.

Laboni (14:42):

Right?

Rachel (14:42):

Yeah.

Laboni (14:43):

And we supposed to wear the heavy jackets this time. It's supposed to be snow here, right?

Rachel (14:47):

Yeah.

Laboni (14:49):

So this is the you change in the summertime when we shouldn't wear that sweater or jacket and anything. Now we are wearing, last year I believe, I think this year or last year we wear a jacket until June.

Rachel (15:02):

Yeah. So how does that affect growing? Does it?

Laboni (15:07):

Yes, of course because normally we supposed to, we start growing from end of the February and beginning of the March. But it's changed, now he say we cannot do anything until may sometime.

Rachel (15:21):

Wow. That's a big change.

Laboni (15:23):

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Yes. Because-

Rachel (15:23):

When did that start changing?

Laboni (15:25):

Last couple years.

Rachel (15:27):

Yeah.

Laboni (15:27):

Because even though, if you throw seeds on the bed plant doesn't come out.

Rachel (15:36):

How?

Laboni (15:36):

Because the cold because the soil is cold. In order to grow plants your soil need to be very hot, right, but it doesn't.

Rachel (15:47):

So how do you learn to... What is that? Why do you do in response to that? How do you learn to adjust? And what does it feel like to be doing that? With the experience of seeing something that used to be really consistent change?

Laboni (16:05):

What we are doing, we start planting the seed in our home because home is warmer than outside. So if you go any gardener home you'll see they are putting cup after cup, bowl after bowl, small tubs and everything to grow seeds there because they don't have any option. And when we are ready to grow outside is almost mid summer.

Rachel (16:41):

Wow.

Laboni (16:41):

And we don't have time because winter is going to come again. So in order to keep up, there's all pumpkin grows, bitter melon, flood beans, other things, you name it except red emeralds. Except that one, decide everything we plant at home. So when we are ready, whether it is ready we just bring those thing and put in the bed.

Rachel (17:14):

Is there a way that global warming affects you on a daily basis?

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Laboni (17:21):

Of course, this daily basis is a way that it's changing and you don't know. Today is a wonderful day, tomorrow is going to be cold, right? And if you were in a rush and you didn't have time to check your weather report, maybe you'll be in the trouble.

Rachel (17:41):

Yeah.

Laboni (17:41):

If you don't take your jacket, you'll be feel sick, right?

Rachel (17:41):

Right.

Laboni (17:45):

You'll feel cold.

Rachel (17:46):

Right.

Laboni (17:46):

So every day we need to in the morning, as soon as we wake up, we get ready then we need to think, "Okay, what I'm going to wear today? Should I wear the light clothe or the heavy clothes? Should I put it back, all my summer clothes in the luggage? Should I put it back, all my winter clothes?" We cannot, we need to keep everything in the closet, right?

Rachel (18:14):

Right.

Laboni (18:15):

That is big hassle for me.

Rachel (18:19):

Is there a way that it affects how you plan for your future?

Laboni (18:23):

Of course. How long I'm going to do it? Every day? When you wake up, I don't know about other people, for me I don't have time. I'm running, running, running. Wake up in the early morning, pray, finish praying then make your breakfast. Make breakfast for family, right. Then get ready for job, fix your dresses. Do this thing, go in the workplace. Sometime remotely, sometime you need to go in the... I need to go in there physically, the field trip. Then when I go there, I have to be prepared for every single thing. Today I came here, I check whether there will be a possibility for the rain. I bought the jacket, switch shirt, this and the rain coat. How many things? I have a small purse right? Now I need to change my purse size too and I hate that. I have a shoulder pain but I don't have any other option. How many

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things I carry? Tell me. And now if we go in the market with need to buy the bags, do this thing. So if you are on the outside, how many things you going to keep notice, right? You have to take care of this thing, that thing. So it's affecting every single way.

Rachel (19:46):

It really affects every single part of your day, it sounds like.

Laboni (19:49):

Yes. When I was working first I had a jacket, now I cannot work with the jacket. I take it off. Then he started working with the switch out. I believe I worked 30 minutes. I was feeling hot. I took it off again. So tell me now, I'm pretty sure after two hours or if I don't work, if I sit here, I might start feeling chill, right?

Rachel (20:24):

Yeah.

Laboni (20:25):

Then again, I have two hour and if I didn't bring those things, maybe I need to visit hospital, right?

Rachel (20:32):

Yeah. Okay. Let me ask, you have three more questions if that's okay and then I'll set you free. The first is, do you have a spiritual or ethical or religious practice that helps you understand this moment of change?

Laboni (20:49):

Can you repeat again the question?

Rachel (20:54):

Do you have a religious, spiritual or ethical practice that helps you understand this moment of change?

Laboni (21:01):

Oh yes. In the Quran. In Quran. I'm Muslim. In Quran it says, "There will be that time. There's what will change. We'll see the change." And yes I is here because we believe in the last day, judgment day before the world destroy. And we believe that that day we'll meet with Allah. And before we meeting Allah everything will be destroyed, everything will be the plain. If you ever get a chance to read Quran, read it English version. And if you have a Torah, there's a Jewish people they read it and read that too. After reading that you'll get the connection and it is very interesting. I'm not telling you to read as a religious book, read as a history book.

Rachel (22:05):

Totally.

Laboni (22:06):

And you love it. World has a lot of history, details.

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Rachel (22:10):

Yeah.

Laboni (22:11):

And is clearly says that.

Rachel (22:13):

So you see this moment as part of prophecy and written in. What does it feel like for you then to be living in this moment of prophecy? If I can put those words together.

Laboni (22:34):

I'm scared. You know why? Because when our last prophet was here, Mohammad, that time he says it's the last judgment day [inaudible 00:22:55]. That was 14,000 years ago, right? Now that time he says, it is right here. And now I can see that time he says "there will be time people will not talk with each other. They'll send some way message." They will feel comfortable doing that like text message. We don't feel to call anymore, right? We feel comfortable most of us sending the text message. It says, "There will be the Lord of long buildings." Right now, however, we go we see all taller total building.

And it also says there will be female. The population of female it'll grow. Now, female is a bigger number, male is a smaller number. Says there will be like a mushroom thing. It's a satellite all over, right? And like this, he described the way now as a believer, practice Muslim, I see everything is right and is happening. Is warned us.

Rachel (24:23):

Sounds scary.

Laboni (24:24):

Of course for me, it's very scary. And I already, I lost my father on June.

Rachel (24:31):

I'm so sorry.

Laboni (24:32):

He had a COVID and we didn't get chance to talk with him. Nine days he was in the hospital all and stuff. It still, I just can't take it. It still, sometime I feel let me call Aba. Let me call him but that time I remember, oh, he's no longer here. So now I'm start doing, I'm packing everything because anytime I can die, there's no guarantee. You know? And I see the Quran says, history says, prophet says this going to happen. And I see from my eyes is happening. I get scared. I get scares. I don't have any other option. Trust me.

Rachel (25:28):

Yeah.

Laboni (25:30):

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I just don't focus right and left. I just look forward because I know it's going to happen. And I don't know, do I have to see that part? I don't want to see. How it's described in the Quran, it's very scary. And I don't want to see, and I don't want to part of that, how everything is going to be destroyed. And I can see those people are fighting whatever they're told in the Quran. In the things, everything is happening. Not in here. People will hate each other. It's happening. They will fight over the religious. They'll fight over this power. Is happening. I'm scared. I'm very scared.

Rachel ([26:21](#)):

I'm scared too.

Laboni ([26:22](#)):

I'm very scared, trust me. I just don't talk with people because whoever need to understand, they will understand themselves. I don't want to teach anybody but if somebody come to me, yes, I tell them, don't do it. Do this thing. At least try to keep yourself safe for next world. This world.

Rachel ([26:49](#)):

Is there anything you feel hopeful for?

Laboni ([26:53](#)):

Yes. In Islam says, "If you make mistake, seek a lot forgiveness." That's called Tawbah in Arabic. Do it. Since we know that is happening here, we have an option. We can stop things, yes, God is almighty. We don't know what going to happen and 5 things in Quran says... Like things nobody knows. One, what you aren't tomorrow. Second, when are you going to die? When a male and female do the intercourse, if they get pregnant, the female get pregnant, they don't know what it is in their womb. Did I mentioned the, how you going to die?

Rachel ([28:06](#)):

Yeah.

Laboni ([28:07](#)):

Okay. What you going to eat? Okay. Another thing, I just can't remember. The five thing in the Quran, chapter number 36. Surah Luqman. Surah Luqman, if you read it, the last part, you'll gathered the five things as Allah says. Nobody knows. Oh, High rain will come. Even though the weather report man, they says, "Okay, rain is coming."

Rachel ([28:39](#)):

They don't really know. They don't know.

Laboni ([28:41](#)):

Five things.

Rachel ([28:43](#)):

They said rain is coming today.

Laboni ([28:44](#)):

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Yeah. So five things, nobody knows. So that way we could, yes, we all know we have to die but we don't know how we're going to die.

Rachel (28:58):

So later Laboni asked me to make a correction in the reference to the Quran that she just quoted. And this is what she sent me as the correction, "The Quran reference chapter number 31, surah Al Luqman, ayat number 34. This is the last sentence. It says 'The knowledge of the hour of resurrection belongs to Allah alone. It is he who sends down rain and he who knows what is in the womb. No soul knows what he will earn tomorrow nor does anyone know in what land he'll die. Barely with Allah is full knowledge and he is acquainted with all things.'"

Laboni (29:39):

So we know there is a world warming, right? This issue, we know that everything is happening and we have a choice. We can do the right thing. What is going to happen, happen. If we have a destiny to face it, we'll face it but until that time we shouldn't wait we should work on it to protect us and for our next generation. Because we saw a lot of things in this world, our next generation they will not. We saw tape recorder, right? You saw video tape, right? VCR, DVD. But next generation they'll say, "What? What is this?" Right?

Rachel (30:26):

Yeah.

Laboni (30:28):

So we need to work for our next generation. At least we could give them a better world, right?

Rachel (30:36):

Yeah.

Laboni (30:36):

Better food, better place to live. We can teach them don't fight, don't hate each other. We have hope. Without hope we cannot do. If we don't believe. If we believe on God, someone up there, if we believe that we cannot be hopeless.

Rachel (31:02):

Wow. Thank sou so much for talking with me. This is-

Laboni (31:02):

You are most welcome.

Rachel (31:04):

This was a wonderful conversation.

Laboni (31:08):

I'm so sorry I was-

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Rachel (31:09):

It's totally okay. It's a very heavy conversation to be having. My last question is just, are there any questions I didn't ask you that you expected I would ask you or that you wanted me to ask?

Laboni (31:26):

No. I don't think. Yes. Yes. We should build more garden, this type more, more, as much possible. Brooklyn has a lot of option, Queens doesn't so we should seek the advice from people, [inaudible 00:31:59] advice, how we can create more gardens, this type gardens in there, that part. There's a lot of people there in need but they don't know where to start, how to start, whom to talk with because it's still a lot of people, they don't know how to use the internet in 21st century.

Rachel (32:24):

Yeah.

Laboni (32:26):

We shouldn't assume everybody knows, right. So it should be available. Green thumb is doing great job but I find sometime it's not available to everyone but even though it is a huge project. That's all.

Rachel (32:43):

Wow. Thank you so much.

Laboni (32:46):

You're most welcome.

Rachel (32:47):

I love this conversation. I really, really appreciate it. Very generous-

Laboni (32:51):

My pleasure,

Rachel (32:52):

With your time and your thoughts. Thank you.

Laboni (32:56):

You're welcome.