

Believe

Latif Alkhafaji. Tortured and beaten for opposing Saddam Hussein's cruelty and unjust actions, he was thrown into prison twice. "Everyone who went to jail either was murdered or tortured, sometimes even buried alive," he said looking down at his knees. "As for me, I have had Saddam's security forces bludgeoned my knees and feet with a cement filled rubber hose," he said furiously while pulling up one of his pant leg, showing a long jagged scar above his right knee where doctors had removed damaged ligament over thirty years ago (Azcentral.com,2010). "I have never seen such hatred like this before, they even seared my flesh with iron!" he said showing me the scars on his arms. After escaping from prison he wandered throughout Iraq writing articles criticizing Iraq's Baath party for discriminating against Shiite Muslims. In the early 1970's, he joined and became a leader of a secret Islamic Dawa party which opposed Saddam's ways. "Saddam's security forces were really looking for me now!" He said staring out into space (Personal Communication, 2010).

He fled to Kuwait in 1975, where he had began his training into becoming a Muslim spiritual leader. "After hiding for five years, they finally found out where I was living," he stated looking down to the floor. "They put my picture all over the place, no matter where I was they wanted to hang me," he said with an aggravating look (Personal Communication, 2010). From here his journey began. Latif Alkhafaji fled from Kuwait to Iran and from Iran to Syria. "I was still not safe, I needed to live in a country where Saddam couldn't get a hold of me," he said (Azcentral.com, 2010). Then finally he came to the United States of America where unfortunately for Saddam Hussein, Latif was safe. He left behind his family, his friends, his wealth, his job, and nearly gave up his life. For what? For himself? No. For others. He worked

for his sweet home, Iraq, only wanting peace, justice, and freedom for his people. This is what I consider moral courage.

Who would have thought that Alkhafaji actually has met and spoken with Saddam Hussein, the most vicious murderer on earth, and told him that his wrong actions will not get him any where? Who in the world has the guts to say this to a monster? This is moral courage. I definitely look up to Latif Alkhafaji as a role model. His impact on me is very strong; he has taught me to never give up on life and to always believe in God. Not only am I proud to say that he is one of the few that survived the terrorized situations that Saddam Hussein put him in, I am also enormously proud to say that this great man is my father. His blood flows through mine and because of this I have learned to fight for justice and freedom and to always believe that God is there every step of the way. Many times Latif was going to be hanged or buried alive but because of his belief in God he was able to escape.

Surely I am able to exhibit his actions and qualities in the future. I am able to wear my hijab and show others my integrity no matter what they think of me. I remember when one of my class mates had said to one of their friends, “Guess what? That rag head came back.” a boy laughed while looking at me.

“Yes I did come back, thanks for the nice compliment!” I told him coolly. At this moment I was able to imagine my father walking down the street limping from side to side. “That’s right I am a “rag head” and I obviously don’t care what you think of me.” I said to myself. If my father has gone through being bludgeoned and shot at, then I can go through people making fun of me. At this point in time I was showing moral courage. I am able to be a strong brave person who only wants peace and justice for the world. I am able to tell a person my

thoughts with having confidence in myself. To spread my altruistic desire for world peace and justice, I can teach people about who I am, why I am here, where I come from, and what it means to be a Shiite Muslim. I can be a part of those who fight against racial discrimination or even Muslim discrimination. All of these Altruistic acts can bring peace. Because most of the world is fighting against Islam it only makes sense to clear up what most ignorant people have learned and thought. I plan to tell others that Islam only means peace and only wants tranquility; it is far from terrorism and vicious destruction to the world. Also, these acts will bring invalid stereotypes to a stop. I believe that someday my father's dream of Iraq becoming a free just country will occur in his lifetime. I also view myself in the future helping Iraq rise from complete destruction to a modern civilized country. This is how I will show moral courage in the future.

It has been almost forty years that my father has not gone back to Iraq or any part of the Middle East. Today, he is a Muslim scholar who preaches at the Al-Mahdi Center. Although my father would like to go back to his home land he is still not able to because once he sets foot in Iraq we all must say our farewells to him until we see him in heaven.

"I will go back to Iraq no matter what the cost is." Latif Alkhafaji said with frustration (Personal Communication, 2010) "I am very sad about how they put my name with that trash" he said. "I am a Shiite, not a terrorist."(Azcentral.com, 2010).