



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA  
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



# Oral History Interview

with

## Naeem Scott

**Interviewer:** Nora Malone

**Narrator:** Naeem Scott

**Location of Interview:**

Alexandria City High School, 3330 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302

**Date of Interview:** May 25, 2023

**Transcriber:** Michele Cawley, PhD

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### **Summary:**

*Naeem Scott reflects on childhood experiences.*

### **Notes:**

*This interview was conducted by a student from Alexandria City High School, Nora Malone. This interview was part of Student Experience Week in the Spring of 2023, where a select group of students served as interns for the Office of Historic Alexandria for 2 weeks. Students from Alexandria City High School were trained in oral history practices and then conducted their own interviews. This is one interview from this project.*

## Table of Contents and Keywords

| Minute    | Page | Topic              |
|-----------|------|--------------------|
| 00:00:07  | 3    | Childhood          |
| 00:09:32  | 6    | Death of Father    |
| 00:14:58  | 8    | Living in Tanzania |
| 00:25:07] | 11   | Closing Remarks    |

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|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| <b>General</b> | Childhood |
| <b>People</b>  |           |
| <b>Places</b>  | Tanzania  |

**Nora Malone** [00:00:00] Okay. Okay. All right. Tell me about your childhood.

**Naeem Scott** [00:00:07] So my oldest memory would probably be when I was in, when my parents were still together, before the divorce happened, when they were still together before the divorce.

**Nora Malone** [00:00:23] What are your parents' names?

**Naeem Scott** [00:00:24] My mother's name is Jamila, which means beautiful in Arabic. And my father's name is Irvin, which is my first name. My childhood. I don't remember much. Besides, I don't remember. I don't remember much of my parents being together. But my first ever memory was when we were in a house together. It was like a townhouse. And

**Nora Malone** [00:00:59] Where it was the townhouse?

**Naeem Scott** [00:01:03] The townhouse was in Woodbridge, I believe is where we lived. And. My first time is a little bit interesting. Basically, so we're in this house right and I have the memory, of memory of our cat, and our cat's name was Meow, Meow, so I named him Meow Meow. But my father thought the name was stupid. So he went behind my back and he called him Joe Joey. Cut that out. Hey, it's like a podcast, right? You.

**Nora Malone** [00:01:33] You should hear this.

**Naeem Scott** [00:01:35] Okay, Um. So basically, I remember crawling on the floor and Joey is like right in front of me and he's like, his butt is like in my face, right? So you know how you play golf?

**Nora Malone** [00:01:54] Yes.

**Naeem Scott** [00:01:54] And you know what you put the ball on? The little tee.

**Nora Malone** [00:01:57] Yes.

**Naeem Scott** [00:01:58] My father played golf and I somehow got a hold of one of his tees.

**Nora Malone** [00:02:09] What did you do with it? (laughing)

**Naeem Scott** [00:02:20] (Laughing) As the memory goes, I stuck the tee inside of Meow, Meow. And I remember my father making a noise from the room next to us. And that is, that is my earliest memory. My only memory of my parents being together. And then. We can skip to, we can skip. How deep is this supposed to go? Like, should I mention the abuse? (Laughing)

**Nora Malone** [00:03:02] I mean, I don't know.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:03] Whose just going to listen to this?

**Nora Malone** [00:03:05] It's up to you. The emotion that you want to where you want to take your story.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:10] Well, I mean, I could lie, like, skip over everything. My parents divorced. I don't know why.

**Nora Malone** [00:03:18] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:19] My mother just loves not telling me things. She's always like, when you're older, I'm like, girl, I'm 18. I don't know when I'm going to hear about it. And I have to resurrect my father. My father died, by the way. This is imperative to the podcast. And my real life. My father did die. 2014. I was eight years old. He had a seizure.

**Nora Malone** [00:03:43] Oh. What did he have, like a.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:45] I don't know.

**Nora Malone** [00:03:47] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:03:47] I literally do not know. I don't know. I don't even know. I don't know if that was like a cyst or what, but, rr sorry, not a cyst, a tumor. Because Gray's Anatomy taught me that seizures can be a result of tumors in the brain.

**Nora Malone** [00:04:03] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:04:03] I wasn't there when he died, but I had been there for a few of the seizures when I would spend weekends with him. Really, really interesting the time. I remember. The what? Don't laugh.

**Nora Malone** [00:04:25] I didn't.

**Naeem Scott** [00:04:29] I remember.

**Nora Malone** [00:04:30] That's actually better you gotta get the angle. But you're too close to the microphone.

**Naeem Scott** [00:04:34] I remember one night in specific, I was at my father's house in Stafford, Virginia, and it was a chill day. I guess I don't really remember that. I remember the night because that's when it happened. So it was the oddest thing. I remember being woken up by like, the sound of a bunch of bees. I don't like looking back. It just sounds so crazy. I don't even know what happened. But I was in my little room there and I just remember being woken up in the middle of the night and there were just like the sounds of a bunch of bees, like coming from the ceiling. I don't know what it was about. I don't know. I literally don't know. It's just I'm like a swarm of bees. And I was like, okay. And then my dad Are you timing this by the way?

**Nora Malone** [00:05:29] It says it. How long.

**Naeem Scott** [00:05:30] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:05:33] How long. So then I remember hearing my father you know and it sounded like he was like crying, like wailing or something. And I like for some reason my immediate thought was like, oh my gosh, like my grandmother died, like his mom. So I was like, that must be why he's crying so late. Because she was an elderly lady. She passed two years after that.

**Nora Malone** [00:05:58] Her name?

**Naeem Scott** [00:06:00] Her name was Francis.

**Nora Malone** [00:06:03] Last name?

**Naeem Scott** [00:06:05] Scotherdoxsa

**Nora Malone** [00:06:07] Yeah, I'm getting the whole. The whole story.

**Naeem Scott** [00:06:10] Francis Scott.

**Nora Malone** [00:06:17] So you hear your dad cry?

**Naeem Scott** [00:06:18] Yeah. And so, then my little eight-year-old brain is like, okay, let's go see what's up, guys. So, I get out of bed, I go through the hallway. His room is, like, directly next to mine. Sam's out of the hallway. So I go through the hallway, go to his room, and the door is, like, wide open. And I just remember like seeing him, like, sat up in his bed in like a pool of sweat, and he was like, foaming at the mouth and staring directly at me. And yeah.

**Nora Malone** [00:06:53] How did you feel about that?

**Naeem Scott** [00:06:55] I don't know. I don't remember how I felt. And I think I had an iPad at the time. And so I think I tried to, like, contact my mother. It did not work. I don't know what the Wi-Fi I was doing that night. It just did not work. I think I have a memory. Some may try and dispute this, some being me, because I'd never know what's real and what's not anymore. I think I remember trying to, like, go into his room and like, crawl past his bed to get to the phone that was like on his nightstand. It wasn't a cell phone. It was like a you know, like a phone with.

**Nora Malone** [00:07:38] A landline.

[00:07:40] I guess I mean, it wasn't like attached to the wall, but it was just know, just like a phone. And so, but I don't know if my memory is real or not. I'm not crying, by the way. I just felt a thing like I don't. I don't really cry about this anymore. So that happened. And then, I contacted my mom in the morning or something. I don't know. I mean, maybe my messages went through in the morning, but I was like, I don't know what I said. And then I think I told him, like what had happened, obviously. And he said that he had, like, no recollection of it. He never wanted to go to the doctor, which was kind of annoying, low key, because he might have still been here anyway. (pause) And then have other memories of, okay, so we had two pets at his house. We had Joey Meow Meow, which we already had, and we also had Scottie. And Scottie was a dog that I got with my father from some like farm. I don't know dog plantation. I don't know what they're oh, I don't

know what they're called. I don't want to say I don't know if it was a breeder or what, because you're not supposed to get them from those but.

**Nora Malone** [00:09:18] There can be people who like breed dogs, but they're not like that. Like, they do it like, humanely.

**Naeem Scott** [00:09:25] Yeah, it wasn't trying to, like, genetically doing anything like. He was the most like, the tiniest, little fluffy white dog.

**Nora Malone** [00:09:32] Do it themselves.

**Naeem Scott** [00:09:32] Mm. Anyway, so we had a dog named Scottie. And Scottie was so chill. Loved him. He was a Bichon Frise, a little white dog. Very small, very crusty eyed. And so we had a doggie door in front of his bedroom door. Like a little like the gate. Yeah, there was, like, a little gate so Scottie wouldn't roam around. Although the cat always slept in his room. But he didn't want the dog in there anyway. What the dog doing? Sorry. And then so we had, the gate is imperative to the situation. Basically, there's another night he had a seizure while I was there and I stayed in my room this entire time. And I remember hearing him, like crash into the. Like he, like, would like sleepwalk as well with it, I think. And he crashed into the doggie door, the gate thingy. And he made his way into the bathroom, which was directly across the hall from him. My bathroom. And I don't know what happened in there. There was just like a bunch of noise. I think I heard him yell fuck or something. But I don't think it was him. But it was just like the reaction, I guess. But I think he was having a seizure or sleepwalking or something. But he, like, I don't know. He didn't know where he was I guess. He wasn't really conscious. And so he got into some things. Skip to the morning cause I forget what happened after that. But I just remember, like he woke up with, like, a cut somewhere and I was like, hey do you need to go see the doctor? And he did not want to. And then one day he died.

**Nora Malone** [00:11:42] Anything else about that day?

**Naeem Scott** [00:11:47] What day?

**Naeem Scott** [00:11:47] The day he died. Yeah. My fault. It was kind of annoying because my father and I never really did, like, father son things. I mean, I was always closer with him than my mom, I think, because my father always, like took time with me, and he spoke to me about things. And my mom grew up very differently. And I think she was more interested in.

**Nora Malone** [00:12:22] Yeah. I was going to say. Oh.

**Naeem Scott** [00:12:26] More interested.

**Nora Malone** [00:12:29] Okay. Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:12:32] My mom was abusive and my father was not. And so where are we going? You should pause the.

**Nora Malone** [00:12:39] Oh, the feed. Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:12:46] So, I was always closer with my father because my mom growing up was very, very not nice to me. I mean, she was, but she but she was also just very physically and verbally abusive which sucked for quite a while until I got bigger than her, I guess. Yes. So it really sucked when I found out that my father died because we had made plans to go do father son things. You know, on the next time that I was supposed to go to him. The custody schedule thing was I got every other weekend with my father, which is not a lot of time at all, and that really sucked and I hated it. And I don't know what was so bad that, like, I don't even know what happened.

**Nora Malone** [00:13:46] Usually mothers get more time with the kids just by the state.

**Naeem Scott** [00:13:51] Oh, okay. And then the day that he was supposed to pick me up from school, my mother did instead. And I remember the look on her face. And then, we walked home and I asked her what was wrong. And then she didn't tell me until we got home. And then she sat me down and she told me that he had died. And then. I didn't really say anything. I just went to go to the park. And then, I don't really know what happened after that I guess. It didn't really hit me until like years later. And then sometimes it will. I don't know. It just comes in bursts. I guess I'm talking about it like surface level. I don't really feel anything that much. Like I can joke about it and stuff. And then. So he died. That happened.

**Nora Malone** [00:14:56] Did you live in Tanzania at one point?

**Naeem Scott** [00:14:58] I did.

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:00] How was that? Why did that happen?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:03] I don't know why it happened.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:05] Okay. Was your mother from Tanzania?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:08] My mother was born in Tanzania. Yes.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:10] Did she grew up there?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:12] Yeah.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:12] Okay. When did she immigrate?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:17] So first. Okay, so she was born in Tanzania, and then she went to boarding school in Uganda. And then in the nineties she moved to the UK with her sisters and then she went to university there and then she came to the States to further her education. She went to school in Washington.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:42] What school?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:43] I don't remember the name.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:44] Like, was it like a college? Yeah. American Catholic?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:52] It's some small one in Washington.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:55] In Washington Georgetown?

**Naeem Scott** [00:15:55] No, it's Washington State.

**Nora Malone** [00:15:58] Oh, okay. In my defense, Washington state. That makes more sense that you don't know. And then she eventually. How did you, how did your family end up in the DMV area?

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:16] And so, I don't know. My father was born in Baltimore. I don't know what he was doing down here. He was just here. Apparently, they met for work. I mean, they met at work.

**Nora Malone** [00:16:37] What work?

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:38] Don't ask me. I do not know.

**Nora Malone** [00:16:41] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:41] I don't. They met at work.

**Nora Malone** [00:16:52] Okay, but. So you moved to Tanzania? How old were you?

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:55] I was five.

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:56] How long did you live there?

**Naeem Scott** [00:16:58] Eight months. I lived there with my grandparents at their home. I went to primary school there. I had a little, little uniform, thanks to the British. We all wore little uniforms. I was fluent in Swahili for a while, and then I came back to the States, and it kind of dwindled down. I can still speak to my mother like basic things, and I can understand more things than I can speak, but I'm not as strong as I was. I have a funny story. Would you like to hear it?

**Nora Malone** [00:17:42] Yeah.

**Naeem Scott** [00:17:43] So at the school that I went to, it was an international school, so they spoke English there as well as Swahili and stuff. But they spoke English. And I could understand both. But one day I was feeling particularly like needing to pooh, and I think I was too embarrassed. Or maybe I forgot how to ask to use the bathroom. And so my uniform, it was a gray polo shirt and blue shorts. The shorts is a really important part of the story if you listen closely. Either I didn't know how to ask to go to the bathroom or I was too scared to. And so I held it for the entire class until dismissal, when I couldn't hold it anymore. And so. Oh, And so I pooped. As all the kids were leaving out of the doorway at the same time, crammed through the little doorway like sardines, I decided to poop because I thought no one would know it was me, and it fell through my shorts. I



don't know how I assumed I had underwear on. I don't know what factor the underwear played, but I pooped on the floor. I did it. I pooped it on the floor.

**Nora Malone** [00:19:23] Well.

**Naeem Scott** [00:19:24] While walking out of the door.

**Nora Malone** [00:19:25] What was the reaction of those around you?

**Naeem Scott** [00:19:28] I don't remember. I simply do not remember. There was another time in Tanzania where, as a five year old, my grandfather slammed the car door into my middle finger or maybe my ring finger. So one of these, on one hand, is not as it seems. It was blue and purple and black, and then it fell off, the nail.

**Nora Malone** [00:19:59] Oh.

**Naeem Scott** [00:20:00] Not my finger. No. The fingers are real.

**Nora Malone** [00:20:03] They're not what it seemed.

**Naeem Scott** [00:20:05] No, the fingers are all real. The nails. One of them has regenerated, but I forget which.

**Nora Malone** [00:20:09] Okay.

**Naeem Scott** [00:20:10] It's kind of cool to think about it, though. Really hot. Anyway. What else?

**Nora Malone** [00:20:18] Well, when you move back to D.C. and then to Arlington.

**Naeem Scott** [00:20:22] Yes, I moved to D.C.. I think I spent maybe first grade in D.C. I don't know. I'm trying to think because I was five, which means that I spent first grade in Tanzania for eight months, but then I also spent first grade in D.C. But then I think I also went to first grade. I don't know.

**Nora Malone** [00:20:42] Lots of schools have different ages. And also.

**Naeem Scott** [00:20:46] Yeah, I don't know what was going on, but I went to elementary school for a time in DC. The school was called. I don't remember what the school was called, but it was chill, I guess. Yeah, I have some memories. There aren't too many. Then we moved to Arlington. Arlington was really, really chill. I enjoyed Arlington a lot. I made lots of friends in elementary school. The abuse with my mother did get worse in that house. I do remember that. The school was fun, though. I mean, I have lots of friends there. I still, for some reason, like, ever since I moved here to Alexandria in freshman year, I still never really felt as connected to Alexandria as I did with Arlington's, probably because I grew up there. But here, it's always kind of just felt like some sort of disconnect. And I don't know why, because I've made really, really good, lasting friendships here. But I think Arlington means so much to me because it's just really nostalgic. And I had a lot of firsts there. And. Yeah. Yes. So elementary school and Arlington Middle School in Arlington, all very fun.

I did jujitsu for six years. I made it up to red solid belt. And then I stopped. I could have been black belt, but COVID happened. And then we had to do things over Zoom and then we got in-person, but things just didn't feel the same. I don't really have a spark for it like I used to. So I stopped, which my mother still makes me feel bad about. Like I'm a quitter or something. But it was literally like so many people were leaving and I just did not have the motivation. I'm so sorry.

**Nora Malone** [00:23:09] Camp counselor?

**Naeem Scott** [00:23:11] Yes. In sixth grade, I had a camp counselor at a camp called Adventure Links. And I loved adventure links so bad. And I had a camp counselor whose name was Dalton. And Dalton. Dalton. Dalton slayed so hard. Dalton slayed so hard. Like he. Okay, so he. He played. So he introduced me to Nirvana. And Nirvana introduced me to a bunch of other grunge bands, which introduced me to classic rock and middle school. And from classic rock, I kind of just spent, like, everywhere and. I got into, I got into I had like, my in the mid 2010s, decades ago. I got into I, I was like an elementary school aged boy slash middle school aged boy. Who was in his like evo era, but I was like, in it, like people. Like I was in it. Like, because back then there were like, teenagers and young adults, but I was like a child in it. Like, I was scrolling on Tumblr constantly, interested in all the fandoms. I listened to all the bands I had, all the merch. It was shit, like it was me. Like my Chemical Romance was a fave. Fall Out Boy was a fav, Fang In Reverse was a fave, even though it's really embarrassing. I got onto 21 pilots before literally anyone did. So that's.

**Nora Malone** [00:25:03] Oh, yeah, we're 25 minutes.

**Naeem Scott** [00:25:05] What the hell?

**Nora Malone** [00:25:06] I'm sorry.

**Naeem Scott** [00:25:07] That's my life.

**Nora Malone** [00:25:08] Okay.