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ZAINAB SALBI INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Zainab Salbi
Author & Activist
6/17/2011
Interviewed by Betsy West
Total Running Time: 37 minutes and 7 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

The following video contains mentions of sexual assault.
Viewer discretion is advised.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America
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ON SCREEN TEXT:

Zainab Salbi
Author & Activist

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BETSY WEST:

So Zainab, I want to start back a little bit. Can you tell me about your childhood, where you grew up, and really, the sort of unusual circumstances of your family life?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

I didn't know they were unusual until I wrote the book, actually. But I grew up in Iraq. It's interesting. As I reflect on my childhood, I would say I had a good solid foundation of love in my- just real, the first ten years of my life. Just very middle class family. Father's a pilot, mother's a teacher, they loved me very, very much.

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And life changed, and life changed with few things happening. And for me, they all occurred to me at the same time at least. Life changed when I realized that- Well first, when Iraq went to war with Iran. So at the very young age, at the age of eleven, war, all of the sudden- I moved in my consciousness from this just happy child to really, the consciousness of war. And moved from that innocent child—I had a really good childhood—to just bombs and sirens, and thinking about death and being conscious about death, actually.

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I remember at a very young age, and the war- I woke up in the middle of the night with an explosion. And I remember seeing it very consciously, it was weird. In the middle of darkness, it was a huge half-circle of an explosion, and

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I remember saying, "This is just like the movies, expect it's much, much bigger." And there are moments in that, it's just a shift of consciousness.

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I remember going to bed- I kept on watching until it disappeared, and I remember going to bed that night thanking God that it's not on my family. And I felt guilty that I thank God that it wasn't on my family. It's that guilt-

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BETSY WEST:

Guilty because it was somebody else?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

And I was conscious for some- I knew that it must of have- someone else must have died and I'm thankful that it wasn't my family. And the next day actually, that someone else was actually my brother's friends. That missile landed on his home and it killed half of his family. Him and his father, but not his mother and his sister. So, war changed this perception in you, and it's very different. Life and death becomes very differently understood at a very fast age.

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But it was also around that same period that I learned that my parents knew Saddam Hussein. I remember Saddam Hussein visiting our home, and I was asked to make coffee for him, which I did, Turkish coffee. And when I offered

it in the living room, he said, "Ah! That's Zanuba." And I was like, "My parents know him? He's the president, and he knows me and is calling me in my nickname."

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So that was also another shift, in that knowing that my family actually knew him, and very soon, my father became his personal pilot. And that changed our lives. I remember the day where my parents came and told me and my brothers, like, "Okay, this is happening, your father is the President's pilot. It's public." In other words, the relationship went public. The pilot part was only the formal aspect of the relationship.

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And they gave me the instructions of what I needed to do. But that also changed, and life changed after that. The combination of war and living in it, and the combination of knowing Saddam, and the fact that I grew up somewhere in the middle. It was interesting that my- In daytime I went to school, and to a school that was in the margin between middle class and lower-middle class neighborhood.

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And my classmates would talk about public executions, would talk about their fathers being killed in the war. Going home was uncomfortable middle class family, but in the evening, we would go to Saddam's evenings, or his family's, and it was a completely different life. It's luxury and plentifulness of everything. And at the very young age- I mean these are my teenage lives, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, I realized the differences between peoples' lives,

and how we each were going through different cycle, and mostly, I realized the concept of fear.

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And I was very conscious at that age, of not telling my parents the things that I was hearing from my school about public executions or death. I knew we were all to be afraid from this figure who was a friend. I called him uncle, quote unquote, and the person to be feared all at the same time. And that very much shaped my childhood, my definitions of life.

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And then, last but not least, was my mother, who was this very strong woman and vulnerable at the same time. But I remember her, at the age of around fifteen I think, holding me and shaking me vehemently, and she's like, "You must be independent. You must be strong. You must not let anybody touch you or talk to you in the wrong way."

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And it was very... with passion, she would say that, and so much so that I would, "I didn't do anything. What have I done? Why are you so upset at me?" And she's like, "You must be strong. You must be strong." Her messages at that young age, very much shaped who I am, and it's almost like was tattooed in my consciousness and it saved who I am.

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BETSY WEST:

In retrospect, what was that about?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

Oh... It was about many things. I mean, it's... To say shortly, it was from- I think it goes back to, I come from a family where my grandmother was married at the age of thirteen, and had to get out of school and married an older man, my grandfather, and actually suffered in that marriage from a very strong mother-in-law, and was vulnerable in the fact that she's living in a context where the mother-in-law and the family alone were taking care of her.

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And in the vulnerability- And that grandmother made sure that all her daughters went to school and finished colleges, and so, that's my mother and my aunt, and they were all working women. So very strong working women, education working women, except they were still- That generation of my mom, at large- they were working and they were educated and they traveled, but they were still very much struggling with very similar concept of what's expected of a woman.

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You are to get married, you are to have children, you are to serve your husband, you are to make him happy. So there's almost this duality of expectations of them. Educate, and go and be strong and earn your own living, but be very domestic in front of your husband. And on the one hand,

my mom went through this phase of her life. But then on top of it, my mom was in that relationship.

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We were inside the palace's compound, not physically but socially. We were encaptured by Saddam Hussein. We were like his jesters. We were at his disposal whenever he wanted us to, weekends, evenings, daytimes, whatever. And it was a social relationship, it wasn't a political relationship. What he liked about my family was the fact that they were not political. Yet, everything was political.

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I remember her orders for me like, "Do not look at him in the eyes. He knows how to read eyes. Always smile when he smiles. Cry when he cries." I mean, there were some orders, some regulations and rules to this relationship. And I don't know how to say it, what was that all about, it was about... I can only say it with one thing that she used to say. She says, "I can see the cages, the bars to the cage. I can feel the bars of the cage. I just can't prove they exist."

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And it was her being all of us. He was like a poison gas leaked into our home and we breathed him slowly. We were all imprisoned in that cage. A beautiful, luxurious one, mind you. But we were all imprisoned in that cage, and she just couldn't get out of it. And I think the independence part was the only way one can get out of such cage.

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BETSY WEST:

And this was a message to you as her daughter, particularly. As a woman to woman.

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ZAINAB SALBI:

I'm amazed in hindsight. I mean, she has died since then. I'm really amazed and impressed in hindsight about what she has done. At the young age I remember, around twelve years old- I forgot to actually mention that in the book, but she made sure that I read *Roots*, the book *Roots*, a book by Nawal El Saadawi, which is the most prominent Arab feminist, books about Arab women being free and all of these things. And at a very young age. And she's like, "Read. Read. Read."

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And she has these instructions, "You have to be independent. Do not cry. You have to be strong." All of these things. And it was almost like, "I have to give these coaching, these rules, so that you can take care of yourself 'cause you can't have the society or husband or whatever take care of you. You have to..." She gave me instructions on how to survive in this world. And what's so amazing is that these instructions are the same of what I give to other women, and what I ended up dedicating my life to.

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But also is what every woman, I believe, goes through it. At the end of the day, gets us to be in our fullness, is when we are independent. And whatever you

define independence, whether- I actually really don't care how it's defined, but when you make your own choices, whatever these choices may be, and that's what enables us to be in our fullness. And so, my mom was just simply giving me these instructions to equip me with it and that's the only thing she could give me.

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Because at the end of the day, that same strong woman got me into an arranged marriage and that's how I came to America. At the end of the day, that same strong woman used traditional methods of protection to get me out and to protect me. I mean so, it wasn't go-straightforward about it. She used the tools that she had around her, but she also made sure to let me know that it is you who have to save yourself. You have to be your independent person to, at the end of the day, do what you need to do.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me, how did you come to leave Iraq?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

So I remember the day my mom called me and said, "There's this marriage proposal for you from America." I'm like, "What?" There's this woman who is very strong, very clear. "I have to be strong and independent. I have to be educated. I can be whatever I want to do." And at the age of fifteen, I told her,

"I'm going to work with women when I grow older." She looked at me and said, " Yes, you can." And here's a woman who's very clear, and all of the sudden, she wants me to accept an arranged marriage with a guy I saw only once vaguely.

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I was like, "What?!" And she would cry, and she would sob, and she would like, "You must accept. I don't care what you do when you get there. You must accept." And even my father was against it, actually. Even my father was like, "Why are you doing this?" And she was so adamant, that at the end of the day, throughout the periods of me saying yes to be getting married, was about not making her cry, was about... It just broke my heart to see my mom in pain and I still can't see my father in pain.

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It was constantly about trying to please her. And so, I accepted a marriage proposal from a stranger. And actually, this week, by happenstance, happens to mark the 21st anniversary of me arriving in the United States at that time. And I remember vividly- I remember how landing in the airport, coming to the airport, seeing him, and like, having anxiety, like the first look. And the irony is, here is the Iraqi-American—mind you he was much older than me—in America. But I was in America, I was in a marriage in America.

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And he did every single thing my mother told me not to accept throughout my whole life. Not to accept someone touching you the wrong way, he touched me the wrong way. Not to accept someone to talk with you in the

wrong way, he talked to me in the wrong way. Be independent, he was everything about me being dependent. Everything. All the rules and the instructions were the reverse with this guy. And on top of it, Iraq invaded Kuwait only a month and a half or so after I arrived here, and my family were completely cut off.

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I was cut off from them. I couldn't reach them. I couldn't tell them, "This is a horrible marriage. You got me into it." I was very upset at my mother for the longest time. Actually, I did not forgive my mother until about a year before she died. And I did not fully understand what she went through until I wrote my book, and I had to go through the same process to understand that this woman did no different than the women I often get to meet in my work later on in my life, who offer me their daughters and say, "Take her. Maybe you'll give her a better life than I can in this world."

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She used the tools she had to save me. But when I left that arranged marriage three months after, with 400 dollars in my pockets, I just remember saying, "I will build my life all over again. I will not tell anybody about my past. And I will prove I can do it on my own, and one day, I'll go home and serve there." And 21 years later, I have.

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But I was able to speak up also ,and I learned in our speaking up, that's part of our each individual responsibility is to speak up. Otherwise, the instructions and the rules for women is to be silent. We take so much and,

"Shhhhh," because the shame and its culture, we carry- especially from a Middle Eastern perspective, we embody the culture, we are the representative of honor. We take on that responsibility. So we keep it in our silence.

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We keep our stories in silence and in whispers, and I think part of our responsibilities is to actually speak up. So 21 years, I find myself have spoken up, have really did rebuild my life from the beginning, and have given back but I want to give back much, much, much more.

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BETSY WEST:

Tell me about the turning point moment for you when Women for Women- I guess it's the gestation- or when was it that this happened? I mean, you're pretty young. Just paint the picture for me.

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ZAINAB SALBI:

So, I'm pretty young. I end up working in a- First time in my life, I end up working in a Hallmark, and then at The Limited, and then at a medical lab, and I'm just learning. Imagine, like, first time I'm working. Then I got into the Arab League, I move to Washington D.C, I fall in love with a wonderful guy who is really a blessing in terms of holding me as... I was coming into making sense of all what happened.

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I go back to university, at George Mason University, and I learned about the Holocaust. And I remember- For the first time. At that time, I was twenty-three years old. It was like, really just learning about it. I never knew about it before. Particularly, I was touched with people not doing anything for the longest time, and then after people started doing something, and they said, "Never again will we have that." But I remember the story.

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It happened—by happenstance, this is the same month—Times Magazine, front cover page, the cover page had a picture of a man behind barbed wire and he was very, very, very thin. And he was in a concentration camp in Bosnia. And then, I'm not sure if it was Newsweek or Time Magazine, later had a picture of about five women sitting on a bed and looking horrified, and they were rape survivors in Bosnia.

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And for me, I just learned about these two points of knowledge at the same month. It's just the same period, basically. And I remember reading the articles about the rape victims, and I just cried, and cried and cried and cried. And I said, "I have to do something." It was just, "I have to do something." And there were the yellow pages at that time. There was no website at the time, so I called all the women's groups in the yellow pages, and I said, "Can I volunteer to do something for women in Bosnia?"

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And not the same response, ironically. I mean, maybe women sometimes now respond the same way, "Come back after six months. We don't know yet what we can do." But I just read about, "We don't know how we can help," in the Holocaust, in America particularly. "We don't know." So I was just like, "But we have to do something." I tried to sponsor a child and there was none in Bosnia. And I just remember I was like, "Well, we have to do something." And I came up with the whole idea at Denny's, midnight, saying, "Well, let's sponsor women instead, and give them cash, and exchange letters and pictures with them."

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But it's different than children, because it's adults you're dealing with, and to give them that integrity and independence and choice, to go to the store and buy whatever they want to buy with it. The fruits, the vegetables, whatever it is. But it's like, all of the sudden, it was like, "Well, let's do that. Instead of with children, let's do that with women." Called again the same women's groups that I called in the yellow pages, and they said, "Why don't you call the Unitarian Church. They're also calling us and they're doing the same thing." So, I go call the Unitarian Church who asked me to come to them. Twenty-three years old.

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And I remember that day because I didn't- 'Cause remember, I didn't have much work experience, definitely don't have family, don't know what I'm doing. I just know I need to do this, and I want to help. I borrow my father-in-law's briefcase to pretend I know what I'm doing. I remember there

was inside it only like a pad, a paper pad. But I got it out, and I present to the board of directors what I want to do. And it was one of the most blessed time in my life, because they came and called me a few hours later, and said,-

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- "We will help you for one year only. And in that one-year, you are to register yourself and get your tax exempt- Get yourself together. And you're on your own afterwards." And so, someone was asking me, it was like, "Do you know that this is what you want to do? This is the structure. You want to get all of these awards, and all this money, and all of that." And I was like, "No. I actually didn't really know." And I still don't care about the structure. The cause is what I care about, the core of the cause of it. The structure is just a way to manifest the cause.

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It's just a way to express yourself. But it's not the attachment. I just really wanted to help women. Honestly that's all what I wanted. And in the process- And it's been an amazing journey. because my thinking was like, "I want to help the women." The Bosnian women. In the process- not only it's been a wonderful process of eventually expanding and working in eight other conflict areas, but on a very personal level, in the process, these women end up helping me.

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And I end up- It's been just a full circle in my life of the very thing I was so passionate about; was not only an external thing, it was actually an internal thing. It just took me a long time to realize that, oops, I was taking myself to

the very same circumstance I came out of—war. And I was repeating them over and over again, and going to them and urging women to speak up. I was now giving my mother's speeches to the very women I was supposed to help. And they gave me, in exchange, a lot. A lot of really, in the breaking in their silence, and their feedback, and the conversations with them, made me who I am, but eventually led to my own healing.

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BETSY WEST:

What is Women for Women, and what does it do?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

So, Women for Women International is a non-profit organization that helps women survivors of wars, and actually, called “serves” women survivors of wars. Very simple program. A) It starts with, we ask every single woman around the world to sponsor one woman at a time, by sending her thirty dollars a month, and exchanging pictures and letters with her for a year only. In that year, the woman that you are supporting, sponsoring, is grouped with another twenty-five women in a classroom for women, and she goes through an intensive training program for only a year.

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Two kinds of training: an educational program that teaches her about her health, about nutrition, about education, about her economic value, political

value. I call it a training program that entails building her confidence, self-esteem, reminding her of her value, and showing her the access to services that she has, combined with very basic literacy and basic financial literacy particularly. So access to knowledge.

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The same time, she's going through a vocational and business skills training program, which I call access to resources. Very practical. What is in the market out there that you can get a job with? So from commercial farming to carpentry to food processing to manufacturing—very practical and very non-traditional. Not women on sewing machines, but what is the market asking, both local and international market, and we're going to teach you skills where you can get a job immediately after that.

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So after one year of training, she's receiving your money, she's receiving your exchanges of letters and pictures and she's doing the same, she's getting these two kinds of training, building support, network with other women, and she exits and there is a big celebration. And at that point our measurements become, does she have a support network? Because in a war, it destroys support networks. It destroys the concept of trust among people.

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Second is, is she able to make decisions within the household and within the community? And that just means her confident, and she's really changing the decision-making pattern within- whether it's running for election or whether deciding the girls eating as much as the boys. It doesn't matter. Is she well? Is

she physically and psychologically well? Does she have access to this thing?
And finally, is she sustaining an income? Earning and sustaining an income.

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But we can't talk about women's rights as a concept in a vacuum of women's access to resources. She must earn the power of her money. And because that enables her to make that independent choices and exercise the knowledge. So the formula of Women for Women is access to knowledge plus access to resources leads to lasting change.

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BETSY WEST:

What about the idea of focusing on the economic development of women?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit for example, women have been the single most contributors to economic growth of the developed countries in the last 40 years than anything else. But it's not documented in history. You don't tell the story like that. It's not a well known- It's not mainstream knowledge. But according to Economist, there's data and economic things, it is actually the core contributors to the economic growth in that trajectory was women. And it sort of tapped into it.

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At this point, it's about making it better and nicer, but... Now, in order for emerging economies—and post-conflict is not even emerging as opposed to emerging economies—but in order for the rest of the world to develop in their economic growth the same way that the developed world has, you need to tap into women as well. And it's about 1 billion women that need to be tapped into.

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Now, I actually argue and I'm a big believer and have been a big advocate for that discussion, because as long as we get attached to concepts of culture- So whether women in the emerging markets or developing world or whatever you want to call it—I call it the other world—are going through, they're still going through access to health, they're still going through violence issues, though this is the same issue in here, we're still going about access to resources, access to education, the very basics, right?

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Now, as long as we make that about this, then you're always... it's a culture confrontation. As a Middle Eastern woman for example, when women's rights is a Western issue, even with all its merits, it's immediately, "Huh-huh. It's about Western imperialism. It's about Westerners imposing their own ideology on us." Now if you shift it- Now, I'm very pragmatic. I'm like, really, really pragmatic. I don't want to get into arguments that will waste everyone's time.

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But if you shift the discussion, and you say, "This is about the economic growth and prosperity for the whole nation, actually. And you actually can not do it, scientifically speaking, without engaging women. And in order to engage women fully, you must invest in her complete access to education. And you must invest in her protection from violence. And you must invest in her health access. And all these things become a prerequisite for what I call engaging her as a full act of citizen, which is in the invested interest of the nation."

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Now I know it is a pragmatic argument and not a moral one necessarily, or is coming at it from a pragmatic perspective and not a moral one. And I don't want to get into the debate of why do we go about change, because I do believe for change to happen is not a one angle touching. You must touch all angles at it. You need the left and the right. You need the loud and the soft. You need all of these things. And this is one way, in my opinion, particularly the economic one, is a softer way of entering into the women's rights issues, particularly when the concept of culture is involved.

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I am one of these people. I have to be very truthful, I shrink when people talk about culture. I shrink because like, "Here they go. Here we go. It's gonna be about attacking, about how the culture I belong to." And it's my essence. Bad. It's bad. It's about, "You do this, you do this, you do-" And it's about finger pointing, and we need to get out of the cultural discussion and make it into,-

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“Look, we all need stability in our lives. And in order for you to get stability, you should just shift the framework of the argument, an argument that is more... It doesn’t have the emotional reaction.” So I do think for both pragmatic, practical, for women and larger purposes, the discussion of women in economy lifts all other aspects of her life.

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BETSY WEST:

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

Definitely.

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BETSY WEST:

What does that mean?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

Feminist for me is just me having the rights to make choices, whatever choice I want to have. Wearing a bikini or wearing a headscarf. Working on Wall Street or working in war zones. It's just a woman's right for full access to choice. That's how I see it. The right to live in an environment that gives me

all the choices that I want to make, just as a man has. That's it. No more. No less. No better. No worse.

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BETSY WEST:

Does American feminism or the women's movement that happened in America- how does that resonate internationally?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

Each national women's movement is speaking to its own nation. Each national movement, obviously, is speaking to its own nation, and you have to adjust and apply and all of these things, as it applies to others. I think America does that a lot, that what happens in America then can also apply exactly the same thing, and obviously there's reasons behind that. There's a need of an adjustment, in terms of the feminist movement in America.

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For example, the fact that it's mostly with the middle class women, and not marginalized women. Says a lot about immigrant women in America, but also about, how would you transfer the concept of it into a different country, in a country where most women are trying to just survive, just to eat? The economic independence or economic access is faster, they need it faster than, I don't know... And I know they are intertwined with each other, but they would make their prioritization differently.

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So, American women's movement defined it in a very specific way that spoke to that particular generation, in that particular class, and all of that. And obviously, it went through different reiterations of it throughout the generations, and it has transformed into different reiterations of it, also. I think rather than applying it completely as is, as a template, we need to look at what the principle- and the principle is the same, right?

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The principle is about a woman's right to make a choice, and to have equal rights- just to be- have equal the right to choices, at least in my opinion, as a man does. So, rather than make it about, "It looks like this," I would look at the core. So, in Turkey, where the struggle is exactly the opposite. In Turkey, or the struggle in France, where woman would want to choose to wear the headscarf, this is not anti-feminist in my opinion. That's about her choice. The core of it is about her choice.

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Do you see what I mean? So my only thing is that core of the feminist movement in America is exactly as the core of any woman's movement in any country which is the right to make that choice, and if we get attached to that core as opposed to how this core look, and how it manifests itself, then it's a different story of how we share.

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BETSY WEST:

You chose to study women's studies. Tell me about that. Why did you do that, and what did that mean for you?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

I did choose women's studies and I loved it, actually. I loved it because it's about... I learned so much. I would make the exact same choices by the way, all over. I really don't have too many regrets. You see, I think the issues with women is about remembering our value. It's about remembering our value. So in the studies of women's studies, it was about all the things that we do and we just don't give credit for ourself. We don't own our power. We don't own our own contribution. We don't own our own voice.

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And so, we repeat the cycle of our marginalization over and over, no matter where you are and what socio-economic background you are. So, I think what women's studies did for me is just the remembering, the acknowledgement of our own power and our self. And as a result, just to give you an example, one of my favorite exercises we do at Women for Women International in our educational program- but this exercise talks about, "What does your husband contribute to the household in terms of cash income and in terms of work? And what do you contribute to the household?"

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And every time I've done this exercise, whether it's with Bosnian women or Congolese women or Sudanese or Iraqi women, she starts with saying, "No,

he earns \$200," or whatever, "and I earn \$5." And then we say, "Okay. Fine. Now what would you charge if you- What do you do for all your household activities?" And she talks about the cooking and the cleaning and all of these things that she does that most women do. "And what would you charge for it if you are to charge?"

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And they always under value because we do under value ourselves. We always under value. And almost every country I've done this exercise, consistently, consistently a woman ends up contributing by, at least, a half more than a man contributed to the household. Now, this is not an exercise to say we are better or worse or anything. This is about valuing our contributions. Contributions that we were told we are supposed to do it, happily, and by the way, with excellence, but it's not valued and it's not acknowledged.

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And what women's studies did for me, and what I end up doing, it's just about remembering the value. Because once you acknowledge it, you take ownership of it. And when you take ownership of it, you start appreciating it and respecting it. And when that happens, you start acting with more confidence, and you start appreciating your value much more, and things start changing. Do you see what I mean? So it's all about- It's not about new knowledge, it's about looking at the same picture in different way.

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BETSY WEST:

What's the best piece of advice that you've ever received?

00:34:09:00

ZAINAB SALBI:

"Just being is good enough," by Angeles Arrien. 'Cause I'm one of those people who torment myself. I can only accept criticism, I cannot accept positive feedback. I'm always like, "Oh, don't give me any compliment. Just give me the... What can I improve?" And there's never enough of this.

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BETSY WEST:

What's the advice that you give—and you talked about this a little bit before—to young women?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

A few things. One, don't wait to live your truth. Live your truth now. Especially to young women. Don't wait till you have it all in shape and order, whether it's the husband or the marriage or the job or the career or the money. Don't wait. Live your truth today. And that entails, sometimes, jumping off the cliff. That does entail that. It's okay. It's worth it. Give it a try now. Don't wait. That's one.

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Second, my particular advice for young women is, actually, I think we should populate, not only the social service sector which women are already 90% of it, but I passionately believe that we must populate the corporate, the media, and the government sectors. That women tend to- And I see young women doing the same, gravitating towards the social services sectors and dropping the corporate and the media and the government, but actually we really- I want to sort of, take over- women to be overpopulating that sector in real ways and in decision-making ways.

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So we're not constantly trying to fix. So we're trying to address it, be proactive about it. So that's really... I feel so strongly about that. And the third one is, have fun in the process. Honestly, have fun and enjoy the process. It's not worth it otherwise. And that's the, "just being is good enough," is have fun in the process. Don't torment yourself.

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BETSY WEST:

What did you want to be when you grew up?

00:36:08:00

ZAINAB SALBI:

I went through so many different things when I was... I wanted to be a pilot, and I wanted to be a flight attendant. Then, my father said I'd have to clean up and I don't like cleaning, and I say, "Okay. No." And I wanted to be a translator,

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interpreter, and I actually am sort of a translator, I think. And I wanted to be serving women and I ended up doing it. And these are the various phases I went through.

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BETSY WEST:

The accomplishment you're most proud of?

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ZAINAB SALBI:

If I die today, I would die a content woman. I would die just a content woman. So I can only go deeper and do more. Like I feel like, "Okay. This is great. Women for Women serves 300,000 women. And now I need to hit millions." I mean, I was just like, how do we ripple the effect. But if this is it, I will die a content woman.

END TC: 00:37:07:00