***2202 Interview Project***

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Yara H. Alkaweesh

Interviewee: Dr. Anthony Leone

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 The Department of Rhetoric and Composition

HUSS Building

The American University in Cairo

College: The American University in Cairo

Professor: Professor Kim Fox

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Persons Present: Yara H. Alkaweesh

 Dr. Anthony Leone

Alkaweesh: I’m Yara Hosam, recording with Dr. Anthony Leone, professor in the Rhet and Composition department. Dr. Anthony Leone got his Bachelor’s degree from Merrimack’s College, Massachusetts, in 1974, and then got his Juris doctorate in 1990 from Massachusetts School of law, and then came to AUC in 2008 to get his Masters. What led you to do your masters in AUC [The American University in Cairo] and was it your first choice?

Leone: Well, I came to AUC because I got an opportunity to come to Egypt, and I was at a point in my life where I had been practicing law in Massachusetts for about over fifteen years, and I could’ve stayed there and lived the rest of my life there, but that was just so close to where I was born, and I had a real, I’ve always had a real desire to live in another part of the world so when I got the opportunity to come here and live, I took it and I came, and so when I first came I had the opportunity to go to school here, and so one thing I was interested in which was my profession, the law, so I immediately gravitated towards the law department and became interested in Human Rights Law, and I got an MA in International Human Rights Law in 2008.

Alkaweesh: Was Egypt your first choice, or what made you choose to come to Egypt, AUC specifically, you said that you wanted to do something abroad but why Egypt, why AUC?

Leone: Well that had to do with the association I had and the opportunity I had to live and that’s why I came to Egypt, so I didn’t choose Egypt from a number of different places, the situation of about living here in Egypt, came to me as an opportunity, and so it was just proposed to me, you know, come to Egypt, see if you could use your law degree to work, and so I was at a point in my life where I had some freedom of decision and I could move and so I did and I wanted to and some looked at me very strangely and they thought that I was crazy to give up my law practice and move to a new country where I didn’t know anybody and I didn’t have a job and a profession but I didn’t think so I thought it was a fabulous opportunity and, and I’ve never regretted it.

Alkaweesh: Yes, after working as a lawyer, and then you came to work as a writing professor, did you kind of put law inside your writing to teach your students?

Leone: Yes I do to a great extent, and that’s why I think it worked out so well because I’ve, I’ve found another way to use my law degree, and I use my law degree to teach undergraduates about human rights law, and how to write about human rights law, and how to explore issues in human rights theatre.

Alkaweesh: I understand that you wrote something, or you teach something called “Legal English.”

Leone: Yes.

Alkaweesh: Can you tell me more about that?

Leone: Yes, well it became known to me that, since English is a widely used language that lawyers even in foreign situations, foreign countries, base their practice on English somewhat, so that if a Japanese company comes to, here to Egypt, to conduct business, they’ll conduct all the contacts in English even though they work with people who speak Arabic, and its because the principles of law especially with contracts are worked out and have been litigated to such a great extent in English speaking countries like the United States, so everybody can be sure what “Breach of Contract” means and what “Contract Performance” means and things like that so everybody is really comfortable in operating with regard to legal documents in English. So, given that situation there’s a great need for lawyers to improve their ability to speak in English about the law, and AUC wanted me to design a course for them that would teach lawyers, who already spoke English, but how to use the legal terms in English. So, I did that, I designed their first course and it’s called “Legal English” and it’s still on going today in the School of Continuing Education. But, after teaching for AUC, the United States Embassy approached me and they wanted me to design a course for judges to be taught at The Court of Cassation, and that’s where I’ve been teaching the past three years, is at The Court of Cassation, and I teach two courses, two classes of judges there, and I’ve had just the greatest time.

Alkaweesh: With all your experience that you’ve had with different lawyers or in America and here in Egypt, what do you think Egypt is missing since we’re in such a big crisis? Are we missing more intellects or what is there that’s missing? Where is the gap?

Leone: Well, I think there’s a number of things of course, but I think that one of the major things that needs to be fixed is the system of education. I think this country wastes a lot of its potential because poor people don’t have the opportunity to go to school and if they’re very intelligent and they want to learn they don’t have the opportunity to learn, so it seems like, you know, poverty is like a life-long sentence for them, and that wastes a lot of potential. I mean, you don’t know, the next Einstein could be, you know, relegated to washing cars everyday because he just can’t get an education that would allow him to excel and then move ahead and get scholarships, and that’s what really needs to be improved here, is a system of education, a free system of education open to all kids and so you can develop everybody’s potential to it’s fullest extent possible.

Alkaweesh: Yes, and you’ve been here since 2008, do you see any improvements or do you think it’s declining since the revolution? You’re saying that the people need to be more educated, have you, have you felt kind of a difference between then and now?

Leone: Well I came in 2006, and I think it’s like two steps back to take some steps forward, that’s what’s happened. We have taken some steps back so that we can take more steps forward, and we’re still at the point where we have taken the steps back and we haven’t taken the steps forward yet, but things take time so I’m very optimistic. I mean, I think under the Mubarak regime things were locked up, people were not engaged. He had, for instance, he had that system of education where no money was being spent on education and although the country was growing and it was economically viable, the money wasn’t being spent on the right things. Now the country isn’t as economically viable, but there is a hope that once it becomes economically viable again, the money will be spent on the right things such as education. So, I’m optimistic. Yes we have taken steps back and things weren’t as good economically as they were before, I think they will be once again, and when they are, I think things will be better for everybody.

Alkaweesh: Stability.

Leone: Stability.

Alkaweesh: What are your future plans? Do you plan to stay here in AUC? We do actually need people like you in this university, or actually in Egypt, especially in a time like this. So are you planning to help improve the situation or help in the legal/political side in Egypt?

Leone: Yes I am, I’m planning to stay here until my retirement in the next ten or fifteen years. I feel welcome here, I feel that my talents are appreciated here, and I feel like my work is actually, like doing something even a very small way, but I feel like I’m fulfilled here, and so yes I am going to stay here.

Alkaweesh: Thank you Dr. we really appreciate it.

Leone: Thank you for the opportunity.