Mohamed Khalil Boujnah Transcription

One of the main struggles that immigrants face and have always faced is learning how to get around in a new country. When I first came to America, I had a very hard time getting around. In Tunisia, where I was born, I was not used to walking everywhere, reading maps, or taking public transportation.

In Tunisia, people do not use maps or GPS. The greater Tunis area, which is urbanized, is less than a hundred square miles. In comparison to Minneapolis-Saint Paul urban area which is over 1,000 square miles. The small urban size of Tunis makes it easier for citizens to have mind maps and use reference points when giving people directions. Here in the Twin Cities, it is much harder to do that, so paper or digital maps are used.

When giving directions in Tunisia, they tell you the name of the street and what is close by. Here, in the US, people give you the cross streets and show you a map. This was a major problem since, when I first came to America, I did not know how to use a map. Unfortunately, I was too shy to tell people that I did not understand maps. For a time, I carried a map around since people would reference it so often, but I ended up disposing of it, since I still did not understand how to use it and asking people was much easier.

Taking public transportation posed another struggle. I did not know the names of the streets or the bus stops, but I knew some landmarks around Minneapolis to help me navigate through the city. I would ask the bus driver to tell me when the bus arrived near a certain landmark, but more often than not, the driver did not know where that landmark was. It was hard for me to distinguish between certain buses, like 3A and 3B. I would often get on the wrong bus and I have to find my way back, which made getting around even more complicated.

Lastly, in Tunisia, I would drive everywhere and I knew where everything is. But here, I have no car and so I have to walk everywhere. Since at first I did not know the city very well, I would always get lost and walk for a very long time. It would cause me to become very frustrated.

When I did have a car to drive, I was not used to all of the driving regulations and rules here. My very first day of driving, I got a parking ticket. Wrong way parking. I did not even know that that slip of paper on my car’s windshield was a fine. It was very upsetting for me to receive a punishment for something that is legal in my home country. I did not understand what I had done wrong. It took me a while to get used to all the different rules and signs in America.

After considering all of the obstacles and challenges I faced while trying to get around, it was very hard for me to assimilate to American transportation, maps, and directions.

Now, after three years, getting around is way easier and I finally learned how to use maps; but not actually. Thank you very much for watching!