

**Oral History of:** Andree Nordan  
**Interviewed by:** Faye Wolf  
**Date of Interview:** August 23, 2018  
**Location of Interview:** Max M. Fisher Federation Building, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
**Subject Matter:** Diaspora in Detroit: the Jewish Immigrant Experience

Faye Wolf: 00:00 My name is Faye Wolf, and today is August 23, 2018. I am interviewing Andree Nordan. Did I say that correctly? Great. At the Max M. Fisher Federation Building in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. This interview is part of the diaspora in Detroit, the Jewish Immigration Experience Oral History Project.

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Andree Nordan: 00:37 Yes, I do.

Faye Wolf: 00:37 Great. Okay. Tell me when and where you were born.

Andree Nordan: 00:43 Casablanca, Morocco.

Faye Wolf: 00:45 And what is the name of the city in Morocco?

Andree Nordan: 00:48 Casablanca.

Faye Wolf: 00:49 Casablanca. Okay. And when was that?

Andree Nordan: 00:53 On July 14, '48.

Faye Wolf: 00:57 July 14, 1948. My birthday is July 21. Tell me a little bit about your parents.

Andree Nordan: 01:08 I know mostly about my mother. My father passed away when I was one.

Faye Wolf: 01:12 Okay.

Andree Nordan: 01:13 So my mother raised us along with her parents helping out when she was working, so.

Faye Wolf: 01:22 Did your grandparents live with you?

Andree Nordan: 01:24 Yes, they did.

Faye Wolf: 01:25 So there was an extended family in your household?

Andree Nordan: 01:27 Yes, we did.

Faye Wolf: 01:28 And were there any other siblings besides yourself?

Andree Nordan: 01:31 Yes, five older ones. I'm the youngest of six.

Faye Wolf: 01:34 Oh, my. And do you have ... tell me a little bit about Casablanca, and how did you ... tell me a little bit about Casablanca. Let's just start there. How did you-

Andree Nordan: 01:48 Casablanca was, as far as I know until 1967 when I left, a beautiful city. A lot of beaches, a lot of swimming pools, and we had discotheques and restaurant along the shore. They did very interesting, because after we swim over there, we could go to the disco at night and have a nice dinner. And the beautiful thing I noticed different than other places I traveled to, the pools were emptied every single night.

Faye Wolf: 02:20 A lot of water.

Andree Nordan: 02:24 They were refilled with ocean water.

Faye Wolf: 02:27 Oh, that's very interesting.

Andree Nordan: 02:29 And there was one area, one pool, they call it [Kontiki 00:02:34]. It had six pools for different activities, different depth and length. It was nice.

Faye Wolf: 02:43 So the pools were community pools? They weren't in individual home owners' backyards?

Andree Nordan: 02:50 They were part. They were not from the individual background. Backyard. People's backyard. It were municipal pools. Everybody would pay a small fee and they could spend the day. They had snack bars and desserts, and they had cabins where people could rent, and use to change. They had umbrellas, tables.

Faye Wolf: 03:24 So you left when you were-

Andree Nordan: 03:27 18.

Faye Wolf: 03:28 18. Okay. And what type of Jewish traditions were practiced in your household?

Andree Nordan: 03:34 We are Sephardic, and we were conservative.

Faye Wolf: 03:39 Okay. So did you ... tell us about how you celebrated Shabbat. Did you celebrate Shabbat every week?

Andree Nordan: 03:49 Yes, we did. Definitely we did. We had a bigger meal, like most Jewish tradition meals, and we were ... we kept Kosher household. And we ... the men went to synagogue. The women did not. My brothers were educated. They were bar mitzvahed, but I wasn't educated in the Jewish studies. I was educated at home with the religion, but I was not sent to school to learn the Jewish religion.

Faye Wolf: 04:26 So when you say you were educated at home, was that how to keep a Jewish household, or did you have actual formal education where you learned to read Hebrew-

Andree Nordan: 04:35 No, I did not. I did not learn to read or write Hebrew. That was the difference between the boys and the girls.

Faye Wolf: 04:42 Was there ever a time where you went to synagogue? Was there a separate women's section from the men? Or there wasn't a women's section at all?

Andree Nordan: 04:49 No, in the conservative synagogue we were mixed. But mostly women attended holiday services, not much on the Shabbat, on the regular base.

Faye Wolf: 05:04 What was ... how large was the conservative Sephardic Jewish community in your area?

Andree Nordan: 05:10 There were thousands. I don't remember how many.

Faye Wolf: 05:13 So there was more than one synagogue?

Andree Nordan: 05:15 Yes, definitely.

Faye Wolf: 05:18 And in general, in the area where you're from in Morocco, how were Jews treated?

Andree Nordan: 05:24 Very well, actually. We didn't have much fears. We did have some fears, I mean, growing up, I mean. When I played outside, because our quarters were very small. We weren't very affluent family. And we played with the Muslim, the Jews, and the

Christian. There was no difference for us as a child. But when I went home crying because Muslim child hurt me, or insulted me, my grandmother would say, well, you have no business playing with him or her. So that was the way things were handled, but yet we played outside most of the time.

- Faye Wolf: 06:13 So what prompted your family ... did you come over with your family? How did that happen?
- Andree Nordan: 06:19 Actually, I left in June 1967. I went to Paris because my grandmother was ill and she died shortly after that.
- Faye Wolf: 06:33 Sorry.
- Andree Nordan: 06:33 And I was offered by my uncle and aunt, who's my mother's sister, to stay in Paris.
- Faye Wolf: 06:40 So you went to Paris alone, or with your family?
- Andree Nordan: 06:43 I went with my mother. My mother went back to Morocco. She asked me to go back with her, but I chose to break away from Morocco because I knew there was no future for young woman. There was no future for me.
- Faye Wolf: 06:59 Can you tell me a little bit [crosstalk 00:07:01] more about-
- Andree Nordan: 07:01 Because there were less and less Jewish people, there were less and less friends of mine, my age. Most of them went to Israel, or France, or South America.
- Faye Wolf: 07:14 So when you say no future, you mean no future socially and career wise?
- Andree Nordan: 07:19 Socially.
- Faye Wolf: 07:19 Or just-
- Andree Nordan: 07:20 Yes, both.
- Faye Wolf: 07:21 Okay. And that was because you were Jewish?
- Andree Nordan: 07:25 Probably, because the Jewish population was getting smaller and smaller. And I did have a group of friends but everybody was moving away, and I was concerned that they will end up, just close to alone, I mean socially.
- Faye Wolf: 07:43 So what was life like in Paris?

Andree Nordan: 07:46 Life in Paris was interesting.

Faye Wolf: 07:48 As a 17 year old.

Andree Nordan: 07:50 It was interesting because I was my uncle's responsibility, I hate to say it, he was very strict. And he had the curfew by midnight. Where I lived and to get to a disco in Paris was an hour away. So by the time the disco starts moving, it was time to come back home, and I was working, made good money, and I could afford to take a taxi and go back to their apartment ... you said no?

So after when I became 21, I made a decision. Instead of ... in order to break away from him gently, so he wouldn't have troubles with his wife my aunt, or my mother, I had to find plan B. And so I wrote to a friend of mine who was my friend since age 14, if her parents could sponsor me, so I moved to Canada. Montreal.

Faye Wolf: 08:50 Oh, okay.

Andree Nordan: 08:52 And I spend six years there, and-

Faye Wolf: 08:57 And what kind of work did you do in Paris? And then-

Andree Nordan: 09:00 I was a hairdresser.

Faye Wolf: 09:01 And then what kind of work did you do in Montreal?

Andree Nordan: 09:03 I stayed as a hairdresser, then I went into banking.

Faye Wolf: 09:07 Okay. So you had some education there in Montreal?

Andree Nordan: 09:12 Yes, I learned mostly English. I had to learn English. I learned English since age 12 in Morocco, but it was never enough. I didn't speak it or understand it as fluently as I do now.

Faye Wolf: 09:26 And what is the language that ... I should've asked you this earlier ... but what is the language that you spoke in Morocco.

Andree Nordan: 09:31 French.

Faye Wolf: 09:32 So Paris was just an easy transition.

Andree Nordan: 09:34 Yes [crosstalk 00:09:35].

Faye Wolf: 09:35 And then from ... then you learned English, and you already spoke French. So you had the Quebec French. I know it's a little different, but-

Andree Nordan: 09:43 Very different.

Faye Wolf: 09:44 Oh, really? Okay. I didn't ... so you had to learn really two languages then.

Andree Nordan: 09:49 It was the ... French Canadian is like a very, very old French but it has ... they use a lot of English words, so sometimes I didn't understand with their accent. And the mixture of English and French, I didn't understand most of the time what they were saying. It took me a while to learn, to understand them, and eventually after six years I pretty much understood most of what they said.

Faye Wolf: 10:20 So Paris was just more or less a way to get out of Morocco.

Andree Nordan: 10:27 Yes.

Faye Wolf: 10:28 But then you didn't really find a life in Paris so you moved to Montreal.

Andree Nordan: 10:32 Correct.

Faye Wolf: 10:32 And was there any feeling in Paris of anti-Semitism, or any feeling of [crosstalk 00:10:39]-

Andree Nordan: 10:39 There was always anti-Semitism, but not as much as it is today, because I did visit Paris many times after 1970 when I left, and it just got worse. There's more Muslim population from what I hear. I mean I haven't been there for probably 15 years, and just from what I hear from my family, what I hear on the news, what I read about it, I have no desire to go back to Paris. Not even for a visit.

Faye Wolf: 10:39 What about Casablanca?

Andree Nordan: 11:16 Casablanca is another story. I would like to go but because I do have an American passport. On my passport it says born in Morocco. So when I go to Morocco, I am a citizen subject first. So they, at custom they can give me trouble and hold me back because they have that power. And then by the time I get hold of the American embassy and so on and so forth, it will be too much to do. So I decided not to go.

Faye Wolf: 11:53 Okay. So tell me about Montreal. You were there for six years. And so you were 27, and then what ... Montreal, beautiful country, beautiful area.

Andree Nordan: 12:07 Absolutely, beautiful city.

Faye Wolf: 12:10 Why did you decide to leave?

Andree Nordan: 12:12 My husband sweep me off.

Faye Wolf: 12:14 So you were married in Montreal?

Andree Nordan: 12:16 No. Well, we got married in Montreal, but I met my husband in Maryland.

Faye Wolf: 12:21 Oh, okay.

Andree Nordan: 12:23 So I was visiting with relatives of mine, and I met him. It was a quick courtship. We got married and moved to the States.

Faye Wolf: 12:38 Was he from the United States?

Andree Nordan: 12:38 He's American, yes.

Faye Wolf: 12:40 And was he from Maryland?

Andree Nordan: 12:42 No, he was working in Maryland. He was born and raised in New York.

Faye Wolf: 12:47 Okay. So this sounds like there's a journey there. Let's go back a little tiny bit though, because you had many stops along the way. Because your grandmother was ill, you really didn't have time to prepare.

Andree Nordan: 13:01 Oh, no. I left overnight.

Faye Wolf: 13:03 You left overnight.

Andree Nordan: 13:04 I got the news at three o'clock in the afternoon, and we were flying at nine o'clock that night.

Faye Wolf: 13:09 So you left all of your belongings in Morocco? And so when you came to France did you start anew, or were your belongings sent to you? Or-

Andree Nordan: 13:17 No, no, no. I start anew.

Faye Wolf: 13:18 You started anew. And then your trip to Montreal was planned, so you just-

Andree Nordan: 13:23 My trip to Montreal was planned, yes.

Faye Wolf: 13:24 Okay, okay. So tell me about your relationship with your family back home. Your five other siblings, did they stay in Morocco?

Andree Nordan: 13:34 They were actually, my sister was in Morocco. Three of my brothers had immigrate to Israel after '56 already. So there was basically one brother left, who actually was studying in France at that time, so. My sister was married then, and I left with my mother. Then when I left, my mother was there with my sister. I mean, she had her own place, but my sister married.

When I moved to Montreal, I was the pioneer. I moved to Montreal first, and then my sister and her husband and first child decided to move to Toronto. Then they moved to Montreal because it just didn't work out with the family they were working with. So they moved to Montreal. Meanwhile, my mother had come also to Montreal and stayed with me before I got married.

Faye Wolf: 14:36 And so did she-

Andree Nordan: 14:37 She live about three years before I got married. She lived with me in Montreal for three years before I got married.

Faye Wolf: 14:43 So she gave up Morocco?

Andree Nordan: 14:46 Yes, yes.

Faye Wolf: 14:46 Okay, all right. Let me just write that down.

And then once you came to the United States after you were married, did any of your family follow you?

Andree Nordan: 15:00 No.

Faye Wolf: 15:01 So they're all still in Canada?

Andree Nordan: 15:03 My sister lives in Canada. I have three brothers who are in Israel. One moved to New York the same time, when I went to Montreal, he went to New York. And two brothers are left in Israel. My sister was in Canada after a while. She stayed in Canada. And my brother who studied in France is ... traveled more than I did. He went to Central Africa, to Zaire. The ex-



Congo. The [inaudible 00:15:36], he got married there, then he moved his family to South Africa, which I visited one time, some 15 years ago. And now he lives in Thailand. He moved back to Morocco, then now he lives in Thailand. We are travel [crosstalk 00:15:55] family.

- Faye Wolf: 15:57 So you broke the door down for the rest of your family to go travel.
- Andree Nordan: 16:00 Well, actually I didn't. My brother from Thailand is the one who started the ... and actually the other three who went to Israel. And was just a ... one along the way.
- Faye Wolf: 16:12 Okay, all right. What difficulties, if any, did you have out of getting out of your native country on your journey from Paris to Montreal to the United States? Was there any backlash from Morocco? Just free travel to and from?
- Andree Nordan: 16:32 Actually I didn't go back to Morocco.
- Faye Wolf: 16:33 You never went back to Morocco.
- Andree Nordan: 16:35 I didn't go back to Morocco. The only difficulty I had when I was in Paris, my Moroccan passport was about to expire, and I needed to get ... like here the green card. It was, you know, working ... a card to work. Working permit. And but in order to get that I needed a valid passport, so they were ... two institutions were pushing me, one to the other, finally had to go and beg at the Moroccan embassy to have them issue me a new passport. And they said, well no, you have to go back to Morocco. And at that point, I said I have no one in Morocco. I'm a young teenager, what am I going to do?
- Faye Wolf: 17:27 How long after you were in Paris did this happen?
- Andree Nordan: 17:31 Shortly after, when I first moved. Within the first six months.
- Faye Wolf: 17:37 But your mother wasn't back in Morocco at that time?
- Andree Nordan: 17:40 My mother was back in Morocco, yes. But I just said a white lie.
- Faye Wolf: 17:45 Plead your case.
- Andree Nordan: 17:46 I had to, because I knew there was ... I would go back to Morocco and I might be stuck there. And you know, it wasn't what I was looking forward to.

Faye Wolf: 18:03 Okay. So you were in New York.

Andree Nordan: 18:06 I was in Maryland.

Faye Wolf: 18:09 You were in Maryland.

Andree Nordan: 18:10 My husband was born in New York.

Faye Wolf: 18:10 I see, okay. Apologize.

Andree Nordan: 18:11 That's all right.

Faye Wolf: 18:13 So it was your husband's decision basically for you to leave Canada and to come here.

Andree Nordan: 18:19 Yes.

Faye Wolf: 18:21 So once you're in the United States, how different was it from Montreal, and how did you adjust?

Andree Nordan: 18:30 I have to say, I do adjust easily to different situations, or I try to. I just got married and started a family, didn't work for 13 years. And the only reason I went to work was because my husband decided to work at home and it was no longer convenient for me to be at home. After two years, I decided to take just a small job, just to get out of the house and be there for the children.

Faye Wolf: 18:58 Let's just backtrack a tiny, tiny bit. You married, you moved to the United States, and how many children did you have and in what span of time?

Andree Nordan: 19:06 I have actually [Mowdith 00:19:08] my oldest son, is my husband's son from a prior marriage. His mother passed away when he was three. I met him when he was six. And the first year I was married and a mother of three. We had twins the first year. So it was everything split up. I had to learn quickly to be a wife and a mother, all at once.

And we moved to Florida. When we first got married, my husband had a house in Florida. So we moved in Florida. The twins were born in Florida. We were there for two years. Then I just said I couldn't raise three children by myself, because he was traveling a lot. And so we moved to Michigan, the last 42 years.

Faye Wolf: 20:01 So how did ... why Michigan?

Andree Nordan: 20:04 Because that's what my husband decided was the best area for him. He needed an industrial area because of his line of work.

Faye Wolf: 20:14 Michigan's good for that. Okay. So you have a total of three kids.

Andree Nordan: 20:24 Yes.

Faye Wolf: 20:25 And then ... so what year did you end up in Michigan?

Andree Nordan: 20:33 We got married in '76 ... no, no, no. '76 we came to Michigan in '77.

Faye Wolf: 20:41 Okay, and you were married in what year?

Andree Nordan: 20:45 '75.

Faye Wolf: 20:47 Okay, so when you were married in '75 and you moved to Maryland-

Andree Nordan: 20:53 No, we moved to Florida.

Faye Wolf: 20:54 So you never lived in Maryland.

Andree Nordan: 20:56 No, we met-

Faye Wolf: 20:58 Oh, I see. Okay.

Andree Nordan: 20:58 We met in Maryland, we got married in Montreal, then we moved to Florida.

Faye Wolf: 20:58 I'm sorry.

Andree Nordan: 20:58 That's all right.

Faye Wolf: 21:02 Okay.

Andree Nordan: 21:04 It's a lot of information.

Faye Wolf: 21:06 Okay, no I just want to make sure I got it right. So you were living in Montreal when you met your husband, in Maryland. You were married in-

Andree Nordan: 21:06 Montreal.

Faye Wolf: 21:15 In Montreal. You moved to Florida, and from Florida you moved to Michigan. So when you started living in United States, tell me

about your impression of living in the United States, versus living in Montreal or Paris or Morocco.

- Andree Nordan: 21:27 Well I ... it was all new. I had only my husband, because my oldest son was with his grandmother the first year. The first year we were married he was already in school in New York, so it was just my husband and I. And he was traveling a lot, so I was alone a lot, and pregnant, and it wasn't easy. We had, you know, few neighbors. They were kind. But just was ... I wouldn't say difficult because I guess I had that easily. But I made the best I could, and the second year my oldest son was with us and I was pregnant that year. I kept busy.
- Faye Wolf: 22:14 And how did you practice Judaism when you were in Florida and or Michigan when you came to the United States?
- Andree Nordan: 22:20 It wasn't easy because we lived away from Miami where the center is of the Judaism and the Kosher butchers and all. We lived in the [Photo Del 00:22:32] area which was sunrise, and we had to go to Miami to get Kosher food. My husband wasn't too much in favor. He respected my belief, but I practice mostly the holidays, the high holidays. And the rest I did the best I could with what I had.
- Faye Wolf: 22:54 Was there a synagogue near you at all?
- Andree Nordan: 22:56 No.
- Faye Wolf: 22:56 No synagogue near you, okay.
- Andree Nordan: 22:58 Not where I was. And that ... I miss that. And I'm very happy, because here in Michigan where I live in West Bloomfield, we have Sephardic synagogue I belong to.
- Faye Wolf: 23:10 I sort of should've asked you this question before. But how did you practice your Judaism in Paris and in Montreal?
- Andree Nordan: 23:16 Oh, in Paris it wasn't difficult at all. In Paris, it wasn't difficult. My family were Kosher and going to synagogue. I mean it was, respected the Shabbat. It was definitely-
- Faye Wolf: 23:29 So there was a synagogue nearby where you lived, even though you were an hour outside of the city?
- Andree Nordan: 23:36 I personally didn't go to synagogue. My uncle went to synagogue.

Faye Wolf: 23:40 And it was Sephardic?

Andree Nordan: 23:42 It was, yes it was Sephardic.

Faye Wolf: 23:42 Okay.

Andree Nordan: 23:45 I didn't go. My aunt and I didn't go to synagogue, but we practiced the religion at home.

Faye Wolf: 23:49 So it was very similar to what you did in Morocco?

Andree Nordan: 23:52 True, yes.

Faye Wolf: 23:53 And in Montreal, what was that like in terms of your practice?

Andree Nordan: 23:55 Montreal was the same, although there was a huge Sephardic, yes, Sephardic population and a lot of Moroccan. As a matter of fact, they have the biggest weddings and bar mitzvah that I ever attended, ever. So they keep very close to their religion.

Faye Wolf: 24:22 So coming to the United States then, it must've been a shock, as there was probably ... was there any Sephardic community?

Andree Nordan: 24:30 Well, not when I met my husband. My husband was Ashkenazi, so there was a difference there. He wasn't as close to the religion as I am, but he felt he was Jewish at heart. He went to synagogue on holidays with me and the children. But we did not attend synagogue on a regular base, on Shabbat, where now I do.

Faye Wolf: 24:53 And did you celebrate Shabbat in your house, even though-

Andree Nordan: 24:58 I did, I did. I made sure. Yes, I made dinner. I made Shabbat dinner and took my crystal and my china and my silver cutlery. I made sure that the children knew what is going on, until they grew and became teenagers, and Friday night was no longer as important, because it wasn't that important for their father. So it was ... I had to let it go.

Faye Wolf: 25:27 So when you came to metropolitan Detroit, where did you live when you first moved here.

Andree Nordan: 25:34 In the same house?

Faye Wolf: 25:35 Oh, so you came from [crosstalk 00:25:37] there and you moved to West Bloomfield and you said this was 197-

Andree Nordan: 25:35 Seven.

Faye Wolf: 25:37 1977. Okay, so you've lived in West Bloomfield in the same house. Did you know anyone here?

Andree Nordan: 25:38 No.

Faye Wolf: 25:50 But you were already speaking English, right? Because you learned it fairly quickly. Okay. And did you ... were you able to speak French to anybody, or no?

Andree Nordan: 25:59 Well, I did meet women who spoke French, and eventually was introduced to a French speaking group, which I still belong to. We call it the French group, French club. And actually most women are not French, but they have to speak French, so they have ... it's international group. We have Russian, Egyptian, Israeli, Belgian, Moroccan, Tunisian, and we just have to speak French.

Faye Wolf: 26:38 Did you work at all when you came here?

Andree Nordan: 26:40 I worked after 13 years.

Faye Wolf: 26:44 And what did you do?

Andree Nordan: 26:45 I worked at a nursery school, because I had to have flexible schedule because I had to be home when the children came home. And it worked out. I worked part time. I worked in the morning. It was five minutes away from home. And when the children got to be bigger, I worked longer hours. Because my husband was at home and I just, I need to be away from that environment.

I mean, he was not demanding, it's just my routine changed and I needed change.

Faye Wolf: 27:19 So when you came to the Detroit area or West Bloomfield in general, were there any lifestyle changes that you made, or was it basically the same as it was in Florida?

Andree Nordan: 27:32 It was pretty much the same. But the only difference is I could join the synagogue here. My oldest son was of age to start studying for his bar mitzvah. And I got involved. I looked for synagogues. Took him, drove him to a Hebrew school three times a week. He had his bar mitzvah, and you know we followed the best we could, and then it was time.

And I stayed connected with the synagogue. It was Ashkenazi synagogue but that's what I knew then.

Faye Wolf: 28:04 And which synagogue was it?

Andree Nordan: 28:09 It was B'nai Israel.

Faye Wolf: 28:10 Okay.

Andree Nordan: 28:10 On the Walnut Lake Road. And next door to it, almost, we have a church in between, we have Keter Torah which is the Sephardic synagogue which I belong to for the last 13 years or so.

Faye Wolf: 28:22 So you're talking about your older son who originally lived in New York, then came to live with you? Or this was your twins?

Andree Nordan: 28:29 No, no. The first one, he lived in New York for year.

Faye Wolf: 28:32 I see.

Andree Nordan: 28:33 When I first met his father, he just put him in school, and then therefore the first year he stayed in school. And my husband and I lived in Florida, and then he moved in with us the second year when the twins were born, before.

Faye Wolf: 28:46 So this was the son that was bar mitzvahed at B'nai Israel?

Andree Nordan: 28:49 Well he was ... yes, he was bar mitzvahed B'nai Israel too.

Faye Wolf: 28:53 And when did you switch to ...

Andree Nordan: 28:57 Keter Torah?

Faye Wolf: 28:57 Yes.

Andree Nordan: 28:58 The last 13 years when I found out about ... that it existed. Actually, it did exist. It was up the block from me on Drake, but the person who introduced me to join where the new location on the Orchard Lake and Walnut didn't tell me there was Sephardic synagogue. And I've known her for 35 years. She's Moroccan.

And so, you know. It is what it is. Otherwise I would have joined already.

|                |       |   |
|----------------|-------|---|
| Faye Wolf:     | 29:32 | Okay. Tell me about some of the differences, or maybe some of the similarities between practicing Judaism here versus practicing it back at home in Morocco or Montreal or Paris.   |
| Andree Nordan: | 29:45 | <p>It's different because I have more access to synagogues than I used to in Morocco or France, or in Montreal. Even when I visit now with my family ... because I visit Montreal every year. My sister lives there and her children live there. They do practice their religion probably more than I do, in a way. Different ways, we have.</p> <p>But I'm closer to the synagogue, because I like the Sephardic synagogue here. So to me it's like a second home to me now. I like it. I like the environment. There's a lot of north African people. We have Egyptian, Tunisian, Turkish, Iranian, Iraqis, Israelis, every kind of people. And a lot of ... a few of them speak French also. So it gives me ... a little French group.</p> |
| Faye Wolf:     | 30:47 | When you first moved here, did the Jewish community help you acclimate at all, or did you have to seek out the Jewish community-  |
| Andree Nordan: | 30:56 | I had to seek out. I had to seek out. I was introduced to Hadassah, which was completely new to me. By an Egyptian lady who was my mother's age, but she was in the French club. And she introduced me to Hadassah, and that's when I started really connecting with Jewish women. And I found out shortly after I met two other ladies from the French club, who belong to Hadassah also, that I could switch group, because she was older, so I was into the older group. And I found out they are different groups, so I switched over to a group that was more my age group, so I've been with them since-  |
| Faye Wolf:     | 31:39 | And what ... how long was that after you moved here?  |
| Andree Nordan: | 31:48 | Maybe five years.   |
| Faye Wolf:     | 31:49 | Oh, okay. So mostly before that you were mostly on your own?  |
| Andree Nordan: | 31:54 | I was on my own, but I was involved in the children's schools. So that kept me, you know, interacting with other mothers of my children's age.  |
| Faye Wolf:     | 32:04 | And they went to public school? They went to the West Bloomfield schools?   |
| Andree Nordan: | 32:09 | Yes, they did.  |



Faye Wolf: 32:10 Okay. So what were your hopes for yourself and your family when you came here? And did you realize those hopes?

Andree Nordan: 32:19 Did I have hopes?

Faye Wolf: 32:22 Maybe that's the better question.

Andree Nordan: 32:24 Yes, you know, as a mother, as a Jewish mother, I always looked at for my children's future. I think mostly, you know, make sure that my husband was comfortable in his life to provide for the family, which he was always looking for. That was his goal also, to provide for the family.

Faye Wolf: 32:51 Are you naturalized citizen?

Andree Nordan: 32:53 Yes.

Faye Wolf: 32:54 And when did that happen?

Andree Nordan: 32:56 When my children were eight years old.

Faye Wolf: 32:58 And the year was ...

Andree Nordan: 33:00 Well they're going to be 42, minus 18, so about 28. 28. [inaudible 00:33:12].

Faye Wolf: 33:14 So almost 30 years ago.

Andree Nordan: 33:15 Yeah, almost 30. I was 28.

Faye Wolf: 33:19 So around '89 or '90 actually. Okay. Let's see. Describe the process of becoming a naturalized citizen.

Andree Nordan: 33:33 It was difficult. Studying some of the history, the geography, the politics, the presidents and vice presidents. Not just ... but you know, the constitution. I had to study.

Faye Wolf: 33:53 And how long did it take you? I mean ... so you were a citizen still of Morocco? And you were here-

Andree Nordan: 34:00 No, I was a Canadian.

Faye Wolf: 34:02 You were a Canadian. So you had ... so you never became ... you were never a naturalized citizen of France, correct?

Andree Nordan: 34:10 No, I didn't stay long enough.

Faye Wolf: 34:12 Okay, and then you became a citizen of-

Andree Nordan: 34:14 Canada.

Faye Wolf: 34:15 Canada. How long were you in Canada before you became a naturalized citizen?

Andree Nordan: 34:19 Six years.

Faye Wolf: 34:20 And then right then afterwards, you met your husband and you moved to United States. And so it took several years, 18 exactly, for you to become a citizen. What prompted you to become a naturalized citizen?

Andree Nordan: 34:34 Actually, I could have been a naturalized, not citizen, American citizen, because I married a ... an American citizen. I had this little thought in my head, you know, as a Jewish mother, or mother, I remembered the war in Vietnam. And in my mind, being Canadian citizen, if we were to face another war like that, in my mind as a Jewish mother, as if I can grab my children and run to Canada. Because they could have dual citizenship.

Deep down I knew it wasn't going to be really feasible because my husband would never allow it, because he was very American first. But it was me protecting my children. So when they became 18 and I had no more jurisdiction over their legal rights, I decided to become an American citizen.

Faye Wolf: 35:38 Has there been anything here ... well, let me just ask you this. What has been the most challenging or difficult things about your experience here in the United States?

Andree Nordan: 35:54 Being here with no family. My family was my husband and my children. But I was fortunate ... I developed some friendship and my friends became my family.

Faye Wolf: 36:09 And is that mostly through your synagogue?

Andree Nordan: 36:13 Hadassah, the synagogue, the children's schools. My first friend was at mother toddler class, which was four years ago. We're still friends. We don't talk every day, but we close contact.

Faye Wolf: 36:42 Were your holidays and Shabbat your immediate family, or did you have other friends that you celebrated with [crosstalk 00:36:49]-

Andree Nordan: 36:49 We did [crosstalk 00:36:51] immediate family, but for the high holidays, I invited people over. Mostly on Thanksgiving because I did adopt Thanksgiving. It became my holiday. And more so when the first one, my oldest son got married, and he came back to Michigan it became my grateful holiday. So it was interesting. Interesting. It was ... I did adopt Thanksgiving because it's not ... it's a very American holiday.

Faye Wolf: 37:33 What are some of the best things you have found here in the United States for you and your family versus the other places you have lived?

Andree Nordan: 37:41 The vast opportunities that one has that I didn't ... I don't think they have in other countries.

Faye Wolf: 37:49 Such as ...

Andree Nordan: 37:53 The freedom of speech. And the freedom of being, existing without as many fear as we had in other countries, although things are changing here, but ...

Faye Wolf: 38:09 Has there been anything you've been disappointed in?

Andree Nordan: 38:25 I couldn't ... could be so many things it's not ... nothing specific. No, nothing disappointed that you know the United States doesn't have that they have in other country, no. I think this is, from what I've seen, I traveled a little bit different places in Israel and Spain, and I tell everybody, this is the best country to live in. No question about it. That's my opinion, no matter what, how much we dislike this or that. This is true the best place.

Faye Wolf: 38:58 When you originally came here from Montreal, did you find it easier or harder to express yourself as a Jew in this country?

Andree Nordan: 39:13 Actually I'm going to tell you, let me mention that I used to wear a Jewish star. And my husband said to me, which really surprised me. He said, "You know what?" He said, "I'm not going to tell you what to do, but Blacks cannot cover their skin, but as a Jew we don't have to display that we are Jewish." And that shocked me. I said, "This is the big America. A big country, free country, and I cannot show that I'm Jewish?" In Morocco, I could show I was Jewish. I was never offended or assaulted because I showed or I said I was Jewish. And from then on I didn't wear Jewish star. Unless I ... Jewish surrounding. But that stayed with me, and surprised me. But you know, I felt I had to listen to his advice because I didn't want to hear I told you so.

Faye Wolf: 40:17 I see. And what about when you were in Paris or in Montreal, did you feel anything like that at all?

Andree Nordan: 40:23 No, no.

Faye Wolf: 40:25 So just here?

Andree Nordan: 40:26 Yes.

Faye Wolf: 40:27 Was that in Florida too, or just here?

Andree Nordan: 40:31 Florida I don't even think about it. I didn't wear much jewelry or anything, it just ... I had simple life.

Faye Wolf: 40:42 Do you travel around the United States at all, or is it just you mostly stay here?

Andree Nordan: 40:46 I went to New York a few times. I haven't been out. I went to Sauvignon, Georgia and Charleston. Went to Florida. Went back to Florida for visit. My mother used to spend the winters there, so we went every year.

Faye Wolf: 41:10 Do you feel that your husband's comment was a metropolitan Detroit area type of a comment?

Andree Nordan: 41:19 No, he ... I think he just ... he was born and raised in New York. He traveled. He went to Vermont to college. It was just taught, a mental state he had.

Faye Wolf: 41:33 To protect yourself from anti-Semitism.

Andree Nordan: 41:36 Right. And I ... that bothered me.

Faye Wolf: 41:43 Okay. And did you teach your kids the same thing, or did you teach your-

Andree Nordan: 41:48 No, actually. Going in a Muslim country we learned, we were taught to dislike the Muslim, and I wanted to make a change with educating my children. I brought up my children skin color and religion does not make a good or a bad person. So my daughter had Jewish, Muslim, Christian friends. And African American. But as she grew older, I was fearing that she will meet an African American, which she did, but he was a very good friend, and he was very good friend. From what I hear, they never had a relationship but I explained to her my fear was ... I tried to be open minded, but I was fear if there is such a mix of marriage, the children will be suffering because you will not

be accepted from either side. From what my experience here. And it worked out. She didn't get too close to him, but they stayed very close friends. Very, very nice gentleman man. So.

Faye Wolf: 43:04 Is there anything else about coming here to United States and being Jewish, anything at all that you want to share with us in your practice of Judaism?

Andree Nordan: 43:17 I think for me personally because, like I said, we didn't go to synagogue, neither in Morocco or in Paris, or in Montreal. Even when I visit in Montreal, my family's closer to Judaism than I am, I mean their Shabbat, some of them. But yet they don't go to synagogue. But on high holidays.

I personally now, I'm by myself. I go to synagogue every Saturday because I enjoy the services. And because they are Sephardic. It's so close to home. It just gives me a purpose.

Faye Wolf: 43:55 Is there a difference in Sephardic practice here versus the one that you grew up with?

Andree Nordan: 44:03 There's always a difference. Even like when I go to Montreal. The services are different. But again, I didn't go too much to synagogue in Morocco, so I don't have much sense of comparison. But when I go to Montreal, it's like I feel I'm in Morocco. I mean the whole attitude is there.

Here, the Sephardic attitude is different because we are so mixed in. We have different countries, but the rabbi is nice. I mean, we like him. I just, you know, it's Sephardic synagogue, and we have a lot of Ashkenazi's also who attend. And a couple years ago we did ... I don't know if you're aware of it ... we did a Jews from different countries. We represent 14 countries, and we did the presentation ... each person did presentation by their country. We did a sample of food, and videos, talking about the story of their life in that country, et cetera. It was very interesting. [inaudible 00:45:13] my rabbi and he'll clue you in where you can find one on the internet.

He worked very hard. He's very, very involved rabbi. Very much. He does a lot for our community. And we love him because we see the difference he rebuilt. He really rebuilt the synagogue. It was, we went through some times when we had to change rabbis. Apparently he was with the synagogue some 25 years ago, so. But I wasn't involved. I didn't know about this synagogue. And yet I lived around the corner from it. But nobody told me. It was a small place.

But we're very happy to have him. And it's nice, and his wife is pleasant. Wife, woman also, both very involved with the community, and they help us the best they can. I enjoy both of them.

Faye Wolf: 46:09 Is there anything else you want to add.

Andree Nordan: 46:13 No. I'm happy to be here.

Faye Wolf: 46:15 We're happy to have your story. I want those. Thank you very much.

Andree Nordan: 46:19 Thank you.