

The Peale, Baltimore

Out of the Blocks Storytelling Series

Recorded by Aaron Henkin; Photographs and Music by Wendel Patrick

Produced for the *Out of the Blocks* website, created by the Peale, <https://ootb.thepeale.org/>

Out of the Blocks is supported by PRX and produced with grant funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, The Hoffberger Foundation, Patricia and Mark Joseph, The Shelter Foundation, The Kenneth S Battye Charitable Trust, The Sana and Andy Brooks Family Fund, The Muse Web Foundation, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios



Speaker 1 (00:01):

So, now I'm going to fix the shrimp cheese steak and you can just see me.

Eight ounces of meat. And now I'm going to put like seven big shrimp in the shrimp cheese steak.

My name is [Houshi Zeman 00:00:14]. This is Emmys Food Palace, 2117 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland. Zip code 21223.

I'm born and raised in Pakistani controlled Kashmir. Kashmir is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. The culture is very beautiful. The people are very beautiful, but unfortunately the nation of Kashmir is separated due to Pakistan and India.

I used to work as an investigative reporter for the Pakistani national newspaper. I used to publish my own newspaper, as well. And I used to work on the corruption in different departments and stuff like that.

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And a journalist's life in Pakistan is really under danger. You can't freely write against the politicians. The journalists have to follow the governmental rules in order to write down anything, if you still want to stay in the country.

I mean, I don't believe that kind of journalism. While you have an opinion, you are free to say anything, whatever opinion in your mind.

Speaker 2 ([01:27](#)):

You must have known as a journalist that you were crossing that line then, when you were writing those sorts of pieces. What went through you when you made that decision? When you sort of knew what the consequences could be?

Speaker 1 ([01:40](#)):

Okay. Let me tell you another interesting story.

I was also part of a journalistic institute. And can you believe, we'd been attacked by the one department of the government while we was there? They sent the people's inside who scared the journalists or who scared [inaudible 00:00:01:59], the journalist leader.

Lot of them physically injured and hospitalized and stuff like that. Yeah, that's on the record.

Once our journalistic institute is attacked by the government, if we keep moving with our freedom writings, we might get in more trouble, maybe face the prison. So, that's why we escaped from there to go in other countries.

This is the toughest time in your life, when you have to leave your own country, where were you born and raised. And I was really feeling really, really bad.

I came to United States not by choice. But due to my circumstances, I tried to come to United States, tried to save my life and my family. That's why I'm here.

I've been here now 18 years, I've been granted asylum. I'm a citizen of the United States now. And I feel free here.

Overstuff with the meats and the shrimp. And now, it's ready to rest. A little touch of peppers.

Speaker 2 ([03:21](#)):

Do you ever regret the decision that you made to write those bold journalistic pieces that caused this path to happen for you?

Speaker 1 ([03:30](#)):

No, sir. Never. I'm the person who sticks to my opinion, always. No regret at all. Not at all.

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