

MORADPOUR, from page 5

She recounted her response with a smirk. "I said, 'Yes, that's who I am.' I was being sarcastic the whole time, and that was a bad, bad mistake."

"You talk a lot, you're coming with us," they said.

This arrest was different from the others. She was intensely interrogated and held for eight days in solitary confinement.

"I want to meet my interrogators, I respect them, actually. They did a very good job," she said matter-of-factly. "The second day, they knew that I wasn't a spy. But yet they had to follow protocol. They had to keep me for a few days. They had to make sure. They had to file the paperwork, and they let me go. If I was their boss, I'd say, 'Bravo, you did it!'"

She never got any paperwork after her release so she doesn't know if it was the police or the Revolutionary Guard that arrested her. Even though she was found innocent, Moradpour was put on probation at the university for being arrested, and she eventually dropped out.

Later that year, she met Amin at a party, and the two began to date. (She asked we not use his last name.) Like her sketching instructor, he was decades older than her. "I think I have a problem with these men," she said with a laugh.

One month into their relationship, Amin told her he was moving back to the U.S., which came as a surprise to Moradpour; she didn't know he was only in Iran temporarily. Shortly before he left, he asked her if she would marry him.

"I said, well yeah, let's think about it for a month," she said. Six months later, he returned to Iran, and they had a small ceremony before he brought her to Portland in 2012.

Moradpour enrolled at Portland Community College before attending Pacific Northwest College of Art. In her free time, she volunteered with Red Cross, giving cookies to blood donors, and at the Portland Art Museum.

She liked working the iPod booth at the museum, where she would "show old people how to use an iPod — I felt like, genius!" she



PHOTO BY JOE GLODE

Dela Moradpour no longer has her facial piercings, her tattoo or her turquoise-streaked hair. "I've grown up a lot," says Moradpour, who has lived in Portland since 2012.

said.

Street Roots sat down with Moradpour in her tidy, book-filled apartment in late August. For the past year, she and her husband were living in the in-law suite above their friend Kenya Zappa's garage. Zappa, a third-generation Italian-American, said the couple dropped everything to move in so they could help her and her children get through a difficult time.

But the couple had their own problems. The day before Street Roots met with Moradpour, her divorce was finalized.

But during the interview, she seemed optimistic, saying she was happy. Just two weeks earlier, she graduated from PNCA with a master's degree in critical theory and creative research.

She cheerfully showed off the Darth Vader toaster she had just acquired before sitting down to talk about her path to Portland — her facial piercings now gone, a tattoo she got on her ring finger when she was 20 removed, and her dark curly hair its natural color.

"I've grown up a lot," she said, although she's struggling to find her place in American society. Everyone in her family, including her parents and younger brother, still live in Iran.

"I think she's definitely turning Portland into her home," Zappa said, "but I still

believe she is kind of stuck between two worlds."

Moradpour says she feels "very alone."

"Now that I'm here, I can speak my mind," she said, but "I can't relate to people."

Americans, she said, "they all think that I am so oppressed. They always think that, 'Oh my God — from that culture? You must have had a bad time.' No! I was fine. Literally, I was fine. I went to jail, I went to solitary confinement, and I'm still saying, I was fine."

"People think that I live a life of a typical, oppressed, self-sabotaging, man-hating, self-sacrificing woman, which is so untrue."

While homesick at times, she said she cannot move back to Iran. There's less competition for jobs in the U.S., and she has to earn money. Plus, she said, she's grown accustomed to the sense of community she has with her neighbors.

According to the Statistical Centre of Iran, between March and June, the unemployment rate among working-age women was nearly 20 percent, although 60 percent of college students are women. The unemployment rate for men was 9 percent during the same period.

For the past few years, Moradpour has worked for a company that provides translation services. Through her employer,

she often assists Catholic Charities and Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization with new arrivals from the Middle East, helping them find housing and other services by translating Farsi. She said many Iranians who practice the Bahá'í faith are coming to the U.S. for religious freedom. She also helps acclimate refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

She says she never wanted to be politically involved, but the current political climate in Iran turns every Iranian into an activist. In August, she attended a rally at Pioneer Square in support of President Barack Obama's Iran nuclear deal.

She said many of the Iranian immigrants she's met have political opinions about the Iranian government, but they're afraid to speak out because they have family back home.

"It's just this paranoia," she said.

"Nobody's going to knock on your parents' door and say, 'We're here to kill you because your daughter said something in U.S. against the regime.'"

But she has a few holdover fears of her own. Zappa said Moradpour still gets anxious around police.

"She has to retrain herself to realize that the police won't — most likely — stop her without cause, and if they did," Zappa said, "they're not going to lock her up without due process."

She said for Moradpour, it's "hard being so far away from her family, but she sees more opportunity here and appreciates the ability to speak openly."

Moradpour says she misses Iran, especially the chic parties.

To remind herself of home, she likes to infuse her apartment with Esfand. She put a pinch of a blend that smelled like chocolate into an incense burner on her electric stove and then waved it around the apartment and above her guests' heads in a demonstration of the tradition. "Now you are safe," she proclaimed.

Smoking a hookah makes her sick, she said, but she brought one with her from Iran and keeps it in her kitchen. Her aunts smoke hookahs heavily.

And there's one more tradition she likes to revisit occasionally. About once a month, she nostalgically wears the hijab she so often evaded in her earlier years.

PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS

TUES	9/8	MISSISSIPPI PIZZA
WED	9/8	POR QUE NO*
THURS	9/10	BIG ASS SANDWICHES
MON	9/14	PACIFIC PIE COMPANY*
TUES	9/15	SALVADOR MOLLY'S
WED	9/16	COUNTY CORK PUBLIC HOUSE
THURS	9/17	THE OBSERVATORY
FRI	9/18	HARLOW
SAT	9/19	ADDY'S SANDWICH BAR
MON	9/21	THE FLORIDA ROOM
TUES	9/22	TIN SHED
WED	9/23	FRACK BURGER**
THURS	9/24	PRASAD
MON	9/28	THE PIE SPOT
WED	9/30	CIAO VITO

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