

Zohair, Pakistan

Mary: you came here for university, for budget university, and then what, what made you stay?

Zohair: What made me stay, honestly, it's just the community. The people. The beauty that we live in the mountains. The clean water. the drives you can make. The random hellos when you're driving down the road and people just wave at you. Just small things like that. If you break down the middle of nowhere, somebody will stop.

Mary: What were your very first impressions of Missoula?

Zohair: As someone who came from Lahore with the population, like 17, 18 million people. Like if you probably take a Google satellite image, it would just look like ants just walking around, because people are just so heavily packed in there. And it's a, it's a metropolitan city. And just moving to Missoula. Like now I get, get pretty mad when there's a five minute traffic jam on Reserve. When my family from Pakistan just recently came and visited, they were just like, oh, it's just 20 minutes. Cool, no worries. Look, it's 20 minutes away! It's a long drive! They're like, what are you talking about? Yes, it's just the difference, the differences, you know, that, that I've now gotten accustomed to. The slowness, if I may call it. The, the welcoming attitude. The beauty that a big city doesn't usually have. At least Lahore, beautiful architecture, but no mountains, you know, beautiful landscape: rivers, not that close. I don't live a five minute bike ride away from blue-green waters.

Mary: What do you miss most from your original home from Pakistan?

Zohair: First things first. Honestly, food. Um, that was something, even though I had done with my parents and seeing them cook, I'd never like taken the, the hundred percent full initiative to make meals from scratch. You know, I was, uh, one of the, mom still to date calls even after my father has passed that I'm still my father's tail. By that she means she's just like, you're a daddy's boy. No matter what I did I was following him. From stirring the pot in the kitchen to watering the flowers and the grass and the garden. And yeah, just trying to emulate the old man so to say.

Mary: Did he take a big part in the kitchen growing up?

Zohair: He was, he did actually. Yeah. Um, the big, big foodie, um, you know, always wanted to try the new restaurants that would open up. And I was like tag-a-long buddy.

Mary: Tell us as something that you're most looking forward to or excites you most about the next couple of years.

Zohair: Opening up, uh, our own business. Become a business owner in this community that has welcomed me with open arms. And this is literally, I'm 36 years old, I've traveled a lot of countries, luckily. I've lived in two cities my entire life, Lahore and Missoula. So just, you know, giving back to the community means so much to me. And I think integrating my birth city with my new home. I'm just very excited for that.