

My Name is Fatma Zohra Naili and here is the Story of My Journey to England

I was born in Algeria in 1993 – fortunately enough in Algiers – and surrounded by many schools. Everything seemed convenient But it wasn't really, as I was from the poor side.

I am the eldest of four siblings and the only female. We have struggled and have been through a lot Life has never been easy. We depended on charity groups because my parents couldn't afford our school necessities but we were so happy when September 1st finally came around, as then we could attend school once again.

We were young and we didn't know that life would be even harder at Secondary School. We didn't know that people can become very judgemental. Two of my brothers stopped school but I never did. I knew that education was the only solution, not only for me, but also for all of the people who have suffered like me. I read about great people who came from nothing – like Mr Houari Boumediene – just to get inspiration. I believed in a vision and I trusted that one day I could do it too.

As an Arab girl, one of my biggest duties is to help improve the role of women in a society where traditional norms can take over. I will say that my country has improved in this area, yet women are still harassed every day for joining men (the general idea about women is that they stay at home and take care of the children, but now women have decided to go out and play a role in building the future of the country). I want to prove that, as a woman, I can make a difference and I can help change the way society looks at women.

I refused to stop going to school; I refused to accept the idea that a girl should marry at the age of 18, as it was her fate – a fate created by men. I know that knowledge is the most priceless thing we can have. I was thirsty for knowledge and education was the solution. I didn't want to keep this idea to myself; I wanted to share it with everyone so that we could all realise our potential and make our country even better – for us, for everyone and for future generations.

I was lucky because my parents never held me back; they have always been supportive, especially my mother. She focused on me because I'm the only girl in the family. She wanted me to be strong and be someone who could change the harsh facts, and I am really grateful to have a mother like her. That's why I didn't want to let her down. I wanted her to be proud of me so I did my best at school and made sure that I was the top student of my class. I was so satisfied with my achievements and I earned the respect of my teachers. I couldn't have asked for more than that.

In Secondary School, I chose to study Literature, just to be different, as everyone else thought that Science was the only important subject. I soon changed my mind though when I saw the Foreign Language Classes. I had studied languages as a hobby since I was little, so I didn't regret my decision to change from Literature once I started the language classes. I studied English, Arabic, French and German, and in my third year I saved some money to do a free candidate Baccalaureate exam (a pre-graduation certified by a diploma, after having taken a special exam in June) plus my Secondary School graduation. I worked hard and succeeded in both exams in the same year.

Sadly, my happiness didn't last because during the same year as I graduated, the Translation University closed because of lack of enrolments, so I used my free candidate Baccalaureate to join the Foreign Languages University and chose to study "anglais technique" or Specialised English. For the second Baccalaureate Diploma I chose to study Law, which was recommended to me by my teachers. I was not a big fan of Law so I didn't really enjoy the classes. Then I heard that new foreign

language classes had been launched at a new University and so quickly subscribed to study Korean and Japanese.

My study programme was intense and my family were going through severe financial problems, so my mum decided to go on TV to try and get some help for the poor condition of our house and my brother's sickness. I refused the idea of appearing on TV but something very unexpected happened something I never thought would happen in a million years. A businessman contacted the MBI Al Jaber Foundation and I received a call from the TV station journalist saying that this Foundation would like to award me a scholarship to study in the UK. I didn't take her words seriously and I thought it was a joke. However, the following week I was invited to the TV station and was surprised to see the businessman, Mourad Nafaa, and Ms Carolyn Perry, Director of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation, who had travelled all the way from England to hand me the scholarship in person. I was so flattered that someone had finally noticed me and had taken me seriously because no one had done that in my country.

It took me some time to arrange everything in order to move to London, especially as I was about to finish my Law Degree, and my Japanese and Korean Diploma at the same time. I was so excited about starting the Japanese course in London.

I was enrolled at SOAS, University of London on 11th October, 2016. The teachers are very professional, just as I had imagined. I only have 4 classmates and all of them are like one family. The atmosphere is so relaxed and encourages us to give all that we can to our studies but there is no pressure and everyone is treated equally, which is what we lack back in my country.

As for living in London, the MBI Al Jaber Foundation granted me everything, just like a dream come true. I live with a great family and it never felt like they were strangers. They are like my second family! I met an amazing friend who keeps encouraging me and I see a source of inspiration in him. Now I am so amazed at how life can turn from the worst to the best in the blink of an eye.

So many people ask me why I chose to learn Japanese and I just say that there should be no limits to your ambition and challenges. I see in Japan the greatest nation of all time. Through all of the achievements that they have made so far, and through the language, I can be close to this amazing culture and learn from it. So my dream is to apply what I see in Japan to my own country – it's always good to have a role model! I know nothing is impossible; everything in this life is possible and I know I can help and make a difference in my country.

I haven't finished my Japanese course yet but I believe that this Diploma is going to open a lot of doors for me and grant me all that I've dreamed of. So my future plans are to start my own class to teach Japanese since there are a lot of young people who are interested in the Japanese language and culture, and these young people share the same vision as me. We don't have limits to our dreams; we don't let the negative side take over and we believe in a better tomorrow, which we can create with our own hands. It's not just a Japanese class; it is much, much more than that.

I would like to thank Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber and the MBI Al Jaber Foundation for making my dreams come true and for granting me a better future.