

SAMPLE INTERVIEW Q & A WITH ISSA MUSHARBASH

1 **As a successful businessman, many people wanted you to write a business related book and why did you choose a completely different route for your first book?**

My intention for this project was to deliver an urgent message, especially for my three young children. Most certainly there will be business books in my future, and I find that they might be better received and understood when people have had a gaze into the journey of how I got to where I am today.

2 **How do you see yourself as someone who has beaten the odds?**

Today I am a U.S citizen, as an immigrant in itself this is beating the odds. Nevertheless, defying the odds does not stop there, cultural assimilation is next, followed by fulfilling your dreams. I found that a relentless work ethic is just the beginning step to achieving your dreams, the dreaming part does not get enough attention and is sometimes mocked. Furthermore, it is my faith that serves as the anchor to ground me during life's most challenging times.

3 **Have you become the version of yourself that you dreamed of when you were a child?**

Yes, and no. It is like two sides to one coin. Yes, I have become the version of myself I dreamed of when I was a child, even better than I expected. And no, not yet as there is always room for improvement and there are definitely things in my life, promises I have made to myself and others, that I haven't quite achieved yet.

4 **“Go Back to your Country” could be placed somewhere between an autobiography, memoir or even self-help book, what was the main purpose for you to write this book, who did you want to reach with it?**

My children are blessed to live a pretty comfortable lifestyle, as I intended for them. However, it is this comfort that can potentially rob them of opportunities to grow in life. Therefore, it is my hope to give them a front row view into my upbringing to inspire them to desire to do great things for themselves and others and never take anything for granted. Another important reason for a book like mine is definitely the relevance of its topic in a globalized world—it gives insight into many untold and unseen aspects of immigration. We are a nation that loves immigrants and greatly benefit from them. Not only on Main St., but on Wall St. as well. In fact, according to The New American Economy, 40% of all fortunes 500 companies have been founded by immigrants and their children, generating \$6.1 trillion dollar in revenue in 2018 alone. So yes, immigrants are the strength and backbone of this nation, which my book highlights. Every immigrant deserves to dream and work hard towards their achieving their goals.

5 **As a now published writer, what is it you hope for most from this publication?**

Unfortunately the topic of immigration and the word “immigrant” in particular still have a negative connotation to it. It is my hope and desire to change that perception through my story.

6 **If you could tell your younger, struggling self anything, what would it be?**

In fact I wrote my younger self a letter that you can find in the epilogue to the book. It was necessary for me to write and in doing so, it helped me settle a few unresolved issues from my past. Overall, speak up, forgive, accept those God has placed in your life and never give up.

7 How did you get started writing a book?

My friend Peter Lopez, who works in the book publishing space has been on me about writing a book since 2015. At first, I ignored him as another salesperson trying to get my attention. Finally, after 2 years of resistance—mainly because of my own self-doubt— I entertained the idea. So Peter sent me a simple email that changed everything. It was a blank outline sheet. He said, “Fill in the blanks with the names of each chapter of your book”. That same evening, November 28th, 2017, I sat down with my wife and completed the outline and sent right back to him. That’s when I knew I had a book to write. It took a lot of hard work and nearly three years to finish what I began on that evening, but it all started with an outline. Thank you, Peter.

8 Did you always know if you wrote a book that it would be exactly this one?

No, I had no idea as to where the story of my book would lead me, if this makes any sense. Writing is a very personal process of uncovering yourself in ways you never knew existed. While I always had in mind that my first book would be a book about leadership it turned into my immigration story and how it set me up to become who I am today, an immigrant, a husband, a father, a leader, a Citizen of the United States of America. Maybe yes, it did become a book about leadership after all, just not in the way I thought it would.

9 Are you the type of person to let the story lead your writing or do you rather write what you planned to start with?

I most definitely let the story lead me, I just have to direct the landings, if you will. As a writer, it is my responsibility to direct how the content lands, while not destroying the integrity of the story. If you want to see the true colors of your story unfold, you must be willing to let others in, when the time is right. This is when you can check with trusted people on the power of your story and where it feels unclear. I quickly learned to stop getting caught up in details that do not serve the overall theme of my memoir. As you’ll see in my acknowledgment page, I let many people into my writing journey. It is true, everyone of us has a story to tell, but we must answer the brutal questions of “So what?” and “Who cares?” so we can keep the integrity of our story intact and yet maximize its impact on others.

10 Writing can be such an emotional and stressful pursuit, how did you cope, while running your business and as a husband and father of three?

Give yourself and others grace. I guess it is similar to gently twisting the lid of a big Pepsi bottle, if you release it all at once it will spill all over the place, so don’t do it. There is no rush, the rush is not real. My journey took me 3 years—no regrets.

11 Are there any parts of your book that were more enjoyable than others to write?

Have you ever heard the phrase “the first step is always the hardest”? It is exactly that, the beginning, although enjoyable, it was very difficult. I recall the early stages as very painful to write. It can be compared to hiking up a mountain whose tip is still in the clouds, once you made it half-way up, the sun is so much closer—this is how I felt writing this book. The second half was hiking down the mountain, although very careful.

12 Can you share with us something about the book that is not in the blurb, but people should know?

I learned the most about my own book from the feedback I’ve received from the early readers. I came to the realization that this book impacts each person differently and in ways I never even thought of. My focus was to tell my story, but I didn’t know and still don’t know the depth and breadth this piece of writing will have on the human journey. I am in awe of the remarks and feedback I have heard so far and continue to hear. My hopes for this entire writing journey into the literary world is simply more, to touch more people, inspire and impact more people, honor and lift up more people and most certainly teach more people, immigrants or natives about hope.