

# Legend of the month – Saana Eishou



When it comes to stories of inspirational women, you can now add the name Saana Eishou to that list. One of the many thousands of individuals displaced by the trouble in Iraq, Saana managed to find a way through the turmoil. Suffering heart-breaking loss, Saana came out the other side and her story captured hearts, so much so that Saana received the Woman Of The Year Award from the Linda George Foundation in February. Linda is a fellow Assyrian who has found a new life in the US, mirroring Saana's story.

Speaking to MUMSRU from her new home in Michigan, Saana's story is one of tragedy and hope of a better life, coming out the other side to where she is now.

Born and raised in Baghdad, Saana lived with her parents, brothers and sisters in the bustling city. As she got older

Saana found love, getting married and welcoming a child into the world. She and her husband continued to live happily in Baghdad with their little one. Their joy would soon double once they realised a second child was on the way and a little girl was born in 2005 to complete their happiness. Unfortunately that joy was short-lived as, not long after her daughter's birth, Saana's husband got kidnapped.

"One Monday night in 2005, not long after my daughter was born my husband was kidnapped by one of the criminal gangs that were rampant in Baghdad at the time. It was a horrifying experience which made me feel scared and lonely. Thankfully my in-laws, who were living with me at the time, were on hand to help when they could. Having lost two sons to the conflict, one of whom was my husband, they understood my pain and the need to stick together in these dark times." To this day Saana still has no idea what has become of her husband, whether he is alive or not, but still holds out hope that they can be reunited one day as a family.

Saana made the decision she was going to leave Baghdad in order to make a new life in the US. While getting ready to make her way out of Iraq, Saana strove to make sure her children's lives remained as normal as possible, a normality which still

exists.

“I experienced great support from my husband’s side of the family as well as mine. My brothers and sisters and my mother are always there for me always checking up on me to see how I’m doing. My husband’s cousins are also very good to me and I’m so blessed to have such beautiful souls around me to keep me motivated.”

Despite being a single mother, Saana’s determination nor resolve ever waivered thanks to one thing – her kids.

“My kids keep me strong. I always look at them and see how they are growing and how they need a good role model in their life. I would like to say no matter the situation, and how hard times may be, you have to find hope. You have to seek something and it may be only one thing, but find what encourages you. Something or someone that will be proud of you. In my case, my hope was my kids. I never wanted them to feel any different from other kids so I always tried my hardest to be there for them.”

Saana and her children undertook the perilous journey out of Baghdad and, after much travelling, they came out the other side and have settled in a

suburb of Michigan, Detroit where they have been happily living for the past fifteen years, where Saana has been working as a cosmetologist, handling business life and 'mummy life' as best she can, but admits it's now easier than it was.

"It was hard for me to take care of the kids when they were younger, but has gotten easier as they have grown up and gotten older. The simple tasks they couldn't perform as younger children are now second nature to them, giving them a sense of independence. I now can go to work and simply call them to see how they're doing and how everything is going."

Earlier this year, Saana received an award which recognises her story and the courage and determination it took for her to achieve her goal, an achievement made all the sweeter because it was made possible by her favourite singer, fellow Assyrian Linda George. Like Saana, Linda left Baghdad for a better life, having already achieved success from a young age as a singer. This success has grown since, with Linda recording fourteen albums and having worked also as a model. She was awarded the Golden Voice by the Assyrian American National Federation in 1997. Speaking of her pride at becoming Woman Of The Year, Saana had this to say;

“Linda George has always been my favourite singer so to be recognised by her is such an honour. I was going through a very rough time and her music has always been an inspiration to me. She has made me feel so proud of what I have accomplished and encouraged me to push further for bigger and better things.”

Finally, asked if she had a message for those still enduring difficult times, both in her homeland and all over the world, Saana has a clear message. “No matter how difficult things get and no matter the situation, never lose hope. Seek that thing which encourages you and hold on to it. In my case it was my kids who inspire me daily. It makes me proud every day to see how they have grown and honoured I have been a good role model for them.”