

Zahra Dabiri: Patience, Acceptance and Faith



Zahra Dabiri was born in Tehran, Iran. She came to the United States in 1989 escaping the religious persecution of members of the Baha'i Faith in her homeland. She is the mother of seven and the grandmother of 19. I met her in a Los Angeles restaurant. Zahra does not speak English, so the interview with Zahra was translated by her daughter, Fareshteh.

In a conference center filled with thousands of people in Los Angeles, the diminutive Zahra Dabiri stood out.

“One of her sons passed away from cancer when he was four years old,” Fareshteh said. “My brother would be 43 years old now.” My mom is saying, “Whatever happens, I shouldn’t question it. Whatever happens is the will of God.”

“You always have to be patient and whatever happens you have to take it for a good thing in life. Whatever Baha’u’llah (the prophet-founder of the Baha’i Faith) says, I try to do. Thanks be to God, I love.”

Zahra escaped from Iran in 1989, walking over the mountains from Iran into Afghanistan with her daughter and youngest son. “We left the country with a camel and one week - me and my mom and my brother,” Fareshteh explained on Zahra’s behalf. “We didn’t have any food or any hygiene and we suffered a lot, but she was very patient. She was supporting us even though she was 65 years old at that time, but she was supporting us.”

It was the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the government stepped up its persecution of members of the Baha’i Faith. “It was hard times for the Baha’is and they would knock on our doors in Iran and say, ‘We are going to just burn out your house.’” Fareshteh said. “She kept asking us to just pray and telling us nothing will happen. She is a very positive person - very positive.”

“During the revolution some people just knocked on our door and she was so scared for our family, because our house was a big house and we had two doors in the front

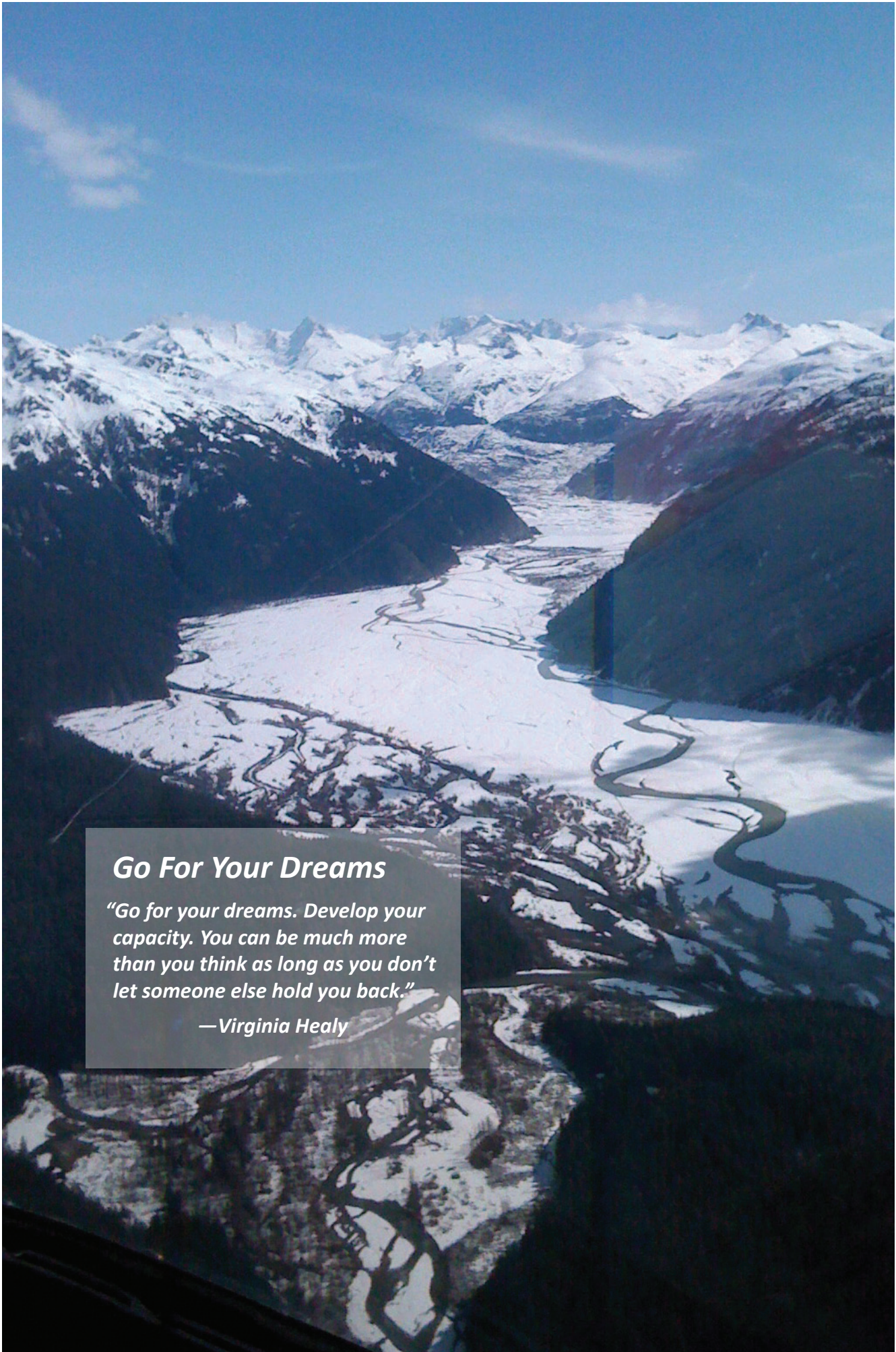
and in the back,” Fareshteh said. “I don’t remember because I was much younger, but my mom is saying that she asked all the children to just get out of the house the other way and she was holding the front door to not let anyone come in. We survived.”

“We couldn’t get a passport from Afghanistan to Pakistan,” Fareshteh explained. “It took us 13 months to get a visa, and we were only in one room, with just a blanket and some basic things. But she was always saying that you just have to be patient, strong and pray.”

Zahra was very young when she lost both of her parents. “She was only 12 years old. Her parents were Moslem and she was born in a Moslem family. But her uncle and her aunt were Baha’is. She was raised by her aunt in a Baha’i family and she declared her own belief in the Baha’i Faith when she was 15 years old,” Fareshteh said. “The rest of her family, they didn’t accept her as a family member once she became a Baha’i. Even her own brother wasn’t talking to her for a long time because she was a Baha’i.”

But Zahra said the Baha’i principles of the equality of men and women and the unity of mankind were important to her.

“Be strong in spirit and believe in God and Baha’u’llah and be happy in this life,” Zahra said. “Be patient and love all mankind. It doesn’t matter what your religion is. Be strong in your faith.”



Go For Your Dreams

"Go for your dreams. Develop your capacity. You can be much more than you think as long as you don't let someone else hold you back."

—Virginia Healy