



Rutgers Humanist

A Magazine of Transnational Connections

Special Edition: *Arab Spring*



Contributors

This magazine is published by the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights.

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*****Special thanks to Professors
Alex Hinton and Nela Navarro*****

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Features

A special *Shukran*/"Thank You" to the students of the Spring 2011 Arabic Literature in English Translation Class at Rutgers-Newark

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Fall 2011 special *Arab Spring* edition of *The Humanist*. I am honored to have the privilege to share with you how this edition was "born." This issue, which I hope you will enjoy and share, emerged from the inspiring and tireless work of my Spring 2011 Arabic Literature in Translation class and the generosity, vision and equally inspiring work of my colleagues at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights, where I am the Director of the US-MidEast Dialogue Project.

In the Spring of 2011, I taught this class at Rutgers-Newark in the Department of Languages and Literature. I found myself surrounded by a remarkable group of young people eager to learn about the literature and heritage of a region where many of them have lived, visited, or retain family ties. In this group, we explored the pride, hope, fear, joy, confusion and, at times, frustration associated with the history of Pan-Arab heritage through the rich literary tradition of Arabic literature. We were also incredibly fortunate to be together during a moment in history that the world is now calling the "Arab Spring," and it seemed that every week we connected the stories and poems of our class with the realities on the ground in places like Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain. Incredibly frank discussions took place with these students, students with family in Egypt, students who were concerned and saw the news in real time. These

were students for whom the violence, instability and fear happened to be "all too real" and not simply a headline in the paper or a YouTube video. Students shared stories and photos about life in Palestine, concerned for their families and worried about their future security. Others spoke about the prospects for countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, again from the perspective of young people who could imagine a future in which these countries could be "Iraq for the people of Iraq" or "Afghanistan for the people of Afghanistan." Students created interactive presentations and raised questions including, what does it mean to be Arab and/or Muslim in the world? What are the myths about Islam? What is the role of poetry in Arab societies? What contributions have Arab cultures made to civilization? What is happening in Egypt? What is the situation of Coptic Christians in Egypt? What is the situation of Palestinian youth today? What does it mean to be Arab and Muslim in the United States?

While these conversations and debates were sometimes very challenging, they were always rewarding and we often stayed beyond the three-hour session to continue talking. I took great pride in watching students agree to disagree. Many dared to imagine what was possible and recognized that the region was indeed undergoing extraordinary change – and that they were partly responsible for that change! I say this because many of our students stayed in close contact with family members in North Africa and the Middle East who in some cases gathered information at great risk to their lives. They took pictures, uploaded information, and leveraging social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, helped broadcast the voices of the youth of the Arab Spring.

My colleagues at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights (CGHR) were so impressed when they attended events that they suggested that we offer my students the opportunity to express their views in *The Humanist*. Members of this special class felt they did not have an institutional space to speak, to be heard, to share who they are and what they are thinking at this critical time in their lives and in history. (I should point out that the class included students who were interested in the literature of the Arab/Muslim world, and not just so-called heritage learners, students learning about their heritage.) Since we decided to create this edition, Egypt has experienced great change and Mubarak is no longer in power. Tunisia is undergoing a transition to democracy. There are civil movements in Bahrain and Yemen; protests in Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Iraq and Oman; and what some could call minor protests in Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania and Sudan. Libyan rebels have deposed Muammar Gaddafi and Egyptians are going to the polls. Syria, my own country, is experiencing a level of violence and brutality that is escalating on an almost daily basis. In an unprecedented move, the Arab League has leveled broad trade sanctions against the country. I remain hopeful that the Syrian people will prevail as others in the region have prevailed.

In this special edition, you will hear the diverse voices of the Arab and Muslim students at Rutgers, along with voices of their friends and supporters. You will read about poetry and fashion, hear some of the myths of Islam dispelled, and read the riveting story of our friend and world famous musician Malek Jandali as he describes how his family narrowly escaped from Syria to the United States. In this edition, you will learn

THANK YOU

about the mosaic of experiences, beauty and hope that we believe is the legacy and spirit of the Arab Spring and of our culture. **Shukran** and enjoy!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues at CGHR, especially Alex Hinton, Nela Navarro and Steve Bronner.

A very special thanks to these extraordinary young women for making this edition a reality: Elena Lesley, Sarah Saleh and our creative designer Claudia Petrilli!

Please do to visit our website:

<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/center-study-genocide-conflict-resolution-and-human-rights/cghr-meeting-tomorrows-challenges-today>

NOTE: In Spring 2012, an Arabic edition of this e-zine will be made available to our brothers and sisters in the Pan-Arab world.

Shukran!
Mohamed Alsiadi
Director, US-MidEast Dialogue Project
Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights

Rutgers Professor Highlights Muslim Opposition to Fundamentalism

Elena Lesley

When Professor Karima Bennoune was a young girl in Algeria, she witnessed her father receive numerous death threats, including the message “Death to Bennoune!” that an anonymous vandal scrawled on the family’s mailbox.



Graffiti in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, where one young man’s desperate act of self-immolation launched the “Arab Spring.” Photo courtesy of Karima Bennoune.

A champion of human rights and vocal critic of both the Algerian government and of Islamic fundamentalists, Professor Mafoud Bennoune had many enemies. While he managed to survive the ongoing conflict in Algeria during the 1990s, one of the family’s neighbors was not so lucky – he was killed during an Al-Qaeda bombing of UN headquarters in Algiers.

Such early experiences had a profound effect on Karima Bennoune, a law professor at Rutgers-Newark and CGHR associate whose work has fo-

cus on promotion of international human rights. Honored as the Chancellor’s Distinguished Research Scholar this past spring, Bennoune used the March award ceremony as an opportunity to highlight progressive opposition to fundamentalism in Muslim countries.

She explained that she had recently returned from Tunisia, Algeria and Pakistan, and with the uprisings in North Africa she had to lengthen her lecture title to “A More Courageous Politics: Muslims Confront Fundamentalism ... and Demand Democracy.”

“Muslims speaking out against fundamentalism are everywhere,” she told a packed audience in the Paul Robeson Campus Center. But, she added, they often get less publicity than those with more extreme views.

Although terrorist attacks aimed at non-Muslims often garner greater media exposure, it is Muslims themselves that have paid the highest price for fundamentalism, she explained.

While not all strains of Muslim fundamentalism are the same, she noted, many of these political movements violate human rights through attacks on civilians and targeted assassinations. Moreover, they support an ideology that promotes subordination of women, advocates corporal punishment and quashes freedom of expression.

Fundamentalist movements have a number of external and internal causes, Bennoune explained, such as colonial histories, lack of democracy and Cold War support for fundamentalists willing to fight the Soviet Union. Moreover, they have been

FUNDAMENTALISM

buoyed by feelings of global humiliation. Bennoune cited the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which has been a persistent flashpoint and source of alienation for Muslims internationally. She described her recent experience crossing Israel’s security wall and how she became trapped for 40 minutes in a cage-like structure.

“This is not the sort of treatment that promotes a decrease in fundamentalism,” she said. But she cautioned that Western liberals should not support religious extremists as challengers of imperialism and champions of the oppressed.

On the other end of the political spectrum, she noted that more conservative forces in the U.S. have used “the specter of Islamist ascent to justify quashing of democratic movements.”

While such a threat cannot be entirely dismissed, Bennoune said she tries to approach recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa with an attitude of “optimistic vigilance.”

“Muslims speaking out against fundamentalism are everywhere, but they often get less publicity than those with more extreme views.”



Tunisians demanding reform on hunger strike in March of 2011. Photo courtesy of Karima Bennoune.

Unrest in the Land of the Pharaohs: Examining Post-Revolutionary Chaos in Egypt

Sarah Saleh

“But when the dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret.”- Alan Paton, “Cry, the Beloved Country”

After 30 long years of oppression, Egyptians finally freed themselves this past January from a long and numbing reign of corruption. Many international observers looked favorably on the relatively non-violent uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak. President Barack Obama called it a revolution “where we had the privilege to witness history taking place,” while Wisconsin’s public workers held up “fight like an Egyptian” signs in protest against proposed state budget cuts. And like an echoing church bell, Arab countries across the region sounded in protest.

But no one, not even the Egyptians, were ready for the consequence of bringing down a dictator — chaos. In trying to understand what is happening on the ground in Egypt, it is useful to draw from behavioral psychological concepts. These can help explain the chaos, which manifested itself in the form of gangs terrorizing the streets of Egypt and a lack of respect for previous institutions of authority — a situation that has even made some Egyptians regret the revolution.

Abraham Maslow, a leading Humanistic Psychologist, developed a theory of human behavior known as the hierarchy of needs, which consists of six stages. It begins with basic needs for survival such as food, water, and shelter and ends with self-transcendence, which is finding meaning in one’s life and living for a greater purpose outside of oneself. Maslow believed that these needs are hierarchal, and that one cannot reach a proceeding stage without having completely fulfilled the one before it. Many of the youth who started the revolution on January 25, 2011 were middle class and well educated. They were financially, emotionally, and socially secure and so they were able to reach the sixth and final level on Maslow’s hierarchy, self-transcendence. So why did the revolution spiral into chaos and where on his hierarchy would Maslow place the gangs, criminal opportunists, and those regretful of the revolution?

Many of the gangs are composed of the extremely poor members of Egyptian society; these are people preoccupied with putting food on the table rather than shaping the future of Egypt. This does not mean that they are less patriotic than those who protested, but it is hard to think about a future when one has no present. Some were even so desperate for money that they were paid off by Mubarak’s loyalists to protest in his favor against the revolutionaries. As a matter of fact, Mubarak is now on trial for — among many other things — sending out civilians on horses and camels to attack and injure the protesters in Tahrir Square.

And what about those who have dared to assault the ones ostensibly serving the public good, like police officers? When my father traveled to visit his mother in Egypt this March following the revo-

PSYCHOLOGY & REVOLUTION

lution, he witnessed a driver verbally assaulting a police officer at a traffic light. The driver wanted to hit the officer because he dared to stop him at a red light. In another incident reported on Egyptian satellite TV, a microbus driver unjustly assaulted a police officer in the street while he was directing traffic. This apparent hatred toward the Egyptian police is in part due to 30 years of police brutality, but such unlawful attacks and destruction of public property also sheds light on the perpetrators’ sense of morality.

American Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg believed that humans pass through three basic stages of moral development; pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Pre-conventional morality applies to early life, where a person obeys rules to avoid punishment or to gain reward. Conventional morality applies to adolescence, in which one starts to care for others and follow the law because it is a social norm to do so. Post-conventional morality is reached as one self-defines what is right and wrong based on basic ethical principles. Unfortunately, in dictatorial regimes where the population is kept in line through fear and intimidation, people often do not have the opportunity to develop and internalize a more personal sense of morality.

According to Rutgers Psychology Professor Sally Cerny, “this same thing happened in Yugoslavia

as well. People would never develop their own sense of morality if they never had to control themselves, but were forced into control instead. A meaning morality needs to grow from within.” Thus when there was no one to fear anymore, some citizens took advantage of the lawlessness.

The unrest in the country has caused some people to doubt the revolution, its future, and whether or not Egypt can change. A sense of learned helplessness, another psychological concept, where people believe that they have no control over their situations, is slowly creeping into the populace again. Once more, hope and confidence is giving in to fear.

Yet Egyptians must realize that when elections do come, no matter what the outcome, it will be the people themselves — not a regime or a president — that have decided it.



A security officer stands near the entrance to Abu Simbel, one of the southernmost Pharonic ruins in Egypt. Courtesy of Alex Wamboldt.

Deposing Dictators, from Belgrade to Cairo

Elena Lesley

Humor is one of the many tools citizen activists can use to bring down a dictator, pro-democracy advocate Srdja Popovic told a Rutgers-Newark audience last spring.



Members of the Serbian youth movement Otpor!, which has been credited with helping overthrow Slobodan Milosevic. Photo courtesy of Igor Jeremic.

“Mockery undermines authority” and “humor is one of the best cures for fear,” he explained. Which is why Youtube videos ridiculing Muammar Gaddafi and the “carnival-like atmosphere” in Tahrir Square contributed to resistance efforts in Libya and Egypt, respectively, according to Popovic.

“These dictators need fear to stay in power,” he said.

Popovic and other youth activists of the Otpor! movement also used comedic antics in their suc-

cessful struggle against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. It was one of the many resistance strategies they shared with Egyptian activists who came to study at Popovic’s NGO, the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS).

Before eventually helping to launch the revolution that would topple President Hosni Mubarak, representatives from Egypt’s April 6 Youth Movement spent several weeks in Belgrade, reading works by Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., while comparing strategies with Serbian activists.

After Milosevic was ousted from power in 2000, several former Otpor! members founded CANVAS to spread information about nonviolent resistance to potential democracy activists around the world.

Egypt’s recent revolution “was not a spontaneous uprising,” Popovic said. “It was three years in the making.”

Members of what was to become the April 6 Movement created a Facebook group in 2008 to support striking industrial workers in the town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra. They went on to stage pro-democracy demonstrations and to maintain a vigorous online debate about the situation in Egypt. They also reached out to CANVAS.

After undergoing training with Popovic’s NGO, they returned to Egypt “with videos and teaching materials,” he said. And they put what they had learned into practice.

Drawing on principles of unity, preparation and nonviolent discipline, members of the Egyptian

DEPOSING DICTATORS



Otpor! activists use humor as a tool of nonviolent resistance. Photo courtesy of Andrija Ilic.

revolution managed to sway international opinion toward their cause.

The “people of the Egyptian revolution rewrote the rules on unity,” Popovic said. They even discarded many of the individual group symbols of revolutionary factions in favor of the Egyptian

flag. They also worked to bring together Egyptians of different religions, to show the world they “are not religious nuts,” Popovic said.

This put Western countries such as the United States in a tough spot, Popovic said, forced to choose between their client dictators and the values of human rights and liberty.

For decades, we have been living “under the completely wrong impression of what the Middle East is,” Popovic said. Westerners have believed they had only two choices – authoritarianism or extremism.

Although Egyptians still have a tremendous amount of work ahead of them, he added, “the young people of the Middle East have awakened and realized they have power.”



Otpor! activists. Photo courtesy of Viktor Sekularac.

Features

Libya and the “Responsibility to Protect”

James Chambers

When she was a young girl in Libya, Amena watched the executions of academic dissidents that were broadcast on TV every year. She was taught that, for her own safety, she should never publicly criticize General Muammar Gaddafi.

“Speaking as a 100 percent American and a 100 percent Libyan, with grandfathers who were U.S. Marines and grandfathers who were Libyan farmers ... I have never been so happy to see my mother’s country bomb my father’s country,” Amena said of the U.N. intervention in Libya during a Rutgers forum held in April. She explained that, though Libyans feel that a ground force invasion would have delegitimized their revolution, they realized that air support was necessary.

Amena, whose last name was withheld out of safety concerns, was one of the speakers featured in a panel discussion organized by the Rutgers-Newark International Law Society and Federalist Society. “The Arab Spring: What Role Should the U.S. and U.N. Play?” gave professors and regional experts a forum to weigh the pros and cons of international intervention and to discuss the implications of U.S. involvement in Libya moving forward.

Law Professor Karima Bennoune, who had recently returned from a trip to Algeria to observe and report on anti-government protests, told the audience that it was important to realize that the



“Arab Spring” movements were inspired not by fundamentalism, but a secular appeal for political reform and universal human rights. She said we should try to develop direct relationships with the people fighting for reform, and consider these movements not as geo-political/strategical issues, but as human rights ones.

“Speaking as a 100 percent American and a 100 percent Libyan, with grandfathers who were U.S. Marines and grandfathers who were Libyan farmers... I have never been so happy to see my mother’s country bomb my father’s country.”

LIBYA AND R2P



She said she sees this period as a “moment of hope,” one in which we can develop an entirely new relationship with the Middle East.

Jared Genser also said the U.S. should support peoples’ aspirations for freedom in Libya. A human rights lawyer who heads an organization dedicated to freeing prisoners of conscience, Genser focused on the Libya intervention in the

context of the emerging “responsibility to protect” doctrine.

While for years dictators used state sovereignty as a shield against international criticism of domestic human rights abuses, the R2P norm contends that sovereignty is a responsibility, not a privilege. While it has not yet been codified into law, it has been used as a tool to advocate international interventions such as the one in Libya. Defense and Homeland Security expert James Carafano had a somewhat different take on the intervention, expressing doubts as to whether international actions in Libya were suitable or sustainable. He said he believes that any intervention that is not practical is also not moral.



Skulls and the clothes of victims in Murambi, Rwanda. The failure of the international community to prevent genocide in Rwanda served as one of the catalysts for creation of the R2P doctrine. Photos courtesy of Julie Dermansky.

The Music of Hope, Peace and Resistance

Mohamed Alsiadi and Nela Navarro

C GHR is very honored to have the opportunity to speak with a great musician and also someone who is a dear friend, Malek Jandali. It is fitting that we have the opportunity to interview Malek for this special edition at a time when our brothers and sisters in the Pan-Arab project for peace, hope and freedom have launched the so-called “Arab Spring.” Malek Jandali is a Syrian-American pianist and composer born in Germany to Syrian parents. Malek’s music, while global and versatile, is informed by his deep love for Arabic music, which he delicately incorporates into his compositions. Malek has fans throughout the world and he travels frequently to play for audiences who deeply appreciate the work of a master who so brilliantly creates “an original blend of civilizations,” as his website notes.

Most recently, Malek has been in the spotlight not only for his extraordinary musical talents, but also because he dared to support his people in their desire for human dignity. Malek composed the song “Watani Ana” (“I am my homeland”), available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjqR7H6YumE>. It was inspired and written for the people of Syria and for all the people of the world who dream of hope, beauty and freedom.

However, Malek has paid a heavy price for embracing those whose voices are being silenced. His parents were brutally threatened, beaten and forced to flee Syria. But Malek, in his character-



Photo courtesy of www.malekjandali.com.

istically modest demeanor, does not focus on what he and his family have suffered. Instead, he reminds us of the bravery of ordinary Syrians who risk their lives every day in search of the freedoms that many of us take for granted. Malek has recently been named as recipient of the 2011 Freedom of Expression Award from The Council on American-Islamic Relations – Los Angeles.

We are grateful that our friend and brother Malek is with us today to share his story with The Humanist. Shukran Malek and Shukran to the people of Syria for their bravery and their hope.

MUSIC OF HOPE

What prompted you to write the lyrics and compose the music for “I am my homeland?”

Art is about beauty, truth and freedom. The role of an artist is to be the true voice of the people and mirror the reality on the ground. I composed “I am my homeland” to support all people, anytime, anywhere, in their noble, peaceful quest for liberty and human rights.

What is the message of your song?

The message of my song is universal and my role as an artist is to spread the message of peace, harmony and love through music. I have the responsibility to ensure that the voice of the people is being heard, and is not tainted with fear or oppression.

What impact do you think your song has had, both here and in Syria?

The Syrian people have taught me and the world lessons in courage, especially those who have sacrificed their lives while chanting for freedom and dignity. I hope that my five-minute song provided them some comfort and support. I believe that this simple song helped in building a musical bridge between the Arab Spring’s peaceful revolution and the American people who are now more aware of the atrocities committed by the Assad regime against the innocent Syrians.

You are one of very few composers/musicians speaking out against Assad’s regime. Why is that the case?

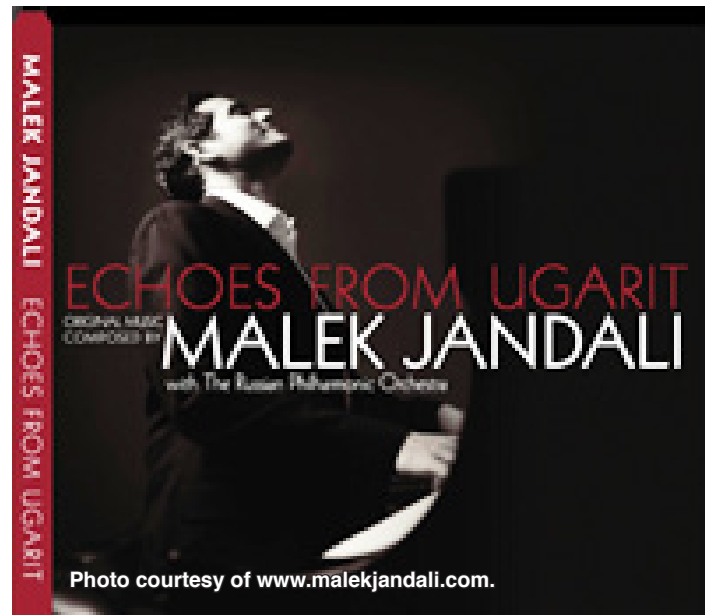
In Syria, all artists are limited in one way or another. The government controls all aspects of the arts and media, and therefore we lack true, free artistic expression. This strategy restricts the advancement of artists and results in hollow, fictitious art. In short, when there is no freedom, there is no true art. This brutal regime also controls people abroad through intimidation and illegal tactics by staff of Syrian embassies from Washington, DC to London. One other reason is because this dictatorship managed to assign a last name to our “homeland” calling it “Syria Al-Assad” as if it’s his own private property! This resulted in generations of people who are loyal to this term becoming automatically loyal to the dictator who hijacked their freedom and human rights. I am a free American-Syrian artist and my homeland is Syria not “Syria Al-Assad.”

The song “Watani Ana” brought great trauma to your family. Do you think Syria can achieve the freedom and peace your song speaks of?

Every day, the brave people in Syria are faced with atrocities and crimes that are much more vicious than the attack on my parents. The kidnapping, torture and murders of thousands of innocent civilians, including women, children and even babies, is nothing short of crimes against humanity. The first peace treaty in human history was recorded in Homs, Syria at the battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC when the Syrian people chose love and peace over hatred and war. Today, this free spirit of love and freedom is alive again after thousands of years. All Syrians, regardless of their religion, ethnic background or race are marching for freedom similar to what the American people and the French people did when they demanded their beautiful freedom that we are enjoying today. The time has come for the Syrian people and we are paying a very high price. The people in Syria know that freedom is never free but the beat of freedom is unstoppable and the voice of the people will never be silenced again.

What is next for you?

My journey will continue in my upcoming album “Emessa” (the Roman name of the city of Homs), which will reflect the historical events of the peaceful Syrian revolution. I just came back from Moscow after recording my new album with the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. I will dedicate this album to the Syrian people, especially in Homs since the most number of martyrs so far have been from this city of peace.



Your elderly parents were forced to flee Syria. How do your parents feel about the song now?

My beloved parents loved the song prior to my release date on April 17, the Independence Day of Syria. Today, after the brutal attack by Syrian government security forces, they don't just love it – they adore it. My courageous mother and wise father told me that this assault is worth at least one song of yours so keep going son. This was a source of both motivation and inspiration from the two most important people in my life.

“In Syria, all artists are limited in one way or another. The government controls all aspects of the arts and media, and therefore we lack true, free artistic expression. This strategy restricts the advancement of artists and results in hollow, fictitious art. In short, when there is no freedom, there is no true art.”

MUSIC OF HOPE

Why do you think your song scared the Syrian government so much?

This regime has proven to the world that it is incapable of true, meaningful dialogue and reform, and is prepared to eradicate any semblance of opposition, even peaceful demonstrations. When this regime realized that they could not stop the universal message of peace and humanity, they resorted to actual violence against my family and murdered over 3,000 innocent Syrians.

“The first peace treaty in human history was recorded in Homs, Syria at the battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC when the Syrian people chose love and peace over hatred and war. Today, this free spirit of love and freedom is alive again after thousands of years.”

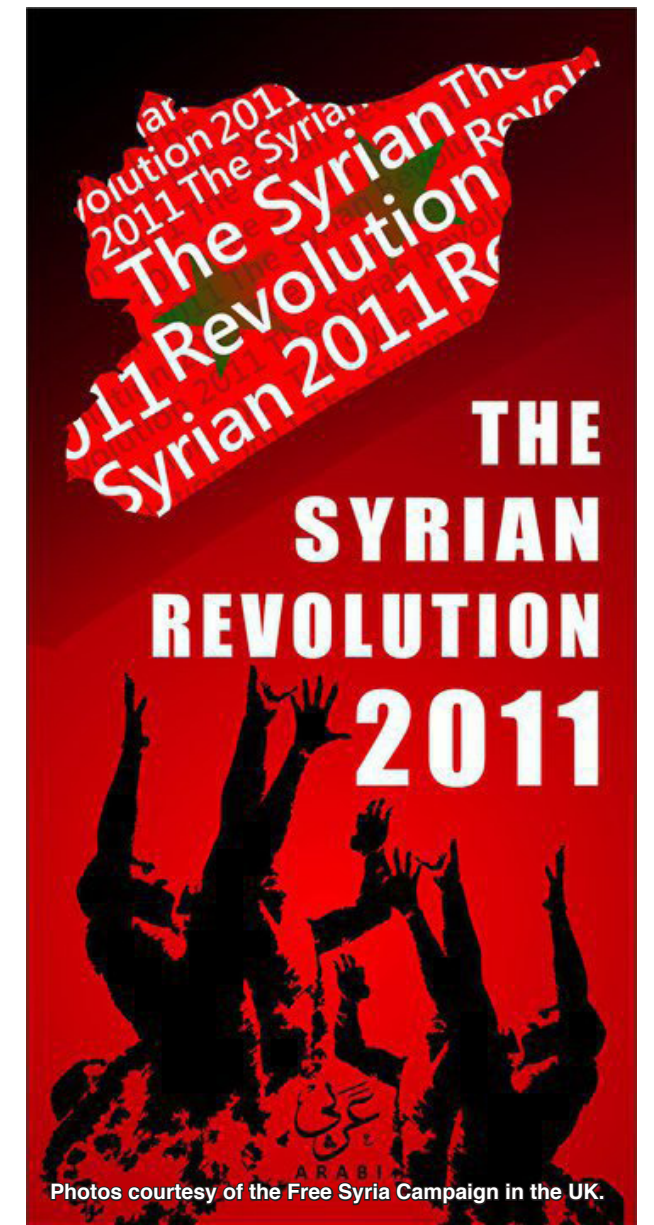
Do you think that peaceful revolution in Syria will succeed?

Definitely. Syria will triumph by the will of the people. The Arab Spring reached Syria and dictatorship, in any form, will no longer be tolerated in the region. Music is a universal language that unites all people and we are already witnessing an increase in artistic expression, especially in music and songs. This is largely due to the fact that the Assad regime has already collapsed and lost legitimacy with the Syrian people and the world at large. Soon we will be hearing the music of celebration and victory, and I look forward to sharing my music in a more beautiful and free Syria.

Who do you dedicate your music to?

I always dedicate my music to you, the listener. May you find harmony, love and peace.

<http://www.malekjandali.com/>



Building Unity through Heavy Metal in the Middle East

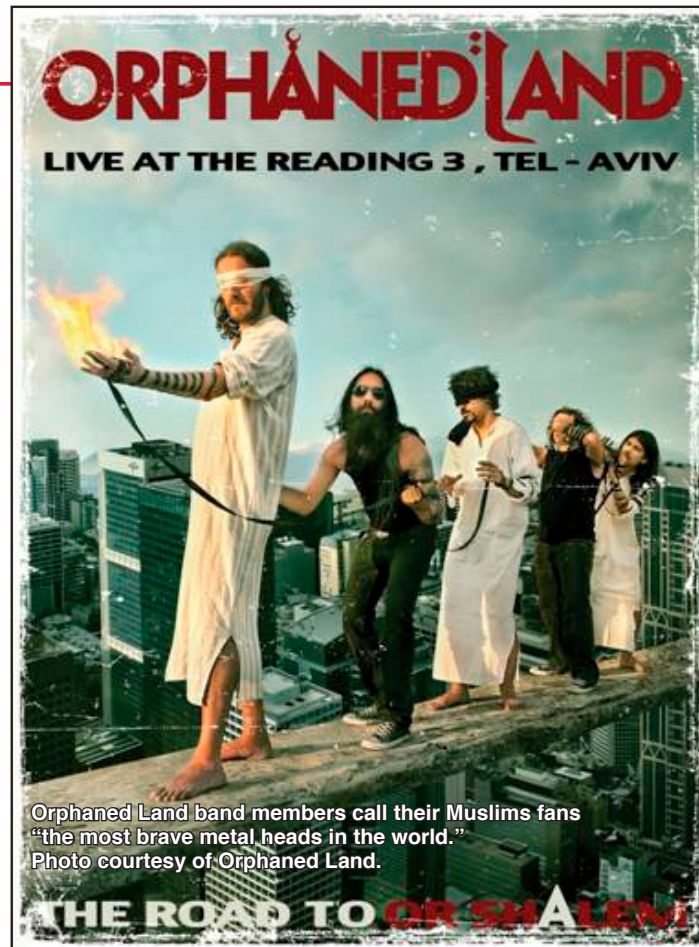
Hassan Muhammad

The price for becoming a hardcore heavy metal fan in some Middle Eastern countries: Jail time. Yet that hasn't stopped metal enthusiasts from openly listening to musician Black Emperor Jomezai in Pakistan, or showing off tattoo tributes to the Israeli band Orphaned Land in Egypt.

Persecution of those who embrace heavy metal is common "in Arab and Islamic cultures unfortunately, and I'm happy that there are people over there who are brave enough to do what their heart tells them is right," Orphaned Land guitarist Matti Svatzky told me during a recent interview. "I think that their braveness is doubled when it comes to listening to us, because we are not only a metal band, but a band that is from an enemy country. I'm sure that people judge them harshly for it, and that they have to stand for their rights much stronger than people in other parts of the world."

And while some people may associate heavy metal with Satanism and violence, many artists in the Middle East claim their music is a vehicle for cultural unity.

Orphaned Land has made its latest album a free download to all Arab countries where it is illegal to listen to metal. Their mission statement posted on the download website reads: "For years I was taught to hate Muslims and was told how much they hate me and my nation. I was sure Israelis and Arabs, Jews and Muslims, could never live in peace. But then something happened, a small



movement rose up from the music that taught me more than any teacher, guru, rabbi or sheik could ever do, it is the music of my band: Orphaned Land... We consider you, our Muslim fans, to be the most brave metal heads in the world."

Black Emperor Jomezai describes playing black metal (which is often considered more anti-religious than heavy metal) in his country like being in a "warzone." In Pakistan, fans must be brave and vigilant to openly listen to heavy metal, and are thought of as dissenters or "troubled youth." According to Jomezai, "metal is just a shoulder for the lost youth of today. I'd rather see people banging their head to music than banging it on the bars of a jail cell where their frustrations led them to." Jomezai lives deep in the mountainous lands of Balochistan and has formed the one-man metal band Taarma, which means "darkness" in the ancient Brahvi language.

BUILDING UNITY

Black metal has long had a reputation for being anti-religious due to the various controversies between the Catholic Church and Norwegian metal musicians; however, Jomezai remains true to his religion and is a practicing Muslim. Unlike other black metal musicians, his music expresses feelings of "life, death, nature, life after death, and subjects that only deal with reality."

Such freedom of expression is more limited in some countries than in others. Although metal is slowly spreading in the Middle East, it is still repressed in countries such as Libya, Algeria, and Pakistan.

In Turkey, a highly democratic country, heavy metal is not much of a taboo anymore. I spoke to the prominent Turkish musician, Soner Canözer of the Gothic/Folk Metal band Almôra, about this; "Turkey is a (secular) democratic republic. Because of this, I think there are some sociological differences between Turkey and other Muslim majority countries. You can't feel any religion-impact in workaday life in Turkey." Soner said that "music gives hope, power, enthusiasm, grief, fun and so many different feelings to people... Because music sets our souls free... music is celestial."

According to bands like Orphaned Land, music can even help foster peace and understanding.

"I think that art in general is a very powerful tool when it gets to sharing ideas and thoughts," Svatzky told me. "It doesn't matter if it's metal or music in general. Many religious people are often afraid of it, and they ban the followers from getting exposed to content that might make people change their points of view."

<http://www.metalarmyinternational.com>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUi1yf97paw>



When I asked Jomezai what metal means to him, he replied, "it means a freedom to express the human pains entangled deep within the soul of an individual through musical arts."

Traveling Exhibit Showcases Muslim Inventors

Khaled Hussein

Contrary to popular belief, human society never really witnessed a “dark age.” While modern scholars believe that Europe experienced a period of intellectual and scientific stagnation from the 5th to 15th centuries, Islamic civilizations actually thrived during this time, considered the “Muslim Golden Era.”

“1001 Inventions,” a traveling exhibition created by the nonprofit Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation, strives to educate the public about the scientific achievements of this period in Muslim history. I had an opportunity to visit the exhibit last April at the New York Hall of Science in Queens and was amazed by the people of all ages and backgrounds who had come to learn about this “Golden Era.”

The exhibit showcased inventions in a number of fields, ranging from medicine to photography. These inventions set the standard for technological advancement and established foundations on which civilizations could build. Cutting-edge surgeon Al-Zahrawi (936-1013) introduced over 200 surgical tools that revolutionized medical science. These tools are still used in today’s hospitals. Ibn Al-Haitham (965-1039) created the camera obscura, an optical device that used shutters and projected an image of its surroundings onto a screen. This early pinhole camera was a precursor to the cameras we use today.

One of the most revolutionary inventions was Al-Jazari’s “Reciprocating Pump,” a triumph of engineering that helped set the groundwork for running water systems. Al-Jazari used a crank, which transmits rotary motion into linear motion. His machines were able to transport huge amounts of water over large distances. “It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of Al-Jazari’s work in the history of engineering. It provides a wealth of instructions for design, manufacture and assembly of machines,” British engineer Donald Hill was quoted as saying in the exhibit.



A museum staff member demonstrates several inventions on display. Photo courtesy of 1001Inventions.com.

The exhibit’s main attraction was Al-Jazari’s magnificent and intricate “Elephant Clock.” Al-Jazari incorporated elements from a number of different cultures into its design – an elephant represents Indian and African cultures, a dragon symbolizes Chinese culture, a phoenix represents Egyptian culture, a man in a turban signifies Islamic culture and hidden water technology represents ancient Greek culture. The clock uses ingenious engineering to make a sound every half hour. The timing mechanism relies on a perforated bowl in a water tank inside the elephant, which slowly sinks every half hour. As the bowl sinks, it tugs

MUSLIM INVENTIONS

on a string that activates a series of pulleys and produces a dramatic chain of events. For a detailed explanation and a brief animation check the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SflvgXhzu7c>

“1001 Inventions” opened many peoples’ eyes to the contributions of Muslim civilizations. Countless other creations were presented in the exhibit, such as the first globe, cryptology, the discovery of coffee beans, the pen, and much more. It is sad to think that this thousand years of invention

and innovation is not better known in much of the Western world. With the aid of videos, demonstrations, and young voices, we can raise awareness about the major contributions Muslim societies have made to human civilization.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZDe9DCx7Wk>



Al-Jazari’s Elephant Clock. Photo courtesy of 1001Inventions.com.

The Poetry of Revolution

Nouredine Sadik

To launch the “Arab Spring” revolutions, it took courage, years of work by advocates of democracy and human rights, and, perhaps surprisingly to some, poetry. It was inspiring to see poetry used to help create change; this literary form has often been used in history as a tool for creating unity, voicing political aspirations, and excoriating governments and leaders. Looking at slogans that were chanted in protest

during the recent uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, one can easily identify poetic characteristics.

One famous poem that inspired protests throughout the region is called “Will to Live,” which was written by Abu-Al-Qasim Al Shabby during the Tunisian struggle against French colonialism in the early 20th century. In this poem, Al Shabby tried to push the Tunisians to revolt against the French in order to gain their freedom:

*“If the people will to live
Providence is destined to favorably respond
And night will be destined to fold
And the chains are must to be broken
And he who has not embraced the love of life
Will evaporate in its atmosphere and
disappear”*

These lines captured the emotions of millions of Arabs in their most recent struggle for democracy, and proved the power of poetry and the influence of words in Arab societies.

And since youth have played such a dominant role in recent uprisings, it should come as no surprise that some young poets were thrust into the spotlight and used their talent to fight against corruption and injustice. Egyptian Hesham Al Gakh is one of the young artists that used poetry as subversive chants against the government. During the revolution, Hesham competed against other Arab poets to win the title of “the prince of poets,” which was aired on one of the Arabic Satellite channels. In his famous poem, “Mashhad Min Maydani Al-Tahrir,” or “A View from Libera-

tion Square,” which was recited while millions of Egyptians demanded the resignation of former president Hosni Mubarak, Hesham announced that a new Egypt was just being born:

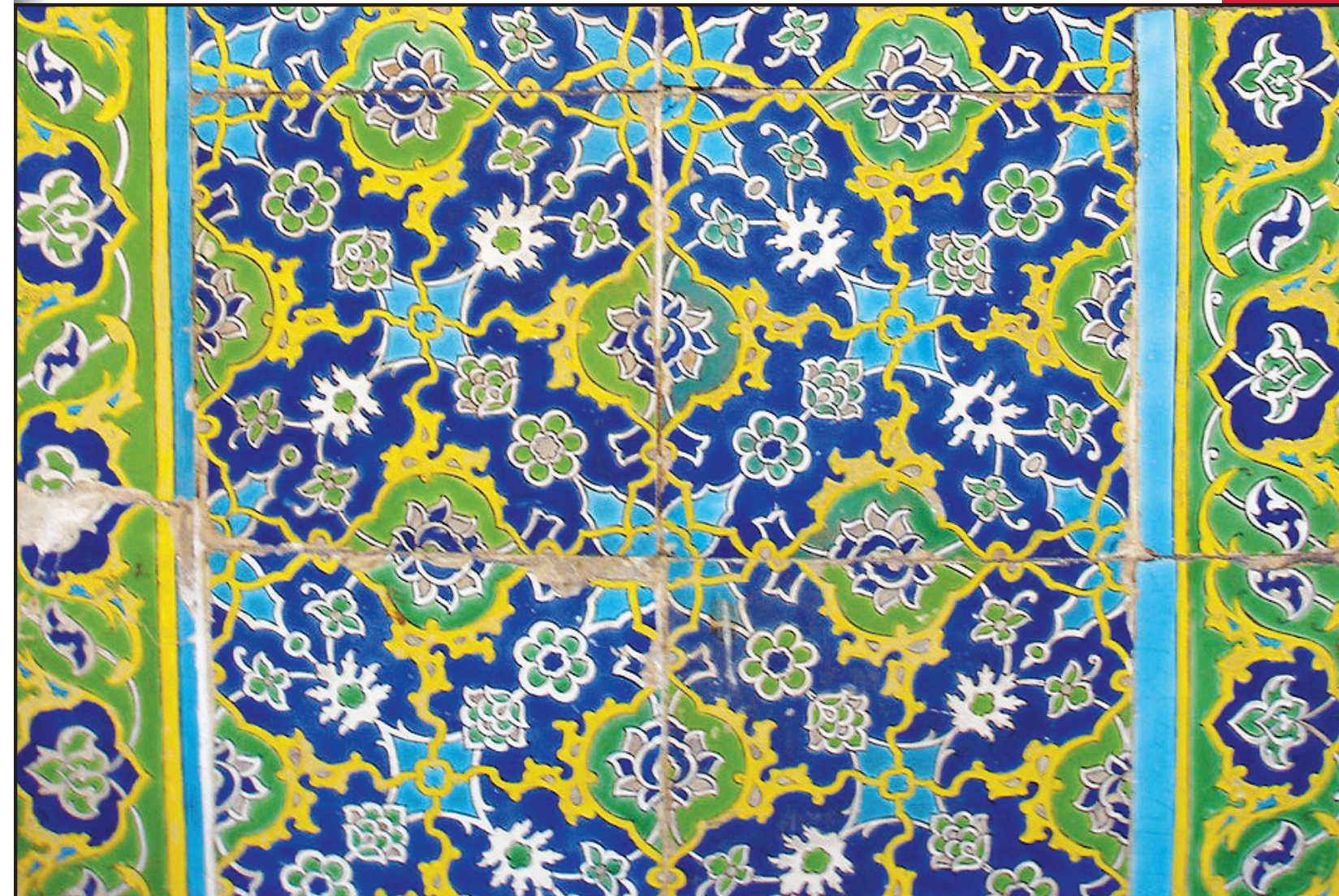
*“Put away all of your old poems
Tear apart all of your old notebooks
And write for Egypt today the poetry that
she deserves
No longer will silence impose its fear
So write that Egypt and its people are
the peace of the Nile”*

As archaic as it may seem, poetry still matters. It is a powerful means of expression, and revolts around the region have used lines from their literary traditions to evocatively and efficiently express their grievances and elaborate their goals.

POETRY



A beggar woman walks in front of a mural in Cairo. Photo courtesy of Julie Dermansky.



Kabul: A Fashion Timeline

Halema Wali

U.S. news sources generally portray the lives of Afghani women in a negative light – frequent topics raised in stories include attempted suicides through self-immolation, domestic abuse and forced wearing of the *burqa*.



An engagement party in Kabul during the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Halema Wali

While it is true that such injustices do occur, Afghani women have not always lived in such a repressive atmosphere. When my mother was a schoolgirl in Kabul during the 1970s, teenagers tried to copy the latest international fashions and the *burqa* was reserved only for older, more traditional women.

It was only later, under the restrictive Taliban, that women's dress became such a flashpoint for political and religious anxieties.

My mother and grandmother have told me that when they lived in Kabul during the 1970s, young girls were required to wear school uniforms that consisted of a blouse, a black scarf, stockings, and a skirt. Yes, you read that correctly, a skirt.

“My skirt came to my knees, but we would wear black stockings with it. I would wear black flats with them,” my mother said. “No one of my age wore *burqas*.”

However, my grandmother did wear a *burqa*, a long, usually blue, head-to-toe covering with only an opening for the eyes.

Outside of school, fashion within the capital was very modern and influenced by American styles. Men and women wore jeans and colorful apparel. Women wore heels and sandals. Even hairstyles were American-influenced.

In Kabul, women's dress varied depending on the kind of family they came from, my mother said. The more liberal the family, the more westernized the clothing. Some women didn't even wear headscarves, very much a rarity in Afghanistan today. Often these were educated women who had post-graduate education and whose families were successful and wealthy.

Throughout the 1980s, fashion in Kabul was continuously influenced by western cultures. It is only when religious clerics came to power within the government that dramatic changes occurred. The Taliban outlawed heels, colorful clothing, and skirts; essentially all types of clothing that resembled westernized fashion. All women were also forced to wear the *burqa*.



A beggar woman wearing a burqa in Kabul in 2010. Photo courtesy of Halema Wali.

When the Taliban was finally overthrown, women were able to wear more comfortable headscarves, but the diversity in head coverings is limited. Many modernized women of the 1980s had fled before

KABUL FASHION

the Taliban came to power, leaving fashion up to the less fortunate and less educated members of the population.

In Kabul today, the color and liveliness has slowly returned, with fashion drawing influence from neighboring Pakistan and India. Clothing stores carry bright *shalwar kameez*'s – the traditional dress of Pakistan – as well as skinny jeans and blouses. In the wake of the Taliban, a number of different forms of personal expression are slowly returning to Kabul, including the re-modernization of fashion.



A recent engagement party with traditional Afghani dress. Photo courtesy of Halema Wali.

Lebanese Designers a New Favorite on Red Carpet

Zainab Ayoub and Hoda Abdelwahab

Reem Acra's discovery by the fashion world reads like a sartorial fairytale. A fashion editor spotted her at a party wearing one of her own designs — a dress featuring embroidery from her mother's dining room tablecloth — and insisted she showcase her work. Shortly after, the Lebanese-born designer was studying in the fashion capitals of New York and Paris, and creating gowns for celebrities and royals.

She believes that celebrities choose her for red carpet dresses because she can “immediately understand what works for their body, occasion, and personality.” One of her most famous pieces is the strapless scarlet gown that she designed for Jill Biden during the inauguration.

Despite her success, she does not forget her early influences: “My mother was and is a major style icon for me,” Acra said in an interview. “Her sense of style and love of creativity and art influenced me greatly.”

Acra isn't the only Lebanese designer making news these days. In 2002, Halle Berry accepted her Academy Award in an Elie Saab original, and Beyonce has sported Saab's designs at events such as the Golden Globes.

Lebanese designer Zuhair Murad has also made a name for himself. His glittering, elegant style has become a celebrity favorite, with his dresses being worn by Kim Kardashian, Christina Aguilera, Katy Perry, Fergie, Shakira, and many others.

Also, names like Rania Salibi — 2010 winner of the Oscar Designer Challenge — and George Chakra — designer of the dress Helen Mirren wore to the Academy Awards in 2007 — are well-known to red carpet celebrities.



Halle Berry wearing Reem Acra. Courtesy of www.reemacra.com.

LEBANESE DESIGNERS



One of Lebanese designer Reem Acra's gowns. Courtesy of www.reemacra.com.

also the embroidery. It's these small details that make a difference.”

With contributions from Wassila Ayoub.

“When you see an Arab dress on the red carpet, you know it,” Amine Jreissati, fashion editor for Marie Claire Arabia, told the Wall Street Journal in 2009. “The culture is in the dress, in the cut and the shape, with layers and movement. And there's

Miral: A Meandering, Uncomplicated Rendering of the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

Y-Vonne Hutchinson

The film *Miral* opens with the following quote: “Miral is a red flower. It grows on the side of the road. You’ve probably seen millions of them.” Presumably meant to frame the story and highlight the tragic ubiquity of the film’s main character, the statement, unfortunately, falls flat. Its link to the protagonist’s storyline is never fully explored and its use highlights the core problem of the film. Focused primarily on beautiful camerawork and hypnotic imagery, *Miral* fails to tell a cohesive story. Instead, it feels like a series of hastily strung together vignettes, which hint at the presence of a larger meaning, but never quite get around to expressing it.

While some critics have charged *Miral* with taking an anti-Israeli stance, the more striking failure of director Julian Schnabel is his inability to take a stronger stand on the story.

Based on the novel of the same name by screenwriter Rula Jabreal, *Miral* follows the lives of four Palestinian women – the real-life Hind al-Husseini (Hiam Abbass) who during the Arab-Israeli War starts the orphanage that later will become Miral’s home; Nadia, who escapes an abusive home only to find herself in prison; Nadia’s cellmate and unlikely revolutionary Fatima, and Nadia’s daughter, the title character, Miral. The film focuses on Miral, who must choose between pursuing her education at Hind’s orphanage and joining her boyfriend in violent protest.

Miral is intended to be epic, spanning over four decades, from the end of the British mandate to the signing of the Oslo Accords, punctuated with leaps in time that highlight important historical events. Ultimately, the story feels tacked on to the flimsy historical framework. Rather than enriching the film’s context or furthering the plot, historical interludes serve primarily as jarring distractions, which compete for the viewer’s attention. Quiz-zically, the film completely glosses over those events crucial to the story, such as the Deir Has-sin massacre and the declaration of Palestinian statehood. Even more detrimentally, the political violence that is presented feels almost gratuitous, as it actually has a relatively small impact on the main characters’ lives. They see bloodshed, witness the horrific nature of the conflict, and are forced to deal with some of its consequences; but these intrusions never amount to a level of pro-found personal tragedy. Consequently, their need to retaliate radically seems unmotivated, dispro-portionate to the harm that they have personally suffered. In the context of the war, they, like the audience, are relegated to an observational role.

The film is directed by former painter Schnabel, whose previous works include *Basquiat*, about the former graffiti artist and neo-expressionist painter, and *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, based on the memoir of Jean-Dominique Bauby, a magazine editor who suffered from “Locked-in Syndrome” following a stroke. Like his previous films, *Miral* is based on the life of an actual person, screenwriter Jabreal. However, unlike he has previously, Schnabel fails to use his artistic visual style to give life to the internal struggle that his characters face. Instead, he directs his artistic focus toward the ongoing conflict. Schnabel is an



emotional, intuitive director and the subject of the Arab/Israeli conflict is complex and far-reaching. These two elements working in concert make for a muddled presentation, which is further stymied by stilted dialogue, poor character development, and a meandering plot.

To the extent that the film takes a political stance, it would seem to be pro-Palestinian, with an appeal toward peace thrown in at the end. However, the film’s political and historical content overwhelm Schnabel. His characters are presented as archetypes, their relationships never fully explained or explored. The war is both all-encompassing and uncomplicated. The film shows Is-raelis, on one side, who capriciously use violence to secure their ill-gotten lands; and on the other, perpetually victimized Palestinians, forced to re-taliate. The cursory treatment of history and poor screenwriting result in a conflict that is painted in stark, naïve terms.

The critique that a particular portrayal of conflict is biased is a common one for socio-political films based on true stories. And one-sided portrayals

MIRAL

can be hard to avoid when news reports are transformed into narratives. The film-makers want their audience to be able to identify with the main characters, to ac-tively invest in them, to place themselves in the protagonist’s shoes. Where the instinct of first-world audience members is to distance themselves from actors in a faraway conflict, filmmakers must find a way to bridge the gap. They want the audience not just to sympathize, but to empathize. The temptation, then, is to boil the outer conflict down into simple terms to minimize distraction, make the need for the protagonist’s choice seem inevitable, then draw the audience into the resulting inner conflict. When the film is based on a personal account, subject to personal bias, the danger of unintentional partiality is further amplified.

The tension of *Miral*’s story could have come from not only the divergent choices that she had to make, but from the ambiva-lent nature of the conflict itself. Rather than highlighting the pathology of victimhood, Schabel’s visuals could have been used to shade the characters’ relationships or nuance the conflict. Placing history as a backdrop to the narrative, recognizing the culpability of both sides to the conflict, and committing to character arcs could have made *Miral* a thought-provoking film about the complex lives of women living in a society embroiled in conflict. As it stands, however, this forgettable film stacks up to little more than a missed opportunity.

Myths about Islam

Fatima Sheikh

Many people are quick to assume, judge, and generalize when it comes to Islam. In the past decade, the amount of international attention paid to this religion has skyrocketed, and considering the politically combative atmosphere in which that has happened, many misconceptions have been formed. As a result, Islam is now vastly misunderstood, especially in the Western world.

The word “Allah” suddenly became taboo, with critics of Islam claiming it was the name given to the “Muslims’ God.” Actually, Allah is the transliterated Arabic word for God. “It is exactly the same word which the Jews, in Hebrew, use for God (Eloh) and the word which Jesus Christ used in Aramaic when he prayed to God... Allah is the same God worshiped by Muslims, Christians and Jews,” according to Huma Ahmad, author of the *Top Ten Misconceptions about Islam*. Many people tend to forget that Islam is one of the three Abrahamic religions, all of which share the same monotheistic God — Allah.

Muslims are also accused of being intolerant toward other religions and of not believing in Jesus. In Islam however, Muslims believe that Jesus is a prophet and the Qur’an even chronicles the miracle of his birth in the verses below:

“Behold!” said the angel, ‘God has chosen you, and purified you, and chosen you above the women of all nations. O Mary, God gives you good news of a word from Him whose name shall be

the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, honored in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near to God. He shall speak to the people from his cradle and in maturity, and shall be of the righteous.”

She said: ‘O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?’

He said: ‘Even so; God creates what He will. When He decrees a thing, He says to it, “Be!” and it is.”

(Qur’an 3:42-47).

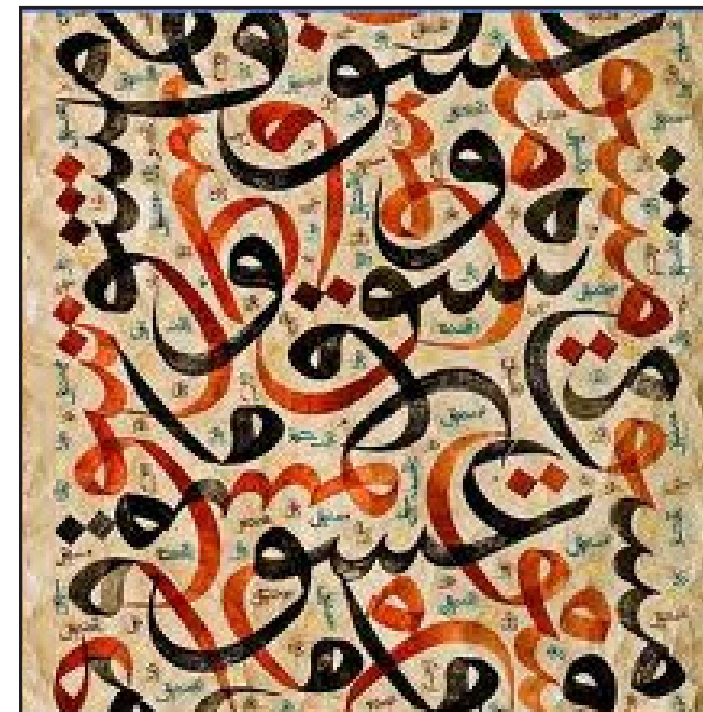
Muslims even believe that it is Jesus, not Mohamed, who will return to earth and gather the believers before the Day of Judgment. In Islam and Judaism however, Jesus is only a prophet — neither the son of God nor God — because the Oneness of God cannot be shared with anyone else.

Another common stereotype is that all Muslims are Arabs and that all Arabs are Muslims. This is socially and politically incorrect! “Only about 18 percent [of Muslims] live in the Arab world and the largest Muslim community is in Indonesia,” Ahmad writes. Muslims are found all over the world and come from all different walks of life, speaking numerous languages and embracing many cultures.

After Sept. 11, 2001, a small, five-letter Arabic word became widely popular — “jihad.” “Many times jihad is mistranslated as ‘Holy War’... the word jihad... means to struggle. At the individual level, jihad primarily refers to the inner struggle of being a person of virtue and submission to God in all aspects of life,” Ahmad writes.

There are three kinds of jihad. The first is rational jihad, which is the struggle to convey the message of God to humankind through informing, understanding, and noble dialogue. The second is economic jihad, which is helping those in need. And the final and third is physical jihad, which involves “armed self-defense, as well as retribution against tyranny, exploitation, and oppression,” according to Ahmad.

With physical jihad comes stringent rules, such as no violence toward civilians, perpetuating justice, respect for religious freedom and accepting peace, all of which must be obeyed.



Another misconception about Islam is that it oppresses women by making them wear a hijab (veil). As it turns out, in Islam hijab is mandated for men and women because “hijab” means a “safeguard” that is supposed to protect humans against indiscipline. The Qur’an states:

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them... And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands...”
(Qur’an 24:30-31).

“In this world where beauty is commoditized, many women are forced to place their self-worth with their looks,” Ahmad writes. The hijab prevents this, allowing a woman to be viewed by her character rather than her physical appearance, while protecting her from the eyes of those with hidden intentions.

Coming into a conversation with a biased attitude and misinformation is never productive if you are trying to get real answers. The best thing to do when you have a question about something is to go straight to the source. If you have questions about Islam, ask Muslims. Don’t hesitate to go to a local mosque, or to ask a Muslim friend. After all, we are all alike in being different.

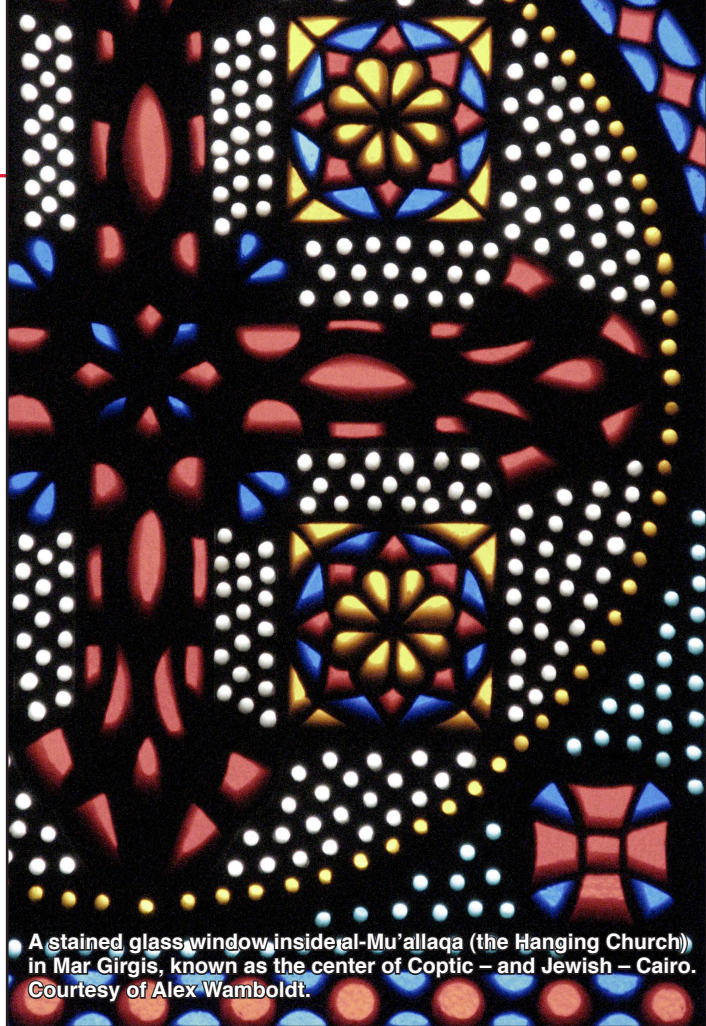
Promoting Religious Understanding at Rutgers

Monica Soliman

Before beginning college at Rutgers, I knew nothing about cultures or religions apart from my own. As a Coptic Christian of Egyptian heritage who had grown up in a relatively insulated community, I found myself overwhelmed by the diversity on the Newark campus.

At first, I had little interest in meeting people from different backgrounds. Although I socialized with various students in my classes, after class was over, I ran back to the same group of Coptic friends I had known for years. Yet, over time, surveying the inadvertent segregation in the Campus Center – where racial and ethnic groups tended to cluster and keep to themselves – I decided I needed to make more of an effort to get to know different kinds of people.

I was particularly intrigued by the Muslim students. Growing up in an American Coptic household, I had heard stories about extremist Muslim groups, killing and discriminating against my fellow Coptic Christians in Egypt. It was safe to say that I believed that some Muslims just didn't like me because I wasn't Muslim. My mother explained to me that in her home city of Cairo she had Muslim neighbors who lived upstairs and downstairs from her. She spent a great deal of time downstairs, because those neighbors treated her like family. However, no matter how friendly my mother and her family were to the upstairs neighbors, they always kept to themselves.



A stained glass window inside al-Mu'allaqa (the Hanging Church) in Mar Girgis, known as the center of Coptic – and Jewish – Cairo. Courtesy of Alex Wamboldt.

Looking at the Campus Center commuters' lounge reminded me of my mom's experience, and the Muslim/Christian Egyptian segregation puzzled me. Everyone seemed comfortable with the way things were and didn't appear motivated to change.

One afternoon I saw two young men playing a familiar card game, so I asked to join them. We exchanged names and nationalities, which made it clear that they were Muslim and that I was Coptic. We played for a few hours and I lost every time, but it was the most fun that I ever had losing. This eventually became a regular scene. I was introduced to many Muslims on campus and just like with my mother, some treated me as family while others kept their distance. I saw myself as their friend, their sister and learned that even with our differences, we can tolerate each other. My goal became to unite Coptics and Muslims, and I'm determined to achieve it.

RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

When the news of the Egyptian revolution reached America, it felt like the start of a new beginning for the country. The citizens — Muslims and Christians — fought and died for justice, equality, and unity. During my Arabic Literature class discussion on the events occurring in Egypt shortly after January 25, 2011, some students didn't want Hosni Mubarak to resign out of fear that an extremist Islamist state would rise in his absence, leading to persecution of religious minorities such as the Coptics. The discussion became heated, and then one classmate raised her hand to speak. After hearing her conviction, I was inspired to share my thoughts and to write this piece. She told the story of Coptics and Muslims uniting in Tahrir Square, each risking their lives

to protect the others while in prayer. This brought me to tears, and I thought to myself what a beautiful sight amid the chaos.

I began wondering, why can't we be like them? Why can't we all sit together on campus? Why must there be a gap between two religions that share the same culture? The point of this article is to plant a seed, to advocate unity, and to inspire others to unite. In the Holy Bible it teaches to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). With love, we can overcome our differences because, as Scottish author Thomas Carlyle wrote, "the soul gives unity to what it looks at with love."



The Coptic Orthodox village church in Deir al-Maimun, Egypt. Courtesy of Alex Wamboldt.

Perspectives

The Life of a Palestinian Student

By *Fatema Sumrein*

When I'm getting ready for school in the morning, my biggest worries generally consist of securing my daily caffeine fix and making sure I don't forget my car keys. I know I am blessed to be an American, but, like everyone, I still complain about the weather, or the terrible traffic I encountered on my way to class.

Too rarely, I stop to think about what life is like for students who don't have the privilege of being in this country. How do they get to school? What are their day-to-day lives like?

To answer these questions and to put my life into perspective, I called my cousin Jawed Ahmed, who is a law school student at Al-Quds University in Palestine. I was amazed by what he told me, and by how much students must endure to get a college degree.

Jawed, who is 24 years old, lives in a small town just outside the city of Ramallah, where getting to school is a nearly impossible task. Yet every day he wakes up, dresses, and heads out to face an army just to get to class.

Jawed told me that he is often late to class because of Israeli checkpoints. Like thousands of other Palestinians, he must wait three or four hours to clear all of the checkpoints, where he is patted down and has his passport checked in the computer system. Depending on the season, the ordeal can be filled with mud, rain or misty winds. In the summer, it is hot, dry and dusty.

Yet the passion to learn and to make something of his life pushes Jawed to go through this humiliating



The Dome of the Rock in the Old City of Jerusalem. Courtesy of Alex Wamboldt.

STUDYING IN PALESTINE



The Israeli West Bank barrier. Courtesy of Fatema Sumrein.

Along with transportation, Jawed has financial concerns. Unlike in our country, financial aid in Palestine is available to very few students. Jawed's older brother, Muad Ahmed, was forced to leave school in order to support his brother's education.

In our society, we can become distracted by superficial things and issues; we think more about what we don't have instead of how much

we do have. When I asked Jawed if he would ever leave his country for a more comfortable life, he definitively answered, "No." He said that, despite all the hardship, his love for Palestine is so strong it means more to him than anything he could ever attain materialistically.

routine every morning. He hopes that, with a law degree, he will one day be able to work to benefit his country.

Like other students, Jawed doesn't have much time for socializing.

"There isn't much time to be social," he told me. "You come to college, go to your lectures and rush home, so you won't get stuck at college."



The author's hometown of Beit Liqya. Courtesy of Fatema Sumrein.



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