A DISCUSSION TOOL KIT: For Individuals, Community Groups and Organizations

“We don’t forget what we came from, and we don’t forget how hard it is and what we have.” —Hassan Faraj

“I am an American, and I want this civilization to continue to grow and to focus on being more enlightened.” —Imad Mahawili

“When I draw, I have no accent.” —Adnan Charara

“Those who do good, do well.” —Judy Habib

“Arab American Stories

“My Egyptian heritage became stronger after the protests. It’s stronger than it used to be … it connected me more with everyone else…” —Esmaeel El Sayed

A DISCUSSION TOOL KIT: For Individuals, Community Groups and Organizations
By celebrating diversity, we find a universal humanity.
Dear Viewer,

When Detroit Public Television approached me to create a television series about Arab Americans, I leaped at the chance. As a second-generation Lebanese American with over 20 years of experience in television and film, I had worked on few projects that related to my ethnic identity, and it was an exciting and timely world for me to explore. I saw the need for Arab Americans to tell their own stories in their own words, and in a medium that commonly misrepresented—or, at best, ignored—the vast majority of Arab Americans leading productive and rewarding lives.

Our priority was to highlight the diversity of the Arab-American experience and, in so doing, I realized we had an opportunity to produce a series that would resonate with Americans of all ethnic backgrounds. By featuring regular people doing extraordinary things, the series engages people on a very personal level. America is a nation of immigrants, and many of the challenges that Arab Americans face are the very same ones all immigrants face. With a cast of interesting and accomplished Arab Americans from all walks of life across the United States, the series highlights the breadth of the Arab-American experience, as well as the broader immigrant experience as it has evolved from generation to generation. By celebrating diversity, we find a universal humanity.

Content is important, but content with impact is even more important. The mission of the series is not only to develop the audience's cultural competence, but also to enable them to go beyond a discussion that is only about ethnic diversity. For example, a high school history teacher who runs for public office has as much to teach about civic engagement in the United States as she does about being a Saudi immigrant. Or an engineer who invents a small wind turbine to help bring electricity to poor and underserved nations can inspire a new generation of engineering students and serve as an example of an Arab American contributing to society’s betterment. In order for the stories to have broad impact, the series is accompanied by an outreach and engagement campaign with national educational and institutional partners in conjunction with the series' national broadcast on public television. The hub of this engagement program is our multimedia website, which will enable us to facilitate community screenings and discussions as well as access study guides that will encourage use of the stories in high school and college curricula.

I look forward to sharing ARAB AMERICAN STORIES, both through its broadcast and its engagement platform, with the public.

Sincerely,

Alicia Sams
Producer, ARAB AMERICAN STORIES
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About the Series

ARAB AMERICAN STORIES is a 13-part series presented by Detroit Public Television that explores the diversity of the Arab-American experience. Hosted by NPR’s Neda Ulaby, each half hour features three short, character-driven documentaries that profile Arab Americans who are making an impact in their community, their profession, their family or the world at large. Featuring a rich array of people from all walks of life, these stories illustrate the complex character of the Arab-American experience. With introductions to artists, scientists, musicians, chefs, actors, businesspeople, cops and teachers, ARAB AMERICAN STORIES portrays a rich tapestry of individuals and experiences that contribute meaningfully to progress and innovation in America.

ARAB AMERICAN STORIES was shot all over the country by a team of independent filmmakers/ producers who brought their varied experience and talents to the stories. The series aired on Detroit Public Television in Spring 2012.
Where Can I See It?
All episodes of ARAB AMERICAN STORIES are available online at:
www.arabamericanstories.org

EPISODE 1: Unexpected Paths
The Arab Americans profiled in this episode have broken from the norm and their own expectations to forge a new path.

EPISODE 2: Bridge Builders
This episode features Arab Americans who navigate differences and build bridges across cultures.

EPISODE 3: Entrepreneurs
America has always been a home for entrepreneurs, and these Arab Americans continue the tradition by building businesses, serving clients and creating jobs.

EPISODE 4: Art & Life
Art and life are inextricably intertwined in the stories of the people featured in this episode.

EPISODE 5: Innovators
The United States prides itself on being a nation of innovators, and the Arab Americans in this episode contribute to advances that set the country apart.

EPISODE 6: Traditions
So much is passed down from generation to generation, and in this episode a younger generation recognizes how their forebears’ experience affects their own lives.

EPISODE 7: Creating a Community
Community is at the heart of American life, and these Arab Americans are building it in their own unique ways.

EPISODE 8: Serving the Nation
The Arab Americans in this episode all have a mission to help the wider community.

EPISODE 9: Expressions
This episode showcases artists who have all found new expression in their work by coming to America.

EPISODE 10: Civic Leaders
The Arab-American immigrants in this episode all feel a responsibility to uphold the precious rights granted to them as American citizens.

EPISODE 11: Artists
These young and talented Arab-American artists are charting their own course in very competitive fields.

EPISODE 12: Lasting Contributions
The Arab Americans featured in this episode have made lasting contributions to American institutions.

EPISODE 13: A New Generation
In this episode, we hear from a new generation of Arab Americans who are making their mark in various fields.

MORE INFORMATION AT WWW.ARABAMERICANSTORIES.ORG
How to Use This Guide

ARAB AMERICAN STORIES offers an excellent opportunity to celebrate the diversity of the Arab-American community and foster greater understanding about Arab history, culture and contributions to the general social fabric of American life. This guide is designed to help viewers use the series to deepen their understanding about the breadth and scope of the Arab-American experiences as part of American history. Whether you are a local leader who would like to use it as the centerpiece of Arab American Month (April) to celebrate the rich and diverse fabric of American experiences today, or if you are an inspired neighbor who would like to convene a cross-cultural dialogue at your local library, this guide is designed to help you make the most of the series.

Throughout this guide, you will also find additional background and context to support the learning. We encourage you to browse through this guide, choose the episodes and themes that are most relevant to you, and tailor your discussion to meet your needs.

How to Use the Series

ARAB AMERICAN STORIES is designed to be used in many different ways. Think of it as an à la carte menu; depending on your appetite, you can pick just one episode, work with an assortment of episodes, or use the entire series as a whole.

• Individual episodes are useful if you want to have a focused conversation around a particular theme. As you’ll see, the episodes are centered on different themes, serving as a springboard for issue-specific dialogue.

• Multiple episodes are useful for broader theme-based conversations—especially if you have a more flexible time frame or are with a group that is planning (or already participates in) regular meetings. For example, using a cluster of episodes may be useful if you’re an educator teaching a unit on Arab-American history, if you’re part of a theme-specific book club, or if you’re hosting an all-day conference. Below are some examples of possible theme-based “clusters”:

  • Culture and History, see episodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 & 13
  • Food and Bridge Building, see episodes 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12 & 13
  • Multiculturalism and Diversity, see episodes 1, 3, 5, 6 & 9
  • Intergenerational Relations, see episodes 1, 2, 4, 6 & 11
  • Religion, see episodes 2, 6, 7 & 8
  • Stereotypes, see episodes 2, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 12
  • Art and Music, see episodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11 & 13

• The full series can be used as a way to spark deep dialogue and discussion around all of the various themes and issues relevant to the Arab-American experience. This might be useful for a college course on Arab Americans or cultural identity, a multiday conference or even a film series at a church or a library.

The series provides a lot of rich content that can allow for many different types of conversations no matter what. So have fun with it!
When Is a Facilitator Needed?

The facilitator’s primary job is to establish an encouraging tone that allows people to explore issues, especially sensitive ones, in a productive manner. The ability to remain calm and neutral, keep people on track, model appropriate interaction and encourage reflection about how the conversation relates to their lives and communities will contribute significantly to the success of your dialogue and the longevity of its impact. A facilitator can be useful for any conversation, but it is even more important if the context of the screening and discussion is heated. So consider your community’s current climate, how well group members know one another, and the kind of discussion you would like to have before deciding.

What Do You Want to Do?

Define your goals. Set realistic goals based on your group's experiences and abilities. Decide on the audience you would like to reach. Do you want to focus on Arab Americans and build cultural pride? Do you want to reach out to your neighbors to foster greater understanding about Arab culture? Be clear about what you expect your audience to gain from attending. These decisions will shape the structure of the dialogue, how it is publicized, and how you assess success.

Choose a structure and format that match your goals. There are several ways one can use ARAB AMERICAN STORIES. Some people may choose to have a one-off screening and discussion around select episodes; others may prefer to host a sustained dialogue over time, diving deep into each episode. Your capacity as a host and how deep you want to go will determine the format you choose.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups (6-8 people) or pairs, or should attendance be limited? Is the room set up so that people can see and hear one another easily? Do you need more than one facilitator? If you plan to break into small groups, decide ahead of time how those groupings will be determined. Will people divide by family, age, gender or task, or will it be random (e.g., by counting off or by rows)?

Work with partners from your target audience. They will have insight into their community’s special needs that can help ensure their participation. For example, consider the location, transportation issues, timing of your event (including holidays), child-care needs and dietary restrictions (if you serve refreshments) to ensure you are being considerate of your audience’s needs. Your partners can help you think through these details. You may even ask them to co-facilitate with you.

Plan to leave enough time for next steps. Your plans for future action will vary depending on your goals for the dialogue. They can be as simple as asking individual participants to continue the conversation in their respective communities. Or they can be more goal-oriented, such as encouraging fairness in your local media. Take a look at Next Steps on page 23 for some ideas.

Other considerations. Have you booked your venue? Checked the DVD or Internet connection? Do you need speakers? Are you sure you have enough sign-up sheets and flyers for your audience to take the next step? Take a look at our handy Logistics Checklist on page 24 to ensure you’ve thought of everything.

How Do You Prepare Yourself for Facilitation?

The skill of a facilitator can make or break a dialogue. If you are facilitating the discussion, it is your job to help ensure the conversation is productive and rewarding without asking people to hide feelings of pain, discomfort or frustration. The following tips can help you prepare for this very important role. If you need help locating an experienced facilitator, contact the International Association of Facilitators: www.iaf-world.org.

Facilitation Tips

Discussions are most productive when people feel safe, comfortable and engaged. That balance can be difficult to achieve when the topic connects to identity, diversity, religion, politics or prejudice. This section is designed to prepare facilitators with tips and strategies for planning and facilitating productive post-screening discussions.
How Do You Prepare Yourself for Facilitation? cont.

Know how to direct people to resources. You need not be an expert on Arab-American culture, history or current events to facilitate a discussion, but most audiences will be curious to know more about the issues. Having a list of organizations and websites that audience members can turn to for questions is a great way to field questions. See Additional Resources on page 26.

Have a plan. Start with one or two of the General Discussion Questions on page 9 to get the conversation started and moving in the direction you would like, but remember to give it room to breathe. You don’t need to cover all the material in these pages, and feel free to skip around to customize your plan for your purposes.

Identify your own “hot button” issues. Discussions about Arab Americans in a post-9/11 landscape can trigger intense feelings in ourselves and in others. As a facilitator, you should be prepared to allow others to process their feelings without taking sides. So watch the episodes beforehand to give yourself some time to reflect on the issues and themes covered before the dialogue.

Know your group. Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic class and education level can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. Be sure to consider this as you build your plan. And be careful not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same experiences and feelings about the issues you’ll discuss.

At Your Screening

Explain the purpose of the conversation. To keep the group on track, clearly articulate your goals for the event at its outset. Why did you bring everyone together? If participants are meeting each other for the first time, it would be worthwhile to devote some time at the beginning for introductions or a welcoming activity.

Set ground rules. Take a look at our suggestions below, but allow participants to make their own suggestions about what rules would help them feel safe enough to participate openly. As noted above, these will help you to create a safe space that everyone feels comfortable participating in.

Discuss the difference between “dialogue” and “debate.” In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening to each other.

Establish a “no proselytizing zone.” For discussions about religion, be sure to explain that the room is not intended to convert non-believers. Be clear that you are not judging the practice, but that the dialogue is likely to be more productive if the space remains neutral.

Take a minute to reflect. Right after you screen the film, ask people how they felt about it. As noted above, the General Discussion Questions on page 9 is a great place to start. Let people speak from their hearts before you dive into the deeper questions.

Guide the discussion, but don’t micromanage! Pick a few discussion questions you think your group will find most interesting to get the conversation started, but be flexible. People will initiate in unique ideas and experiences, so let the conversation flow!

Encourage everyone to participate. If you are having trouble breaking the ice, you might ask everyone to write down a sentence about their initial reactions, and encourage a few people to read their thoughts aloud before starting the conversation.

Press pause if the conversation gets heated. Sometimes people get wrapped up in emotion and the conversation can get tense if there is disagreement. This usually means someone cares deeply about the issue, so take a moment to acknowledge the experiences in the room that make this an important discussion and remind participants of the ground rules and purpose of the conversation. Then, begin again.
Basic Ground Rules

Here are some basic ground rules to consider for any successful conversation. Use them as a starting point, but encourage participants to suggest additions that are important to them.

• Make space for everyone to speak, including people who may not usually feel comfortable doing so.

• Allow people to “pass”… they do not have to speak.

• Keep everything said in the group within the group; confidentiality may be important to some participants.

• Make sure to listen to others without interrupting.

• Use “I” statements (instead of “Everyone thinks,” “We all know…”) to avoid putting words in other people’s mouths.

• Seek clarification if you don’t understand something someone else is saying.

• Practice active listening; pay attention not only to what the speaker is saying, but also to the emotions behind their words and to what may be most important for them.

• Suspend your judgment.

• Don’t expect others to know everything about your experiences or the topic at hand.

• Encourage curiousity: No question is stupid!
Arab Americans: A Brief History

The word “Arab” is a relatively recent invention. While the first wave of immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries spoke Arabic, they did not identify as Arabs. Because the Ottoman Empire was the dominant power in the region during the late 19th Century, immigrants from the Middle East were often identified as “Turks.” But when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, most immigrants began to identify with the specific provinces in the Ottoman Empire from which they came.

The first wave of immigrants from the Middle East were mostly Christians. They came from a part of the Ottoman Empire that is now comprised of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Some came to escape religious persecution, but most came for economic opportunity. Many moved to major cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Detroit and Boston, and became peddlers. Among other things, they peddled religious items, embroidery, baked goods and confectioneries. Eventually these peddlers began to establish small businesses or manufacturing plants. By the 1920s, there were an estimated 250,000 Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians in the United States.

During World War I, a second wave of immigrants started arriving from the Middle East, which contained significantly more Muslims. By the 1950s, newly arriving immigrants were literate, bilingual and seeking white-collar jobs or educational opportunities. About 70 percent of these immigrants were Muslim, and they came mostly from Egypt, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

A new wave of immigrants arrived from the Middle East in the late 1960s, following Palestinian displacement in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This unique experience prompted a greater political awareness and pride. By the 1970s and 80s, new arrivals were coming with a greater sense of political consciousness and identification with an “Arab” identity.

As events in the Middle East became national events—from the oil embargo to hijackings—the media began to link Arab Americans with terrorism. Several Arab-American organizations were formed to promote an accurate and more positive image of Arab Americans in service of protecting their civil rights. These included the Arab American University Graduates, the National Arab American Association, the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Arab American Institute, among other smaller organizations. Their role has become increasingly important in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

NOTE: Much of the information from this section is drawn from and can be found in the Arab American Almanac.

Also visit the Arab American National Museum (AANM)—the first and only museum in the United States devoted to Arab-American history and culture—online at: www.arabamericanmuseum.org.
General Discussion Questions

The prompts below are designed to help open a discussion and get the conversation started. They can be used regardless of which episode(s) you’re working with.

1. What moments, scenes or individuals jumped out at you and why?
2. Which story or individual could you most relate to and why?
3. What do the individuals and experiences depict about Arab Americans and Arab-American culture? Were there any common themes that connected across the stories or people profiled?
4. What is “American” culture?
5. What similarities or differences did you notice between the experiences of the people profiled and your own experience or cultural makeup?
6. How did these stories compare to what you commonly hear about Arab Americans in mainstream media?
7. Did anything surprise you? If so, what? And why do you think you were surprised?
8. In your opinion, how is each of the individuals in the episode(s) contributing to the fabric of American life? What unique perspectives do they appear to bring (to workplace, community, education, etc.)?
Discussion Questions by Episode
The following sections refer to specific episodes in the series. The discussion questions therein are designed to prompt deeper reflection about the respective segments and the themes and subjects covered in them.

EPISODE 1: Unexpected Paths
“Your blood stays with you, but culturally the people you spend all your time with—even as a kid, the music and all that—is kind of who you are, more than just your blood.”
—Robby Ameen

The three Arab Americans profiled in this episode have broken from the norm to forge a new and unexpected path. Diane Rehm challenged traditional roles of women and became a national radio host despite lacking a college education. Robby Ameen was born to Lebanese-American parents but has made a career as one of the top Afro-Cuban jazz drummers in the world. And Rabih Dow, who was blinded by an explosion during the Lebanese Civil War, transformed hardship into opportunity and found his life’s work rehabilitating newly blind people and painting from memory.

For Discussion
1) Diane Rehm talks about the cultural divide that existed between herself and her mother, and yet she found ways to connect with her grandmother despite this. Have you ever tried to bridge a cultural divide? What did you do and how did it go?

2) Robby Ameen is married to a Cuban woman, and his daughter has a mixed ethnic background. In your opinion, in what ways is Robby’s family life unique, and in what ways is it similar to American cultural experience?

3) Rabih Dow attributes his will to persevere and overcome his physical handicap to American culture. “Nothing is impossible,” he explains. In your opinion, what about American culture encourages this type of sentiment?

4) Each of the individuals profiled in this episode has broken from some cultural, gender or societal norms and expectations. What about their experiences or their character, do you think, made that possible?

Walk in Their Shoes
Diane Rehm explains that her mother resisted complete assimilation to American society and wanted her and her sister to preserve their Arab-Christian heritage. Why do you think this was so important to her mother? What parts of your own culture are important to you and why?

Robby Ameen explains that even more than blood, who you spend your time with and how you spend your time make you who you are. What do you think about Ameen’s perspective on his identity? What do you think about your own identity and the identities of the people you interact with?

Rabih Dow shares the experiences that brought him to the U.S. from Lebanon and tells his class that “art is an attempt to understand.” Why do you think helping others to understand is important for Dow? Is it important to you? Why or why not?
EPISODE 2: Bridge Builders

“My relationship with Krista has forced me to be more tolerant, more patient, a better listener.” —Ismail Suayah

“Art at its best can remind us of that human connection we have with each other.” —Omar Offendum

This episode features three Arab Americans who navigate cultural differences to become bridge builders. Hip-hop artist Omar Offendum is a bridge between his Arab roots and American youth culture. Café owner Frederique Boudouani is bringing Algerian food and culture to Elkader, Iowa, the only town in America named for an Algerian Muslim war hero. And Aliya Suayah and her parents Ismail Suayah and Krista Bremer explore and embrace both American and Libyan culture at their home in North Carolina.

For Discussion

1) Both Frederique Boudouani and Oman Offendum use their work—food and music, respectively—to create better public understanding about Arab Americans and the Arab world after the 9/11 tragedy. For Offendum, this is important because “U.S. foreign policy has had a huge effect on the region.” In your opinion, how do mainstream perceptions of people of Arab descent affect U.S. foreign policy with the Arab world?

2) Before his death, Ed Olson, the Mayor of Elkader, Iowa, befriended Algerian-born Frederique Boudouani and worked with him to establish a Sister City relationship with Mascara, Algeria. Today, Olson’s wife sees Frederique as a son despite their cultural differences. Based on what you saw, why do you think they are so close? What shared connections have brought them together?

3) Ismail Suayah grew up in a poor Libyan Muslim home and Krista Bremer in a middle-class secular American home. Ismail explains that his relationship with Krista, his wife, has made him a better Muslim and human being; their differences have helped to bond them rather than divide them. Does this surprise you? Why or why not? Based on what you saw, how have they worked through their differences?

4) For Ismail and Krista’s mixed-race daughter, Aliya, the headscarf is something she chooses. “I love wearing the headscarf and showing my uniqueness as an Arab American,” she explains. How is Aliya’s relationship to the headscarf similar or different from what you would expect?

Walk in Their Shoes

Omar Offendum explains that after 9/11, Arab Americans were quick “to tell people what we weren’t but not what we really are.” So today he shares his story with students to reflect the ideals of the community that raised him. What ideals did your community raise you with?

Frederique Boudouani sees food as a great “bridge builder.” What do you think he means by that? Can you think of circumstances where food is a bridge builder in your life?

Krista Bremer talks about the challenges of marriage with someone of a different cultural and religious background. “Every step of the way,” she explains, “we try to question our own assumptions and our own prejudice. And it’s an ongoing process… I continue to uncover prejudice I didn’t know I had.” What do you think about Krista’s process? Do you take steps to uncover your own prejudices? Please explain.
EPISODE 3: Entrepreneurs

“This country has been great to us… if you drink from a well, you don’t throw a stone in it.”
—Fahid Daoud, citing an Arabic proverb

America has always been a home for entrepreneurs. Inspired by the American Arts and Crafts movement, Nawal Motawi started Motawi Tileworks, a successful craftsman tile business in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Fahid Daoud and his brothers fulfilled the American dream through a chain of chili restaurants that began in Cincinnati, Ohio, and spread throughout the region. And social entrepreneur Moose Scheib built LoanMod.com to help homeowners facing foreclosure refinance and save their homes. These Arab Americans are entrepreneurs, building businesses, serving clients and creating jobs.

For Discussion

1) This episode features three successful businesses started by immigrants: Motawi Tileworks, Gold Star Chili and LoanMod.com. Each business is contributing to communities in its own unique way. In what ways does this story complement or contradict mainstream depictions of the role immigrants play in the U.S. economy? Please explain.

2) What common characteristics did you notice among the characters in this episode that may have contributed to their success? In what ways are these characteristics and experiences particular to the immigrant experience and in what ways are they not? Please explain.

3) Moose Scheib and Fahid Daoud talk about the need to give back to the community. Why do they care about giving back? What does it mean to them?

4) In order to help people stay in their homes, Scheib went door-to-door to learn and understand what homeowners were going through. Think of a time when you had to work at understanding someone else’s experience. What did you have to do and how did it go? Please explain.

Walk in Their Shoes

Nawal Motawi likes to hear her staff’s opinions about the tiles and projects. Why do their opinions matter to her? What benefits and challenges do you imagine Motawi’s attitude offers her business?

Fahid Daoud explains how difficult the transition from a farming village in Jordan to the U.S. was for him. But having a support system here to help him made a big difference and paved the way for his ability to succeed and enrich his new community. Can you think of a time when you received support and were able to pay it forward to others? Please describe.

Moose Scheib was only 7 years old when he left the war in Lebanon for the U.S. This has left him with a strong sense of responsibility to make something of himself and ensure his parents’ sacrifices were worthwhile. What are the experiences that have left you with a strong sense of responsibility? Please describe.
**EPISODE 4: Art & Life**

“We don’t forget what we came from, and we don’t forget how hard it is and what we have.”
—Hassan Faraj

Art and life are inextricably intertwined in the stories in this episode. Author Alicia Erian mines her life’s experience for her books, stories and screenplays. Artist Huguette Caland has found America to be the place she can most freely express herself in her art. And Hassan Faraj’s life was actually turned into art—the story of this neighborhood butcher became the subject of a community theater piece.

**For Discussion**

1) Laila Lalami explains “the only effective way to counter whatever images exist about people like you in the media is to create your own images.” Each of the three people featured in this episode embraces this in their own way. What do the images or stories they shared tell you about them?

2) For each person depicted in this episode, where they come from is intimately connected to who they are. How would you describe who your people are and, therefore, who you are?

3) Huguette Caland sees her art as a deep expression of who she is. In your opinion, what does Caland’s art and artistic process communicate about who she is? Please explain.

4) Hassan Faraj was forced to flee the war in Lebanon. Take a moment to imagine you have to leave the U.S. tomorrow morning, uncertain to ever return. How would you feel? How would you prepare? What do you think you would need from others in your new host country?

**Walk in Their Shoes**

**Alicia Erian** wrote a book about the painful experience she had of living with her father as a teenager. If you wrote a novel or memoir about your life, what experiences would you prioritize as central to your identity?

**Huguette Caland**, an artist and daughter of the first President of Lebanon, explains that “the history of the Middle East was made, shaped, while I was growing up.” This had a major impact on her. What histories shaped your upbringing and who you have become? Please explain.

**Hassan Faraj** describes the differing ways people of different ethnic backgrounds prefer their meat prepared. He takes pride in his knowledge and understanding of the tastes and cultures of the people in his community. Take a moment to consider what you know about the different cultures represented in your community. What are some of the differences between them? How did you learn what you know about them?

**Laila Lalami** is a Moroccan American novelist and essayist, and teaches creative writing at the University of California at Riverside.
EPISODE 5: Innovators

“*I am an American, and I want this civilization to continue to grow and to focus on being more enlightened.*” —Imad Mahawili

The United States prides itself on being a nation of innovators, and the Arab Americans featured in this episode are part of that tradition. Imad Mahawili saw a problem with energy in the third world and set out to fix it. Amir Abo-Shaer created the Dos Pueblos Engineering Academy to inspire high school students to enter careers in science and math. And Brian and Leon Dewan have inventing in their blood and music in their souls, and have married the two by making highly unique electronic instruments as Dewanatron.

For Discussions

1) This episode features four innovators who have set out to create something new in their respective fields. What was the source of inspiration for each of their endeavors? How do they compare to your own sources of inspiration?

2) Amir Abo-Shaer was deliberate about composing his classroom to include a mix of races, ethnicities and genders, explaining that we “compartmentalize ourselves too much.” In fact, two of the people featured in this episode work in distinctly diverse workplaces. In what ways do you think that diversity contributes to innovation, and in what ways can diversity be a challenge? Please describe.

3) Abo-Shaer realized his students couldn’t apply any of the physics they had been learning in abstraction. So he set out to help empower them by designing a curriculum that accounts for a variety of different mediums for learning, in particular, building and testing real robotic models. In your opinion, what are some of the challenges of accounting for difference and what are some of the benefits? Please explain.

4) Imad Mahawili was deeply moved by the 2004 tsunami in Thailand and set out to find a creative way to ensure global access to electricity. What connections do you see between Mahawili’s personal history and his choices to help? Please explain.

Walk in Their Shoes

Imad Mahawili shares his opinion that “because we are Americans,” we have to find creative ways to continue this great civilization. What do you think he means by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Amir Abo-Shaer sees his classroom as a model for the way humanity can be. Do you agree his classroom is a model for humanity? What aspects of his story resonate with this idea for you?

Brian and Leon Dewan enjoy watching the Dewanatron, their project that fuses music with technology, take on a life of its own. Have you ever experimented with something that has taken you “off the beaten path”? What obstacles did you face and what helped you to overcome them?
EPISODE 6: Traditions

“My Egyptian heritage became stronger after the protests. It’s stronger than it used to be… it connected me more with everyone else…” —Esmaeel El Sayed

So much is passed down from generation to generation, but it sometimes takes time for members of the next generation to recognize how the past affects their own lives. Hearing their family history shows three generations of the Abercia family how values are passed down from their forebearers. Chef Ali El Sayed’s son Esmaeel is just beginning to understand how his father’s Egyptian heritage fits in with his own identity as a native-born American living in ethnically diverse Queens, New York. And the family recipes Kamal Al-Faqih learned from his mother led him to his calling as a chef and cookbook author.

For Discussions

1) Families in this episode bond and pass down their histories and culture through cooking and eating together. Why do you think food plays such an important role for these families? How does it compare with your own family traditions?

2) The Abercia family arrived in the U.S. in the early 20th Century. Back then, explains Ralph Abercia, there was none of “this Arab deal”; people simply were identified by their country of origin. In your opinion, why does this matter to Ralph? Please explain.

3) Chef Ali El Sayed, fondly called the “Mayor of Little Egypt” in Astoria, Queens, is amazed at how many cultures collide in one place. What does he appear to love about it? Can you relate to his enthusiasm? Why or why not?

4) Kamal Al-Faqih’s calling in life was inspired by his experiences at home with his mother, who taught him everything he knows about Lebanese food. What did your family teach you about your own cultural heritage and identity? Please share.

Walk in Their Shoes

Ralph Abercia explains that his culture is one that believes in the Almighty, family and respecting other people. Why do you think he describes his culture in this way? How would you define “culture” generally?

Kamal Al-Faqih wants to share his love of Lebanese cuisine with the world. What parts of your own cultural heritage have you been inspired to share with others and why? How do you decide what to prioritize?

Chef Ali El Sayed respects food. “Food is made for thought,” he explains. “Food is not only made for filling up your stomach!” What do you think he means by this? Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.

Did You Know?

In Arabic, the word halal means permitted or lawful. Halal foods are foods that are allowed under Islamic dietary guidelines. According to these guidelines gathered from the Qur’an, Muslim followers cannot consume the following:

- pork or pork by-products
- animals that were dead prior to slaughtering
- animals not slaughtered properly or not slaughtered in the name of Allah
- blood and blood by-products
- alcohol
- carnivorous animals
- birds of prey
- land animals without external ears

These prohibited foods and ingredients are called haram, meaning forbidden in Arabic.

From the USA Halal Chamber of Commerce. To learn more, visit: http://www.ushalalcertification.com/about-us.html
**EPISODE 7: Creating a Community**

“I thought that through comedy we could build alliances, which is really important to us as Arab Americans.” —Dean Obeidallah

Community is at the heart of American life. In this episode, social services provider and activist Linda Sarsour serves new immigrants and youth in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, New York. Imam Taha Tawil maintains spiritual vitality with a diverse group of worshippers at the oldest mosque in America in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. And Dean Obeidallah performs across the country with a group of comedians who shatter popular myths and stereotypes about Muslims and Arabs.

**For Discussion**

1) Each person profiled in this episode is doing something to build community: across generations, between different communities of color, or within their faith. Based on what you heard, why does community matter to each of them? What communities are important to you and why?

2) In this episode, we see a variety of ways people relate to being Muslim and practicing Islam. What were some of the characteristics they shared and what were some of the differences? Please describe.

3) While producing a documentary called “The Muslims are Coming!” Obeidallah had to travel to a lot of places where there weren’t many Arabs. He learned that while most people are open-minded in America, most have a lot of questions about Islam. “‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ are seen as the same thing in this country,” he explained. Do you have any questions? What are they?

4) Sarsour, the Imam Tawil and Obeidallah each talk about life after the 9/11 tragedy. Muslims in America, explains the Imam Tawil, experienced a “double jeopardy” because they mourned both the loss of American lives and Muslims and Arab lives. How do the different people featured in this episode relate to tragedy? What experiences do they have in common, and what are the differences between them?

**Walk in Their Shoes**

*Linda Sarsour*, the Director of the Arab American Association of New York, says she thinks it’s “about time” her community has an Arab-American Muslim congresswoman. What reasons does she give for this? Based on what you saw, what characteristics make her a good leader for the community?

*Imam Taha Tawil* came to the “mother” mosque of America, first founded in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in the 1930s from Jerusalem. For him, the mosque represents the “identity and dignity” of Muslims who have served the U.S. What defines identity and dignity for you? Please explain.

*Dean Obeidallah* ironically explains that “a Muslim comic is an oxymoron because there is no laughter in Islam.” What do you think about his choice to use humor and comedy as a catalyst for social change? Do you think comedy can be an effective way to bridge divides and build community? Why or why not?
EPISODE 8: Serving the Nation

“These are our people; if we don’t help, who is going to help?” —Dr. Mahmoud Traina

This episode features Arab Americans who all have a mission to help the wider community. Cardiologist Mahmoud Traina serves the working poor at a county hospital outside Los Angeles, but he also found time to take medical supplies to Libyans during the revolution. Sergeant Mike Abdeen and Deputy Sherif Morsi run the groundbreaking Muslim Community Affairs unit for the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. Father George Shalhoub built St. Mary’s Antiochian Orthodox Church into a positive force for the people of Livonia, Michigan.

For Discussion

1) The four individuals featured in this episode all share a firm commitment to serving their communities and, in some cases, far beyond. How does each of them define what it means to “serve”? And what appears to be the motivation for each of them?

2) Why are Sergeant Mike Abdeen and Deputy Sherif Morsi of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department working to establish cultural diversity classes for new police recruits? In your opinion, what is the intent of these classes, and do you agree with the strategy? Please explain.

3) Father Shalhoub’s parents sent him from Syria to the church in Lebanon with no explanation. Then he arrived in Michigan—which was “a cultural shock,” he explains. Do you have any ideas about what may have been so shocking for him? Please take a moment to consider what “culture shock” means, and explain your opinion.

4) Father Shalhoub’s wife took a leap of faith and left her family in Syria to marry him, a man she had never met. What do you think of this? How common or uncommon were arranged marriages in your family history? What similarities or differences do you notice between your family’s and Father Shalhoub’s story? Please explain.

Walk in Their Shoes

Dr. Mahmoud Traina came to the U.S. from Libya when he was only a child. Yet he was so moved by the recent uprisings in Libya that he risked his life to travel there and help. Why did he feel so compelled? Can you imagine a situation in which you might do the same? Please explain.

Sergeant Mike Abdeen and Deputy Sherif Morsi believe that effective communication and trust are vital to their work. Are there areas of your life where effective communication and establishing trust are most vital? Please explain.

Father George Shalhoub expresses how important the church is for Arab-American Christians. For many, he explains, it is the only link to the family and the land they left behind. Do you associate your faith with home, family and land as he does? Why or why not?
EPISODE 9: Expressions

“When I draw, I have no accent.” —Adnan Charara

This episode showcases artists who have all found new expression in their work by coming to America. After fleeing Iraq for political reasons, proud player and composer Rahim Al-Haj now fuses Middle Eastern and Western influences and instruments in his music. Malika Zarra, who was born in Morocco and grew up in France, has now found a creative home in New York’s multicultural music scene. And Detroit artist Adnan Charara explores the idea of identity, personally and cosmically, in his painting and sculpture.

For Discussion

1) In this episode, art and music are universal languages that help bring diverse cultures together. What role does music play in your life? Do you agree it can help to connect people to one another? Why or why not?

2) For Al-Haj and Zarra, music is a powerful medium for change. Al-Haj got involved in politics when he began criticizing the Iran-Iraq War. One of the songs he wrote about it became famous enough in Iraq that he had to escape. Do you agree that music is so powerful? Why or why not? Can you think of any music that has changed you? Please explain.

3) Zarra collaborates with musicians from around the world to produce a blend of American jazz with traditional Arabic songs in the Berber language of Morocco. She has noticed that when collaborating with others through music, all the misunderstanding disappears. What do you think of this? Even if you couldn’t understand the words in her songs, did they provoke any feelings in you? What were they?

4) Charara uses found objects and, through his art, envisions them becoming what they “wanted to be.” For example, the hammer that wants to be a musician. He compares the discarded objects to newly arrived immigrants. What do you think he means by the comparison? Do you agree with it? Please explain.

Walk in Their Shoes

Rahim Al-Haj keeps homing pigeons at his home in New Mexico. This is because, he explains, it reminds him that he always has a home. Can you relate to the experience of feeling you need to be reminded you have a home? Why or why not?

Malika Zarra loves New York City because it pulls together so many amazing artists from all over the world and “pushes you to overcome yourself,” she explains. What do you think she means by this? Have you ever pushed yourself in the same way? If so, what compelled you to do so?

Adnan Charara appreciates art because it “has no accent.” What does he mean by this? How do you relate to what he is communicating through the comment? Why does this matter to him?
EPISODE 10: Civic Leaders

“I want you to be the best American, the best Arab and the best Muslim.” — Ferial Masry

American citizenship is coveted around the world. Teacher and political candidate Ferial Masry, union organizer Khalil Kaid, and lawyers Nawar and Kareem Shora all feel a responsibility to uphold the precious rights granted to them as American citizens.

For Discussion

1) This episode focuses on four immigrants who are proud Americans, each practicing democracy in their own way. What experiences does each draw upon to motivate them?

2) Ferial Masry teaches her students about the U.S. democratic system because it is so precious to her. What does she say she values so much about it? Please explain.

3) Nawar shares that he was bullied in junior high school and leaned heavily on his brother for support. Eventually, they both began working for the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Have you ever been harassed or bullied because of your identity? If so, how did you overcome it? What support systems do you think need to be in place to protect people from it?

4) Each person featured draws on both their Arab and American experiences to exercise their rights. In fact, the Shora brothers learned from their parents that in order to become good citizens they should take the best from their Arab heritage and blend it with the best of American culture. Why do you think they encouraged this? What does this have to do with good citizenship, in your opinion?

Walk in Their Shoes

Ferial Masry’s classes emphasize that with freedom comes responsibility. She has run unsuccessfully four times for the California State Assembly and continues even though she knows her chances of being elected are slim. Why does she do this? What do you think of her choice? Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.

Khalil Kaid constantly urges his union members to vote; that’s the only reason politicians care about them, he explains. Have you ever felt so strongly about something that you worked hard to ensure people exercised their right to speak up? What was it and what prompted you to do so? Please explain.

Nawar and Kareem Shora noticed the backlash against Arab Americans and Muslims that started immediately after the 9/11 tragedy. And yet, in some ways, they imply that the experience helped Arab Americans to step up and take ownership of their American identities. Can you relate to this? How did you relate to the way things unfolded for the country and for Arab Americans specifically after 9/11?
EPISODE 11: Artists

“The most amazing feeling is when you’ve worked so hard on something and it exceeds your expectations.” —Rami Kashou

Talented Arab-American artists are charting their own course in very competitive fields. Opera star Hanan Alattar’s passion keeps her going as she pursues an international stage career. Najla Said is an actress, playwright and author exploring her identity as a Palestinian American and a quintessential Manhattanite. And fashion designer Rami Kashou, who charmed America as a finalist on Project Runway, continues to wow the fashion world with his designs.

For Discussion

1) In the highly competitive worlds of fashion, music and theatre, the people featured in this episode are making their mark. What do you think gives these artists their edge? Please explain.

2) Alattar loves “slipping into” a character’s background through opera because it helps her to feel “more alive.” Why do you think it leads her to feel more alive? What does Alattar seem to value by this example?

3) Said noticed that the young people who would approach her after her one-woman show about being Palestinian in America were from a variety of backgrounds, and all related to her search for her identity. What do you think they connect to in her story?

4) Kashou’s parents noticed his talents early and have always encouraged him, despite his fears they would find his interest in women’s fashion unconventional for a Palestinian boy. Have you ever been surprised to learn your expectations about a person—or a group—were wrong? What caused you to have the ideas you had and what helped you to recognize your mistake? Please explain.

Walk in Their Shoes

Hanan Alattar explains that while she grew up with Arabic, American and Texan culture, the latter is stronger than the other two most of the time. Which parts of your own identity are strongest and why do you think that is? Are there times when other parts of your identity take precedence? What do you think determines this? Please explain.

Najla Said is the daughter of political theorist and Arabic intellectual Edward Said. But she is not a political person like her father and has worked to negotiate her experience in her own way as a Palestinian-Lebanese-American in New York. What are some of the negotiations that you have made around your identity that have helped you to remain true to yourself and the histories that have shaped you? Please explain.

Rami Kashou grew up under occupation in Palestine, where people were more concerned about buying food than fashion. Today, he says, after a lot of hard work, he is “living the dream” as a designer for Bebe. Who helped him get to where he is today? Consider your own achievements; how have you gotten to where you are today? Who has helped you along the way?
EPISODE 12: Lasting Contributions

“Those who do good, do well.” —Judy Habib

Many Arab Americans have made lasting contributions to American institutions. Public relations executive Judy Habib talks about the legacy established by her father’s generation at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, and how she now continues that tradition of support. Maha Freij found her niche as a development dynamo and helped grow ACCESS into the largest Arab-American human services organization in the nation. And researcher and radiologist Dr. Elias Zerhouni had a transformative impact on medical research in the U.S. as Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

For Discussion

1) Habib explains that a brand is the why, not the what, of an organization. What do you think she means by this? Do you agree with her that “meaning matters to people”? Please explain.

2) Freij laments that Arabs or Muslims are currently portrayed as terrorists in this country. In particular, it bothers her that people could think Arab mothers don’t love their children and would simply send them off to die. What effects do you think these unfair stereotypes about Arab or Muslim people have on Americans or on Arab and Muslim people abroad? Please explain.

3) Freij and Zerhouni believe that tapping into the knowledge that people share is important. Knowledge sharing and collaboration, explains Zerhouni, is “more likely to bring more peace.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

4) Zerhouni was the first immigrant to be placed in charge of the NIH. What were the internal negotiations he made before accepting the offer, and why did he decide to take the job in the end?

Walk in Their Shoes

Judy Habib wasn’t the “blonde, blue-eyed” typical American young woman growing up, which made her feel “less than,” she explains. Why do you think she felt that way? Have you ever felt similarly? What led you to feel the way you did?

Maha Freij chokes up when she explains that she never wants her kids to not feel proud “for one minute,” reflecting on the shame she felt growing up. She explains that this is why helping her community find their voice is so important to her. How do you think pride and “voice” are connected for Freij? Would you make the same connections? Why or why not?

Dr. Elias Zerhouni explains that seeing the poverty of the Algerian mountain people drove him into medicine. But when he arrived in the U.S., he was surprised to find certain parts of Baltimore to be in an even worse state. Think of a time when your own expectations or ideas about a community changed. What caused you to take on your new perspective? Please explain.
EPISODE 13: A New Generation

“I get to talk to the entire city of Detroit every night.” — Ace Montaser

This episode introduces a new generation of Arab Americans who are making their mark. Actress Alia Shawkat, best known for her role on “Arrested Development,” is a rising independent film star. Mariem Masmoudi is a student at the University of North Carolina who is trying to figure out how to merge her American and Tunisian identities to give back to both cultures. And former Marine Ace Montaser is making his name as a DJ on Detroit’s airwaves.

For Discussion

1) Each of the young people featured in this episode draw on their Arab and American identities, families and experiences in different ways. What commonalities did you notice between their stories? Were there any striking differences? Please describe.

2) Shawkat explains that “a good project humanizes.” What are the characteristics of a project that humanizes, in your opinion?

3) Mariem Masmoudi is helping to play out her father’s dream of “bringing democracy” to the Arab world. Based on what you saw, what are her sources of inspiration?

4) Montaser joined the Marines one year before 9/11. This was “very awkward,” he explained. What was the experience like for him? For his parents?

Walk in Their Shoes

Alia Shawkat is proud to be half Arab and expresses a desire to become more connected with that. Are there parts of your own identity you would like to be more connected to? Why do you think you feel this way?

Mariem Masmoudi is both a “deeply religious” Muslim and in some ways a typical American girl. Does this appear to pose any conflict for her? What do you think Masmoudi is teaching older generations about identity? What do you think about this?

DJ Ace Montaser has always wanted to be on the radio. Now, as a DJ, he gets to speak to the entire city of Detroit every night. Would this inspire you, too? Why or why not?
Next Steps

**Educate yourself:** If the series prompted any new questions for you, the simplest thing you can do is to learn more. You can start at [www.arabamericanstories.org](http://www.arabamericanstories.org).

**Continue the dialogue:** Encourage an ongoing dialogue at your church, book club or community group. Bring the series to them as a way to discuss identity and explore common ties.

**Get to know Arab Americans in your community:** You can invite them over for a potluck dinner. As you saw from the series, sharing food provides an excellent opportunity to build bridges. In fact, consider breaking the ice with an episode from the series about food!

**Encourage fairness:** If you notice unfairness in the media, do something about it. For example, you can ask your local news station to present more diverse stories and more accurate depictions of Arab Americans and people of other cultural backgrounds. Or you can write an op-ed in a newspaper to share your own story and perspectives.

**Harness it:** Many of the stories in the series demonstrate the value of collaboration and drawing upon a diversity of experiences. Ask yourself, will tapping into the rich tapestry of experience in your community help to boost your work or local efforts?
Preliminary planning—at least 6 weeks ahead

☐ Book the venue and date for your screening. Be sure to confirm all the basics:
  • Is the screen big enough for your audience?
  • Does the venue have a projector and adequate speaker system?
  • If you’ll be setting up a panel or reception, are there enough mics, tables and chairs?

☐ Recruit local organizational partners to broaden your reach and help identify roles for each one (such as publicity, panelist coordination and reception planning).

☐ Determine speakers, panelists, performers and a moderator (if applicable).

☐ Create your flyer, email blast and news release.

Logistical planning and initial outreach—3-4 weeks ahead

☐ Get the word out electronically (Facebook, Twitter, etc). Make sure to include a contact, your website and RSVP information (if applicable).

☐ Check all of your equipment with the DVD you’ll be using for your event. If you plan to stream from the web, be sure your connection is strong enough and remember to load the page well before you begin to ensure the video doesn’t freeze.

☐ Secure food for reception (if applicable).

☐ Draft event agenda and run through it with partners to gather their feedback and make adjustments.

More logistical planning—2 weeks prior

☐ Send out news releases to media outlets like local papers, television stations and/or radio programs and let them know about your event. Be sure to identify a news point person to follow up with later.

☐ Contact community calendars and online event sites about your event.

☐ Post your flyer in high-traffic areas. Be strategic; publicize in areas that your target audience will frequent.

☐ Confirm all details with event staff (caterer, venue, IT, etc.) and finalize agenda.

Media outreach—10 days prior

☐ Follow up with media who expressed an interest in covering the story. Remind them what makes your event unique and important for the community.

☐ Final planning—several days prior.

☐ Test screen your event equipment one last time to make sure there aren’t any glitches.

☐ Send a reminder email blast.

☐ Make copies of handouts to distribute at the event. Consider action steps that you could highlight. And print out a sign-up sheet.

At the event

☐ Gather panelists together at least 30 minutes before the event to answer last-minute questions.

☐ As people arrive, ask them to sign up to receive updates from your organization.

☐ Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their assigned time.

☐ Announce your call to action or point to the materials available for attendees to follow up.

☐ Invite audience members to learn more about the film and campaign on www.arabamericanstories.org.

☐ Take photos!

After your screening

☐ Follow up with audience members and invite them to future meetings and events.

☐ Upload your event photos and connect with new fans on the ARAB AMERICAN STORIES social media platforms!
Additional Resources

Arab-American Culture, History and Politics
The Arab American Institute (AAI) is a nonprofit organization committed to the civic and political empowerment of Americans of Arab descent. AAI represents the policy and community interests of Arab Americans throughout the U.S. through two primary focus areas: campaigns and elections, and policy formulation and research. www.aaiusa.org

Arab Culture and History
The Arab American National Museum (AANM) documents, preserves and presents the history, culture and contributions of Arab Americans. www.arabamericanmuseum.org

Civil Rights
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is our nation’s guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country. www.aclu.org

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is a civil rights organization committed to defending the rights of people of Arab descent and promoting their rich cultural heritage. www.adc.org

Muslims and Interfaith Issues
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a leading advocate with a mission to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding. www.cair.com

Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) brings together young people of different religious and moral traditions for cooperative service and dialogue around shared values. www.ifyc.org

Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) is a public-service agency working for the civil rights of American Muslims, for the integration of Islam into American pluralism, and for a positive, constructive relationship between American Muslims and their representatives. www.mpac.org

Inclusivity in Education
Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) delivers classroom strategies, resources and lessons that inspire young people to take responsibility for their world. Their work over the past 30 years demonstrates that effective teaching can cultivate the sense of civic responsibility needed to protect human dignity and prevent violations of human rights. www.facing.org

Teaching Tolerance was founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center and is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children. www.tolerance.org
Immigrant Integration

Welcoming America is a national, grassroots-driven collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans. www.welcomingamerica.org

National League of Cities Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration has focused on promoting civic engagement and naturalization among immigrant communities in cities throughout the United States through research and technical assistance capacities. (MAII) www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/center-for-research-and-innovation/immigrant-integration

Refugees and Migration

Migration Policy Institute (MPI) provides analysis, development and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national and international levels. www.migrationpolicy.org

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) provides resources that foundations need to address the challenges facing newcomers and their host communities and to strengthen society as a whole. www.gcir.org

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides new populations with opportunities to maximize their potential in the United States, linking people in need to crucial resources to assist them in becoming integrated members of American society. www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) defends the rights of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. Through advocacy campaigns and direct services, USCRI seeks protection and dignity for the world’s most vulnerable people. www.refugees.org

Dialogue & Deliberation

Public Conversations Project prevents and transforms conflicts driven by deep differences in identity, beliefs or values. www.publicconversations.org/blog/terms-39

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) promotes the use of dialogue, deliberation and other innovative group processes to help people. www.ncdd.org
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Andrea Torrice Producer/Director of Fahid Daoud segment
Kelly Whalen Producer/Director of Imad Mahawili segment
Sarah Zientarski Producer/Director of Nawal Motawi, Father George Salhoub & Abdul "Ace" Montaser segments
Sameh Zoabi Producer/Director of Dean Obeidallah segment

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“Art at its best can remind us of that human connection we have with each other.”
—Omar Offendum

“I want you to be the best American, the best Arab and the best Muslim.”
—Ferial Masry

“The most amazing feeling is when you’ve worked so hard on something and it exceeds your expectations.”
—Rami Kashou

“Your blood stays with you, but culturally the people you spend all your time with—even as a kid, the music and all that—is kind of who you are, more than just your blood.”
—Robby Ameen

“This country has been great to us…if you drink from a well, you don’t throw a stone in it.”
—Fahid Daoud, citing an Arabic proverb

“My relationship with Krista has forced me to be more tolerant, more patient, a better listener.”
—Ismail Suayah

“These are our people; if we don’t help, who is going to help?”
—Dr. Mahmoud Traina

“I thought that through comedy we could build alliances, which is really important to us as Arab Americans.”
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“I get to talk to the entire city of Detroit every night.”
—Ace Montaser