



Teacher/Viewing Guide

Arab American Stories - Episode 112

Maha Freij

Deputy Executive Director, CFO, ACCESS

Grade Level: 9-12

Episode Overview:

Growing up in a Palestinian village inside Israel, Maha Freij constantly felt that—even in her home country—she was treated less like a person and more as a threat. Feeling inferior to others around her pushed Ms. Freij to work harder and disprove those stereotypes. Her hard work paid off: she became the first Palestinian woman in Israel to earn a CPA license. She had a good career in Israel, but she decided to emigrate to Dearborn, Michigan for love when she met her future husband, an Arab American, in 1988. Ms. Freij now works as the second-highest ranking officer at ACCESS, the largest Arab American services organization in the US. ACCESS works with the Arab American community on everything from immigration to civil liberties issues.

Through her work at ACCESS, she discovered that she was a talented fundraiser. As a result, in 2006 she helped to found the Center for Arab American Philanthropy as a way to harness the giving power of the Arab American community. Today, CAAP is the only Arab American philanthropic organization that is modeled like a community foundation, but on a national scale. As Ms. Freij describes it, CAAP provides an avenue for Arab Americans to work towards their dream of making the world a better place through charitable giving to all kinds of causes. Her organization houses many different community services, and Ms. Freij works to support all of them. Ms. Freij also works tirelessly to set an example for her own sons. She fears the possibility that they will experience, like she did, a feeling of inferiority and disdain from their country. Her solution is to empower others to combat negative stereotypes and be a good role model herself by working to improve the future for all Americans.

Previewing Questions:

1. How would it feel to not only be in the minority population but also to be seen as an enemy?
2. How can a charitable organization help individuals, both donors and recipients, realize their dreams?
3. What can Arab Americans do to counter negative stereotypes?

Vocabulary:

1. Articulate: Express (an idea or feeling) fluently and coherently.
2. Benefactor: A person who gives money or other help to a person or cause.
3. Beneficiary: A person who derives advantage from something.
4. Civil Liberties: Freedom to exercise one's rights as guaranteed under the laws of the country.
5. Philanthropy: The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the donation of money to a cause.

Lesson Overview/Review:

After viewing the segment on Maha Freij, students should be able to brainstorm ways to counter negative stereotypes. This can be done as a group activity, having students or the teacher record ideas on a board, or in their own journals.

Journal Option: Have students take a moment to write about a charitable cause that they have been or would like to be involved with, and why they value involvement in the organization.

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Post Viewing Class Discussion: Conduct a short discussion to synthesize the information they gained from viewing the video segment. Some possible topics:

1. How would you describe Ms. Freij's outlook on the future?
2. What about Ms. Freij's personality contributes to her success?
3. Why would Arab Americans be more likely to donate through CAAP than other national charitable organizations?
4. Why does Ms. Freij become emotional when talking about her sons' futures in America?
5. Explain how CAAP will improve negative stereotypes of Arab Americans.

Activity: For this activity, groups of no more than six students will research and present a successful charitable organization that works to improve the lives of its beneficiaries. For the final component of the project, groups will plan a fundraiser or drive for the charity. Students may choose (with teacher approval) any charity with a local presence. The following questions are required for the presentation (teachers should encourage students to conduct live interviews):

1. What is the name and nature of the organization?
2. How was the organization started?
3. What are the core values of the organization?
4. Who are the target beneficiaries? Why was this group targeted?
5. How is the organization structured?
6. Who are the primary donors?
7. What are some current goals of the organization?

Once groups have researched their charitable organizations, they should plan a fundraiser or drive to be conducted at school or in the community. This information (including method and goals) is to be included as the final component of the presentation. Presentation ideas: slide show, iPrezi, video, web page, Glogster, etc.

Take it outside the classroom! Have students execute their plans and keep track of results on a chart in the classroom.

Assessment Ideas: Students will be graded on:

1. Participation in class discussion.
2. Participation in group work.
3. Group research answers.
4. Final presentation.

Explore Online: Use the following resources to allow your students to further explore the topic and the Arab American community.

1. Arab Cultural Center: <http://arabculturalcenter.org/>
2. Arab American Museum: <http://arabamericanmuseum.org/>
3. Arab American Antidiscrimination Committee: <http://adc.org/>
4. ACCESS: <http://www.accesscommunity.org>
5. Center for Arab American Philanthropy: <http://www.centeraap.org>

Interdisciplinary Options: Business & Marketing; Psychology; Sociology; Career Education



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In this episode, students will see how dedicating one's self to the betterment of others serves to empower both the recipient and the benefactor.

Common Core Alignment:

- RI7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- W6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.