



Teacher/Viewing Guide

Arab American Stories - Episode 113

Mariem Masmoudi

Student Activist

Grade Level 9-12

Episode Overview:

In this episode, student activist Mariem Masmoudi shares how she felt compelled to take time off from college in her senior year in order to go to Tunisia and work with Tunisian students after their revolution. Working with five other students, she founded a group in Tunisia to help mobilize young people for democratic change. Mariem was born in the US to Tunisian parents, and she shares her love of both her parents' homeland, Tunisia, and the democratic freedoms she enjoys in the United States. She is particularly passionate about freedom of speech in America, and the right to make your own political and social choices. She also shares her excitement at watching more Arab nations undergo democratic revolutions and witnessing their youth movements for change.

Mariem's parents share their pride in their daughter's choice to contribute to building a new democracy in their home country in the Maghreb (Arab North Africa.) In this episode, Mariem is returning to the University of North Carolina to finish her senior year after spending almost a year in Tunisia.

Previewing Questions:

1. What is the Arab Spring? Where and how did it start? Where is Tunisia?
2. What is a student activist? Do you think students can play a role in major political or social events?
3. What is required of citizens to participate in a democracy? What is civil society?
4. How can one person bring about change in a local, national, or international cause?

Vocabulary:

1. Student Activism: Work done by students to effect political, environmental, economic, or social change.
2. Democracy: A system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
3. Arab Spring: A term given to the pro-democracy wave of demonstrations, protests, and wars occurring in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010.

Lesson Overview/Review: After viewing the segment on Mariem Masmoudi, students should be prepared to discuss how individuals and students working together as activists can affect change. In addition, students will discuss the Arab Spring and the role that youth have played in bringing about change in the Arab world.

Post-viewing Class discussion:

After viewing the segment, consider the following questions:

1. Mariem decided to leave college just prior to graduation. Why do you think she was so compelled to act immediately?
2. What role does social media play in modern student activism?
3. Have you ever participated in any form of social change or activism? If so, what was the cause you supported? In what ways did you participate?
4. Do you believe that students can play a major role in social change? Give examples of times throughout history that students have played a role in change.

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Journal option: Ask students to respond to the following writing prompt:
One thing that I would like to change about my school or community or country is:

Activity: Students will compare and contrast student activism in the 1960's and 1970's with today. In particular, students will explore the role of communication and awareness. Students should discuss how social media has increased the speed with which information is disseminated and broadened participation. Students should select a particular movement from the 60's and 70's and research student activism within that movement. Students should not merely select "the civil rights movement," but rather a specific campaign within that movement. Students should explore the following questions:

1. How did students become aware of the situation or crisis?
2. How were they able to participate?
3. What specific things did students do as part of their activism?
4. In what ways were they able to affect change?

Next, have students explore current or recent events where student activism has played a role. You may wish to have students specifically look at the Arab Spring or more broadly at current student activism. Have students answer the same questions from above. Finally, ask students to write a five paragraph compare and contrast essay where they make note of how activism has changed in the last forty years. In particular, direct students to look at how technology, media, and social media has expanded and changed student activism.

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

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5At0vcCYmk>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunisian_revolution
3. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/57g.asp>

Interdisciplinary Options Social Science, World History, English, Geography

Common Core Alignment

- RI7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
- W6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.
- W7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.