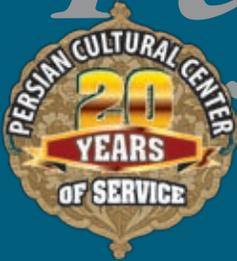


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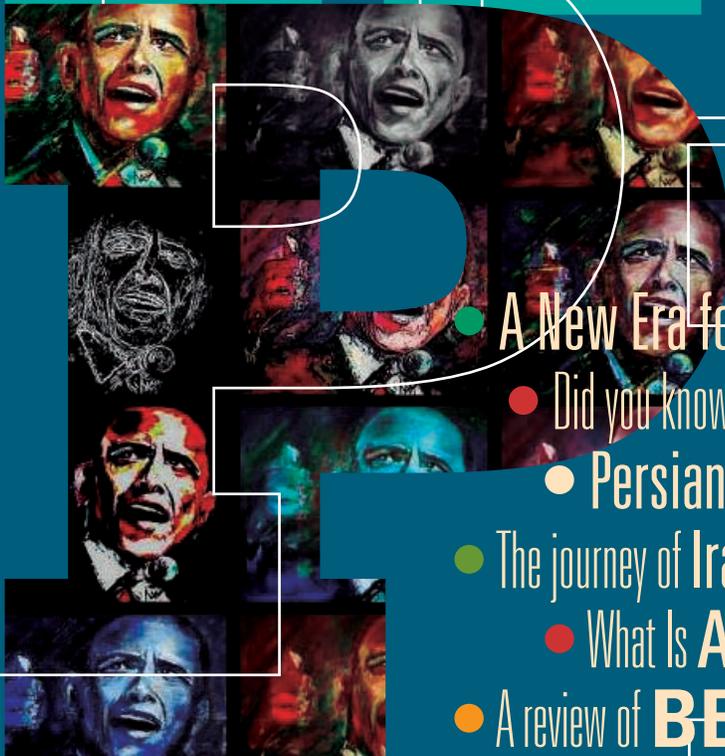
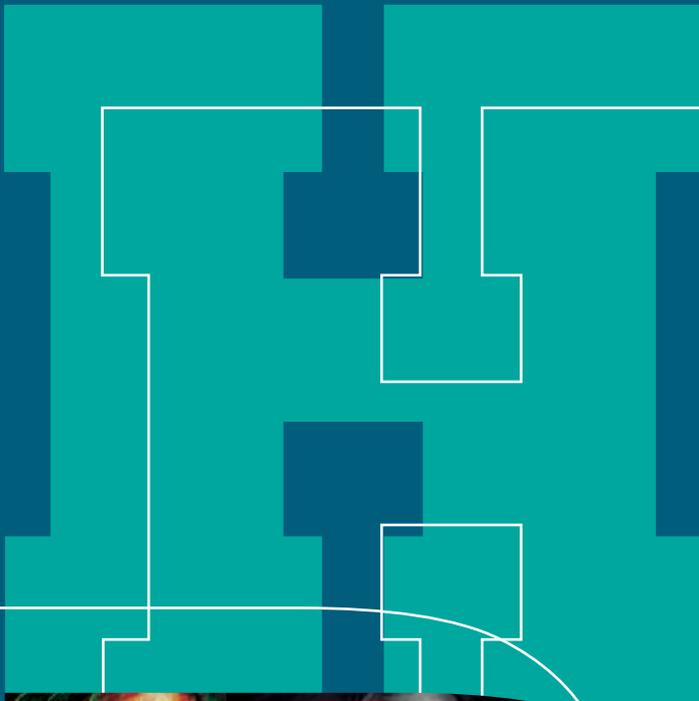
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A New Era for Change

- Did you know . . .
- Persian Family Festival:
- The journey of Iranian-American scientist
- What Is Art History?
- A review of **BE**LONGING,





Editorial

by *Shahri Estakhry*



A New Era for Change

On October 18, 2008, then candidate for the presidency of the United States, Barack Obama delivered a campaign speech under the Gateway Arch at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri, for about 100,000 people. In the background of this magnificent gathering was the green dome of the building that not long ago was the site where African-Americans were sold as slaves. His message: "Together, we cannot fail. Not now. Not when we have a crisis to solve and an economy to save. Not when there are so many Americans without jobs and without homes. Not when there are families who can't afford to see a doctor, or send their child to college, or pay their bills at the end of the month. Not when a generation is counting on us to give them the same opportunities and the same chances that we had for ourselves."

On November 4, 2008, after 21 months of hard campaigning in an unprecedented election with a brilliant team devoted to him, who also worked hard for us as a nation to believe that his way was the road to a mandatory change needed for us all, we the people elected Barack Obama and jubilantly danced when the news was finalized. His acceptance speech was given at Grant Park in Chicago in front of a quarter of a million people who were sobbing, dancing and shouting "YES WE CAN." For those of us that have witnessed the struggles of Civil Rights, and cared deeply for human rights, it will always be a cherished moment. This said he was not elected because of the color of his skin. 135 million Americans went to the poles, and despite enormous differences, and for a variety of reasons, they expressed dissatisfaction with the ruling government and gave him a vast majority mandate for significant changes.

These three words of "Yes We Can" are very profound and powerful and a promise to be there for him. This brilliant, young, self-confident and debonair man who will be our first black president, is setting a precedent in the history books of this nation. Very few other presidents have inherited so many problematic issues as he will from day one. In order to re-build America it will take each one of us to exhibit a strong will and the understanding that there may be many sacrifices required of us in the years to come. Regardless of our political beliefs, now is the time to stand up as a citizen of this nation behind this highly intelligent and educated president who has the greatest compassion and respect for everyone and all things that surround him, and who we have elected to move America forward into the future.

These are times incomparable to any other in our lives. We are no longer deeply divided, for the majority agrees on so many important issues that our lives and the stability of our future generations depend on it. Bumpy roads are ahead, but it is not the first time nor will it be the last that as a nation we have faced such times. With great confidence in our ability and ingenuity and giving ourselves time, we will be the same ole America that has led the world with compassion in technology, charity and a strong and dignified belief in character. After many years, once again the world is embracing and celebrating America and all eyes are on us. It is unprecedented that America would choose a president that the rest of the world would cheer and celebrate along with us.

To the other Western civilizations, we are a proud nation that has broken the divisive barriers of prejudice...when will you?

"If there is anyone out there who will doubt that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer." Barack Obama, November 4, 2008 – Grant Park, Chicago.

Persian Cultural Center's Bilingual Magazine

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Persian Cultural Center

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Affiliate of Persian Cultural Center
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Cover Design: Saeed Jalali



Persian Cultural Center Report

November and December 2008:

The board of directors of PCC had two monthly meetings. At these meetings, various committees presented their respective reports as well as projections of their future activities.

PCC had two programs in December:

Persian Family Festival was a joint program with House of Iran and the Mingei International Museum that was presented museum's Escondido location December 13. This program consisted of several folk dances and Persian and Daf Ensemble music. A report of the event is present at page 10 of this issue.

Yalda, the traditional winter solstice, was celebrated at Alborz Restaurant on December 20. In this program Jamal Vafaei and his band presented a beautiful and a memorable Yalda performance for all the guests.

PCC will present several programs over the next few months:

- **Participation in the Multicultural Festival, organized by the City of San Diego, January 11, 2009.**
- **Lecture and poetry reading by Niloufar Talebi, January 19, 2009.**
- **Azari concert by Araz with Rahim Shahriari, February 10, 2009 at the Neuroscience Institute.**
- **Kamkars Concert, March 4, 2009 at the Sherwood Auditorium.**
- **Nowruz Festival, in collaboration with House of Iran and the Mingei International Museum, March 7, 2009.**
- **Charshanbeh soori and Sizdeh bedar, in collaboration with House of Iran and AIAP.**
- **Nowruz Celebration with AIAP, March 22, 2009.**

To ALL PAST MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

As a part of our 20th Anniversary, the Board of Directors of PCC cordially invite all past members of the Board to get together at the Iranian School of San Diego, branch I (Standley Middle School) on January 25, 2009 from 2 to 3 PM. The purpose of this meeting is to celebrate 20 years of service. Please RSVP by calling (858) 653-0336. We hope to see you all.

Shahla Salah - President



EDITORS NOTE:

In issues 116 and 117 of Peyk we featured articles debating the accuracy and use of the term "Islamic Art." The first article, entitled "Islamic Art?" was submitted by Bahar Sarkash. This article expressed the view that the term "Islamic Art" is inaccurate, confusing, and prone to negative associations.

The second article, entitled "Islamic Art? Or Arts of the Islamic World? How to Define a Complex Field of Art History," was authored by Ladan Akbarnia. This article was part concurrence and part rebuttal of the first. While Dr. Akbarnia acknowledged the inadequacies of the term, she also outlined the academic and historical basis for its current use. Her suggestion is to remove the assumption of religious ascription by using the label, "arts of the Islamic world."

We have received a counter rebuttal to Dr. Akbarnia's article from Ms. Sarkash, reiterating and defending the arguments set forth in her first article. While we are grateful to these wonderful authors for gracing the pages of our publication with their knowledge and expertise, we have decided that further debate does not advance the argument but merely turns on semantics. For this reason, we are forwarding Ms. Sarkash's letter directly to Dr. Akbarnia. We thank them both for expanding the marketplace of ideas in our community.

Solicitation of Material

Do you have an opinion on something you see here? Have you written an article that you would like us to publish? If so, we would love to hear from you! For directions on how to submit your piece, please contact PEYK- PCC's office at: P.O. Box 500914, San Diego, CA 92150. You might find your submission printed in the next issue of Peyk!

Peyk reserves the right to edit all materials at its sole discretion. Materials submitted will not be returned to sender, even if not used, and the contributor will be deemed to have given consent and license for the reproduction and publication of such submission in Peyk magazine and/or the Peyk website.

Dear Loyal Readers:

We need your help!

Peyk is in danger of closing down due to lack of funding.



The first issue of Peyk was published 18 years ago in the form of a two-page black and white newsletter. What a long way we've come since then! With the help of a growing number of talented writers, editors, and an amazing graphic designer, our newsletter has transformed into a beautiful magazine filled with original and unique articles and interviews. The Peyk staff is comprised solely of volunteers, working purely for the love of the publication and from an extraordinary commitment to community-building.

Did you know that the Library of Congress is a subscriber to Peyk? Peyk readers span the nation and spread into Canada and Europe, too! We also have a steady following of online readers. Because we value our intelligent and diverse readership, we endeavor to maintain high quality content with expansive coverage of topics. We strive not to overload our pages with advertisements out of respect for you, our devoted readers.

However, due to tough economic times, some of the few advertisers we did welcome on our pages are not renewing their business with us. Losing the advertising revenue means that we will no longer be able to meet our printing and production costs.

Fortunately, there is something that you can do to help! You can either renew or begin a membership with the Persian Cultural Center (PCC), which comes with a free subscription to Peyk, or you can subscribe to the magazine for an annual cost of \$20. If you're filled with the holiday spirit, you may even consider giving Peyk a monetary donation. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please join us in our efforts to keep our valued publication alive. Please help us save Peyk!

Good wishes to you and happy reading!

The Entire Peyk Team

Membership or Subscription Application

Name:

Address:City:.....State.....Zip.....

Tel: () Fax: () E- Mail:

Membership: \$50 Family \$35 Individual \$20 Students

Donation: \$1,000 \$500 \$100 \$ other **Donations are Tax Deductible.**

Peyk Subscription: \$20

Check enclosed

Credit Card: MC Visa Card #: Expiration Date:



Noush-e Jan

From: *The Joy of Persian Cooking*

By: **Pari Ardalan Malek**

Stew is served with Chelow (white rice recipe Peyk #107).
www.pccus.org

Khoresh Beh (Quince Stew):

Preparation time 1 hour; serves 5-6 persons

1½ lbs lamb, veal or beef ; ½ lb dried sour prunes (also Bokhara) found in Iranian stores (Peyk page 23); 4 large quince, cored and sliced (not peeled); 1 large chopped onion; ¼ cup lemon juice; ¼ cup oil for frying; ½ teaspoon salt; 1/8 teaspoon pepper; 2 cups water.

1. Remove excess fat from meat or poultry, cut to 1½ inch cubes, wash and drain.
2. In a non-stick pan, stir meat over medium heat until water evaporates.
3. Add oil and stir and add onion.
4. Add water, stir, cover and cook over medium heat until meat is almost done.
5. Fry quince for three minutes.
6. Wash & dry prunes. Add fried quince, prunes, lemon juice, salt and pepper to meat.
7. Simmer over low heat for 30 minutes.

Quince Jam:

Preparation time 1 hour, makes 5 medium-size jars

10 medium to large quince; 8 cups sugar, 1 teaspoon cardamom, ½ cup rose water

1. Peel quince, cut each one in half and scoop out seeds.
2. Cut fruit into small wedges and place in a bowl of cold water as you slice them, to prevent discoloration.
3. Transfer quince to a large pan, then fill pan with just enough water to cover fruit.
4. Cook over medium heat about 30 minutes or until fruit softens. Add sugar, rose water and cardamom.
5. Reduce heat, cover lid with dish cloth and cool for another 2 hrs.
6. Jam should turn red. Remove from heat, keep pan covered and set aside overnight.
7. Transfer to air-tight jars and store refrigerated.

Note from Noush-e Jan editor: When making jams, keep in mind that it is best to cook such in pans that have not been used for stews or similar that may have an odor of onion/garlic or herbs. If you enjoy cooking perhaps you may want to have a separate pan for cooking jams or similar recipes.



DID YOU KNOW...

Unless you have a high-efficiency toilet (HET), every time you flush you are using 3 gallons of precious fresh water. An HET gives the same flush but uses only about 1 gallon of water. Over the course of a year you could cut down on toilet water consumption by as much as 60 per cent.

An average dishwasher can use more than 10.5 gallons of water per cycle and releases hundreds of pounds of greenhouse gases in hot-water heating. Using the dishwasher only when it is full will save water and energy. If you are in the market for a new dishwasher make sure you check out the energy star models. Also, instead of using your machine's drying cycle, open the door of your dishwasher just a crack or two after the wash cycle and let the dishes air dry.

All those toxic chemical cleaners you use around your home are not only potentially hazardous for you but they also end up polluting our environment when poured down the drain or put into the landfill. Try to buy green products for cleaning your home or make up your own cleaners with a variety of natural ingredients...they really work! Look up ingredients and recipes online:
www.geocities.com; www.organizedhome.com.

Virtual Kit for green-cleaning parties, where you and your friends get together to make your own cleaners. see www.womenandenvironment.org

You can reuse your printer ink and toner cartridges up to four times, regardless of what the packaging says. Just use a reputable company to refill or remanufacture your cartridges. You'll avoid adding cartridges to the landfill and save yourself money.

Having indoor plants in your home and office reduces air pollution and the incidence of fatigue, coughs, sore throats, and other cold-related illnesses by up to 30 per cent. Plants also reduce stress levels.

Your old cell phones contain toxic metals such as arsenic, copper, lead, nickel and zinc. These metals do not biodegrade so they must be recycled. Phones that still work can be exported to developing countries to help bridge the digital divide. See www.wirelessrecycling.com and www.charitablerecycling.com.



Source for this article:
 National Geographic's "True Green" by Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin.
 Body+Soul Magazine, Jan-Feb 2009, P.26



Persian Family Festival:

Photos: Saeed Jalali

Successful Cultural Outreach

On Saturday, December 13, the Persian Cultural Center of San Diego (PCC) launched the first of two cultural programs at the Mingei International Museum. Mingei is exhibiting Tent & Textiles of Central Asia and Iran in the city of Escondido. The Persian Family Festival included dance and music performances from 1–4 pm. The program began with a performance by the Daf Ensemble, and continued with performances by classical and folk musicians. The Persian Cultural Dance Academy enticed the audience with four wonderful performances while representatives and artists from the House of Iran welcomed the audience by teaching them how to write their names using Persian calligraphy. The program also had the great fortune of having San Diego based artists, Majid Fadaeian and Parvin Heydarinassab at the event. Visitors both had the opportunity to learn about Persian culture and observe Mingei's Nomadic exhibition at no cost. The Persian Family Festival was a rich cultural event, with many dancers, musicians, calligraphers, and artists and engaged countless enthusiasts. The program was successful in outreach to both the Iranians and non-Iranians of North County.

Do Not Miss The Next Upcoming event:

Nowruz celebration on March 7, 2009.
Mingei International Museum (www.mingei.org)
155 West Grand Avenue in Downtown Escondido
Telephone: 760-735-3355



Festival at Mingei Museum offers a peek into Persia

By Pat Sherman

TODAY'S LOCAL NEWS

December 11, 2008

ESCONDIDO – Following years of strife between the United States and Iran, people in both countries are sensing that relations between the two nations could improve during the administration of President-elect Barack Obama.

“They’re very hopeful that this is a new beginning,” said Ali Sadr, a board member of the San Diego-based Persian Cultural Center. “There will be probably more ... scientific and cultural exchange.”

The center is co-sponsoring the Persian Family Festival from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Mingei International Museum in Escondido.

At the event, those attending will have a chance to immerse themselves in Iranian dance, music, art and cuisine.

Though it won’t solve the diplomatic void, Sadr said he hopes the festival will help attendees gain a better understanding of Iran, its people and its culture.

“Unfortunately, most Americans don’t have that much exposure to the Iranian culture,” Sadr said. “There is a lot of animosity and a lot of rhetoric everywhere in the news. What they see mostly is what they hear in the news, and that’s totally unfair to the people who live here and consider this their homeland as well.

“What we (hope to do) is create friendship and show part of the culture that people don’t really see.”

The event, sponsored by the museum, the House of Iran and the Persian Cultural Center, is being presented in conjunction with the exhibition “Nomadic Legacy: Tent and Textiles From Central Asia and Iran.”

The exhibit showcases the region’s heritage and nomadic

culture, including a prize-winning Kyrgyz yurt, Persian bag faces and Central Asian hats.

The festival will include performances by the Persian Cultural Dance Academy, as well as classical and folk musicians.

Attendees can learn to write their names in Farsi using Persian calligraphy, an ancient and revered art form.

Though many Iranian cultural events have been held in San Diego, there haven’t been many in North County, where there are Iranian-American populations in San Marcos, southern Escondido, Rancho Bernardo and Rancho Peñasquitos, Sadr said.

“We haven’t really had much exposure in that area before,” he said. “Bringing some of the Iranian families there to mingle among the other community members would be really helpful to create friendship.”

■ Pat Sherman: (760) 752-6774; pat.sherman@tnews.net



Rising Health Care Costs Puts Pressure on Small Businesses

Voluntary products and benefits communications can provide relief.

by Eamen Hameed

Although double-digit health insurance cost increases affect all business owners, no matter the size of their company, smaller businesses feel more pressure because they typically don't have as many benefits options available to them as larger companies. Yet they need to offer competitive benefits packages to compete with larger companies for qualified employees.

Voluntary benefits offered at the worksite can help small businesses lessen benefits program management pressures by providing much-needed solutions: voluntary products to help employees fill the gaps in their core benefits as well as benefits communications to help employees better understand their benefits and the value of what is provided to them.

Voluntary Products Expand the Benefits Program

We're seeing larger numbers of small business employers putting in high deductible health plans, and some are even adopting consumer-driven health care plans. Either way, employees are taking on more responsibility for their health care expenses. Voluntary benefits can help you better manage your benefits program costs and help provide employees with coverage choices to meet their out-of-pocket medical expenses. Adding a supplemental health insurance product and other voluntary benefits such as life insurance, cancer insurance and short-term disability can expand your benefits program. For example, with a high-deductible health plan, employees could choose a supplemental health insurance product to help pay for their additional out-of-pocket expenses. With voluntary benefits, a portion or all of the premiums for the voluntary benefits can be paid for or the employees may pay for the additional benefits themselves.

Benefits Communications Helps Employees Understand and Appreciate Their Benefits

Small businesses typically have little to no human resources staff, which means the business owners often handle HR duties in addition to all the other responsibilities. In many cases, you don't have the time and resources to fully communicate your benefits program. Yet employees who understand the benefits they have and the value of what their employer provides appreciate their company more and use their benefits more responsibly, according to the Wyatt WorkUSA® 2004 study.

Having a voluntary benefits partner who can communicate your benefits program — both core and voluntary benefits — and help employees make educated coverage decisions can help take the load off of you. Find a voluntary benefits partner who is experienced in conducting one-on-one benefits communications sessions and who is willing to provide this valuable service at no cost. Many larger companies have staff or outside partners to help them with



benefits communications and enrollments, but by partnering with a quality voluntary benefits provider you can take advantage of these services for your own company at no additional expense. It is a huge competitive advantage.

Voluntary benefits can help you relieve some of the pressure from increasing health insurance costs yet still remain competitive in the marketplace. The benefits to you are an enhanced benefits program, savings in program costs, quality benefits communications and an effective enrollment process. Your employees will benefit from having more coverage choices to meet their needs, plus they'll understand and appreciate the value of what you provide for them.

A screenshot of a website for a House of Blues event. The header features the House of Blues logo and the text "A HOUSE OF BLUES - SAN DIEGO". Below this, the name "MAZ JOBRANI" is prominently displayed. A photograph shows Maz Jobrani smiling and giving a thumbs up, surrounded by other people. To the right of the photo, the event details are listed: "January 16 at House of Blues San Diego". There are two buttons: "More Info" and "Buy Tickets". Below the buttons, it says "On Sale Now!". At the bottom, the event info is provided: "Event Info Friday, January 16 House of Blues San Diego door: 7:00 PM / show: 8:00 pm All Ages".

The journey of Iranian-American scientist honored by President Bush

Washington, Oct. 24, 2008 (IranVNC)

Eight years ago, Dr. Maysam Ghovanloo came from Iran to start his Ph. D. in America. This year, the 35-year-old Georgia Tech assistant professor was honored by the US President, for his scientific contributions to humanity. He is an Iranian who came to America eight years ago to start his Ph. D. at the University of Michigan. This year, President George W. Bush singled him out in his speech at the White House annual Iftar dinner before a crowd of diplomats, Administration and Congress officials.

U.S. President George W. Bush: "This immigrant from Iran has become one of our nation's most ingenious biomedical engineers." Dr. Maysam Ghovanloo: "I feel very privileged just to sit at the dinner table with the U.S. President and talking to him face to face, not in a quietly formal but friendly manner." President Bush: "Last month, the good professor and his team of researchers at Georgia Tech unveiled an incredible invention that could one day help some with severe disabilities operate wheelchairs and surf the Internet by simply moving their tongue." Thirty-five year old Dr. Maysam Ghovanloo attaches a lentil-size magnet to the tongue to mobilize the severely disabled.

Ghovanloo: "As you can see in this diagram, the changes in magnetic fields are being sensed by magnetic sensors and this information is being sent to a smart phone... It can translate the tongue movement into a particular command." And that command can operate devices in their surroundings. Ghovanloo: "TV, computer, lights, phone, wheel chair, the bed..." He developed this idea three years ago. His innate desire to help the disabled started while growing up with his younger brother Yasser who was born with hearing deficiency. Ghovanloo: "I think that had an impact on me early on, to use my knowledge and experience in engineering in the field of medicine for people... with most severe disabilities, because in their life I can have the biggest impact; that that's why I am here and that is what I am doing."

The kid who liked playing with electronic toys, was fascinated with studying engineering.

Ghovanloo: "...against the desire of my parents who also wanted me to become a doctor." So Ghovanloo studied electrical engineering at the University of Tehran. Eventually, he received his M. Sc. in biomedical engineering from Amirkabir Institute of Technology. He credits Iran for the education that



paved the way for his accomplishments today. He is married to lawyer Azadeh Shahshahani who works with the American Civil Liberties Union defending the rights of women and immigrants.

Ghovanloo: "We are, thanks to God, quite happy with our life and hopefully we also continue to feel happy in the future."



©IranVNC 2008.

EDUCATION

by Sheiveh Jones



CYBER-ISSUES



EDUCATION

You have probably recently heard of Megan Meier, a thirteen year old girl, who committed suicide after being bullied by 49-year-old Lori Drew posing as a teenage boy on MySpace. Drew suspected Meier was spreading rumors about her daughter, and to take revenge established a persona on MySpace to become friends with Meier. Though charged with four felony counts, Drew was found guilty only of misdemeanor charges. Nonetheless, the end result of her cyber bullying was the suicide of a young girl. So what is cyber bullying? According to the California Technology Assistance Project, "Cyber bullying is the use of technology for social cruelty, which can include harassment, impersonation, denigration, trickery, exclusion and stalking."

A recent study by Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin surveyed two thousand middle school students about this issue. Nearly 26% of the two thousand students reported having been either a recent or lifetime victim of cyber bullying. If this is a relative number for middle school populations, you could expect one quarter of your child's middle school is experiencing or has experienced cyber bullying. Why is this even an issue? The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reports more than thirty million children under age 18 use the Internet, which means they can potentially give out personal information or fall victim to bullies and predators. During an age when children are vulnerable and looking to be accepted by their peers, it is important to arm them with the proper tools for dealing with the risks of accessing the Internet. We know there have been multiple suicides related to cyber bullying and thus not a matter to be dealt with lightly. We also have heard of cases where children have fallen victim to online sexual predators. Before you tell yourself, "This wouldn't happen to us," think about whether your child has a blog, uses instant messenger, or is part of an online social network such as MySpace or Facebook. If so, the potential to fall victim is there.

I would encourage you to take time to discuss responsible use of the Internet. Aside from the bullying and predator component, it is known that college

personnel use blogs and social networks as a background check for potential candidates applying to their universities, so it is worth talking to your child about what responsible use looks like. There are multiple age appropriate resources online for parents and children such as videos, games, statistics, articles, and tips to help address cyber safety. You can simply Google the term "cyber bullying" which will yield over one million results or you can go to one of two of my favorite websites addressing this issue: www.stopcyberbullying.org or www.netsmartz.org.

Some suggestions for internet safety posted on www.netsmartz.org include:

- Posting simple and clear house rules near the computer monitor.
 - Reading a web site's privacy policy before giving any personal information.
 - Talking to children about what personal information is and why you should never give it to people online. Web sites for children are not permitted to request personal information without a parent's permission.
 - Talking to children about never meeting in person with anyone they first "met" online if they use chat or e-mail.
 - Talking to children about not responding to offensive or dangerous e-mails, chats, or other communications.
 - Keeping the computer in the family room or other open area of your home.
 - Letting children show you what they can do online, and visiting their favorite websites.
 - Having children use child-friendly search engines when completing homework.
- Though it may be a difficult subject to broach, being proactive may prevent having to be reactive later.

Sheiveh Jones began teaching in 1996 and has since taught high school math, English, and AVID. During the last five years she coached new teachers in effective instructional practices to increase student learning. She is currently a program coordinator for the San Diego County Office of Education and continues her work with new teachers through training and mentoring. Additionally, she is completing her Doctorate of Education Organizational Leadership and navigating her way through the public education system as a parent of two boys.

Calendar of Events

Dar Shahr Cheh Khabar?

Visit Our web site at

www.pccus.org

Persian Cultural Center

Tel: (858) 653-0336 - Fax & Voice Mail: (619) 374-7335
Website: www.pccus.org



Lecture and Poetry Reading

with Niloufar Talebi

Friday January 23, 2009 8PM National University

Global Village and International Festival

Hosted by the city of san Diego, Saturday January 17, 2009, 10AM to 5 PM downtown San Diego.

Araz, Azari live concert,

February 10, 2009 7:30 PM at The Neuroscience Institute.

Kamkars in Concert,

March 4, 2009 7:30 PM at the Sherwood Auditorium, La Jolla.

Nowruz Family Festival with House of Iran and Mingei Museum

Saturday March 7, 2009 at Mingei International Museum, Escondido.

Charshanbehssori, with HOI and AIAP,

Mission Bay, March 17, 2009 form 6PM.

Nowrouz Celebration, with AIAP

Saturday, March 21, 2009

Setar classes by Kourosh Taghavi (858)717-6389

Daf workshop with Ali Sadr, Tuesdays 6 to 7:30 PM at PCC office.

Iranian School of San Diego (858) 653-0336

Nowruz Preparation

Sunday March 8, 2009 at branch I form 2-4 PM.

Nowruz celebration

Sunday March 15, 2009 3:30 to 6:30

Branch I : 1:30 to 4:30pm Standley Middle School

Branch II: 6:00 to 8:00pm Mount Carmel High School



Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

Every Sundays at Iranian School of San Diego Branch I

From 1:30 to 5:30pm (858) 653-0336

Dollar a Month Fund

Nowruz Bazar - Egg coloring, March 8, 2009
2 to 4 PM at Iranian School of San Diego Branch I.
Tel: (858) 653-0336
www.dmfund.org



Association of Iranian American Professionals (AIAP)

Tel:(619) 645-7273 www.aiap.org
Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm



Kamal Cultural Foundation

Tel: (858) 538-0829

House of Iran

Tel: (619) 232-Iran Balboa Park, Sundays 12:00-4:00pm

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 653-0336



Mehrgan Foundation

www.Mehrganfoundation.org Tel (858) 673-7000

Iranian Women's Study Group of San Diego

Meets: First Sunday of the month • Contact: (858) 952-6713

Meeting location: The University of California, San Diego

The Women's Center • 9500 Gilman Drive, 0096

La Jolla, CA 92093-0096 • Meeting time: 3:30 to 6:30 PM

Association of Iranian American Network of Services

Thu Oct 9 2008, 12:30 PM

(760) 729-9979 www.niabo.org

Nomadic Legacy

at The Mingei International Museum exhibition

October 12 , 2008 - March 22, 2009 (see ad on Farsi section page 25)

Maz Jobrani , Brown and Friendly

Friday January 16, 2009 at House of Blues, San Diego

A lecture by Sussan Babaei Ph.D of Getty Research Institute

Title: "Problematizing Modernity in Persian Visual

Culture: Pictures and Performance in Contemporary Arts"

Date and Time: January 15, 2009 at 5:00 PM

Location: UCSD, Department of Literature, Literature Building 155, deCerteau Room

Wed Feb 25 2009 7:30 PM

Dastgah Jam

Persian Traditional Music

Dornob

Southwestern College, Room 105 U, 900 Otay Lakes Rd

(619) 482-6367

Sat Apr 18 2009 8:00 PM

Zimbabwe Day

Tsitsi Mutseta and Kwame Degbor

Masongano Mbira Ensemble

Zimbeat Marimba Band

The Neurosciences Institute, 10640 John Jay Hopkins Dr, 92121 (760) 845-9480

La Jolla Motor Car Classic - 11 am-3 pm Sun, Jan. 11, 2009

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Recreation event type: Car Show

La Jolla Cove

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Birch North Park Theatre

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NIAC Forges Ahead in SBA Struggle



Washington DC - NIAC is forging ahead with its campaign to achieve SBA (Small Business Administration) 8 (a) benefits for Iranian-American small business owners. The nation's largest Iranian-American organization is enlisting the cooperation of other ethnic minority groups and reaching out to Iranian-American organizations to bring the issue before the public and Congress. If granted, Iranian-American entrepreneurs would be eligible to compete with other minority communities for lucrative government contracts and services.

NIAC laid the foundation for SBA recognition by formally submitting a petition for Iranian-American group status in 2005. The petition was the end result of thousands of man-hours gathering information, surveying the community and enlisting expert support. The petition is by far most comprehensive documentation of discrimination of Iranian American small business owners to date. It includes in-depth surveys and one-on-one interviews, as well as empirical evidence and polls to support the argument that the community is subject to systematic discrimination and disadvantage. The very existence of the petition - with its meticulous documentation of discrimination - constitutes a critical foundation for any current or future efforts to achieve SBA status.

Over the years, NIAC has exerted pressure on the SBA to come to a decision: exemplified by over 60 letters of support for the Iranian-American community from U.S. lawmakers sent to the SBA.

Earlier this fall, the petition was denied by the SBA on the basis that the discrimination suffered by Iranian-American small business owners was not 'chronic' enough for the SBA. Unperturbed, NIAC is determined to compel the SBA to recognize the discrimination suffered by Iranian-American small business owners, and afford them the benefits of other minority groups.



"The petition process was a necessary step in achieving group recognition," said Legislative Director Emily Blout. "With this important groundwork laid, the community is well positioned to achieve SBA status by way of the legislative process." But Blout also pointed out that additional paths do also exist, "NIAC reserves the option of pursuing legal action to realize the rights of our community."



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WHAT IS ART HISTORY?

People often ask me what I study, and I say Art History. The next question varies. Most people then ask me “are you a painter?” and I jokingly answer “No, that is for talented people. Art History is for people who have no talents whatsoever in creating and are only good at talking about the art that others have created.” However sarcastic, my answer is true; I talk about art. After mentioning that I study art history, only a few people have ever asked me “in what area?” To that I smilingly say, “Modern and Contemporary European and American Arts.” Regardless of my personal experience, I think it is worth taking a brief look at the history of Art History.

Art History or History of Art is the study or knowledge of visual arts (art works as well as artists) within a historical context. Basically it is the history of art objects, from the stylistic to socio-cultural points of view. As for the formal analysis of the piece, Art History is concerned with the meanings and philosophies behind the work. Art History also involves the aesthetic study of a piece of art or an art movement. Specializations in Art History are based on region and period; for example, 19th century art, Medieval art, European art or African art. These categories, like other labels, cover some parts and exclude other important parts. Labels and categories in every field of study make the study of the subjects easier, however labels often simplify the matter categorized and therefore are misleading. For example ‘African Art’ as a label generalizes Art of 53 different countries under the name of one continent. Art styles in Nigeria, a country in West Africa differs from one region to the other let alone, from one African country to the other. Thus African art as a label ignores these varieties and presents many different styles under one name, which is misleading to a general audience. Although in recent years art historians are more and more careful with the issues of labeling, the old names sometimes stick because of their usability. Like many other definitions, Art History has been the subject of many debates.

It is always important to know how much money one would make choosing one major over the other. For those who want to choose, or already have chosen Art History as their profession, the recent post on the Wall Street Journal called “Salary Increase By Major” might be interesting. According Wall Street Journal’s “year-long survey of 1.2 million people with only a bachelor’s degree by PayScale, Inc.” Art History majors have an average starting salary of

\$35,800. And ten years after graduation, their median salary is \$64,900. In this respect, they beat majors in anthropology, biology, criminal justice, drama, education, English, forestry, graphic design, health care administration, hospitality, interior design, music, nutrition, psychology, religion, sociology, and Spanish. But they lose to philosophy majors who are earning an average of \$81,200 ten years after their graduation. (Art History Newsletter: <http://arthistorynewsletter.com/blog/?p=763> and Wall Street Journal: http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-Degrees_that_Pay_you_Back-sort.html)

In the West the first existing text that can be considered as History of Art, is Greek Painting and Sculpture Found in Natural History, written by Pliny the Elder in the 1st century AD. Independently from the West, Art History also developed in China. The first example of Chinese scholarly text in this area is Six Laws of Painting, by Xie He in the 5th century. The Chinese Art History that followed Xie He, belonged to a class of scholar-officials, whose members were skillful in calligraphy and painting. During the 11th and 12th centuries, connoisseurs basing themselves on earlier schemes, enhanced the standard three-category ranking of painters from the past. The categories were inspired, excellent and competent. Based on these categories the Chinese formulated a list of creditable artists who were ranked by status and explored formal differences based on regional art schools.



Giorgio Vasari, Self-portrait c.1567

After the 15th century, the Western tradition of Art History revived. In his article for Oxford Art encyclopedia, Wayne R. Dynes suggests that during the Italian Renaissance artists strived for fame and “this sense of fame as a kind of earthly immortality counts as one of the roots of the concept of individual genius, which was to be important in the later cult of the great masters.” Based on Pliny’s example the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti created the first sketch of the history of Italian Art in 1450. In 1550 Giorgio Vasari’s work Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, often called The Lives, was published. Vasari’s book was fervently read in his own day and later for the many details he supplied about individual works and their creators. He established a comprehensive theory of the History of Art. He believed there had been three main stages in each art style and movement: beginnings, an intermediate stage, and the final attainment, each stage being better perfected than the other. Vasari applied these three stages to the period from 1250

to his own time, High Renaissance. Vasari’s stages are still in use in Art History, but in his view art should always keep a profound level and the personality of the artist is important in the greatness of the art. Vasari’s principle was debated many times after the 18th century.

In 1764 Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s well-written work, History of Ancient

Art, marked the start of art criticism in Art History. While Vasari emphasized the personality of the genius artists when discussing a masterpiece, Winckelmann believed that scholars should avoid the personality of the artist and let the artwork speak for itself, as if it is a product of an unknown creator. Dynes suggests that Winckelmann “represented a beholder-centered (rather than artist-centered) historiography.” This view in a way hints toward Roland Barthes’ ideas in post-structuralism and postmodernism in the 1960’s, when the French philosopher

and theorist wrote his famous essay, Death of the Author. In this essay Barthes suggests that readers should separate a literary work from its creator in order to liberate it from interpretive domination. In other words, the moment a work, literary text or visual artwork, is presented to the audience, the author’s authority should be dismissed. Winckelmann put the growing field of art criticism in motion and from that point onwards the more modern field of art criticism began.

Another important milestone in the 19th century was the establishment of Art History as an academic discipline. This began with Franz Kugler’s (1800–58) appointment in 1834 to the chair of the Art History department at the University at Berlin. Slowly the institutionalization of the field spread to other countries. In the late 19th century modern Art History crystallized into a new synthesis, which remained influential until the 1960s.

In this brief history I have overlooked many important figures such as, Henrich Wolfflin, Alois Riegl, Erwin Panofsky and others.

Like other fields in the humanities and arts, new influences and impact come from a change by focusing and applying the critical views of Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism. Recent Art History is more of a combination of interests rather than a single doctrine. Study of the arts of Africa, Oceania and Pre-Columbian Americas also began to flourish in the second half of the 20th century. After the publication of Orientalism in 1978 by Edward Said, which questioned the appropriateness of dominant Western standards on other cultures, the study of the history of the non-Western arts has changed.

With this introduction to the field I have provided the short answer to “What Is Art History?” This article is an introduction to a title, Art History, rather than a deep study of the field. If you would like to pursue this area but enrolling in a general Art History course is not practical, the art aisle of a public library near you would be a good starting point.

To read more:

Anthony F. Janson: Janson’s History of Art, 7th Ed
V. H. Minor: Art History’s History (New York, 1994)
Wayne R. Dynes and Gérard Mermoz. Art History, In Grove Art Online; Oxford Art Online, (<http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T004367> (accessed December 15, 2008).



Portrait of Winckelmann, by Raphael Mengs, 1755



Reviewed by Aria Fani

A review of **BELONGING,** New Poetry by **Iranians Around the World.**

Edited and translated by Niloufar Talebi

Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008

<http://www.thetranslationproject.org/>

Farzaneh Milani writes of modern Iran as “a complex web of paradoxes, a vibrant mix of contradictions, a culture in transition, [that] remains an abstraction—at worst a cliché, at best an enigma- in the American imagination today.” The enigma that Iran is in the West, will not be solved any time soon as long as people’s “imagination” is allowed to run loose by totalitarian news corporations whose agenda is to depict a one-dimensional image. In doing so, it takes both sides to misrepresent a country that has potential far greater than imagined. It takes Fox News as well as—and not without—the absent-minded audience to misrepresent a nation, for every audience has responsibility to pursue truth in alternative forms and medias. And alternatives are countless. “One of the most compelling ways to understand a culture and its complexities is through its art and literature,” says Persis Karim, a Professor of English literature at San Jose State University.

Classical Persian poetry has been widely translated and explored by scholars and thinkers such as: Dick Davis, Edward Fitzgerald, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Goethe, Arthur John Arberry, and Coleman Barks. It has found a profound place in the heart of Western literature. Contemporary Persian poetry on the other hand, remains quite invisible in the West—in comparison to Classical poetry—in spite of numerous efforts by Persian scholars and translators. The works of Nima Yushij, Sohrab Sepehri, Ahmad Shamloo, Forough Farokhzad, Simin Behbahani and that of many other contemporary poets and writers have been translated into English, and have been featured in numerous literary publications and anthologies, such as *The Development of Iranian Literatures*, *Modern Anthology of Persian Poetry*, *Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature*, and more recently *Strange Times, My Dear*. I do not intend to explore the reasons why Contemporary Persian poetry has not reached its potential readership in the West, but rather introduce an anthology that has an enormous potential to go a long way in offering an extensive panorama of Iranian literature today.

- **What does BELONGING feature?**

BELONGING is a collection of new poetry by Iranians around the world, edited and translated by Niloufar Talebi. Talebi is the founder of the Translation Project (established in 2003) that aims to introduce the contemporary (20th and 21st C.) Iranian literature in multiple languages and medias. For the first project, Talebi began her research in 2002, with the goal of “discovering and exploring Persian poetry created by Iranians living outside Iran who had left because of the 1979 revolution.” *BELONGING* has brought together eighteen poets, all living outside of Iran, mostly in Europe. The rest are scattered in the U.S, Canada, and Australia. All the poets in *BELONGING* are living, except for the late Nader Naderpour who passed away in 2000.

BELONGING features three generations of poets, born between 1929 and 1945, 1946 and 1960, and 1961 to the present. The first



generation includes established poets who had played a role in the shaping of Modern Poetry, before the 1979 revolution—writers such as: Nader Naderpour and Yadolla Roya’i. The second generation includes voices that began emerging before and during the revolution, and the third younger generation includes voices that came of age well after the revolution.

- **On presenting contemporary Iranian literature through various medias:**

Poetry has an undeniable, elusive quality to it. By elusive I mean that often because of its complex, multi-layered, and profoundly unsettling nature, poetry may not be readily accessible to general readers. Complex poetry might require readers to bring prior knowledge of poetics to the table. The struggle to understand and relate to a poem can frustrate and unsettle the reader, and is potentially one of the main reasons general audiences show little interest in reading poetry. To remedy this situation for those who are hungry for poetry from their cultural heritage that they can connect to, *BELONGING* deliberately offers poetry that is accessible to all readers as well as the younger Iranian-Americans with varied knowledge of the Persian language. No Ph.D. in poetry is required to read these poems.

The Translation Project’s mission to present contemporary Iranian literature is not confined to *BELONGING*. To make things further accessible, Talebi has created multimedia projects based on this poetry, to capture the imagination of unlikely poetry audiences. One of these projects is “ICARUS/RISE” a multimedia theatrical performance of the new Iranian poetry featured in *BELONGING*. Talebi took inspiration from the Iranian spoken word tradition of *Naghaali*, which is practiced in the streets, cafes, public rituals, or “art music” stage and mixed it with Western theatrical elements to create ICARUS/RISE. *Naghaali* brings to mind the old *Chai Khane* (traditional tea house) atmosphere filled with the legendary stories of *Shahnameh*. ICARUS/RISE however, is a performance of new poetry (20th and 21st century) in *BELONGING* rather than the usual content of Classical Persian poetry and myths. In this way, ICARUS/RISE is a step toward introducing not only new content to new audiences, but also of introducing an Iranian theatrical tradition to them. This has never been done before, certainly not in translation, and not in the West.

Talebi states, “ICARUS/RISE gives voice to hybrid-Iranians, reflecting their experience in contemporary society. Many

A night of Contemporary Persian Poetry with the award-winning translator Niloufar Talebi

When: Friday, January 23, 2009. 8:00 pm. • Where: National University

Info: 858-653-0336

younger Iranian-Americans have never been exposed to and do not have familiarity with their heritage is tradition of *Naghaali* and may not realize that global phenomenon like Hip Hop theater or poetry slams have cultural precedents in the Iranian traditions of 'Moshaa'ereh' and 'Naghaali'. Our goal with projects such as ICARUS/RISE is to help introduce an Iranian theatrical/literary contribution to the American artistic landscape."

• On the content of BELONGING:

This anthology is both an excellent reference book and an educational tool as a bilingual collection. Apart from the selected works of its featured writers, *BELONGING* offers a partial list of more than a hundred Iranian poets around the world. With the power of the internet, any of those names would mean exploring a world fraught with artistic, political and social concerns. It would mean exploring voices that defy social constructions, re-define sexual identity, and challenge gender roles.

The poetry in *BELONGING* spans multiple themes— universal themes of satire, love, erotic, quest for identity, humor and nostalgia. Also social, political and cultural themes that have profound Iranian undertones, recalling and addressing the Iranian Revolution, the Bam earthquake, the Islamic regime, gender roles in the Iranian culture, and etc. Longing for what has been left behind is a common theme in many of the poems, but so is Belonging to our present lives. The Persian title of "Del-bastangui", a combination of "Del-tangui" and "Del-bastegui" is a clever analogue to the word play of Longing + Belonging in the English title. The following is a snapshot of how diverse, powerful and joyful of a read *BELONGING* is:

Longing is tangible in Mina Assadi's "Yearning for Saari":

*Oh you wet weeds
Growing on the riverbanks
Of my homeland,
tell the breeze
that so lovingly passes through you,
Someone on this side
of the world is also enamored
of the scent of your bodies!*

Or perhaps in Madjid Naficy's "To a Snail":

*Oh you little home-on-your-back!
Weren't you afraid that my huge foot
Would sweep you away?*

*Last night, under the rain,
You slid into my sneaker
For shelter.*

*Today,
You return to your green birthplace
Leaving me covetous, longing for mine.*

Maryam Huleh conveys the strange and complex world of exile in "Sticky dream of a Banished Butterfly":

The flower I sent you yesterday wilted on the way
THIS IS THE MEANING OF BANISHMENT, I know!
But smell its stem!

I'm still coming towards you....

Gender role and sexual complexities are both directly and indirectly addressed by many of the poets. The "mother poems" in *BELONGING* convey the change of mentality between classical Persian poetry and contemporary Persian poetry: the praising tradition of mothers in classical poetry versus de-constructing the role of patriarchy on the lives of women/mothers. Reza Farmand portrays his mother in "My Mother Did not Become Beautiful":

*My mother
Did not become beautiful
My mother could not
Open the trapdoor of her life unto love
Was not master of her beauty*

Saghi Ghahraman's sharp language cuts through profound layers of "motherhood" in "The Dead Dear One":

*We open the window across the way as well
Cold floats in cold
Little by little
The dead dear one turns blue
We pull the sheet up a little
We pull the dress up a little
We spread her legs and enter her
We get up
Straighten the dress up
Straighten the sheet up
We sit*

Granaz Moussavi defies the old order for women in "Post-Cinderella":

*I have gone so far for you
That my foot does not fit in any lone shoe
But has to,
So much has to have gone from me
To fit into you*

BELONGING calls on contemporary Iranian literature to join the universal literary dialogue by shedding light on an underrepresented, diverse and rich body of literary works. This anthology is proof that many Iranians, regardless of where they reside, still choose poetry as their most powerful means of communication. Niloufar Talebi must be commended for gathering such a wonderful collection and for her excellent translations. *BELONGING*'s arrival could not be timelier, considering the vast gap of knowledge existing in the West regarding Iran.

BELONGING is available on Amazon and *ICARUS/RISE* will be available in mid 2009.

*Aria Fani is a Comparative Literature junior at SDSU
Contact Aria via: fani@rohan.sdsu.edu *



Hate is not a family value

Anita Tasviri

"Maybe you too can be president one day!" my father tells me enthusiastically the day after the recent Presidential election. My usual response of no one with a Middle Eastern sounding name would ever be elected nationally is no longer applicable.

Election years are an exciting time for me. I find myself diligently reading literature on various propositions and candidates running for office; partaking, in my viewpoint, the privilege of participating in this country's political process. I believe that making an informed decision is not only my civic duty, but my legacy. Laws we pass through propositions or officials we elect to create laws have a direct impact on each and every one of us and govern our daily lives. Our families, friends, neighbors and even strangers who one day may become near and dear to us are all affected in some shape or form by these laws. Understanding and interpreting laws, is how I make my living as an attorney.

While in college, I took an American politics class where my assignment was to determine the congressional district my home was in and to identify my elected representative. I had to review their voting record and any laws they may have authored and write a paper about the bill and the congressional process. From that day forward my congressman's telephone number was always programmed in my cell phone. While wandering through the mall, I would give his or her office a call and let his or her staff know my position on whatever local or national issue that was on my mind at that moment.

In law school my favorite class was Constitutional Law. I was so moved by it that to this day, I carry a copy of the Constitution in my purse. I find myself quoting the Fourteenth Amendment often to people when we are discussing laws, propositions, and our civil liberties. The Fourteenth Amendment reads in part: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without

due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

I cannot help but to tie the Fourteenth Amendment to a poem by Sa'adi on humanity. When I was twelve years old my father gave me a copy of this poem and I immediately tacked it to the wall in my bedroom. It later graced the wall of my dorm room in college and followed me to law school. It reads: **"Human beings are like parts of a body, created from the same essence. When one part is hurt and in pain, others cannot remain in peace and be quiet. If the misery of others leaves you indifferent and with no feelings of sorrow, you cannot be called a human being."**

As a child, I had a vivid imagination. I viewed myself as a superhero of sorts whose mission was to debunk stereotypes about the categories I fell into. I was the defender of Iranians, Americans, women, brunettes, Californians, little sisters and so on. I think my greatest evolution as a human being is my desire to debunk stereotypes about all people regardless of categories. My humanity has eclipsed my own individual characteristics and I now adopt everyone's struggle as if they are my own. My attitude towards the struggles of those that, on the surface, are unlike me can best be summarized by a poem written by **Anti-Nazi Pastor Martin Niemuller** which reads: **"First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew; Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak out for me."**

I cherish the Fourteenth Amendment, Saadi and Pastor Niemueller's poems because they share the same premise that the majority should not violate the rights of the minority. The Fourteenth Amendment and Sa'adi's poem make no exceptions for the definition of "humans" or "persons." Our common humanity transcends a person's sexual orientation, their gender, age, religious affiliation, national origin or skin color. Pastor Niemueller's poem addresses the dangers of not speaking up when others are being stripped of their basic rights. Rights afforded to the rest of us.

No matter how you attempt to disguise it or justify it, hate and intolerance chip away at the very essence of our humanity. An end to homophobia, sexism, racism, and any other "-ism" you may adhere to begins at home with each of us as individuals. As Iranians, we take great pride in Cyrus the Great's human rights proclamation. I can think of no group of people better than the descendants of Cyrus the Great and Sa'adi to lead the struggle to end bigotry. **Hate is not a family value, regardless of who it is directed at.**

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Tel: 619-298-2801

Persepolis Market

327 S. Rancho Santa Fe Rd
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Tel: 760-761-0555

Rose Market (Bay Area)

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Ms. Firoozeh Naeemi

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THE ART AND SCIENCE



By Mersedeh Mehtash



Much like the fresh healing scar tracing my mother's belly from pelvic bone to breastplate, the last couple of weeks have left me permanently marked. With an uninvited guest's invasive occupation, our world, and our vision of the same are quickly redefining. I am not sure how distinct our struggle may be from that of other individuals, given the long shadow that cancer casts over most families. Perhaps then, it is the realization of our common humanity, exposed during times of suffering and weakness that grants us a sliver of light during these very dark hours.

On Monday November 24th, an hour after seeing her general practitioner for routine examinations, my mother returned to the hospital for more exams. The blood found in her urine was thought to possibly be kidney stones, so an ultrasound was ordered. One ultrasound, pelvic MRI, blood test and day later, on Tuesday morning, as we sat around the breakfast table swallowing our fears she received the phone call that would change everything; "we believe it's cancer." All I recall after that phone call is the name of the surgeon we were referred to see the following morning, Wednesday November 26, the day before Thanksgiving. We understood that much of what awaited us would lie in his hands.

Four weeks have passed since that date and my mother now sleeps in her bedroom recovering from surgery and preparing herself for the six months of chemotherapy that she will start two weeks from now. Since I find myself in the middle of the storm, I lack both the clarity and aspiration to reflect or draw upon the larger question of the disease. However, after sleeping in the hospital for a week and watching my mother receive treatment after treatment, what I have developed is a different appreciation for both the healing as well as the healers.

For Iranians, who have distinguished themselves from other minority groups through the high mark of educational achievements and dedication to higher learning, the prefix of "Doctor" carries a special weight. Needless to say, Iran has produced a great number of doctors and engineers, not to mention proud parents. Iranian children often feel

pressured to follow certain paths precisely to please their parents, despite how conflicting their personal interests may be from the career goals that have been laid out for them. The most cherished path of all is medicine, of course, deemed to carry the highest prestige and honor. Stories of these family struggles have become the material of middle-eastern stand up comedians. Although my parents never pressed me to follow in my father's footsteps towards a career in medicine, I had ample opportunity to find comedic material of my own as insinuations to that effect flowed from other factions within Iranian society.

In my second year of college, on a return trip to Iran (after an 8 year absence) I had a conversation with an officer inside the customs zone. As I waited behind a glass wall for my passport papers to finally be cleared, the officer asked what I did in the US. I told him I was a university student, and he followed up inquiring about my field of studies. "I am majoring in History," I said. After a long pause he responded: "don't they offer medicine at this University where you study?" I never did find an appropriate response but I learned quite a lot from the implications of the question itself.

If one's interests or desires are deemed insignificant, then the pursuit, study and practice of a field, becomes a mere test of an individual's ability to fulfill the challenge. According to this logic, anyone equipped with opportunity and intellect would realize a career in one of these sought-after fields; keeping out only the unfortunate and incapable. This was the logic that puzzled the Iranian customs agent upon hearing of my choice of major. There is a distinguishing factor between those who, like that customs agent, subscribe to this long running formula of success, and the many others who often mock it. Although both groups are equally driven, the latter maintains that passion ought to be the determinant of that success; since achievement devoid of devotion can never be truly fulfilling.

When my mother heard she had cancer, she swallowed hard and her face turned a little pale. There were no tears, no drama; but there was fear. Fear seeped inside our skin and

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ate away at our tranquility. For a woman who has spent the last 20 years living in the US speaking English well enough to handle her life independently, her fear reverted her back to her monolingual days. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, fear was soaking into her organs as she waited to hear her diagnosis. We had heard from numerous sources that he was a remarkable surgeon, but that day with all of us crammed in the small examination room, he made my mother feel it and believe it. Confident, kind and warm, he saw her struggling with her English so he spoke Persian, which was not an easy task while discussing medical terminology. He wanted to break through the haze of fear and make sure she would hear him because she needed to start gathering her strength back up. Fear was not entirely gone, but by the time we left his office, my mother had a new ally that she believed in and trusted, who understood her, beyond words, beyond just the simple language barrier.



Kindness does not have a map or flag. If we have learned anything as immigrants, it is to embrace the unexpected celebrations of our shared humanity. Another aspect of the immigrant experience is learning not to expect an automatic connection from our fellow countrymen solely based on common ancestry. On the day of her operation, as my brother and I sat by my mother's bedside in the surgical holding room, fear's cold embrace had silenced us. We sat listening to the nurses chatting, waiting to meet the anesthesiologist who was to interview and then whisk my mother away. The rock music playing from the little boom box in the room could not feel more alien at that moment.

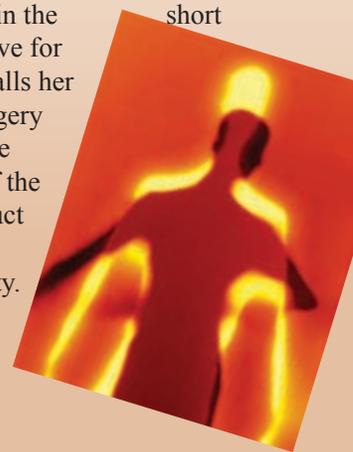
Suddenly a familiar stranger entered and introduced himself as the anesthesiologist. The young doctor reached out for my mother's hand and held it in his as he asked her for her name and the name of her procedure, etc...but my mother's nerves were shot and she could not think in English, much less utter her name, "Hysterectomy" or any of the other medical terminologies. Instead she looked in his eyes, which gave away his legacy and without hesitation, asked him if he was Iranian. Yes, he answered, I am, though he resisted a bit; clearly feeling more comfortable addressing medical questions in English. When he sensed her disconnect, however, he chose her comfort over his and told her to speak Persian

and that he would try to go along. She was rolled into the operating room by his hands and we all felt grateful and a bit more at ease that with fear around her, once again she had found the blessing of kind, gentle, and familiar eyes at her side and watching over her.

During the next week, her anesthesiologist visited her daily and with each visit he made a bigger effort to speak more Persian. On each visit he joked with her and on his last visit he gave her a hug as she promised to one day invite him over and cook for him. He helped to manage her pain during the week she spent in the hospital but I wonder if he realized the degree of positive impact he had on her spirit?

To fight against that which pulls us down, it is helpful to gather weapons. When you are sick and weak, the person responsible for healing you holds the power to be one of those weapons and give you the energy to fight back. My mother's surgeon is also one of her weapons and sources of strength. I cannot help but remember that a few weeks ago she sat crunched up in his waiting room full of fear and now she lights up every time he hugs her. He removed the cancer from her body but her battle is not over; she is about to get a heavy beating called chemotherapy and fear will resurface once more. However, she will not be helpless and she will not be alone, and that gives her the energy she needs to heal.

Yes, Iranian parents dream for their children to grow up to become Doctors and indeed many of them do. Some get their degrees only to hang them on their walls; some practice only part-time and are businessmen the other half of the time. Some just like to call themselves Doctors without the proper degrees hoping that no one will notice or request clarification. However, there are also many others who work 12-15 hour shifts, 6 or 7 days a week with 1 day off every other week. There are those who are constantly on call, those who work in emergency rooms, those who continuously push their own personal lives aside because of their professional responsibilities. These are the ones we consider the really good doctors. The ones who do all of this and manage to also motivate and inspire their patients in the 5-10 minute increments of time they have for visits, or the general practitioner who calls her patient on numerous occasions post surgery to see how she is doing, and tells her she wishes to visit; ...these are examples of the extraordinary ones. They are the product of the finest talent, passion driven, and quite simply, the gems of our community. I cannot help but think that when our Iranian parents were pushing us to become doctors, this is what they were hoping that we would become.



I thank Dr. Afshin Bahador, Dr. Sepehr Tabibzadeh, and Dr. Maryam Hekmat, who inspired me to find a positive branch to latch on to in a sudden landslide of helplessness.