

Peyk

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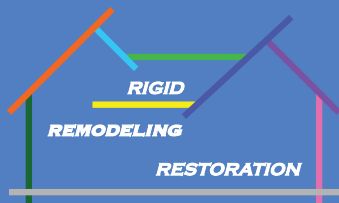
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Shaghayegh Hanson



Coming to Aamrika!

Having had the experience of being a newly minted immigrant myself, twice (England, then America), I have always been fascinated by other people's immigration stories. The United States, being an immigrant nation, holds countless tales of those who arrived here to face an uncertain new world, whether by choice or some coercive force. Alas, many Americans seem to have a negative view of immigration, either having forgotten their own families' immigrant roots, or believing their earlier arrival and decades of longevity entitle them to priority and superiority. It makes me incredibly sad to think the idea of immigration that once swelled in their forebears' hearts with excitement and hope now engenders in them a fear of invasive "otherness" and, sometimes, hate. I truly believe that if they reconnected with their own immigrant story and summoned the will to listen to those of today's immigrants, they would instantly, perhaps even intimately, *recognize* the people who they currently view as strangers to be feared.

And that brings me to my point, that immigrant stories are priceless; they are educational, inspirational, instructive, and life-affirming. They should, and must, be told, preserved, and retold. Many Americans' beginnings in this country have to be pieced together from history or family hearsay, passed down with ever-increasing inaccuracy, from one generation to the next. But, as "new" immigrants, *we are the beginning*, our stories are first-hand, ready for the telling.

... immigrant stories are priceless; they are educational, inspirational, instructive, and life-affirming. They should, and must, be told, preserved, and retold.

Which is why *Peyk* has embarked on a project to promote and publish your stories of coming to "Aamrika." There is no better place to start than with Reza Khabazian's account on page 11. No matter who you are, your life will be a little richer after reading what he has to say.

When I first heard Reza's story, years ago, we were seated amongst friends who all shared their own tales of coming to Aamrika. We laughed and cried by turns, all of us enjoying a safe space where we could admit the ridiculous naiveté with which we first arrived and the burdens we carried. I was in stitches listening to how Reza, upon arriving at JFK airport, befriended an earnest phone operator who tried in vain to comply with his request, "Hello, can I talk to Hamid?" Another friend had an equally hilarious airport story about how he couldn't run after someone who stole one of his suitcases because he had disabled himself by stuffing thousands of dollars in his socks, for safety. There were other, more sobering stories of loved ones left behind, never to be held again, and now long passed. Some of us who had left as young children, under a cloud of urgency, sought clarification of the political climate at the time, and the unbearable

... as "new" immigrants, we are the beginning, our stories are first-hand, ready for the telling.

and dangerous conditions that had befallen the "old country." All of us tempered our current problems in life with these reminders of how far we had come, and how things could be worse.

I have tried to retell Reza's airport story myself, but it has always fallen flat for want of the original storyteller's charm. So, I am delighted that Reza has put pen to paper to chronicle what no one else can recapture in the same way. I encourage you to do the same, whether you share your stories with us or keep them in the family. What you have to say is an important contribution to the annals of "Aamrika's" history, for ourselves in the moment, for our descendants in the future, and for the soul and conscience of this land for all time.

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Persian Cultural Center

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PCC NEWS



PCC's Board Meetings

Persian Cultural Center's board of directors holds its meetings every second Wednesday of the month at the Iranian American Center (IAC). The last two meetings took place on March 11 and April 14, 2021.

Virtual Movie Discussion Series – March 25, 2021

The Intouchables (2011), directed by Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano, was the movie selected for the March virtual movie discussion. Mahmoud Pirouzian hosted the discussion, at which Mahmoud Behrouzian reviewed the movie.

Three Chefs in the Kitchen - March 13 and April 10, 2021

This is a new cooking program presented via zoom. The chefs, Sima Kashani, Zhaleh Shayan, and Venus Safaie, demonstrate how to prepare Persian dishes and desserts. On March 10, 2021, the dishes were sabzi polo mahi (main), and loze (dessert). On April 10, 2021, the dish was kofteh Tabrizi with garlic baguette. A panel of judges commented on the dishes. Read more about the program and the next presentation on page 20.



Quarantine Night's Poems – April 21, 2021

In this virtual event hosted by Farshad Babakhani and PCC's Poetry & Literature Committee, poems from Seif Forghani were read and attendees also read poetry.

Jong-e Farhangi – April 16, 2021

April Jong was an online event hosted by Ali Sadr. Guest Hossein Mortezaeian Abkenar talked about *Short Story*. A question and answer period followed the discussion.

Virtual Nowruz Celebration - March 19 and 20, 2021

Due to the ongoing pandemic, instead of our traditional Nowruz gala this year, PCC prepared a memorable Nowruz celebration online. The program was live-streamed on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram on Friday, March 19 at 8 p.m. and again on Saturday, March 20 at 10 a.m. Shalah Salah, the current president of PCC, greeted all participants by wishing everyone a happy and prosperous Nowruz and the new year of 1400. Local representatives Nathan Fletcher, Chair of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, and Todd Gloria, the Mayor of San Diego, then sent warm, heartfelt messages to the PCC members and the Iranian American Community at large (their full remarks are included below). Famous Iranian American comedians Maz Jobrani, Tehran, and Max Amini also gave their own *Nowruzi* messages. Then, members of PCC's Persian Dance Academy, under the direction of Ila Darafshandar, performed a beautiful dance.



Rastak music group

PCC Election



Persian Cultural Center Annual Meeting and Election

The Persian Cultural Center will hold its annual meeting and election for members of the Board of Directors on **June 3, 2021**. Please join us.

If you have been a member of PCC for the last year and are interested in running for the board, please contact us by sending an email to pcc@pccsd.org. If your membership has lapsed or you would like to become a member, this is the best time to do so and join us for our annual meeting. Please visit www.pccsd.org.

Thank you,
Board of Directors of Persian Cultural Center



For the first time, the San Diego County Building was illuminated to red, white and green for Nowruz



Nowruz Message by Nathan Fletcher, Chair of San Diego Board of Supervisors

Sallam Doostan {Hello friends} I am Nathan Fletcher, Chair of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, and it is my great honor to join you again for this year's Nowruz celebration.

The diversity of our community is what makes us stronger and I want to thank the Persian Cultural Center for advancing that idea each and every single day. The Persian and Iranian community of San Diego is a vital part of what makes our region so special. Nowruz is a time to cleanse the soul and move forward with the renewed, refreshed perspective. It is a time of revitalization. This celebration of a new day is something we can all collectively look forward to a day and a time of unity, looking forward to a day when we have beaten COVID-19. So on behalf of the San Diego Board of Supervisors, I wish you the best and hope you have a safe celebration.



Nowruz Message by Todd Gloria, Mayor of San Diego

Good evening, I am Mayor Todd Gloria. On behalf of the City of San Diego, I would like to wish the Persian Cultural Center and our entire Persian Community a very happy Nowruz. There is no denying the last year has been challenging for

all of us, but it's my hope you will look to the values of Nowruz for strength and inspiration at this moment. I'm talking about the values of peace, solidarity, reconciliation, renewal, and taking care of each other. Together we will grow and move forward to realizing a new day. Wishing you and yours a new year full of love, peace, happiness, and prosperity. Happy Nowruz.



Tehran

From the bottom of my heart, Happy Nowruz and best wishes from this Tehran to that Tehran.



Max Amini

Wishing all a very good year for all, full of happiness and health.



Maz Jobrani

From Persian Cultural Center to all my Iranian friends around the world, Happy Nowruz.



The main part of the program, however, was the performance of the renowned Rastak music group who played several beautiful songs from various parts of Iran. For the past decade or so, Rastak has collected, arranged, and performed many folk songs from all around Iran. Their sold-out concerts and the sales of their albums are indicative of the great popularity of their music.

This program was watched live all around the world and in Iran. It is still available to watch on PCC's YouTube channel.

The U.S. Healthcare System: A Problem With an Obvious Solution

By Maz Hadaegh

Like many others who immigrated to the U.S. from Iran in the 1980s, my family's journey was via a third country, France. Within days of arriving in Paris at the age of 7, I had the misfortune of falling face first on a cobblestone sidewalk, resulting in a badly bleeding forehead. After getting help from our tiny hotel's concierge, the visit to a local hospital went smoothly; I was quickly examined by a nurse and doctor who sterilized my wound, applied bandages, and concluded that the situation was not very serious. I distinctly recall my mother nervously trying to figure out how to pay for the visit, but the people she asked were a little puzzled by the question. In the end, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that there would be no charge.

Fast forward five years later when my family finally made it to the U.S. Within days, my sister developed what appeared to be a bad cold which she couldn't shake. Being brand new to the country, my parents had not yet started working and, therefore, did not yet have health insurance (which, quite frankly, is something I'm not sure they thought much about at the time). My sister had a short visit with a doctor at his office—maybe 15 minutes long, at the most. The doctor concluded that my sister was probably okay and just needed more rest, and thankfully she recovered within a few days. It did not take long, however, before my parents began receiving multiple doctor bills amounting to over \$500 (\$1,130 in today's dollars), an absolute fortune for new immigrants.

This visit to the doctor had a chilling effect on our family as we all understood when you do not have health insurance, you do not go to the doctor unless it is a *very* serious issue. In retrospect, we were quite fortunate not to have a major illness during the years we had no insurance. Even once I obtained insurance from my employer as an adult, I was shocked at the price of health services and disappointed by “surprise bills” I would receive months after a visit, like when my wife spent a couple of hours in the ER and racked up over \$10,000 in bills (fortunately, our “good” insurance policy only required us to pay \$4,500 out of pocket due to our high deductible). My experience with different forms of health care systems and my experience even with “good insurance” caused me to start investigating why the U.S. health system operates in the way it does and what the potential solutions are to fix it.

The State of the U.S. Healthcare System

The United States is the only country in the developed world not to guarantee universal health care as a right. As a result, its healthcare system is an inequitable, wasteful, and expensive apparatus which leaves 29 million people completely uninsured and at least 47 million more *underinsured*, meaning millions who have health insurance cannot afford the exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 68,000 Americans lost their lives annually due to affordability or inadequate access to healthcare, and another 500,000 Americans declared bankruptcy each year due to their inability to pay their healthcare bills. [1] This, in the “richest” country in the world.



Even more shocking, the U.S. spends more than its international peers on healthcare and with *worse* health outcomes. This is the case whether we measure cost on a per capita basis (\$11,000 per capita in the U.S., about twice the median of our international peers), or as a share of GDP (17% of GDP, versus our international peers who spend 11% of their GDP on healthcare on average). [2] On key health metrics including life expectancy, child mortality, and maternal mortality, the U.S. significantly lags countries of comparable income and GDP per capita. [3]

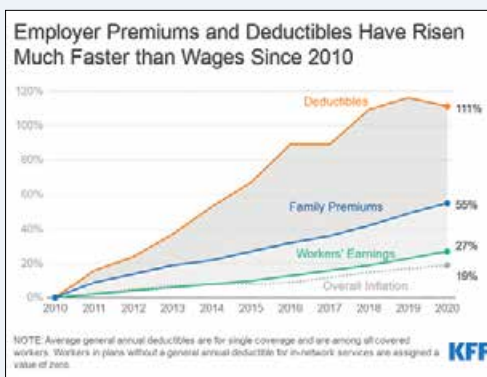
Simply put, the U.S. healthcare system is in a class of its own. And it's not an enviable one.

The Affordable Care Act: A Stopgap Giveaway to Private Corporations

In a purported effort to “fix” the healthcare system and cover more Americans, Congress enacted the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010. Commonly known as Obamacare, the new law, among other things, added regulations for minimally-allowable insurance, expanded Medicaid, and created healthcare exchanges for people to purchase insurance (using government subsidies if their income was sufficiently low).

While the ACA resulted in some improvements—including a reduction of the uninsured rate among the non-elderly (from about 17.8% in 2010 to 10.9% in 2019) and elimination of health insurance companies' ability to discriminate based on pre-existing conditions—its principal mission of making healthcare *affordable*

failed miserably as healthcare premiums and deductibles have continued to outpace inflation and worker wages by a large margin. [4] Furthermore, even this modest step toward universal coverage came at the



expense of mandating Americans who did not already have health coverage to purchase it from private insurance corporations, entities

which are *designed* to maximize profit and have little incentive to make healthcare affordable. Although the ACA attempted to resolve major structural problems, it really has proven to be an expensive band-aid rather than a cure.

Proposed Solutions for the U.S. Healthcare System

So what can be done to improve the system? There are many proposals, but the key ones are: (1) expanding the ACA, (2) adding a public option, and (3) creating a single-payer healthcare system.

With regard to expanding the ACA, the federal government could funnel more subsidies to individuals, employers, and insurance companies to get the nation incrementally closer to universal coverage. This is probably the worst idea *fiscally* as taxpayers would be subsidizing private insurance companies who have proven to be miserable at controlling costs. The private insurance companies' number one mission is to maximize profits, and an expanded ACA would essentially guarantee even more profits for them at taxpayers' expense.

A "public option," basically a health insurance plan offered by the federal government (potentially with government subsidies), would give consumers an alternative to the private insurers with the goal of reducing costs. The effectiveness of a public option would vary widely depending on the exact implementation. While it seems like a sound idea on the surface, in practice, the private insurance companies could undermine the public option by, for example, making their plans very attractive to healthy people and pushing the unhealthy people (e.g., older people or those with chronic conditions) to the public option. The private insurers can do this quite easily and legally by, for example, depleting their networks of oncology services, thereby driving those "costly" patients to the public option. This will inevitably cause the public insurance premiums to skyrocket over time, opening the public option up to political attack. Simply put, the public option keeps our existing *multi*-payer system in place and just makes it even more complex.

Another prominent proposal is *single*-payer healthcare in which the government is the single payer (insurer) in the system but the providers (doctors, nurses, hospitals, etc.) are all still private. The government guarantees all medically necessary care, including hospitalization, doctor visits, dental, vision, hearing, mental, reproductive, and long-term care, plus prescription drug coverage, with virtually no out-of-pocket expenses at the point of service.

Single-payer healthcare is not a new idea; it has been a policy proposal for decades in the U.S., but has recently gained grassroots popularity as "Medicare for All." Single-payer systems already exist and have proven quite successful in many countries, including Canada, Australia, Taiwan, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The existing U.S. Medicare program is itself a single-payer system for those 65 years of age and older, and has proven to be much more effective at controlling costs in comparison with private health insurance companies (e.g., roughly 12% of premiums for *privately run* Medicare Advantage plans are spent on overhead, compared to just 2% in traditional Medicare programs). [5] A single-payer system promotes competition among providers for the best cost

and the best service; it simply eliminates the middlemen (private insurers and their profit motives) which do not add any value when it comes to health and only serve to inflate costs (because they have to pay their executives and deliver profits to their shareholders).

Single-Payer Healthcare: Cost-Effective, Popular, Opposed By Corporate Interests

But can we afford to cover everyone under a universal single-payer system? Absolutely. Study after study after study has shown that a single-payer system would *save* the U.S. between 2 and 5 trillion dollars over a decade compared to our existing system, largely due to reduced administrative overhead and cost controls. [6,7,8] Hospitals and employers would no longer need to hire an army of insurance administration clerks and benefits administrators to navigate and negotiate our complex system. Further, with the government operating as the *only* healthcare buyer, it would exert economic pressure on healthcare providers and pharmaceutical companies that have been price gouging consumers. Finally, by having everyone insured, we can prioritize preventative care and wellness, which is much more cost effective than emergency care (which is the most expensive way to deliver care).

And a single-payer system here in the U.S. is popular; about 69% of all Americans support it according to public opinion polls. [9]

So if the problems with our healthcare system are so stark and the solution so clear (and proven), why do we continue to put up with a system that is so obviously broken? The answer is simple. It's money and politics. Large campaign donors and corporate lobbyists have an outsized and corrupting influence on how policies are formulated. The healthcare and pharmaceutical industries spend more "influence" money (on lobbying, media misinformation, campaign contributions, etc.) than any other industry—and they don't want a system that replaces them with a more cost-effective coverage of care. In the 2020 election cycle, the healthcare industry spent at least \$600 million on lobbying activities alone. [10] Those same corporate interests also have an outsized influence on our media. As a result, the media rarely covers Medicare for All in a fair or even-handed way. While the corrupting influence of money in politics is not limited to the healthcare sphere, it is one of the most egregious examples.

Whether the U.S. moves toward a universal single-payer system will depend in large part on the battle between grassroots activists and organizers against well-funded corporate healthcare interests who wish to maintain the status quo.

- (1) <https://spendmenot.com/blog/medical-bankruptcy-statistics/>
- (2) https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/health-spending-u-s-compare-countries/#item-spendingcomparison_health-consumption-expenditures-per-capita-2019
- (3) <https://ourworldindata.org/health-meta>
- (4) <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>
- (5) <https://www.salon.com/2020/02/15/american-health-care-system-costs-four-times-more-than-canadas-single-payer-system/>
- (6) <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/12/medicare-for-all-study-peri-sanders>
- (7) <https://theintercept.com/2018/07/30/medicare-for-all-cost-health-care-wages/>
- (8) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33019-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33019-3/fulltext)
- (9) <https://thehill.com/hilltv/what-americas-thinking/494602-poll-69-percent-of-voters-support-medicare-for-all>
- (10) <https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/industries?cycle=2020>



by Hooshyar Afsar

Voting Rights: The Future of U.S. Democracy and Immigrant Rights

In the past few months, over 1,200 new voting-related bills have been initiated in both Republican and Democratic majority state legislatures. One thing is clear about these new laws: the ones spearheaded by Republicans will make voting more restrictive and the ones pushed by Democrats will make voting easier. Does any of this have anything to do with immigrant communities in the U.S.? How will each trend impact such communities, including our own Iranian American community? Let's look.

A Brief History of Elections and Voting in the United States

The 1787 U.S. Constitution did not specifically address who had the legal right to vote in the U.S.; in a sense, the responsibility shifted to the states, leading to disparate results that deprived a large portion of the population of voting and essential citizenship rights to participate in the political process. Of the 13 founding states, 11 had laws that restricted the right to vote to men who owned property (and New Jersey allowed women with property to vote only until 1807). Property qualifications varied in each state. The only one that did not have any property requirements was Pennsylvania, but voting was still limited to men (and primarily to white men for that matter). All 13 states had an age requirement of 21 and only four allowed free Black men who met the age and property requirements to vote. While millions of enslaved people and all native people were not considered citizens and did not have the right to vote, free Black men were treated more like “quasi citizens” in most states. In the early nineteenth century, the right to vote became more and more synonymous with being a citizen as it was acknowledged in Webster's *American Dictionary*. On the eve of the Civil War (1861-1865), only five of 34 states (all in New England) recognized the right of free Black men to vote.

And what about immigrants' voting rights? The 1790 Immigration Act and its successors in the pre-Civil War 19th century limited naturalization (the legal process of becoming a U.S. citizen) to “free white person[s]... of good character.” In effect, while property requirements were all gone by 1856, on the eve of the Civil War in 1861, no non-white immigrants had the right to vote—similar to women, all enslaved people, all native people, and free Black men in 29 out of 34 states.

After the victory of the North's Union Army in 1865, voting rights for previously-enslaved people became a core part of the political struggle for establishing citizens' rights. This endeavor culminated in ratification of the 15th Amendment, which banned denial or abridgement of the right to vote by the federal and state governments based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude—which clearly affected immigrants who had been brought to the U.S. as indentured servants. More inclusive proposed versions of the 15th Amendment included all citizens regardless of race or ethnicity and even gender; although those versions did not make it out of congressional committees, the 14th Amendment established birthright citizenship and the question of citizens' right to vote then included all citizens regardless of race or ethnicity. Notably, the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause opened the political debate on inclusion of women. The three post Civil War reconstruction era constitutional amendments—namely, the 13th, 14th and 15th—created such a paradigm shift in the definition of U.S. citizenship and the

rights of citizens that they became famous as the “Second Founding” of the U.S., deemed a great leap forward for a nation that had only recently enslaved 4 million humans (see a further discussion in *Peyk* #192 by the same author [March/April 2021]).

After the post-Civil War reconstruction ended with the 1877 compromise and the departure of Union troops from the South, racist terror intensified and state level legislators in the South embarked on an onslaught to turn back the accomplishments of the freed Blacks and progressives toward racial justice. Finally, starting with the 1890 Mississippi Plan (constitution), southern states enacted Jim Crow segregationist policies and voter suppression laws aimed at Black people, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and “white” primaries. It was no accident that, along with these anti-democratic trends, the right of women to vote was again put on a backburner for decades until the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920.

Immigrant rights, including naturalization rights for all immigrants except white Christians from northwest Europe, were suppressed in parallel with the establishment of Jim Crow segregation in the South, thereby limiting the right of non-white immigrants to vote (for more specific examples on this please see the article on Immigrant Rights by the same author in *Peyk* #192 [March/April 2021]). This trend continued to a great extent until the Civil Rights movement's achievements resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, followed by the Immigration Act in the same year, that ushered in a new era for “non-white” immigrants to find their way to the polls through naturalization.

The Future of U.S. Voting Rights

The U.S. population makeup trends toward an increase of non-whites such that by 2045, the white share of the population will drop below 50% as reported by Brookings Institute in 2018. While the share of whites in the U.S. was still over 60% in 2018 and white people continue to control political and economic levers of power by even larger percentages, conservative political forces have used this trend to foment fear of immigrants and communities of color. Donald Trump was very effective in using this fear—he started his campaign in 2015 by attacking Mexican immigrants as rapists and criminals, augmented his anti-immigrant politics by floating a ban of Muslims in 2016, and then put the ban in place via executive order within his first several days in office in January 2017.

The fact is that the majority of new immigrants and an even larger majority among their children (aka second generation Americans) support progressive politics. Based on the data collected by Edison Research for a consortium of ABC, CBS, MSNBC, FOX, CNN, and the AP, Trump lost the non-white vote—including Blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinos—by a more than two to one margin in the 2020 presidential election. According to FiveThirtyEight, an oft-cited American polling and analytics site, Indian Americans voted against Trump by a margin of 65% to 28%. Using these margins plus other data (including the Edison Research non-white and religious voter data for the 2020 elections), we can extrapolate and conclude that a solid majority of all immigrant communities, including Iranian Americans (more or less), voted along the same lines against Trump. All this means that the writing is on the wall for Republicans. The current population trends will make it more and more difficult for them to win elections in the U.S. if they play fair and stand for expansion of voter rights. How do you deal with such a big problem?

There is more than one way to deal with the above problem. A post-2012 election Republican National Committee “Growth and Opportunity Project” report made broad and groundbreaking recommendations on making the party more diverse and expanding its base. Yet, with the

entrance of Trump into Republican politics, all those recommendations were thrown out. Instead, the party chose the path of lies and voter suppression. Trump lying about the election results started back in the primaries of 2016 when he claimed that he won Iowa and his opponent at the time, Ted Cruz, won by cheating. He then repeated the same claims about Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote by more than 2.8 million votes in the November 2016 presidential elections. Trump didn't stop there and even formed an election integrity commission that eventually dissolved itself after it could not find any evidence of widespread fraud. So, Trump's reaction to the results of the 2020 election was consistent with his reactions years earlier—the big difference is that, this time, these lies became the excuse for Republican state legislatures to introduce an unprecedented number of restrictive laws.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, as of March 24, 2021, 361 bills with restrictive voting provisions were introduced in 47 states. A majority of these bills could become law and they will install new restrictions primarily affecting Blacks and immigrant communities of color in order to reverse progressive and liberal election gains of 2018 and 2020. Some have already been passed and signed into law, including in Georgia, Iowa, Arkansas, and Utah.

Georgia's SB 202 clearly aims for the reversal of the 2020 results. In November 2020, Georgians not only voted for a Democratic president for the first time since 1992, they then sent two Democratic senators to Washington, DC, in the January 2021 special election, reversing the balance of power in the U.S. Senate. Notably, these recent elections were very close races and people of color, specifically Black women, played a huge role in large population centers to defeat Trump and the incumbent Republican senators. Trump lost Georgia by only 11,779 votes out of almost five million votes cast, a margin of 0.23%. The new restrictions that are being put in place aim to reverse those victories by literally stopping people of color in large population centers, such as Atlanta, from voting; they include closing poles at 5:00 p.m., making it illegal to give food or water to people waiting in line to vote, putting at least five new restrictive measures on absentee ballots, allowing mass challenges so that one person could seek to remove an unlimited number of people from voter rolls as ineligible, and so on. Georgia's Republican legislators have every intention to restore Jim Crow-like restrictions by resorting to the lie that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump. As a symbolic gesture, Governor Kemp, along with eight white legislators, signed the bill with a painting of a real plantation in the backdrop that enslaved over one hundred people.

In Arizona, seven restrictive bills are advancing; in addition to making the absentee ballot process more difficult for voters, they intend to prohibit voter expansion measures that Arizona doesn't even have, including automatic voter registration and election day registration. Similar to Georgia, Trump lost Arizona by a mere 10,387 votes, a margin of 0.3%. Trump lost Georgia, Arizona, and Wisconsin combined by a margin of 43,000 votes (0.03% of the total votes cast). If these results were reversed, there would have been a tie of the Electoral College at 269. This shows how important and critical these voter suppression measures could be in future elections.

Republicans are taking action to reverse the impact of population trends and win the 2022 midterm and 2024 presidential elections at any cost. The philosophy behind these blatant voter suppression tactics is that voting is more of a privilege than a right, a privilege that should be restricted as much as possible when it comes to Blacks and immigrant communities of color.

Is It All Gloom and Bust?

The above restrictions are serious and definitely weaken the democratic process. Yet, in another set of 47 states, 843 bills with expansive provisions have been introduced. These measures include expansion of early voting, automatic registration, disability access, and pre-

registration of 16 and 17 year olds who will turn 18 by the election date. The most extensive bills to protect voters rights and expand access to polls, however, are at the federal level.

House Bill H.R.1 and Senate Bill S.1 are comprehensive federal legislations that do not limit their scope to expansion and ease of voting—they restore the pre-clearance measures of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that prevented the restoration of Jim Crow restrictive laws in any state, and put in place significant campaign finance reforms and ethics rules at the federal level to stop future foreign interference in U.S. elections, require all presidential candidates to make their tax returns public, and end gerrymandering (partisan redistricting), which opens the path to restoration of democratic representation at state and federal levels. H.R.1 passed the House of Representatives on March 3, 2021, and S.1 was introduced in the Senate on March 17, 2021. There are ways to push S.1 through the Senate, yet they require the political will to end the filibuster (another vestige of the Jim Crow era).

What Is in it for Iranian Americans?

Here is what history teaches us: as a community, we have consistently benefited when voting has been expanded and the country has taken steps toward racial justice. On the contrary, immigrant communities have become the target when the country has moved away from racial justice and has restricted voting rights; it usually takes a few decades before the most severe effects of such trends become solidified into laws, and overcoming these laws requires costly social movements (in terms of human lives lost and those unjustly imprisoned) to reverse those trends.

For example, after the post-Civil War Reconstruction era ended it took 13 years before Jim Crow became law of the land in the South, starting with Mississippi. The U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) played a key role in allowing discriminatory and racist bills to become law at the state level. Then, it took another 75 years to reverse those laws. What we see today did not happen overnight either. The system of racial and social control under Jim Crow segregation mutated to a new regime that has been coined the "New Jim Crow" by author Michele Alexander in a book of the same name. The core aspect of this new system is mass incarceration of Black and Brown people (primarily men), resulting in the U.S. having over 21% of the world's prisoners despite having less than 5% of the world's population. And SCOTUS did its (racist) share again by reversing the preclearance clause of the 1965 Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County vs Holden* ruling in 2013, leading to expansion of voter suppression in southern and midwestern states within hours of the ruling. History is being repeated with the new characteristics of our times.

One might disagree and say that these are different times. I like to be optimistic, yet progressives were to a great extent falsely optimistic during Reconstruction in the 19th century and during the Obama years in the first and second decades of the 21st century. The current onslaught against voting rights—if successful—will impact all of our lives and our children's lives. It will impact our immigrant community regardless of our legal status. There are early signs of what future could hold for our community: stopping American citizens of Iranian descent at the Canadian border coming back from ski trips, hate crimes against our community members, closing of our bank accounts by major financial institutions, and Senator Lindsey Graham calling all Iranians liars—and these actions can easily turn into severe statewide and nationwide restrictions and undemocratic measures. It is urgent for us to raise awareness and act using all peaceful measures before it is too late.

Hooshyar Afsar is one of the founders of Racism Awareness Project (RAP), an educational program on the history of and present-day racism in the United States and its impact on the Iranian American Community. RAP has had a variety of educational forums across the United States. Mr. Afsar has written several articles and book reviews on the topic for Peyk and other publications. He can be reached at hoosh.afsar@rapusa.org.

An Immigration Story: How I Met A “Dime”!

Reza Khabazian

Leaving your homeland and residing in another--with a totally new culture, language, and set of laws and regulations--is very challenging and requires a lot of adaptation that, in most cases, is also very frustrating.

But, looking back at those challenges many years later makes some of them look funny, some amazing, and some, of course, sad.

The truth is, no matter how we feel about them, the challenges are, for sure, part of the history of immigration that needs to be documented for use by our grandchildren or simply by historians to picture the hardship that first generation Iranians had to go through to meet those challenges.

The main purpose of this column is to encourage our readers to start telling their stories so we can present a diverse documentary.

“How I Met A Dime” is an effort for this purpose.

The first thought of continuing my graduate studies in America came to my mind in 1976; it took two years to finally materialize the thought.

The possible obstacles that could face me in my new journey were listed one after another but, funnily enough, the language barrier never made it on that list. Graduating from an English-speaking university in the city of Shiraz (Pahlavi University) made me believe that English was just “a piece of cake” for me! It took me only two days after my arrival in the U.S. to realize not only the huge difference that exists between Academic and Conversational language, but also the gravity of pronouncing the words with the correct music, called accent.

Rahim, a friend of mine back home, who had an opportunity to be sent by the Ministry of Agriculture to America for a short period of only three weeks, acted as an expert on American Culture. He tried to prepare me for easier adaptation:

“AAMRIKA is very big and very chip. You can get any cing you want with almost noking if you go shopping on Wednesday!! Because every cing is NESF (half price). Hungry?? No prablom. There is one Mac Doonald in every corner that you can get one HAMBERGERD, one Pepsi, and one Potato for 99 cents.”

To purchase the flight ticket, I had to go to the heart of Tehran (Villa Street). The whole town was sad. Tires burning, demonstrators running in all directions avoiding gunshots, doors to all stores were half shut, and the face of everybody passing you by lacked any sign of happiness.

Tears ran down on my face as I asked myself a painful question:

Is it fair that I am planning to leave?

And the soothing answer of:

It is not permanent, it is only for a few years. Coming back with more up-to-date scientific information will make you more useful. Let the journey begin!

The tickets were purchased and finally came the very sad moment of saying goodbye to my family members, especially my mother. The pain has not left me after almost 43 years!

I called Hamid, a close high school friend who was going through his graduate studies at Cornell University, to let him know the day and time of my arrival. He was the best help I could get upon arrival in New York.



Pan Am flight 111 was preparing to land at JFK almost four hours later than scheduled. Worried, I asked one of the Iranian students on the plane to educate me how to use the telephone to call my friend once we arrived. He rushed me through and we exchanged some paper bills for coins. Then we landed.

As expected, there was no sign of Hamid at the airport.

I braced myself to make a call on the American phones. I picked up the handle of the telephone and it rang a few times before I heard a lady on the other end:

- Hello, can I talk to Hamid?
- This is an operator, Sir! Do you want to make a collect call?
- ESCUSE me. What is collect?
- Do you want him to pay for the call?
- NO, No, I want to pay!
- Then, you need to deposit another dime!
- Another Dime? What is that?
- Another coin. A dime!
- ESCUSE me. I have some coins but don't know which one is Dime! Because I just landed in JFK for the first time in your country!
- Oh boy.... Ok, a dime is the smallest coin that you have, the same color as a quarter.
- TANK You, TANK YOU.

And that is how I met a Dime but, unfortunately, nobody picked up the phone. The operator came back on the line:

- Sir, there is no answer. You can try later.
- OK

I thought to myself: Hamid must have waited a long time and must have felt tired and left. I need to give him half an hour to get home before I try again.

My one year old baby boy was knocked out after 16 hours of flight, sleeping deep in my wife's arm. She sat on top of our luggage, looking lost and tired. I walked up and down the huge lobby trying not to get lost, thinking: *What the hell I am going to do if I cannot get hold of him? Where are we going to sleep tonight till tomorrow for our next flight to OKLAHOMA?*

Now, the good thing was, I was an expert at making a telephone call since I made friends with a Dime!

- ESCUSE me, can I talk to Hamid?
- This is an operator! Is this a collect call?
- No.
- You need to deposit another dime!

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- *Oh, I am the person who talked to you about half an hour ago trying to talk to my friend, Hamid!*
- Sorry, you did not talk to me!
- *You helped me finding a Dime in my coins!*
- You must have talked to a different operator. We have so many operators here!

Again Ring...Ring... Ring and, again, no answer.

Wow!!, I thought. *They have so many operators. In Iran, we have only two, one for day shift and one for night. We almost knew their names: Salam Asghar Agha! Salam Agha Reza!*

There is no sign of Hamid, I told my wife, *so let's go find a place to sleep till tomorrow going to Oklahoma!*

Luckily, the cab driver was Iranian, talking nonstop till he dropped us at a hotel. He must have missed talking Farsi.

I dropped my wife and son in the room and came down to get something to eat. I went straight to a lady behind the desk:

- May I help you?
- *We need something to eat.*
- Sorry, the kitchen is closed now. It is too late!
- *Ok (God Bless Rahim for his useful info)... is there a Mac DOONALD here?*
- What??
- *Mac Doonald! A place to eat... hum... Hamburger...*
- Oh.... McDonald's. Yes, out this door turn left. You can see their sign!

Trying to forget about Hamid, I was now so proud of myself as I was walking by myself in the streets of AAMRIKA!

- Can I help you?
- *I need two Hamburgers.*
- Big Mac??
- *Not that big! Hum....medium.*
- Look here (pointing at the menu) and tell me which number you want!
- *Two No. 1s.*
- That's Big Mac.
- *Ok!*
- Anything to drink?
- *Two Pepsi!*
- We don't serve Pepsi.
- *How about Kooca Cola??*
- What size?
- *Medium.*
- Anything else?
- *Yes, some Potato please!*
- Sorry, we don't have "potato."
- *Yes, please look at that person on that table, he has potato!*
- Oh... you want French Fries.
- *YES!*

Now, I was so anxious to settle down as soon as possible and go shopping for household stuff on Wednesday!! Half price!

I will continue this story in our next issue.

Please contribute your own "How Did I Get Here?" stories as well!

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Human Rights On and Off the Pitch: FIFA's Responsibility to Set a Precedent

By Danial Golforouh



As soccer continues to struggle in the fight against racism on and off the pitch (including on social media), a necessary and vital controversy has taken hold of sports media once again.

The Qatar World Cup Controversy

New reports confirm that more than 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar during the building of the infrastructure for the 2022 FIFA World Cup since the country was selected as the host more than a decade ago. In light of this news and the constant fight of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other institutions, the latest FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in March 2021 created a platform for fans, players, football associations, and teams to take a stand. On March 24, 2021, the Norway National Football Team players wore “Human Rights On and Off the Pitch” t-shirts to express concern about the 2022 FIFA World Cup and Qatar’s human rights record ahead of their qualifying match against the Gibraltar National Football Team. Since that night, Germany and the Netherlands have joined the cause as well. There have also been rumors that some teams or players may boycott the tournament if their team qualifies for it. It is important to mention that there were calls for boycotts back in 2013 as well, as many teams rightfully linked the selection of Qatar and FIFA’s corrupt regime at the time.

There is no doubt that FIFA’s corruption at the time (which has since been made public) is the direct cause of the selection of Qatar. This corruption has not only led to thousands of deaths, but a complete restructuring of the soccer calendar (as the games will be played during the winter to avoid the oppressive heat of a Qatari summer) and many other questionable outcomes. Therefore, the matter of host selection and related decisions will need reform. However, there are more important and immediate questions at hand: What now? What needs to be done? Why have the migrant workers been treated so poorly? And, more importantly, how can soccer and FIFA avoid such issues in the future? Why should FIFA set the precedent?

The Problematic Qatari System

Since the moment in 2010 when Qatar was announced as the 2022 FIFA World Cup host nation—beating the likes of the United States, Australia, South Korea, and Japan in the process—FIFA’s choice raised many eyebrows. Qatar will become the first country from the Middle East region and only the second country from Asia to host the games since Japan and South Korea’s joint venture in 2002. While bribery, corruption, the heat, the new calendar, Qatar’s lack of infrastructure, and—even worse—its human rights record were the main talking points, some NGOs had already started the conversation on the prevention of the potential exploitation of migrant workers in the upcoming years. There have always been questions regarding Qatar and other Persian Gulf nations’ sponsorship programs.

Qatar, like many other Persian Gulf states, utilizes the Kafala System—a sponsorship system which monitors migrant workers who are often recruited strategically from the lower socio-economic status citizens of developing nations in Central Asia. Due to a lack of fundamental and universal labor rights, this system has been described by Amnesty International and other NGOs as forced labor and modern-day slavery. An exit visa prevents the workers from leaving the country before confirming with their employer. The exit visa, lack of wage payment, and horrendous work and living conditions were exposed by *The Guardian* seven years ago. Since then, Qatar has removed the exit visa and created a digital wage payment platform; however, there are still reports of unpaid labor and unacceptable working and living environments for these migrant workers.

Migrant Abuse in the Qatari FIFA Tournament Construction

February 2021 reports from *The Guardian* and Amnesty International regarding Qatari preparations for the 2022 World Cup reveal horrifying statistics. Per the report from *The Guardian*, the data compiled from government sources discloses an average of 12 deaths per week since the announcement of Qatar as the nation host. “Data from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka revealed there were 5,927 deaths of migrant workers in the period 2011–2020. Separately, data from Pakistan’s embassy in Qatar reported a further 824 deaths of Pakistani workers, between 2010 and 2020.” Notably, the number of deaths is expected to be a lot higher since many of the countries with a smaller number of migrant workers in Qatar do not gather any data on migrant deaths.

In a statement in March 2016, Amnesty International’s then-Secretary General Salil Shetty stated that: “The abuse of migrant workers is a stain on the conscience of world football. For players and fans, a World Cup stadium is a place of dreams. For some of the workers who spoke to us, it can feel like a living nightmare.”

Qatari Authorities have complained that Qatar has been put under immense and unprecedented pressure even though Qatar has exceeded expectations in regards to the efficiency in building new stadiums and infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the World Cup and its fans. In a November 2019 CNN interview, Nasser Al Khater, the chief executive of the 2022 Qatar FIFA World Cup, displayed his irritation at the scrutiny that his country has been under by saying that Qatar “has been treated unfairly.” He also mentioned that the Qatari Authorities were proven innocent by three different governing bodies and investigations. However, he did not deny that there have been multiple deadly and high-stakes mistakes that have been made, which have been allocated new resources.

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FIFA's Responsibility to Human Rights

The system of human rights abuse in Qatar, whose construction project directly benefits FIFA, is just one of the many stains that world football has on its conscience. Almost every tournament, every season, and every match brings in its own controversies and rights violations, known to even the most casual spectator; the constant blatant systematic and in-person racism faced by black players throughout the world, the forced relocation of thousands of settlers of favelas for construction of new world cup stadiums, or the doping scandal during the world cup hosted by Russia are just a few examples of the many stains on international soccer's character. And FIFA has blessed them all.

The FIFA World Cup brings in more than half the population of the world every four years in viewership. With that incredible spotlight comes an incredible power, authority, and responsibility to challenge the status quo and right wrongs. Because of its unique position and unmatched global reach, international soccer reflects and highlights the issues that it involves itself with. However, since growth, power, and money are so intertwined, we are often left with a complex set of decisions to make.

Human decency and rights are often sacrificed for money and other business-related ventures, yet FIFA and other soccer institutions, in general, have the reach and potential to set a new precedent and fresh take on contemporary social and economic dilemmas. There needs to be a more proactive and intuitive force utilized by these soccer governing bodies to ensure that the potential opportunity of hosting games will come with its own obligations; it is only fair to ask for a living wage and higher environmental and social actions from the hosts. There is no doubt about the complexity and difficulty of the task ahead for international soccer, but there is an obvious need to prioritize the human over the ball and the money. At the end of the day, a boycotted tournament is not a well-remembered one.

Soccer possesses an extraordinary global reach that cuts across different cultures, languages, and physical borders; thus, ultimately, it has the responsibility to set a precedent for other global events and institutions. With a younger, ever-changing, and more socially-aware fandom, soccer will need to reconsider its practices and stance by implementing long-term and robust plans for the present and the future of the sport. Instead of owning the status quo, it ought to walk its talk and own this challenge.

Events in San Diego

Persian Cultural Center

Tel: (858) 552-9355 Fax & Voice: (619) 374-7335
www.pccsd.org



Persian Cooking:

Three Chefs in the Kitchen

Saturday, May 8 at 11 AM

Saturday, June 12, 2021 at 11 AM

Jong e Farhanghi

Friday, May 21, 2021 at 7 PM

Friday, June 18, 2021 at 7 PM

Movie and Discussion

Thursday May 27, 2021 at 7:30 PM

Thursday June 24, 2021 at 7:30 PM

Poetry Night

Wednesday, May 19 2021 at 6 PM

Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 6 PM

PCC Annual Assembly and Election

Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 7 PM

Iranian School of San Diego

(858) 552-9355

End of the Year Celebration

May 23, 2021 at 11 am

Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

Dance classes for all ages at the location of Iranian School

Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.dmfund.org

www.facebook.com/DollarAMonthFund



AIAP (Association of Iranian-American Professionals)

Tel: (858) 215-2427 • www.aiap.org

ISTA (Iranian Student Association at UC San Diego)

www.istaucsd.org

House of Iran

House of Iran Balboa Park

www.thehouseofiran.com

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.iasfund.org

www.facebook.com/Iranian-AmericanScholarshipFund

Mehregan Foundation

Tel: (858) 673-7000

PAAIA (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans)

www.paaia.org

NIAC (National Iranian-American Council)

www.niac.org

IABA (Iranian-American Bar Association)

www.iaba.us/chapters/san-diego

Book Club Meeting

Iranian-American Center (IAC)

6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121

Tel: (858) 552-9355

Iranian-American Life Science Network (IALSN)

www.ialsn.org



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May 11, 2021



Nutritional Value of the Sugars and Health

By Mohammad Ahrar, PhD

Introduction

Most people have a taste for sugar. We know that consuming foods high in sugars can cause weight gain and other health complications. In this article, we discuss some facts about sugars and how our body handles them.

Basics about sugars

Sugars are synonymous with carbohydrates (commonly known as carbs); by this definition, starch, plant cellulose, and animal glycogen are also considered sugars. In general, sugars refer to glucose, fructose, sucrose, and maltose. Common table sugar (sucrose) is made of glucose and fructose, which is the sweetest of all simple sugars. Milk sugar (lactose) is made of glucose and galactose. Maltose, found in Persian samanu, is made of two glucose molecules.

How do we detect different tastes?

Humans can distinguish between five basic tastes, including sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and umami (a savory flavor, often found in meat). Recently, lipid sensors have been identified on the tongue, which suggests that fat can be considered a sixth taste. Taste processing is first achieved at the level of taste receptor cells or sensors which are clustered in taste buds on the tongue. When the receptors are activated by specific foods, they transmit information via sensory nerves to specific areas in the brain that are involved in taste perception. Sweet taste receptors can be activated by a wide range of chemically different compounds, including sugars (glucose, fructose, sucrose, maltose), artificial sweeteners (e.g., saccharin, aspartame, cyclamate), and some other chemicals.

Are sugars necessary for good health?

In humans, sugars provide quick energy for optimum metabolic reactions in the body cells. The brain is totally dependent on glucose for energy.

Eliminating carbohydrates from the diet can result in severe health problems. When there is no carbohydrate in the diet, the body uses its protein and fat sources as fuel. As a result, the body may lose muscle mass. The body can also metabolize fats to produce energy. But the problem is that high-fat diets (such as some commercial regiments) can, in the long term, accumulate ketones and keto acids in the blood that can cause nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite, and ketoacidosis, which can have serious consequences such as a coma and even death.

It is not necessary to include sugary foods or added sugars in the diet in order for your body to make energy. A diet with adequate complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, beans, and foods containing natural sugar (such as fruit and milk), will fulfill this role.

Absorption of sugars and carbs

When carbohydrates are consumed, the large molecules must be broken down into simple sugars by digestive enzymes so that they can be absorbed by the small intestine. Likewise, when sucrose is ingested and reaches the small intestine, it will be broken down into glucose and fructose and absorbed, ultimately entering the liver for processing or storage as glycogen.

People who are lactose intolerant, which means they lack the enzyme lactase, may experience irritation of the small intestine, discomfort, and even diarrhea if they consume milk products that contain lactose. When lactose enters the large intestine, bacterial enzymes ferment the sugar and produce different gases and other compounds which can cause more discomfort.

Studies show that fructose is absorbed more slowly from the intestinal tract than is glucose. When glucose and fructose are in equal quantities (1:1 ratio), such as found in sucrose, the absorption rate is rather fast. When sugary foods or drinks that contain different ratios of fructose and glucose are consumed, some fructose may escape the absorption in the small intestine and enter the large intestine.

Fructose digestibility complications

Although sucrose and simple sugars are highly digestible, fructose is not completely absorbed in the small intestine and a good portion of it is transported into the large intestine. Fructose can easily be fermented by the colonic flora and produce fatty acids, carbon dioxide, and other gases which can cause bloating, diarrhea, and gastrointestinal pain. Exercise immediately after consumption of sugary foods exacerbates these symptoms because a greater amount of fructose enters into the large intestine. Fructose was initially thought to be a better choice for diabetics due to its low glycemic index (see *Peyk* #165). But only liver cells can process fructose, and that's where the problems begin. In the liver, fructose triggers the production of triglycerides and cholesterol.

High-fructose corn syrup, which is found in many processed foods, is actually a synthetic sugar. It is made from corn syrup and has had some of its glucose converted to fructose enzymatically. High-fructose corn syrup typically contains between 42% and 55% fructose, according to the FDA. Excessive consumption of fructose, especially from sugar-sweetened beverages, may contribute to insulin resistance, obesity, and elevated LDL cholesterol.

Are fruit-based sugars better than other sugars?

Fruits usually contain a balance of glucose and fructose. But fruit isn't just sugar; it also provides vitamins and minerals such as vitamins A and C, potassium, and folate, as well as fiber,



which is good for digestive health. Not to mention, fruits are also packed with antioxidants, which can reduce inflammation and boost the immune system.

Fruit sugar content

The amounts of sugars and the types of sugars in various food sources are not the same. For example, the amount of sucrose in an average apple is about 2 grams per 100 grams of the fruit, while an apricot contains almost three times as much sucrose. Moreover, the percentage of sucrose in fruits also affects their sweetness. For example, orange juice is sweeter than plum juice or pear juice. The table below shows the amount of sugar and the ratio of glucose and fructose in certain fruits.

Table 1. Sugar content of selected common plant foods (g/100g)

Food Item	Total Carbohydrate ^a including "dietary fiber"	Total Sugars	Free Fructose	Free Glucose	Sucrose	Fructose/ Glucose Ratio	Sucrose as a % of Total Sugars
<i>Fruits</i>							
Apple	13.8	10.4	5.9	2.4	2.1	2.0	19.9
Apricot	11.1	9.2	0.9	2.4	5.9	0.7	63.5
Banana	22.8	12.2	4.9	5.0	2.4	1.0	20.0
Fig, dried	63.9	47.9	22.9	24.8	0.9	0.93	0.15
Grapes	18.1	15.5	8.1	7.2	0.2	1.1	1
Orange- nvl	12.5	8.5	2.25	2.0	4.3	1.1	50.4
Peach	9.5	8.4	1.5	2.0	4.8	0.9	56.7

Note that dried fruit and fruit juice are more calorie-dense and contain more sugar than their fresh counterparts.

Ways to minimize sugar intake and consequences

- **Portion size:** The amount of food we eat is directly related to the caloric value of the food, which influences weight. Portion size is a simple visual factor that can also help us choose the amount of food we need to eat to keep our weight down. The U.S. government mandates that all packaged food products should list the major nutrients and calories in the content. Checking food labels makes it easier to choose the right portion size. Some restaurants may not have the caloric value of their foods listed in the menu, so one simple way to limit caloric intake is to share a meal with your friend or loved ones. You will enjoy the food and the company and reduce your calorie intake in the process. If you crave ice cream, you can get a small cone (87 Calories)

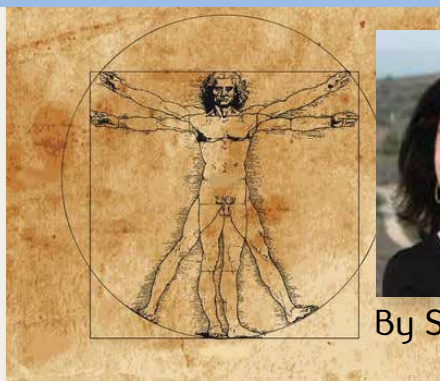
rather than a large cone (350 Calories) while still enjoying ice cream. The same is true for any snack or meal; you can enjoy the food and cut the calories in half if you get a small portion or share the plate. You can find more information about portion size in *Peyk* #189 (September/October 2020).

- **Dietary fiber:** Humans do not have the enzyme to digest fibers. Therefore, fibers will pass through the small intestine undigested. While they provide almost no fuel or energy value to the diet, fibers play an important physiological role in delaying absorption of sugars and reducing the attendant jump in blood glucose level.
- **Low glycemic index foods:** The glycemic index is an index that shows how fast a sugar increases the blood glucose level. Consumption of foods with low glycemic index is a smart dietary decision. For detailed information about the glycemic index, please visit *Peyk* #165 (September/October 2016). A list of the caloric value of foods and further information about weight control can also be found in *Peyk* #167 (January/February 2017).
- **Exercise:** Exercise and physical activity in general improve quality of life in various ways—they sharpen memory, relieve mental stress, control blood cholesterol, lower blood pressure, stimulate metabolism, improve the immune system, increase bone strength, and improve sleep quality. The benefits translate to lower risks of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and cancer of the colon and breast. Exercise can also lower the risk of heart disease, help ease arthritis pain, trim your waistline, and preserve your independence. Please find a great detail of information about the effect of exercise on health in *Peyk* #168 (March/April 2017).

Selected sources

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By Sanaz Majd, MD



WHAT IS IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)?

If you suffer from a recurrent or chronic myriad of gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms that may include abdominal pain/discomfort, bloating, constipation, and/or diarrhea, they may potentially be due to a frustrating medical condition called Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). It is a rather common condition that may be left undiagnosed in many, but is associated with an estimated \$1 billion dollar annual medical cost in the U.S.

The prevalence of IBS in the U.S. is somewhere between 10-15% of the population and, according to a systemic review studying its prevalence in Iran, it is reported that as high as 25% of Iranians may suffer from IBS in certain populations.

Could you be one of them?

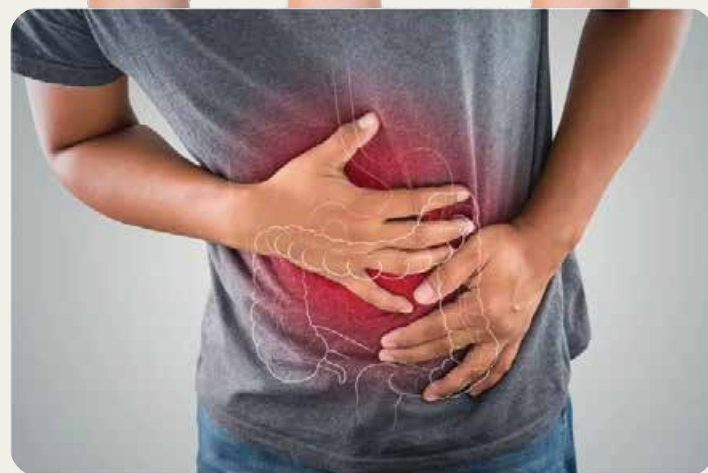
SYMPTOMS OF IBS

IBS is regarded as a condition arising from the dysfunction of the “gut-brain axis,” as many patients experience symptoms that are psychologically driven. There is a strong physiological connection between our brain and GI system; stress and emotion often play a large role in the frequency and severity of the symptoms in *some* people with IBS. Therefore many, but not all, concomitantly suffer from anxiety, depression, and/or report symptoms driven by stress or emotion.

Interestingly, there is a higher prevalence in young people (adolescence through 30s) and also women. Although, older people and men certainly do suffer from IBS as well.

Not everyone with IBS has the same exact symptom profile, and the severity can vary on a spectrum from mild/occasional symptoms to severe/frequent. Problem with stooling is a commonly reported issue -- some experience predominantly diarrhea, while others report a constipation predominance. There are also those who experience mixed bowel habits and go back and forth between diarrhea and constipation throughout their lives. But almost all IBS patients report some type of abdominal discomfort, which may include a sensation of bloating as well.

IBS can mimic other more concerning medical conditions, however, such as Celiac Disease, Inflammatory Bowel Disease (such as Crohn's or Ulcerative Colitis), and, less commonly, colon cancer. However, these patients often experience red flag signs and symptoms that often prompt further evaluation, such as:



- Rectal bleeding
- Unintentional weight loss
- Anemia, especially if iron-deficiency anemia (often discovered via a simple blood test)
- Recent change in bowel function or appearance (such as small-caliber stools)

Also, new onset of symptoms after the age of 45 is of particular concern, most especially if the above red flags are also present. And those with a family history of colon cancer, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, or Celiac Disease also pose a greater concern.

DIAGNOSIS OF IBS

A specific test to diagnose IBS does not exist. It is typically a diagnosis of “exclusion,” which denotes the need to rule out other conditions first, and is often discernible based on history alone.

However, a blood test to screen for Celiac Disease, anemia, and thyroid disorder (which can cause changes in stooling) is useful to rule out other potential causes. A colonoscopy may be recommended in some in order to rule out Inflammatory Bowel Disease, along with colon cancer in older people (especially over age 45). But most young, healthy people do not necessarily require a colonoscopy in order to evaluate for IBS. Your doctor may decide to order one depending on your symptoms and severity, however.

Note, “food allergy” testing is not diagnostic or useful in IBS, and not routinely recommended.

TREATMENT OF IBS

Unfortunately, a miracle pill or treatment to fully eradicate IBS does not exist. Treatment is often tailored based on the predominant symptoms.

For diarrhea predominance, over the counter (OTC) loperamide can help alleviate the watery stools. There is some evidence that prescription tri-cyclic antidepressants (TCAs), such as amitriptyline, can improve diarrhea in IBS patients, as well.

For those with constipation predominance, an osmotic laxative, such as the OTC generic for Miralax, would be a handy tool to have in your medicine cabinet. "Osmotic" laxatives refer to the pooling of fluid into the stool, as opposed to other laxatives which work as stimulants with greater side effect profiles. There are also several newer prescription drugs on the market for those who suffer from chronic constipation, including lubiprostone, linaclotide, and plecanatide. But they are currently only available as a brand drug, may be costly, and insurance coverage may be a challenge.

For abdominal discomfort, there are some studies supporting the use of peppermint oil, along with prescription TCAs, and anti-spasmodics that inhibit GI spasms that may contribute to abdominal discomfort (such as hyoscine and dicyclomine).

The role of fiber has not been entirely established in IBS. Some studies report improvement and others do not. However a trial of psyllium at a starting dose of 1/2 to 1 tablespoon daily is a worthwhile effort. The amount of daily fiber can then be gradually increased through time in order to avoid exacerbation of symptoms with an initial large dose.

There is also some data, although not substantial, that the following treatment modalities may also help alleviate IBS symptoms:

- Exercise, walking, yoga
- Relaxation techniques (such as diaphragmatic breathing)
- Acupuncture
- Psychotherapy (especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)

But we need more studies to substantiate their specific roles in IBS.

DIETARY MODIFICATION

There is limited evidence that a "gluten-free diet" would be useful in IBS, but there is a smaller, select segment of patients I have seen who vouch for it. The hypothesis is that the improvement in symptoms may not necessarily be due to gluten restriction, but the concomitant removal of fructans in the same food items.

However, more specific to IBS, there is some data supporting a "FODMAPs" diet -- this refers to a diet low in fermentable oligo-, di-, and monosaccharides and polyols. These foods include ingredients such as fructose, honey, lactose, sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, and xylitol, which are short-chain carbohydrates that are poorly absorbed and rapidly fermented and may be responsible for certain GI symptoms. Besides dairy, this means eliminating wheat, barley, garlic, onions, beets, cashews, pistachios, lentils, legumes, chickpeas, apples, pears, and various other fruits and veggies. A lot of good stuff.

Of course, there is nutritional value in many of these foods and it is not recommended to eliminate them from your diet unless they actually pose a problem for you. Therefore, it may be useful to implement an "elimination diet," restricting all foods on the list for 6-8 weeks and then gradually reintroducing each food item back

into the diet. A referral to a dietician that can navigate this process is highly recommended.

It may also be useful to keep a symptom/food diary in order to discern any dietary trigger(s), such as lactose contained in dairy. Up to 65% of adults are reportedly lactose-intolerant. In a blank notebook, split the page in half -- on the left write down the timing and your specific food consumption, and on the right jot down any symptoms. Patients who actually complete this exercise often report other potential dietary triggers as well, such as spicy foods, gas-producing foods, artificial sweeteners, etc. So, although time-consuming, it is a worthwhile effort if the IBS is impairing your quality of life.

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Sanaz Majd, MD is a board-certified Family Medicine physician and host of the Majd MD YouTube channel, reviewing the latest medical topics and headlines: www.youtube.com/MajdMD. You can also follow her on Facebook or Instagram: @SMajdMD.



Public Announcement

PLANT TREES IN SAFE SPOTS TO HELP PREVENT POWER OUTAGES AND FIRES

With trees, beauty is more than branch deep. Trees help clean the air, prevent erosion and conserve watersheds. They can add shade, greenery, fresh fruit or flowers – even value to your property. However, when branches or roots touch overhead or underground electric equipment, it can cause problems with safety and reliability.

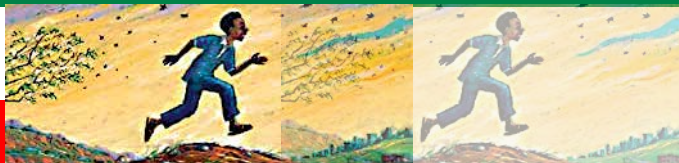
Pair the right tree in the right place. Knowing how trees grow and where to plant them can help prevent electric shock hazards, power outages, and fires.

You'll find five types of trees that are popular locally and compatible with overhead power lines in SDGE's Tree Care for Power Safety brochure at sdge.com/TreeSafety. Browse SDGE's tree planting selection guide to learn more about trees you're considering.

Know what's below. Before you break ground, contact DigAlert at 811 or DigAlert.org at least two working days in advance. DigAlert's free service will locate and mark underground utility-owned gas lines so you can avoid dangerous and costly damage.

Never prune trees near electric equipment. It can cause severe shock or death if you touch an electric line or any object that's in contact with an electric line. State law requires any tree pruning within 10 feet of power lines must be done by a line clearance-qualified arborist.

Visit sdge.com/TreeSafety



“Who was that?”

“Oh, that was Abbas, he said hi.”

“How is he?”

“He’s definitely not okay. He was trying real hard to sound like he’s ‘fine ‘n’ dandy’ – you know how they all are – but he’s not in a good place.”

“What’s the matter with him? Is he having trouble with his thesis?”

“His dad’s been laid off again. He’s still making money driving for an app, but that’s not nearly enough to make rent, so Abbas took the year off from school to work.”

“What’s he doing?”

“Works at a café.”

Why not work in his own field, she wants to ask, but swallows her question when she remembers what it was like last time we were home.

“Said he shows up at like seven in the morning; sets things up for when they open at eight thirty. And he stays there the whole day, gets home after midnight. Too exhausted even to read; can you imagine that? Abbas without a book in his hands?”

“Must be the end of the world... .”

“I asked him if he’s seeing anyone and he just said he couldn’t afford to, like it’s nothing. What do I say to that? You know how much a cup of coffee costs right now? Between twenty to forty Tomans; last time I ordered one in Tehran it was only nine or ten. Where am I supposed to go with a conversation like that?”

Apologize. Beg his forgiveness; beg them all to forgive you for not being there. Not that you could have done any good for any of them were you there right now, but at least you could have shared in their suffering, kept your conscience clear. That’s all you want, isn’t it? Well, it’s selfish either way; stay or leave: either be actively miserable, shoulder to shoulder, unsaddled with this boa constrictor strait jacket, or be passively miserable: keep quiet and just show your teeth in that standard issue SoCal smile when all you want to do is bite through this membrane of safety and go back – run and keep running, straight on home where it’s properly, unabashedly miserable. But I’ve never been much for running so I sit it out, all of it.

“Shamim said hi, too, by the way. We spoke yesterday. You know what she said to me? Said ‘you got out just in time’ and she’s right; it all went to hell right at our heels. I should be grateful that I’m not there, shouldn’t I?”

Or at least that’s what people keep telling me. And it’s always one of *those* people; the “build the wall” folks. Yes, those guys, exclusively, are the ones who have the gall to *demand* I feel a certain way. *Yeah, you should be grateful*; what for? That they were kind enough to *let* me in here? That I got upgraded from living in one of *those* countries to living in the “greatest country in the world?” What about you? Are *you* grateful to have been born here, free of charge?

But I ought to be grateful; for all intents and purposes I should be ecstatic at being cocooned in the reliable, lulling tedium of “normal life.” When that hashtag started trending on Farsi twitter I wanted to tear my teeth out. How dare they say that *that* is not normal! The audacity! To claim that I and everyone I love, through accident of birth, are condemned to abnormal life. And, groping at the monolith of longing that I have held inside me since day one, it felt like a personal insult; I would have

to be insane to want to be back there, where life isn’t “normal.” I do *want* normal, don’t I? The sort of life that you can plan out beforehand, then carry out, step by step towards “success,” whatever that is. *Well, “normal” doesn’t necessarily equal good*, I find myself elaborating to anyone who stands still long enough for a conversation. I never knew normalcy is something one strives towards, never got enlightened to this wisdom; “it’s probably a cultural thing,” right?

“Oh, look at that.”

“What?”

“Pari has made a post on Instagram.”

“Tell me what’s it say. I left my phone upstairs.”

“Apparently she’d been waiting by the curb for her car to arrive when someone on a bike buzzes past her and grabs the phone straight out of her hand.”

“Same thing that happened to Hossein last week. And Sheema and Mohsen the week before that.”

“Yup. No two ways to nab a phone.”

“How are any of them going to put together enough cash to buy a new one? The other day at work it came up in conversation; you should’ve seen the look on Keith’s face when I told him back home no one sells phones in installments. You have no idea how hard it was to explain to him that that’s simply impossible to do in a situation like Iran; how paying for anything in installments necessitates stability. He just couldn’t imagine a scenario where that bare minimum of stability doesn’t exist. Know what he said? ‘Ridiculous,’ that’s all.”

Ridiculous, more so than the absence of stability, is yearning for that very absence; to yearn for the luxury of not having to plan out life, but to live it one day at a time, simply because you can’t afford to invest too much hope into any potential destiny. I find myself flinching away from the very thing I crossed literal *oceans* to possess. At first glance, stability looked to me like stagnancy, like something that infects you, makes you complacent, gets you addicted to an amount of comfort that is obscene and unnecessary. And there is a case to be made against all of that and against the instant gratification and cheap luxury rampant here, but that does not, in any way, vindicate the downward spiral of utter chaos that ravages Iran.

Iran; I-Ran. I wish they’d at least mispronounce it in a way that didn’t imply cowardice. Iran; the very name resonates with everything you could ever possibly want to run towards and away from, the bittersweet essence of so many centuries that have passed more or less the same way as this one.

Homesickness is not the sickness, but only one of its symptoms. Then again, to consider human selfishness a disease would be unkind to all of us, particularly those who follow the needle of their heart’s compass, which stubbornly points toward that place that was, and will forever after be, Home. That place where every step crunches down on the powdered bones of forebears who suffered and died in the love of that very soil which was, even then, saturated with the powdered bones of *their* forebears. A Ruba’i by Abu-Sa’eed Abulkhair comes to mind:

*All across the moors of Khavaran, there is not a single stone
Which is not anointed by tears or heart’s blood;
Nowhere in the land, throughout all these leagues,
Can one find one whose heart is free from the sorrow of your love.*

nash-e Jan Persian Cuisine

From: *The Joy of Persian Cooking*
By: Pari Ardalan Malek

Baghala Polo

(Rice with fava beans and dill)

Preparation time: 45 minutes

Serves: 7-9 persons

Ingredients: 3 cups rice; 5 cups fava beans or 5 cups frozen baby lima beans; 3 cups chopped fresh dill; 3-4 tablespoons dried dill; 6 lamb shanks; 3 bay leaves; 1 medium chopped onion; ½ teaspoon salt; 3 teaspoons liquid saffron

Directions:

1. Wash meat and place in a pot with the onion, salt, pepper, bay leaves, and 2 cups of water. (Baghala polo can also be served with beef or chicken, but this recipe will concentrate on lamb.) Bring to a boil, remove foam from the top, and cook on medium heat for one hour. Drain meat, reserve juice, and set aside separately.
2. Prepare rice per *Peyk* #107 (January/February 2007) online at www.pccus.org
3. Add the fava or lima beans (skin does not need to be removed, if small variety) to the boiling rice, then drain together. To make rice crust, follow recipe in *Peyk* # 107.
4. Spoon 1/3 of the rice mixture into your cooking pot.
5. Place the cooked lamb shanks in the center of the rice. Cover shanks with remaining rice, beans, and dill.
6. If rice is not completely green, sprinkle some dried dill over the pot of rice.
7. Steam rice for 45 minutes on medium heat.
8. Gently remove 1 cup of the rice (from the top of the pot) onto a separate plate, add 1 teaspoon of liquid saffron to this plate, mix gently with the rice, and reserve for garnish.
9. Sprinkle remaining 2 teaspoons of liquid saffron over the rice in the pot and mix gently.
10. Remove pot from heat and, with a spatula, gently dish out the mixture onto your serving platter, placing the cooked shanks in the middle of the rice. Garnish with saffron rice (step 8) and serve.



Cornish Game Hen Kabab

Preparation time: 35 minutes

Serves: 5-7 persons

This dish can be served with Baghala Polo (above) in place of lamb shanks.

Ingredients: 4 Cornish game hens; 2 teaspoons thyme; 2 teaspoons rosemary; ½ cup fresh lemon juice; ¼ teaspoon salt; 2 teaspoons oregano; 4 minced garlic cloves; ¼ cup oil

Directions:

1. Except for hens, mix all ingredients for marinade.
2. Pour over hens, cover, and marinate overnight in the refrigerator.
3. Broil hens in marinade (four inches from heat source) for 20-25 minutes.
4. Turn hens once after 15 minutes for a golden color.



آشپز که سه تا بشه!!! Three Chefs in the Kitchen

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با شما دوستان

خنده و شوخی و مهر چاشنی خوراکها
و دسرهای ما خواهند بود.
تازه به پرسشهای شما نیز پاسخ می دهیم.
دیگر چه می خواهید!

به امید دیدار.



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Financial support is provided by the City of San Diego
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THREE CHEFS IN THE KITCHEN

Chef Venus sits down with Chefs Sima Kashani and Jaleh Vida Shayan, asking what makes them so determined to help PCC with its missions of promoting Iranian culture.

Venus: So we have just finished our second live cooking show, and I know we are all tired, but I sense a deep satisfaction and we are so proud of being able to support PCC with its cultural programs and activities during the pandemic.

Sima: Indeed, we are definitely tired, but happy we could share our Persian cooking skills.

Jaleh: Showcasing Kofteh Tabrizi, a signature Persian dish, and the tasty Garlic Baguette was good fun.

Venus: Since we will be hosting more cooking shows, let's share a bit of who we are with the PCC community. I have been involved with PCC for years as a board member and a friend who is ready to tackle any project and help at all times, but you have joined more recently. What brought you to us?

Sima: I have always been active in charity work locally, with UCSD Medical Center, ChildhelpUSA, CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), and during this pandemic, Jaleh and I sewed and donated thousands of masks to healthcare professionals throughout San Diego County. So when you asked us to join you to create an original cooking program to help PCC, it was a welcome invitation and we were so happy to do it.

Jaleh: It is true, I always support local programs, such as California Gymnastics, and was a Candy Striper when that was vogue – with the pandemic, it was easy to jump in and use our sewing skills to make masks. Joining you on the cooking shows is another way to help a very well-deserved organization to promote our culture even in the pandemic. It has been a very important year to offer talents to inspire others to join, and give them a reason to smile.

Venus: Oh yes, smiles and good food go together so well and are very needed in these times! I believe from the first time a mother holds her baby in her arms to feed, we associate food with love, protection, and comfort.

Jaleh: Food in our culture is much more than a source to satisfy hunger. Food is a strong family tie as the family gathers together to eat. Food is a way of showing respect when we cook for our guests and kindness when we cook to share and feed others.

Sima: Iranians are known for being the most hospitable people. They welcome everyone to their home and make the food as festive as possible.

Venus: I think it is important for our children and grandchildren to learn about our beautiful culture and the delicious food associated with it. The PCC is for all ages, and we want young members of our community to join us and learn about Persian cooking and our culture. Any ideas on how to inspire the youngest out there?

Sima: When I first married, I really didn't know how to cook anything well. Finding cookbooks or TV shows on Persian cuisine was nonexistent in those days. We are blessed to have PCC's support on these shows online to allow anyone to watch and learn.

Jaleh: The best Persian cooking is in the home, and these shows are right in the home with regular pots and pans and simple ingredients. It can be fun if family members with their youngsters join us to have a fun Persian cooking experience.

Venus: That's perfect, let's work on that! I look forward to our next broadcast with delight, thank you for being part of Three Chefs in the Kitchen...

Join Three Chefs in the Kitchen on May 8, 2021, at 11 am PDT, preparing the Persian dish tachin and other wonders made with yogurt.

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