No Wall Is Ever High Enough!

Join us on October 12
visit Cyrus the Great Cylinder

• I am the Sun
  reciting afghanistan in exile

• Hair Loss
  • Tips For Student Success
• The Liberation of Abstraction

Congratulations and THANK YOU for Iranian Center
Congratulations and THANK YOU

Not long ago I wrote in one of my editorials that I hoped to live long enough to see a place we could call our Community Center. The size didn’t matter to me, what mattered was a place that would be “the core part of the fabric of our community.” This has been the dream – something we have talked about doing for more than twenty years. You have to realize that I am the historical encyclopedia for PCC, ISSD, IASF and DMF.

I remember very well, twenty- four years ago our first office space was a rented storage unit just to store our file cabinets. Then we moved to a one room office with a desk and two chairs on Miramar Road. Followed for a few years by two rooms on the second floor on Silverton Avenue, and for the past twelve years the three-room PAC office has been located on Dowdy Drive. Now, at our new Center we will offer our community a library/computer room, several office spaces for our needs with extra storages, a small kitchen facility, and a hall space where small-to-medium size events can be held.

I’m so excited that I wake up some nights smiling knowing that, as promised, we have accomplished Phase I of what we set out to do for our “Building the Dream” project. We are on the right track and will in time move on toward Phases II and III for an even larger and better Community Center.

After more than two decades of wishful thinking, now for nearly two years actively, we have been walking, talking, dreaming, and hoping for a place to call a Center for our community. Phase I has made it happen with the money donated by all who wanted to be participants in this project. Hats off to them and to those of you WHO DID NOT GIVE UP! Thank you, thank you, thank you. On behalf of the community I thank you for your determination, and your persistence in getting us to this point. Thank you for donating and investing the funds instead of keeping them in an account with very little return.

So what does it mean to have a Center for our community? Even if limited at this point, we can offer various classes, activities, lectures, recitals, meetings, and consultations. Personally I can’t wait to have Friday night movies. We have a Center to enjoy, with many opportunities to participate and learn, as well as support.

Our Center will indeed be “the core part of the fabric of the community.” It will bring us together and help us grow as a valuable community in San Diego. How many Iranian communities do you know throughout the United States that have in one city:

- A Community Cultural Center:  www.pccus.org
- A school such as the Iranian School of San Diego:  www.pccsd.org/issd
- An Association of Iranian-American Professionals:  www.aiap.org
- A House of Iran:  www.houseofiranandsdiego.org
- A National Scholarship Fund:  www.iasfund.org
- A Children’s Charitable Organization:  www.dmfund.org
- A Cultural Foundation with Seminars:  www.mehrganfoundation.org

AND … they are all thriving from the supports they receive from our community members in San Diego. Keep in mind that not one of these organizations is based on religious or political beliefs. The Iranian-American community in San Diego should be very proud. Our community is exemplary of all that can be done and accomplished with caring and sound leadership, as well as community support. The key to the success of any organization is making certain the community is not only aware the benefit of the organization for them, but the community’s responsibility as well. The above organizations are the accomplishments of those who have had the passion (to support however possible for them) and the belief that endurance of our cultural heritage matters to us, as well as preserving it for our future generations.

Not that I plan to leave soon, but as some other force is the conductor of duration of our time on this earth; I’m so grateful for getting the frosting on my cake before my time comes! Thank you to all who made it possible.
Dear Friends:

The Persian Cultural Center’s Board of Directors is proud to announce that we have taken the first step towards achieving a long-lived dream and have purchased a building to house an Iranian-American Community Center. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to those of you who gave your support, financial and otherwise to make this dream come true.

The work has just begun. We must now make this building into a Center that can fulfill the needs of both our first-generation immigrants and subsequent generations who seek a link to their heritage. We have published the list of donors in previous issues of Peyk. This time the list is organized based on various levels of donations. However, the fundraising is not over and we need your help again. In order to make this building a vibrant community center, we need to fulfill our obligations and obtain the following items:

1. For the purchase of the building, we had to borrow $50,000 that we have to pay back in the next six months.
2. Construction, repairing & remodeling $20,000
3. Furniture, including stackable chairs for the auditorium $10,000
4. Projector and Screen $3,000
5. Sound system and stage lights $5,000
6. Bookshelves for the library, desks and chairs $5,000

You can sponsor any of these items, fully or partially. Your contribution will be added to your previous donation and change your status on the founders list. If you have not participated yet this is the best time to join and add your name or name of your loved ones to the list.

The Board of Directors of Persian Cultural Center wishes to congratulate the Iranian community. This Center would have not been possible without the generous donations and selfless help of its community members. Donations are welcome at www.pccsd.org or call us at (858) 552-9355.

Hamid Rafizadeh, PCC President

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**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!

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**BUILDING THE DREAM**

You have the following donation options

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All donors’ names will be recognized prominently on a plaque posted at the entrance of the Center and entitled, “Founders’ Circle.” In addition, at certain donation levels special recognition applies as indicated. This Center will not only serve you, your loved ones, and the community, but it will also benefit future generations and those who want to reach out and learn about Iranian Culture and the Persian language. As an established and respected community, we owe it to ourselves, our children, and the survival of our heritage to achieve this goal.
We would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the building fund so far; your vision and generosity will serve generations of Iranian-Americans and San Diegans in the future.

Add yours or a loved one’s name to this list.

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- Persian Cultural Center

**Elite Founder (%70 of Purchase Price)**
Scores of commentaries have been written on Afghanistan following the U.S.-led occupation of the country in 2001; only a small proportion of these narratives has been written by Afghan writers and scholars themselves. Whether or not visible in English letters, Afghans have been in dialogue with world around them and have reflected on the transformative events of their modern history: the Soviet Invasion (1979-1989), the Afghan Civil War (1992-1996), Taliban’s rule (1996–2001), and the ongoing Occupation by the U.S and its allies since 2001. Literary texts created by Afghan poets and writers offer a glimpse into the narrative of their self-reflection and allow us to see Afghans—against the disempowering grain of victimhood—as active agents in shaping the political, social, and intellectual history of their homeland and the region.

In the West, modern Afghan literature is mainly represented by its accomplished novelists, namely Khaled Hosseini (U.S.), Tamim Ansary (U.S.), Atiq Rahimi (France), and Mohammad Asef Sultanzada (Iran/Denmark). “The Kite Runner,” Hosseini’s first novel, alone has sold millions of copies internationally and has been translated into more than forty languages. Widely popular and influential in Afghanistan and understudied in the West, Afghan poets have yet to enjoy the same international readership as fiction writers. Competing with fiction is a twofold challenge: first, quality and diverse translations are needed to gain a broader audience; and second, should Afghan letters gain visibility through competent translations, they still need to compete in a more defined market for poetry in North America, in which poetry is routinely marginalized.

The following poetry selection—co-translated with Adeeba Talukder—attempts to highlight the diversity of expression in Persian poetry in Afghanistan today, and by extension strengthen my contention that the voices of contemporary Afghan poets deserve wider readership. This selection draws from a generation of Afghan female poets in diaspora. Bahar Saeed (b. 1953), Nadia Fazl (b. 1966), and Parwin Pazhwak (b. 1967) have all been forced into exile and currently reside in Europe and North America—with the exception of Leyla Serahat Roshani (1959-2005), a promising poet who tragically passed away in Europe. With more access to economic resources and civil liberties, they have been widely read, critiqued, and anthologized in Afghanistan, Iran, and the Persian-speaking diaspora.

Mainly practitioners of Sheʿr-e Azad (meaning free verse; see a further discussion in Peyk # 133), the verse of Pazhwak, Fazl, and Serahat-Roshani is characterized by a sincere tone and colloquial phraseology. Their unequivocal and humanitarian voice has condemned the rule of violence and injustice in their homeland. Documenting their experience of war and loss that led to their dispossession, they echo their generation’s heartfelt quest for peace and human dignity while insisting on the presences of people who lost their lives in these conflicts. Their profound regret for the destruction of a cultural past is accompanied by genuine hope and devotion to the reconstruction of a liberated Afghanistan. Afghan verse is not limited to war poetry. Bahar Sayed’s masnavi is a personal commentary on the practice of veiling while Serahat-Roshani’s poem paints a different kind of growth. Though far away from their homeland, these poets present a more nuanced and soulful narrative of Afghanistan yet.

**Afghan Child**

Afghan child do you know what war means?
War is life!

I am ten and there has been war for a decade

Afghan child do you know what bombing is like?
It’s the falling rain

And tanks?
I’ve crawled on top of them many times, and I can tell you how they’re different from armored cars …

Afghan child do you know what peace is?
It is that golden dream I cannot reach for

And flowers?
Those that grow in green meadows?

Yes! And green meadows?
I’ve never seen them

What is a good future for you?
I am tired of the myths of old storytellers

And what’s your childhood like my precious?
My dear you seem to have come from the land of immortal lives!

I may not get to grow older in these ten years
I have been a child
grown into an adult
and it seems that I’m becoming old!

**Death of the Sun**

(excerpt)

And right there,
Sun turned cold.¹
stars fell, scattered
upon the earth
burning deep chasms
chasms resounding
emptiness
its anguished cries.
And now:

Dark.
leaves of hope fallen apart
with the wind
talents gone
unfulfilled
birds slaughtered
devoured
piles of books
smoldered to ash
just to keep homes
warmer.

Here, gentle trees were uprooted, their thin limbs
turned to beating-sticks for children
here, thoughts dared not leave
the mind’s secluded
quarters.

You who have not plucked
a single leaf from the tree of hope:
will you ever
from the ocean of darkness
build a bridge to light?

You men of God! Cast your eyes from my face.
go and hide your weakness of self—
veil, veil your withering faith

Leyla Serahat Roshani

Sign for Eternity

In me you
are a mirror
vast as existence,
fresh and limpid as Spring.

I plant my eyes
in the mirror
so that a sign
small and green
may emerge, proclaim
the eternity of Spring.

All translations are by Adeeba Talukder and Aria Fani. The Persian original of the current selection can be found on the columnist’s blog, Alef.

Featured poets:

Born in 1967 in Kabul into a literary family, Parwin Pazhwak received her secondary education in Kabul and went on to graduate from the Avicenna Institute of Medicine. Following the Soviet invasion (1979), Pazhwak and her family have found permanent residence in Ontario, Canada. Four volumes of her works have been released: Sea in Dew and The Death of the Sun (books of poetry), as well as I Pick Flowers and Be a Bird for children.

Born in Kabul in 1953, Bahar Saeed holds a Bachelor’s degree in journalism from Kabul University and a Master’s degree from the School of Literature, Tehran University. Following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, Saeed was forced to leave her homeland. She has published two volumes of poetry. Saeed resides in Los Angeles, California.

Nadia Fazl was born in Kabul in 1966. She was a student at the School of Law and Political Science, University of Kabul, but she could not finish her studies. Fazl left Afghanistan for Bonn, Germany with her two children. She writes poetry in both the classical and modern style. Her Persian book of poetry, Parnian-e Khial, was published in Germany in 1998.

Born in Kabul in 1959, Leyla Serahat Roshani held a degree from the School of Literature, Kabul University. Following her graduation, she taught literature at secondary schools. In 1998, she immigrated to the Netherlands. She has published more than four books of poetry. In the Netherlands, she edited Eve in Exile, a literary quarterly in Persian. Tragically, she lost her battle to cancer at the age of 46.

Sources:

Follow Aria’s literary blog: Alef @ ariafani.com
From Weight Watchers Kitchen something different and healthy

Pear Tart:
Servings: 10; Preparation Time: 20 min; Cooking Time: 55 min; Level of Difficulty: Moderate

This tart is elegant and delicious — a fantastic choice for special occasions or dinner parties.

Ingredients: 6 Tbsp Butter, divided; 18 item(s) Cookies, gingersnaps, crushed to crumbs (about 4 1/2 oz) 4 large Pear(s), Anjou or Bartlett, peeled, cored, sliced 1/8-inch thick; 2 tsp Juice, lemon, fresh ½ oz Liqueurs, any type, pear-flavored suggested (about 1 Tbsp); 1½ Tbsp Orange peel, raw, or to taste

Instructions:
1. Place oven rack in lowest possible position. Preheat oven to 350ºF and place a baking sheet on oven rack while oven is preheating.

2. Meanwhile, melt 4 tablespoons butter in microwave or in a small saucepan on stovetop. Place cookie crumbs in a small bowl and incorporate melted butter into crumbs with fingertips until mealy. Spread crumb mixture onto bottom of a 10-inch tart or cake pan and pat down into an even layer; chill for 30 minutes before baking (or up to 2 days). Bake until crust starts to turn golden, about 8 to 10 minutes; remove from oven and cool. Increase oven temperature to 400ºF.

3. In a medium bowl, gently combine sliced pears with lemon juice and pear liqueur. Arrange pear slices in tart pan starting with the outside edge — the long rounded part of the pear should rest against the side of the tart pan. Continue to overlap pear slices in tight concentric circles until all the slices are used up; work in any leftover slices.

4. Cut remaining 2 tablespoons butter into small pieces; scatter over pears. Place tart in oven on baking sheet and bake until tart bubbles and fruit is tender but not mushy, about 40 to 45 minutes. Allow pie to cool and garnish with orange zest. Slice into 10 pieces and serve. Yields 1 slice per serving.

Aqua de Melon:
Servings: 4; Preparation Time: 5 min; Cooking Time: 0 min

The perfect thing on a hot summer day. Minty and mildly sweet with just a little spice.

Ingredients: 2 cup(s) Cantaloupe, diced; ½ tsp Coriander seed, whole; ¼ cup(s) Peppermint, fresh, fresh (about 20 leaves); 4 cup(s) Water, still-mineral

Instructions:
1. In a food processor, puree the cantaloupe, coriander and mint until smooth, about 1 minute. Pour the mixture into a fine sieve.

2. With a ladle, kitchen spoon, or rubber spatula, press as much of the liquid as possible through the sieve and into a large pitcher.

3. Add the water, stir and serve over ice. Yields about 1 cup per serving.
Hair Loss

Being blessed with a long, thick, and healthy mane is regarded as a sign of beauty in our current culture. Hair implants for men is a thriving business. Celebrities have made hair extensions a rather expensive fad. More and more women opt for wigs—and men for toupees—than ever before. Our society just might be obsessed with having a head full of hair. Thankfully, many of us Iranians have been blessed with the beautiful-hair gene. Therefore, for those of us who start to lose our hair, it can feel somewhat traumatic.

What Causes Hair Loss?

There are 7 common causes of alopecia, otherwise known as hair loss:

- **Genetics**: This is by far the most common cause of hair loss. Genes are responsible for hair loss in both men and women, and hair loss related to genetics may begin as early as age 12. The loss of hair is diffuse and all over the entire scalp—not just in one spot or patch—but is worse in the front or sides of the scalp.
- **Pregnancy**: Many women lose some hair throughout pregnancy or after delivery. This is usually reversible, and most regrow their hair with time.
- **Thyroid Disorders**: Many patients with abnormal thyroid hormone levels can experience hair loss. Thyroid disorders are typically genetic.
- **PCOS**: Elevated testosterone levels cause a diffuse thinning of the scalp in women, which is why many women with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a condition marked by irregular periods, acne, and abnormal facial/body hair, experience scalp hair loss.
- **Autoimmune Attack**: The body can produce certain proteins that attack its own hair follicles. Patients with this type of hair loss typically have a very distinct area of hair loss, and the rest of the scalp is unaffected.
- **Damaged Hair Follicles**: A number of things can damage the hair follicles:
  - chemicals applied to the scalp
  - infections of the scalp
  - radiation or chemotherapy
  - certain crash/liquid protein diets
  - medications (like hormones and anti-seizure medications)
- **Stress**: Stress can also cause a rather diffuse pattern of hair loss all over, and the hair loss typically begins two to four months after experiencing a rather traumatic stressful life event. It can last several months, but it is reversible.

How Can You Treat Hair Loss?

There are several treatment options to treat hair loss:

- **Multivitamins**: Take a a multivitamin every day. It will ensure that you are getting the right amount of nutrients and vitamins necessary for good hair and nail growth, especially if you don’t have a balanced diet, or are a vegetarian.
- **Minoxidil**: A medication initially used to treat high blood pressure was discovered to have an interesting side effect—it caused hair growth. Now this drug, called **Monoxidil**, commonly known as **Rogaine**, is formulated and marketed specifically to regrow hair. **Minoxidil** is an over-the-counter medicated solution and it must be applied to the scalp twice daily. It does work, and works really great for many people, but it typically takes about three months to start noticing the difference. There is a traditional “female” 2% dose and “male” 5% dose. However, women can also use the 5% “male” dosing if their hair loss is significant. Most common side effect? Some women report a little bit of hair growth on the face (don’t worry, this is reversible once you stop using the product). And if you do stop the treatment, hair loss will likely return. You can get this at any drug store or pharmacy on your own without a prescription from a doctor!
- **Steroid injections or creams**: If your hair loss is in a distinct pattern caused by autoimmune attack, and the earlier mentioned treatments don’t work, see your personal doctor or a dermatologist for possible injections of steroids or prescription steroid creams to apply to the scalp.
- **Tretinoin**: There are a few studies that suggest using good ole tretinoin (Retin-A) as an adjunct to **Minoxidil** can help treat those with a distinct hair loss patch. **Tretinoin** is also used to treat acne and improve wrinkles.
- **Propecia**: You may have seen advertisements for the hair loss drug, **Propecia**, but unfortunately, this oral medication is only used to treat men with hair loss, mostly because it can cause abnormal genitalia in the male fetuses of women who get pregnant while taking it.

When Should You See Your Doctor About Hair Loss?

Hair loss can be treated over-the-counter, but there are certain times when you should see your doctor:

- If the over-the-counter methods don’t work
  - If your hair loss is not just diffuse, but in a distinct circular or oval pattern
  - If your hair loss seems significant, or is getting worse with time
  - If it is caused by any new medications you may have started
  - If you experience any problems with your periods, or also suffer from acne
  - If you have any signs of thyroid disorders, such as constipation, fatigue, depression, and weight gain

Dr. Sanaz Majd is a board certified family medicine physician and the host of the House Call Doctor podcast at MacMillan Publishing’s website at www.housecallldoctor.quickanddirtytips.com. You can email her at majdmd@gmail.com.
Tips For Student Success

As the school year is under way, I thought it would be beneficial to review ways to ensure your child’s success this year. Regardless of whether they are elementary, middle, or high school students, the strategies for success are the same with slightly different variations depending on the age group.

1. Communicate, communicate, communicate! I can’t emphasize this enough. It is so important to communicate with the teachers to help provide a context for which the teacher is teaching. If there are grandparents at home, a different language spoken in the home, divorced parents, a recent traumatic event (even the loss of a family pet), all of these things impact a student’s behavior at school. Giving the teacher the benefit of this information will allow the teacher to plan the best way to approach a student’s education and learning experience.

2. Minimize anxiety in the morning. When an individual experiences high anxiety, the brain’s amygdala is affected, impacting learning. Essentially, high anxiety means minimal-to-no learning. How often have you yelled at your child for not brushing his teeth, finishing his homework, or slowing you down as you are trying to get out the door to go to drop him off at school on your way to work? Or had an argument with your spouse before school? These incidents impact student learning in the classroom.

3. Ensure your child has a quiet, organized space to study without interruptions. If he is to study at the kitchen table, the TV should not be on and the foot traffic and conversations should be minimal.

4. Ensure study time is consistent. For instance, when my kids come home from school, they eat a snack, watch one TV show, and then do their homework before dinner. This schedule is consistently enforced everyday. And because of this, I do not have to tell them to do their homework or stop watching TV. They know the routine.

5. Allow your child experiences that will make him well-rounded. Living a balanced life now will teach your child to live a balanced life as an adult. This means he will know how to balance work, family, and personal/spiritual health and growth. Pushing a child to be 100% academic because of our desire for his success, ironically, may backfire and lead to an unbalanced life due to poor social skills, being a workaholic, and other repercussions.

6. Model good behavior. If you tell your child to read for twenty minutes a day, then he should see you reading as well. If you want your child to live a balanced life, then working 15 hours a day, 7 days a week may contradict your expectation.

Every parent wants his/her child to be successful, but the challenge comes in having an active role in the child’s success where the parental behavior does not contradict the expectation. Being mindful and using the tips above to help your child will make a difference in his success.
**Persian Cultural Center**
Tel: (858) 552-9355  Fax & Voice: (619) 374-7335
www.pccus.org

**Saturday September 28, 2013**
**UCSD- Lecture and Music • FREE admission •**
See ad on page 7 Farsi section

**Saturday October 12, 2013,**
**Visit Cyrus the Great Cylinder**
At Getty Villa Museum, one day trip to LA
See ad on page 6 Farsi section

**Saturday November 16, 2013**
**Parisa with Haminvazan**
TSRI (La Jolla) 7-11 pm • More info 858-552-9355
See ad on page 18 Farsi section

**Setar Class by Kourosh Taghavi**
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**Daf Workshop with Ali Sadr,**
Tuesdays 6 to 7:30 PM at PCC office.

**Iranian School of San Diego**
858-552-9355
Mt. Carmel High School
9550 Carmel Mountain Road • San Diego, CA 92129

**ISSD Registration**
Branch I
Sunday Sept. 8, 2013 at 10am-12pm

Branch II
Thur. Sept. 5, 2013 at 6-8 pm
For more information: 858-552-9355

**Persian Dance Academy of San Diego**
(858) 552-9355  www.pccus.org

**Dollar a Month Fund**
7th Annual Casino Night - (See ad on page 19)
Friday. Nov 15th 6:30-11 pm
Tel: 858-552-9355 • www.dmfund.org
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dollar-a-Month-Fund

**Association of Iranian American Professionals (AIAP)**
Tel: (858) 207 6232 • www.aiap.org
Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM at Sufi Mediterranean Cuisine
5915 Balboa Ave, San Diego, CA 92111

**ISTA (Iranian Student Association at UC San Diego)**
visit us at www.istaucsd.org

**House of Iran**
Tel: (619) 232 - Iran  Balboa Park,
Sundays 12:00 4:00pm
Reagan’s words resonate today: Qalandia, Bethlehem, Jenin, Erez, Rafah, Tijuana, Nogales, Reynosa, Agua Prieta. This time, however, much more than a call for “change and openness” ties us—as Americans—to the barriers that stand between Palestine and Israel, Mexico and the United States. These Walls are rooted in our political intolerance; they marginalize and terrorize indigenous peoples, tear communities apart, disturb ecosystems, feed the industry of fear, and destroy the identity of landscapes. They enable policies and politics of apartheid.

Let us start in Palestine. Funded by U.S. taxpayers, the construction of the Israeli Wall began more than a decade ago. At its core, it isolates the West Bank from historic Palestine—the State of Israel today—where twenty percent of the population is Palestinian. The Israeli Wall is 450 miles long—the distance from San Diego to San Francisco—and stands 26 feet tall, more than twice as high as the Berlin Wall. It is called the “Security Fence” by Israel and the “Apartheid Wall” by Palestinians. The Israeli Wall functions through an advanced and multifaceted security infrastructure: watchtowers, cameras, sensors, electronic fences, and barbwires.

While it is important to consider official narratives—political statements and opinions—overlooking the stories of ordinary Palestinians on the ground would only highlight, strengthen, and extend the existence of the Israeli Wall not only as a physical barrier but also as a metaphor for segregation.

“I told them: don’t build fences around your settlements. If you put up a fence, you put a limit to your expansion. We should place the fences around the Palestinians and not around our places”—Ariel Sharon, quoted in Neve Gordon, “Israel’s Occupation”

My summer plan to study Arabic language and literature took me to Palestine where I witnessed the impact of the Israeli Wall up-close and personally. The Wall’s immediate impact has been on the Palestinian landscape, uprooting thousands of trees and creating a prison-like environment that disheartens and terrorizes locals and intimidates undetermined visitors. For instance, Qalandia, once a small charming village near Ramallah, has been transformed into an open-prison compound: a military base with multiple watchtowers, a checkpoint equipped with revolving doors and fingerprint scanners, an area filled with Jerusalem-bound services, and ambulances on standby in case of clashes between Palestinian youth and the IDF. Qalandia is no longer; it is al-ma’bar, the crossing, al-hajiz, the checkpoint.

The Israeli Wall prevents thousands of Palestinians from reaching their workplaces, schools, farmlands, and hospitals while it curtails their access to the hub of Palestinian life and economy in East Jerusalem. From many parts of Abu Dis, a town in East Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock in the Old City is visible; a distance previously covered in several minutes now takes more than an hour. In Salfit, central West Bank, the property of Mr. Hani Amer has been entirely enclosed by all sides; the Wall, electronic fence, and the Elkana settlement surround his property. He has been entirely isolated from the nearby village of Masah. For months, Mr. Amer and his family were only allowed to leave their house two times a day; he was only recently able to get a key to his own property. Having resorted to humor, the entrance to his house reads: “Welcome to the State of Hani Amer.”
In Bethlehem, the Israeli Wall has shut down businesses and separated families from each other. In one of the neighborhoods, it surrounds a house on all three sides; the family is not allowed to use their rooftop or keep its blinds open due to the Wall’s proximity to their house. The Wall has also been turned into a mural by Palestinian and international graffiti artists and painters. Many residential areas have lost their sense of privacy as tourists pour into Bethlehem to capture the graffiti art or leave their own mark. In the most infamous case yet, Qalqilia, a city northwest of the West Bank, has been entirely enclosed by the Wall; there are only two crossings for thousands of residents. Families who live near the Wall no longer see the sun set or rise. All over the West Bank, farmers’ access to their properties has been severed; many have to walk several kilometers to get to their farm while others have to wait for soldiers to open the gate and allow them in only a few times a day. Many have abandoned their lands.

Referring to an approximately twenty-five foot tall structure as a “fence,” Israel says the Wall merely serves security objectives, and has stopped waves of suicide attacks that target its citizens. Many Palestinians point out that the majority of suicide bombers have come from within Israel—namely Nazareth. It is needless to say that the Wall is not entirely built on the 1967 borders—the Green Line—and consequently has grabbed eleven percent of Palestinian land. Like most walls—in spite of billions of dollars spent on its construction and surveillance infrastructure—the Israeli Wall is incapable of keeping out all “intruders.”

It is not the wall that has created the camp, but rather the strategy and reality of encampment which has led to the construction of the wall—Adi Ophir and Ariella Azoulay, “The Monster’s Tail”

The Israeli Wall is an extension of Israel’s policies and politics of apartheid; it is only a part of Israel’s ruling apparatus in the Occupied Territories. While half a million Jewish settlers are connected to Israel via Jewish-only fast roads, West Bankers face traveling restrictions and more fragmentation of their land every day through settlements, settler roads, military bases, trenches, roadblocks, walls, fences, barbwire, tunnels, etc. Interactions between Jewish and Arab populations have been minimized as a result of the concrete barriers that separate communities. For instance, many Israelis went to Masah, a village in Salfit, to buy its quality, inexpensive furniture. According to NPR, “[n] ow Palestinians must carry goods over barricades installed by the Israeli army, and business is drying up.” Overall, militarization of the West Bank indiscriminately terrorizes and humiliates thousands and millions of Palestinians on a daily basis while relying on acts of violent resistance to justify its existence on the grounds of “national security.”

“We’ll be the most militarized border since the fall of the Berlin Wall. That’s why I think this amendment was very important”—Senator John McCain, June 2013

Located in different terrain, the U.S.-Mexico barriers narrate similar stories, reveal identical scars. Erecting a series of barriers along the U.S. border with Mexico has been one of the main strategies of the U.S. government to combat “illegal immigration and terrorism,” most particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Ten feet tall, the first phase of the barrier in California—coded “Operation Gatekeeper”—started in 1993 along the Pacific Ocean to the Otay Port of Entry. Later, surveillance cameras and stadium lights were added and the barrier was expanded. In 2006, President George W. Bush signed “The Secure Fence Act of 2006” into law, remarking that “this bill will help protect the American people. This bill will make our borders more secure. It is an important step toward immigration reform.” Just recently in June 2013, the
foster relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Then, only barbed
dedicated by Pat Nixon, it was built in 1971 on San Diego hills to
the identity of their landscape. Friendship Park is an example;
by driving a physical block between them, forever transforming
The U.S.-Mexico barriers have torn indigenous communities apart
but also darken social relations with our southern neighbor.
policies will not only alienate an important economical partner,
for many decades and wish to visit their families. According to
the Department of State, Mexico is
its border conclusions on a serious consideration of such studies.

As in the case of Palestine, the U.S.-Mexico barriers are incapable
of stopping people from entering the “other side.” But they are
capable of endangering the lives of migrant workers—indigenous
to this region—by driving them deep into the desert; many die
of dehydration. Further militarization of the border will affect
six million people who call the border their home in California,
Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as thousands of migrant
workers who have been living and working in the United States
for many decades and wish to visit their families. According to
the Department of State, Mexico is Texas’ number one trading
partner and the third trading partner for the country at large; such
policies will not only alienate an important economical partner,
but also darken social relations with our southern neighbor. While
San Diego is inaccessible to Mexican and Central American
immigrants, Tijuana, Mexico’s third largest municipality, remains
welcoming to thousands of Americans who visit each week for
work, entertainment, or medical tourism, as well as hundreds of
displaced workers who seek shelter having been deported from the
United States.

The U.S.-Mexico barriers have torn indigenous communities apart
by driving a physical block between them, forever transforming
the identity of their landscape. Friendship Park is an example;
dedicated by Pat Nixon, it was built in 1971 on San Diego hills to
foster relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Then, only barbed
fence marked the border; now the Department of Homeland
Security has built a wall: a twenty-foot tall steel barrier with metal
posts that continue into the ocean. Once a place for friends and
families to come and socialize with each other from both sides, in
recent years, free access to the Park has been rare. Jill Hoslin, a
professor at San Diego State University, describes these changes:
the DHS “blocked off Friendship Park, and suddenly Sundays felt
like visiting day at a maximum security prison.” After months of
negotiations with San Diego Sector Border Patrol, the Park is now
open to the public on weekends. A barrier built to prevent illegal
immigration has itself crossed many borders, communities, and
families. One frontier, All frontiers (2010), a documentary film by
David Pablos, highlights how Mexicans have integrated the border
wall into their daily lives, trying to overcome its primary function,
segregation, by developing new relationships with their loved ones
who live on the “other side.”

You may ask, what connects the Israeli Wall in Palestine to the
U.S.-Mexico barriers? Both Walls have been constructed on the
destruction of landscape and community life, and neither Wall
has taken into account the existence and needs of people whose
lives are affected. Both barriers obscure critical issues that have
remained unaddressed and unresolved: in the case of Palestine,
Israel’s almost half a century-old military occupation, and in
Mexico’s case, the corporate-building policies of NAFTA, lack of
labor and civil rights for migrant workers, and the U.S. support
for the “War on Drugs” that has consumed the lives of more than
40,000 Mexicans since 2006. Both Walls have been born as a
result of xenophobic climates against indigenous peoples and feed
the billion-dollar industry of border control. In fact, Elbit Systems
Ltd., a defense electronics manufacturer based in Haifa, Israel, has
been given a multi-billion dollar contract to build the surveillance
mechanisms of the U.S. border wall; this is the same company that
enables the Israeli occupation to control the movement of millions
of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The spirit of the
Berlin Wall lives on through the Israeli Wall and the U.S-Mexico
barriers. Qalandia Crossing will one day follow the fate of Berlin’s
Checkpoint Charlie, reduced to a replica built for curious tourists,
a glimpse into Israel’s historic apartheid. With each immigrant
who jumps over the U.S.-Mexico barrier, the policies and politics
of apartheid that marginalize indigenous populations and rely on
xenophobia and criminality to feed the cynical industry of border
control will be increasingly clear. As Americans, we are tied to
these Walls; as humans, to every wall.

Notes:
1. Title extracted from President Obama’s speech in Jerusalem in March 2013.
   settlement/020529.kenyon3.html
3. A student at Birzeit University shared with me that an IDF soldier spotted
   her after she crossed under a hole into Israel from Al-Ram, north of Jerusalem,
   but did not attempt to stop or chase her.
   Photo credit for the Israeli Wall in the West Bank, Aria Fani; for West
   Bankers jumping over the Israeli Wall, Oren Ziv; the coast of San Diego-
   Tijuana, John Gibbins; and for hands and the fence, David Maung.

A native of Iran, Aria Fani has spent time living and studying in
Palestine and Mexico. He holds a B.A. in comparative literature and is
currently a Ph.D. student in Near Eastern Studies at the University of
California, Berkeley.
Customer Assistance Programs

Many SDG&E customers may have already received notice that their bill will be increasing starting September 1. But what customers might not know is that those who are qualified to participate in SDG&E’s CARE and Medical Baseline programs, are exempt from this increase!

San Diego Gas & Electric’s (SDG&E) Customer Assistance Programs provide support to more than 300,000 customers in San Diego and southern Orange counties. Also, it’s important to check out SDG&E’s 10 Ways to Save to learn about the simple steps that can help you reduce your energy use.

Don’t leave money on the table – find out if you’re qualified by learning about the SDG&E Customer Assistance programs below:

CARE and FERA

- California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) is a low income, ratepayer assistance program that provides customers with household incomes at or below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines with a monthly savings of up to 35 percent on their SDG&E bill. Learn how customers can benefit here.

FERA allows families whose household income slightly exceeds CARE limits to be billed at the lower Tier 2 rate for electric usage that would normally be billed at the higher Tier 3 rate.

Medical Baseline

- The Medical Baseline Allowance Program ensures that extra allowances of natural gas and electricity are billed at the lowest rate for customers who rely on life support equipment or need heating or air conditioning due to medical conditions.

Energy Savings Assistance

- The Energy Savings Assistance Program provides free energy efficiency upgrades to customers who meet the CARE household income guidelines – or who participate in certain public assistance programs. Upgrades make homes more comfortable and secure and include door and window weatherization, attic insulation, energy efficient appliances, low-flow showerheads and water heater blankets. Learn about how customers can benefit here.

Solutions that can save customers up to 20% on their SDG&E bill

SDG&E also has the Level Pay Plan – which gives customers the opportunity to have a more predictable monthly bill by leveling out the highs and lows over the course of the year.

Just one more way SDG&E is connecting its customers to smart energy solutions.

Energy Solutions Partners - Emergency Prep Toolkit

As we see too much, emergencies can come in many forms such as wild fires, storms, earthquakes or school or work emergencies. That’s why being prepared for emergencies means so much. We just never know when and where the next emergency might hit.

Maybe you haven’t thought about it too much, but why not consider these two steps that will make sure that you and you and your family will be safe in case of the next unplanned emergency. The two most important parts are having a written plan as well as supplies. Developing a written plan provides a systematic and repeatable approach to emergencies.

Your plan should be tailored to meet your specific situation, such as preparing for elderly and disabled family members as well as pets. Your plan should be reviewed and updated annually.

Here are some things to consider when making a plan:

- Create an emergency plan for your family, identifying two places for the family to meet.
  1. A place outside your home
  2. A spot away from your neighborhood in case you can’t return home
- Practice the plan with your family, including your children
- Review the emergency plans at your workplace, your children’s school or daycare center and other places where members of your family regularly spend time away from home
- Plan safe routes away from your home and business to high, safe ground. Make sure your children are aware of the routes away from home.
- Develop a plan for family pets and livestock
- Evacuation shelters may not allow animals
- Designate a friend outside the area who family members can call if separated
- Keep current important documents in a safe-deposit box

Prepare a Kit of Emergency Supplies

During an emergency, you will need supplies. Here are some of the basics you should have on hand.

- Three-day supply of bottled water (one gallon per person per day)
- A three-day supply of packaged, dried, and canned food
- First aid kit and essential medicines
- Pet food and pet carrier
- Manual can opener
- Portable radio and flashlights with spare batteries in waterproof bags
- An extra set of car keys
- Cash and credit cards
- Special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members

Comprehensive Checklists

Read SDG&E’s comprehensive checklists for your home, at work and in your car. You can find this checklist and more at http://www.sdge.com/safety/emergency-preparedness.
The Liberation of Abstraction

I was invited by an acquaintance of mine to evaluate a painting her family friend wanted to buy. It was a nonrepresentational abstract oil painting, with expressive doodled lines all around the large canvas. The colors were pale green, blue, and yellow.

I asked the potential buyer if she liked the painting, and her answer was very honest. She said, “I am on the fence about it, I think the size of it is good for my living room but I am not fan of the dull colors. I want something with stronger colors.” Immediately she felt sheepish about her answer and apologized. I had to stop her from apologizing for her taste. Not only did her answer make my evaluation easier, but I needed her to trust her own evaluation, even if it was mostly about her living room space. I told her to wait for a piece that has enchanting colors and a size that would work with her space. Even though this happened some time ago, the conversation remains fresh in my memory. It is a great example of the concept that the more abstract a painting is, the more attention the viewer gives to the formal elements of the work.

It is important to clearly state what we mean by nonrepresentational work of art and also abstract work of art. A representational art or figurative art references objects, or events in the real world. Basically, we see recognizable objects in the work. Abstraction is a very relative term. Abstract can mean “reduced to its essence;” when we recognize an object in a painting, but the object does not represent the appearance of its counterpart in the real world, we can call it abstract.

Think of Mona Lisa! When we look at the painting, we recognize a portrait of a woman. Her depicted appearance resembles the appearance of that particular woman in the real world in size, ratio, and shape. Mona Lisa is a superb example of a representational and naturalist work of art. While this painting opens the doors to one’s imagination, to a good degree it remains rigid and fixed in its naturalist depiction. Her face, even her famous mysterious smile, cannot be reimagined. Once it is seen, it is fixed on the eyes of the mind.

Now think of a Cubist portrait by Picasso. We recognize the fragmented shapes here and there and our mind weaves an image of a face on its own. Since we have recognized a representational object in the work, the work cannot be considered nonrepresentational, but since Picasso’s depiction doesn’t resemble the way the object actually is in the world around us, in its naturalistic appearance, we cannot consider it naturalist. We see the reduction of an object to its essential forms. The fragmented part represents complete forms, but the artist’s refusal to complete the forms creates a mental game for the viewer. Due to abstraction of forms, here the viewer has the freedom to complete the image, to imagine and fill the work with his own reality. A Picasso portrait does not have the verisimilitude that was valued during Renaissance, yet it offers the liberty of imagination to the viewer. A Picasso portrait is not of one person frozen in a specific time and space. It is of a person who can change depending on the viewer.

The more abstract a work gets, the more liberty it offers the viewer. A nonrepresentational work, such as the one I was asked to evaluate for a buyer, is examined for its formal qualities and evaluated based on the personal space of the buyer. Its size was good for her living room, yet the colors were not enchanting to her. What a traditional work of painting offers, aside from the tremendous skill that we all are prone to appreciate, is set in its frame. The viewer won’t wonder how it fits in her living room. If the viewer likes a representational painting enough, the living room and all of its character should change for that painting. It is set.

Our taste in life, arts included, is subjective. It changes from one person to the other. Of course, the more we educate ourselves on any given subject matter, the more familiar we become with the whys and hows of our own taste. And sometimes, but not often, our knowledge changes our taste. You can replace the word “liking,” “choices,” and more importantly “sensitivities.” Abstraction in style offers a freedom of thought. A Rothko painting is less controlling of one’s eyes, yet more liberating, not only to one’s imagination but also one’s sensation.
Dear Readers:

As a part of our community services, we have approached some of the Iranian medical specialist in various fields to send us their information to share with the community. We appreciate the work of Dr. Reza Shirazi who spearheaded this effort. The following list is not complete by any means. If you are a Medical Doctor and would like to be added to this list, please send your information to Dr. Shirazi or directly to Peyk.

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