

"try to be joyful in your heart
for many a flower will bloom
while you will be in clay."

سعدی: بنی آدم اعضای یک پیکرند / که در آفرینش زیک گوهرند
بیهبانی: ... اگر چه پیرم ولی هنوز / مجال تعلیم اگر بود / کنار بنام تو جان
خویش / حدیث حب الوطن زشوق / بدان روش سازمی کنم / که جان نشوهر کلام دل ...
حافظ: درخت دوستی بنشان که کام دل به بار آرد / نهدال دشمنی برکن که زنج بی شمار آرد

• The President's Persian Poetry



- Where Have All the Good Men Gone
- Persian Cultural Center's 2015 Annual Meeting
- Bridging the Gap
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- The San Diego Museum of Art
- Why Your Doctor Won't Prescribe Antibiotics
- Nowruz in Other Persian Lands
- The role of music in language learning for young children
- Growing up Iranian-American



• Second Biennial Persian Language Educators' Symposium



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By: Shahri Estakhry



WHERE HAVE ALL THE GOOD MEN GONE ...

In a way I am a news addict! I have to listen to world and national news daily at different times. If for some reason I don't hear it, I feel lost. Of course when I hear it, I'm not sure how much of it is the truth and how much of it is the extension of the imagination of source. I learned long ago in order to get at least 60% of what is real one must diversify sources, and be willing to give fair judgements. That becomes really difficult since most people live and breathe with their political and religious ideologies. I have found that often the most "educated" are also the most prejudiced individuals. Degrees do not constitute being unbiased and open-minded.

One recent Sunday, on Meet the Press, the subject turned to how people no longer trust or respect the majority of politicians, especially those in Washington, D.C. I thought to myself nothing like this would have been said 20 years ago. Where have all the good men gone?

I have been a witness to the political system in this country since the Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Many men and women have come and gone and served this nation honorably and regardless of their party affiliations have earned the respect of the people and the gratitude of our nation. They were aware of their duties and responsibilities to the people and for the benefit of this nation. Their mastery of the art of negotiations was splendid to watch and the results were great for all. Undoubtedly, some were there for their own self-interest and moved on to become highly top paid lobbyists. Yet, then they were numbered. But now, the table has turned and those who are within the halls of the most revered and important institution, in the name of the people, are there mainly to promote themselves. The interests of their constituents are the least of their concerns and it baffles me as to why we as voters are so gullible. Why don't we open our eyes and choose better and more responsible individuals to represent us? That is, if such individuals are willing to step forth. As voters, the burden of being informed is on us, as are the consequences for not being so. Regardless of party affiliations we need to admit that 'WE THE PEOPLE' have chosen time and time again a "do nothing" Congress. Look at how low we have permitted our nation to be dragged. America and we the people deserve much better than this.

Today, I don't recognize "America the Beautiful" anymore. It has lost much of its glory and beauty to injustices and greed. It has become the home for the oligarchy of a few to multiply their own wealth and in the name of democracy, to spend the plenty to enrich their friends and causes. Where in the Constitution of our nation, which again they use to their own benefits is this permitted? 'A nation by a few for a few'?

Now begins the era of headaches... look at how many are running for the high office! Listen to all of their empty promises. Even if there is some kernel of truth in what they are saying, there is no way that I would believe it. It gets lost in all of the other nonsense. Glory be, with each of them also comes the *rah rah sis boom bah* of more empty promises, the cynical mudslinging. WOW, and these are the individuals we choose to lead us again?

I came to this country with much hope, and have worked very hard for what I have achieved through honesty and decency. It is really like these politicians are stomping on my dreams and purposely crashing my hopes. Perhaps most of my life is gone, but I am still alive and this is my country and I care deeply about what happens. Its future matters to all of us.

There are many good people left to work for the future of this nation. They need to have the courage to come forward and stand up for what is right, fair and just for all. There are many ethical and honest people left. We need to put aside party affiliations and begin to search for honorable individuals who can work together to bring back a prosperous America that belongs to all of its citizens, individuals who recognize how vital passing a budget is for a nation such as ours. We need people who will stop this nonsense of party bickering and become representatives for America. We are responsible for educating ourselves in choosing candidates. We must also hold these elected officials accountable when they get nothing meaningful accomplished in our Congress. As an employer would you pay an employee who does not work? We are the employers and they are the employees!

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Report of Persian Cultural Center's 2015 Annual General Meeting and Election

PCC's annual meeting took place on May 17, 2015, at Mt. Carmel High School in San Diego, California. The annual report was presented and was followed by the election process for new Board of Director members. The past year's activities were presented by Mr. Hamid Rafizadeh-PCC's President, the *Peyk* report by Mr. Sadr-Editor-in-Chief of *Peyk*, the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD) report by Ms. Fariba Babakhani- Ghazi-ISSD Vice Principal and PCC Vice President, and the Financial Report by Ms. Bahar Bagherpour-PCC's Treasurer. A summary of PCC's annual report is as follows:

Board of Directors and committee members for the past year were as follows:

- * Hamid Rafizadeh (President)
- * Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi (Vice-President)
- * Bahar Bagherpour (Treasurer)
- * Golsa Soraya (Secretary)
- * Afshin Asgharian Nahavandi
- * Anahita Babaei
- * Lisa Hildreth
- * Gity Nematollahi
- * Negar Nekouei
- * Farideh Rasouli-Fazel
- * Abdy Salimi

Advisory Board:

- * Shahri Estakhry
- * Saeed Jalali
- * Rosita Bagheri
- * Shahla Salah
- * Shaghayegh Hanson



The Board had twelve meetings in the past year. At its first meeting, the Board elected its Executive Committee and established the following committees:

Educational Committee (ISSD): *Ali Sadr (lead), Fariba Babakhani, and Rosita Bagheri.*

Arts & Culture Committee: *Abdy Salimi (lead), Golsa Soraya., Ali Sadr, Anahita Babaei, and Negar Nekouei.*

Membership and PR Committee: *Fariba Babakhani- Ghazi (lead), Gity Nematollahi, Bahar Bagherpour, Lisa Hilderth, Ali Sadr, and Shahrzad Julazadeh.*

Peyk Committee: *Ali Sadr (lead), Saeed Jalali, Shahri Estakhry, Bahnam Hedari, Shaghayegh Hanson, Maryam Irvanian, Shahrzad Julazadeh, Reza Khabazian, Aria Fani, Rachel Tait, and Saeid NouriBoushehri.*

Grants Committee: *Hamid Rafizadeh (lead), Shaghayegh Hanson, Rosita Bagheri, Shahrzad Julazadeh, and Bahar Bagherpour.*

Fundraising Committee: *Anahita Babaei (lead), Hamid Rafizadeh, Fariba Babakhani, Afshin A. Nahavandi, Ali Sadr, Shaghayegh Hanson, Shahla Salah, Shahri Estakhry, and Shahrzad Julazadeh.*

Charity (PCC Foundation): *Gity Nematollahi (lead), Shahri Estakhry, Fariba Babakhani- Ghazi, Farideh Fazel, and Abdi Salimi.*

Governance and Nominating Committee: *Farideh Fazel (lead), Shaghayegh Hanson, and Bahar Bagherpour .*

Building Committee: *Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi (lead), Shahla Salah, Ali Sadr, Saeed Jalali, Farideh Fazel, Abdy Salimi, Hamid Rafizadeh, Rosita Bagheri and Shahrzad Julazadeh.*

Finance Committee: *Bahar Bagherpour (lead), Hamid Rafizadeh, Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi, and Shahrzad Julazadeh.*

Summary of Cultural Activities

During 2014-2015, PCC was not only active in organizing traditional celebrations and programs for the Iranian-American community, but also collaborated with other organizations to reach out to the community at large. PCC continues to raise funds for the upkeep of the new Iranian American Center (IAC) and the variety of new programing that is now held at the Center.

PCC sponsored and co-sponsored the following programs:

A-PCC:

- 1- The Memorial of Ostad Lotfi in collaboration with AIAP
- 2- Celebrating Persian Female Vocalist Sepideh Raissadat
- 3- 20th Annual IWSF Conference in collaboration with Iranian Women's Study Foundation
- 4- Citizenship and Naturalization Workshop at IAC
- 5- Mehregan Celebration at IAC
- 6- Dornob CD Release Concert at IAC
- 7- Santoor Concert in collaboration with the Indian Fine Arts Academy
- 8- Yalda Celebration at Sufi Restaurant with Roya
- 9- Ostad Hossein Alizadeh Concert for 2 days at IAC
- 10- Chekhov Story Reading was conducted by Mr. Parsa Pirozfar
- 11- Sueran Ensemble Concert in collaboration with Association of Iranian American Professionals (AIAP)
- 12- Universal Children's Day Event in collaboration with Child Foundation and Dollar a Month at ISSD
- 13- A Charity Art Bazaar in collaboration with Sage Canyon Elementary School
- 14- Nowruz Preparation at the Iranian School of San Diego
- 15- Nowruz Celebration at the Iranian School of San Diego
- 16- Chahârshanbeh Soori with AIAP and House of Iran (HOI) at NTC Park
- 17- Nowruz Celebration at Marriott Hotel with AIAP
- 18- Nowruz Celebration at Poway, 4S Ranch, and El Cajon Community Libraries
- 19- Sizdeh- Bedar with AIAP and HOI at NTC Park
- 20- World Cultures Day at Mira Costa Collage
- 21- Presentation of Haft-Seen along with literary, cultural, and historical exhibits in seven public libraries throughout San Diego
- 22- Acting Workshop series were conducted by Mr. Parsa Pirozfar April and May 2015
- 23- Harmony Festival at Balboa Park on Saturday April 18, 2015
- 24- Art Expressive Class every second Saturday of the month at IAC
- 25- Movie Nights every first Sunday of the month at IAC
- 26- Jonge Farhanghi every second Friday of the month at IAC
- 27- Tasnifkhani with Kouros Tagavi every other month
- 28- Monthly Art Exhibition at the Center
- 29- Daf classes with Ali Sadr
- 30- Setar classes with Kouros Taghavi
- 31- Tonbak classes with Milad Jahadi
- 32- Yoga class with Dr. Nahavandi at IAC
- 33- Collaboration with San Diego Museum of Art and Balboa Park to open Persian Section at the Museum
- 34- Collaboration with San Diego Museum of Art and Balboa Park restoration of archeological artifacts.

B-ISSD:

This year, both branches of ISSD were held at Mt. Carmel High School. The 2014-2015 academic year was ISSD's 27th year of operation. 225 students attended both branches of ISSD in the past year. The school's Nowruz program was held on March 15, 2015, and was attended by 500 parents and family members. A variety of dance presentations, plays, music recitals, and songs were presented. Students received awards for their academic achievements. This year, the school had its second Talent Show on February 8. ISSD's end of year event was held on June 7, 2015. ISSD's first branch offers 17 classes on Sunday mornings, which are separated into three levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. ISSD also offers Persian classes for adults. Extracurricular classes such as Dance, Theatre, Orff, and Setar have been offered as well. The second branch is held on Thursday evenings and has a total of 5 classes, which are also separated into three levels: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. ISSD's Persian language program is accredited by the San Diego Unified School District and the San Dieguito School District,

which means that high school students can fulfill their second language requirements by taking Persian language courses at ISSD. Dance and Daf classes were also provided for adults. This year, the PTA of both branches worked very hard and cooperated successfully with the teachers and administrators on issues such as curriculum and extracurricular activities. The PTA was also instrumental in helping to raise funds for the school. In addition, ISSD is working with a network of Persian schools in the U.S. and other countries to exchange experiences and educational materials.

C- Persian Dance Academy:

More than 40 students under the supervision of Ms. Saba Borjjan of the Persian Cultural Dance Academy met on Sundays at ISSD Branch I. The dance students performed in the following programs:

- 1- PCC Nowruz Event
- 2- ISSD's Nowruz Event
- 3- ISTA Nowruz Event at UCSD

D- Building:

The Iranian American Center (IAC) hosting a variety of organizations, such as IASF and DMF. The Center has a library with more than four thousand books. MARKAZ is publicly available for Cultural activities.

E- Public Relations and Community Outreach:

During the 2014-2015 operating year, PCC used its bi-monthly publication, *Peyk*, to reach thousands of readers. *Peyk* is a bilingual publication published in Persian and English. Its circulation includes San Diego, Orange, and Los Angeles Counties, the Bay area, Chicago, Washington D.C., Dallas, and many other cities. *Peyk* is also available and read via the Internet on PCC's website (www.pccus.org/peyk or www.pccsd.org/peyk).

In the last year, PCC has worked with SDG&E's "Energy Solutions Partners" campaign. As an "Energy Solutions Partner," PCC has joined other nonprofits and environmental groups in a collaborative effort to make all of California's consumers aware of how they can save energy and money through energy efficiency. PCC was chosen as a partner because of its ability to target a specific demographic and translate important emergency news alerts into Persian as necessary.

Membership: During the 2014-2015 year, PCC continued placing advertisements on its website, with the goal of increasing membership. PCC issued a membership card to its members, and also managed to continue getting discounts from various Iranian businesses for its members.

Public Outreach: In the past year, a number of PCC events were featured on KPBS radio in San Diego, KIRN in Los Angeles, Chekhabar.com, and on the San Diego Arts and Sol website. These programs not only reached the Iranian-American community, but other communities who attended featured programs. PCC also used various social media outlets to make sure that its events were well-publicized to a larger audience.

Website: Thousands of people all over the world view the PCC's website (www.pccsd.org or www.pccus.org) and Facebook page, and receive mass emails sent out by PCC. The website has been upgraded and, as a consequence, PCC's reach and exposure have increased in the last year. The PCC website provides quick access to *Peyk* (the bi-monthly, bi-lingual magazine), ongoing programs and activities, as well as other cultural information and events. Please refer to the website to read about PCC's many activities and to renew your membership and make your tax deductible contributions online.

F- PCC Foundation-A Charitable Organization:

This year, the foundation has raised funds for several refugee families who were in financial crisis. The foundation also raised funds for two young students who lost their parents and needed help, which is a long term project. In addition, PCC raised money to help a 3-year-old refugee girl who was diagnosed with cancer.

G- Honors and Recognitions:

We are very proud to be the recipient of citations and recognitions for our 26th Anniversary from the California State Senate and San

Diego County Supervisor Dave Roberts-3rd District.

H- Special Thank You:

In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the following board members who are leaving us. We are grateful for the time, energy, and talents they generously gave to PCC and our community. We look forward to having them back on the PCC Board again.

The members who are leaving are: Hamid Rafizadeh, Golsa Soraya, Lisa Hildreth, and Farideh Rasouli-Fazel. **Board members Golsa Sorya, Farideh Fazel, and Lisa Hildreth are up for re-election. Hamid Rafizadeh is termed out and cannot be re-elected.**

We are continually looking for Volunteers and Sub-Committee members- Please step forward and GET INVOLVED with various groups to HELP OUT.

The following members were announced as voting members of the Board of Directors:

- Sara Alagheband
- Mahmoud Reza Pirouzian
- Farideh Rassoli- Fazel

The following members were announced as alternate members of the Board of Directors:

- Golsa Soraya
- Lisa Hildreth

Report of Persian Cultural Center's 2015 Annual General Meeting and Election

PCC's annual meeting took place on May 17, 2015 at Mt. Carmel High School in San Diego. The annual report was presented followed by the election process for the new board of Director Members. The past year activities were presented by Hamid Rafizadeh, PCC's chair, the *Peyk* report by Ali Sadr, the Iranian school of San Diego (ISSD) report by Ms. Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi.

After the board of directors report, candidates introduced themselves and presented their plans for joining the BOD.

Election Results:

The following were elected as voting members of the board of directors:

- Mahmood Pirouzian
- Sara Alagheband
- Farideh Rasouli-Fazel

The following members were announced as alternate members of the board of directors:

- Golsa Soraya
- Lisa Hildreth

Other Board members: Abdy Salimi, Afshin Nahavandi, Mahmood Pirouzian, Sara Alagheband, Giti Nematollahi.

The first meeting of the board of directors was held on June, 3rd 2015. In that meeting, the following members were elected to serve as the Executive Committee of PCC for one year:

- President: Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi
- Vice President: Anahita Babaei-Kalantar
- Treasurer: Bahar Bagherpour
- Secretary: Farideh Rasouli-Fazel

Advisory Board: Shahri Estakhri, Saeed Jalali, Shahla Salah, Rosita Bagheri, Shaghayegh Hanson

Other members of the BOD will be leading various committees such as Art and Culture, Education, Charity, Building, Nowruz, Grant, PR, and membership.

Committees-Assignments of Committee Heads

Education Committee, ISSD: Ali Sadr

Art & Culture Committee: Abdy Salimi

Peyk Committee: Ali Sadr

Grant Committee: Bahar Bagherpour

Fundraising Committee: Farideh Rasouli-Fazel

Charity Committee: Giti Nematollahi

IAC/ Building Committee: Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi

Nowruz Committee: Bahar Bagherpour

If you wish to participate in any of the Committees, please contact PCC and ask for the head of the Committee.

May and June Events:

• **Film** committee presented “Ajans e Shishei and Ruban e Ghermez,” two movies by **Ebrahim Hatamikia**, for May and June sessions, respectively. The shows were followed by review and discussion. Movies are shown on the first Sunday of the month at the Center.

• **Jong e Farhangi** (cultural variety show) takes place on the second Friday of the month at the Center. On May 8, 2015, the show was hosted by Ali Sadr. He interviewed **Mehnoosh Mazarei**, a local writer who has published several collections of short stories and her first novel is coming out shortly. She read one of her short stories. In the second half of the show, Ali Sadr interviewed with musician, **Reza Bayat**, about some of whose works have been exhibited at the Center. He spoke about his style and answered questions by the audience. The next part of the show was an interview with **Reza Bayat**, musician about various styles of playing Santoor. In the last part, Mr. Bayat played several compositions of his. He was accompanied by **Milad Jahadi**.

On June 12, The “Jong” hosted the prominent novelist **Shahriar Mandanipour**. The show was led by Saeid Noori Boushehri and Noushin Khorsandian. The first part consisted of an interview regarding contemporary writing styles, effects of censorship and printing obstacles in Iran. In the second part, the author read parts of his latest novel. Before the start of each half of the show Ali Khorsandian recited poems by Akhavan and Shamlu. The program concluded by a short interview with **Nilufar Shiri** the beautiful pieces of music she played on kamancheh. Milad Jahadi accompanied Ms. Shiri.

• **Tasnif-khani**, singing workshop. On June 19, **Kourosh Taghavi** led the sixth session of Tasnif-khani workshop at the Center with approximately 30 participants.

• **Creative writing workshop** with **Shahriar Mandanipour** met at the Center on Saturday June 13, 2015.

• **Art Therapy**, with **Saeideh Rahimi**, on the second Saturday of the month.

• **Daf Workshop**, with Ali Sadr and Milad Jahadi, every Tuesday at 6:30 at the Center.



• Memorial for **Maestro Mohammad Reza Lotfi** at the Q Auditorium of Qualcomm, on Friday, June 5, 2015. On the first anniversary of Maestro Lotfi’s passing, PCC hosted a gathering at the Q Auditorium with over 250 music lovers in attendance. The first part of the program consisted of several beautiful compositions by Mr. Lotfi, performed by Kourosh Taghavi, Fariborz Azizi, Saeid Kamjoo, Pejman Haddadi, and Naser Sheikhzadegan. Then a video produced by BBC about Mr. Lotfi called Four Seasons was shown and at the end **Maestro Hossein Alizadeh** spoke about Mr. Lotfi, his art, and his great contributions to Persian classical music.



Bridging the Gap: A Convergence of Generations and Organizations

By: Shaghayegh Hanson

Something momentous happened in San Diego on June 11, 2015. It did not make the nightly news or the morning's paper headlines. It was only attended by a small group. But the import of the event is one of those markers in history that sets off an unstoppable path, that uncorks the genie from the bottle, and that has elicited an idea whose time has come. Am I exaggerating? I hope not. Let me explain by first setting the scene.

One of the very first articles I ever wrote for *Peyk*, roughly 7 years ago, addressed a vexing problem: how do we get the younger generations of Iranian-Americans invested and involved in cultural and community-based organizations? There seemed to be a divide in focus between the older and younger generations; the former was all about maintaining an ancient cultural heritage through the arts and education, while the latter, either consciously or subconsciously, was focused on establishing an independent identity more in line with their American upbringing.

This dissonance was expertly described by Maboud Ansari in his book, "The Iranian Americans" (reviewed in *Peyk* No. 151). Based on his empirical study, Dr. Ansari concluded that, for the second-generation, "'being Iranian-American' is not a fixed state of being and not just something given to them by their parents." These younger people have a "fluid" concept of "Iranianess" that is not tied to a fixed location or a rigid set of social standards. Dr. Ansari describes this as "a form of consciousness, a widely variable set of loyalties and personal identities."

As someone who straddled both groups (having been born in Iran and raised in the West), I saw the value of both of the groups' focuses. However, I worried that unless the younger generation took responsibility as torch bearers for the culturally-based organizations, those organizations would eventually collapse, destroying a tangible link to our heritage and wasting the hard work of those whose blood, sweat, and tears had brought them to fruition. For example, I asked, who will run the Iranian School of San Diego when the current pioneers retire? The school has been teaching extra-curricular Persian language, history, and customs to younger generations, from Kindergarten through to adult classes, since 1989.

There was another issue in the equation; how could the existing Iranian-American organizations in town give more support to each other in ways that not only benefit the entire community, but also maintain the viability of each individual organization? The thought was that if we all put our heads and resources together, we could accomplish certain major goals, such as bringing the younger people into leadership positions.

Well, it has been a wonderfully productive seven years since I wrote that article. The community come together to raise money for the modest Iranian American Center, purchased in 2014, and that any organization can call home for a variety of performances, exhibits, lectures, workshops, film screenings, and social events.



With every passing month, the Center hosts a growing number of activities and events; it has brought people together in so many ways.

And on the evening of June 11, the Center embraced a warm and unprecedented gathering of board members from many of our culturally-based organizations: the Persian Cultural Center (PCC, which also runs *Peyk* and the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD)), Association of Iranian-American Professionals (AIAP), Dollar-a-Month Fund (DMF), Iranian-American Scholarship Fund (IASF), Mehregan Foundation, House of Iran (HOI), Iranian-American Life Science Network (IALSN), and Iranian-American Bar Association (IABA). The attendees spanned several generations. The groups' missions were diverse yet complementary. The younger generation brought new ideas and a commitment to becoming more involved in the community, and the older generation listened with open minds as to how the organizations might reach out—in a less rigid, more "fluid" way—to those would-be torch bearers. Old friends made new friends and new friends found mentors. It was an inspiring start to an ongoing, hands-on partnership to support and promote all of our organizations, for now and in the future.

Why so momentous? Because this partnership is an essential link to moving forward without forsaking the past, and to truly transitioning from being "immigrants" to being a part of the rich American tapestry of settled ethnic groups. It is called evolution and on June 11, 2015, we found our missing link.



Crafting a Cultural Idiom of Engagement: The President's Persian Poetry

The events culminating in the interim agreement between Iran and the members of the P5+1 group in Lausanne, Switzerland, over Iran's nuclear program are sure to attract historians wishing to understand how two countries with minimal diplomatic ties (severed more than three decades ago) were able to reach a political agreement and perhaps begin a chapter of more normalized relations. In particular, analyses are likely to focus on the role of sanctions, meant to isolate the Iranian economy internationally and demonstrate the high cost of nuclear intransigence, in reaching a deal. Largely unnoticed has been the Obama administration's diligent crafting of a cultural idiom to engage Iran through a multitude of methods, such as the reciting of Persian poetry.

It's true that the use of sanctions should be regarded as the administration's primary political tool in achieving a nuclear deal. While the international campaign to isolate Iran was inherited from previous administrations, the decision to continue enforcing sanctions as a tool to reach a nuclear agreement was decidedly the administration's own: even as negotiations progressed, sanctions continued uninterrupted, new ones were introduced, and other countries and non-U.S. banks were encouraged to abide by them. But while the president inherited a sanctions architecture that could be more explicitly redirected toward the pursuit of a nuclear agreement, the situation was decidedly more complex when it came to political rhetoric. Years of mutual enmity and distrust defined the rhetoric of American-Iranian exchange. If sanctions could merely be ratcheted up and more deliberately repackaged as a deterrent to Iran's nuclear program, then the cultural and political discourse accompanying such an aim and meant to demonstrate this administration's differences from its predecessors would need to be repackaged, too. The problems it inherited didn't afford the Obama administration the luxury of business as usual; the political rhetoric directed toward Iran would need to be significantly decoupled from that of previous administrations.

Upon taking office in 2009, President Barack Obama inherited a cavalcade of confrontational political messaging that sought to define Iran as one of the preeminent threats facing the United States and its allies. President George W. Bush's designation of Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil," still very much an integral part of Washington's lexicon when Mr. Obama took office, was only the latest in a years-long run of such sloganeering. The crafting of a new cultural idiom would prove to be a key element of Mr. Obama's own vision of diplomacy. Required was the desire to remain committed to the implementation of sanctions and pursuit of negotiations, while at the same time articulating a linguistic register that could afford a greater display of recognition of Iran as a cultural entity. This evolution to engaging Iran through a refined cultural idiom designed to operate

in conjunction with political policy is best seen in the president's recitation of Persian poetry in annual messages addressed to the government and the people of Iran.

Every year since taking office, President Obama has taken the occasion of Nowruz, the Persian New Year marking the first day of spring, to offer his well wishes to everyone celebrating the holiday around the world and speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While economic sanctions and their impact will continue to be subjects of analysis, President Obama's overtures of cultural diplomacy through Persian verse warrant careful consideration for challenging a discourse that has heretofore solely engaged Iran as a political territory.

The inclusion of Persian poetry in the president's messages recognizes Iran as a cultural territory transcending its political borders. It situates Iran in a decentered and broader scene, with its own distinct historical legacy cultivated by many ethnic, linguistic, and religious participants. Using poetry as a robust form of intercultural dialogue, the president finds himself in a long genealogy of Persianate diplomats, litterateurs, and state secretaries who have mediated the most pressing political conflicts of their time through the Persian literary idiom. Such an approach recognizes the cultural affiliations and affinities of not only Iranians, but the region at large. If we have learned anything in the post-9/11 world, it is that the rhetoric of warmongering forbids ambiguity and discards nuance. Mr. Obama's cultural rhetoric is a first step in a long process of recovering a lexicon that can register difference beyond the political designations of "us" versus "them."

In his messages to Iran, Mr. Obama draws on the opportunity of Nowruz to speak of the "promise of a new beginning" (2009), "to reflect on the year gone by" (2010), and to celebrate "the hope that comes with renewal" (2012). The approximately four minute-long messages often refer to disagreements over Iran's nuclear program and the latest developments in U.S.-Iran relations, but also focus on the plight of the Iranian people.

For example, in 2010 and 2011, following the protests over the contested 2009 presidential elections in Iran and in the midst of the Arab Spring, Mr. Obama spoke of "a campaign of intimidation and abuse" against the Iranian population by their government. In 2012, the mention of Iran's nuclear program was altogether absent; instead, the primary focus was on the Iranian government's monitoring of its population's communications, the Iranian people's inability to access information freely, and the "electronic curtain" considered by the West to have fallen over the country.

Even as the details of the messages change, a consistent curiosity remains: the inclusion of a line of poetry from a famous Persian poet, past or present. The president's quoting of such poets helps frame the content and mood of his messages and reflects the development of his attitudes toward Iran during his years in office.

In his first message in 2009, Mr. Obama quoted a line from the poet Sa'di (d. 1291-2): "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence." The line is one of the most famous in all of Persian poetry. It's familiar to children across the Persianate world who at an early age read Sa'di's *Rose Garden* as a primer in the Persian language and as an introduction to the humanism and wisdom embedded in his stories. It was an appropriate choice for a newly-elected president seeking to shift the tenor of U.S.-Iran relations by appealing to the most general commonality: the fact that we are all humans. It was certainly a safe choice, even if it wasn't the first time a U.S. president had uttered the words of the thirteenth century poet: President Jimmy Carter quoted the same lines to the Shah at a New Year's Eve celebration in Tehran in December 1977, when Iran was on the brink of revolution. That the choice to quote the humanistic aphorism by Sa'di in the presence of his friend the Shah was an admonishment over Iran's human rights record, as some have claimed, rather than an exhibition of hypocrisy and deafness to the complicity of American support

of the Shah's regime, as likely seen by many Iranians at the time, remains a possibility. But if Mr. Carter's words were a noble attempt at solemnity during a time of celebration, then they were certainly subsumed by the opulent and exclusive nature of the fete, closed to ordinary Iranians and indicative of indulgences for which the Shah was known. Mr. Obama's quoting of Sa'di's famous *bayt* surely did not account for the manner in which it had been evoked previously in the context of U.S.-Iran relations, yet it nonetheless captured the message's uncertainty of whether hope would be required after years of mutual enmity.

In 2011, in a message that focused primarily on the persecution, arrests, and struggles of the Iranian people, Mr. Obama drew from the poetry of Simin Behbahani, who died in 2014: "Old I may be, but given the chance, I will learn. I will begin a second youth alongside my progeny. I will recite the Hadith of love of country with such fervor as to make each word bear life."

Selected from "My Country, I will Build You Again," these lines surely would have resonated strongly with certain segments of the Iranian population. Like Sa'di's lines, the poem comes with its own historical baggage. It was composed in 1982 at the height of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), during which the U.S. overlooked, if not supported, Saddam Hussein's aggressions against Iranians, particularly his use of chemical weapons. The poem, as with all enduring works of literature, has transcended its original context and captures the universal love of homeland. The latter is the context Mr. Obama's reading hoped to evoke. A year before the president quoted her, Behbahani, in her eighties, was not allowed by the authorities to leave the country to attend an International Women's Day event in Paris. Having lived in Iran as an educator and poet for more than five decades, Behbahani was a major figure of the Iranian literary landscape whose work enjoyed readership not only in Iran, but also in the wider Persianate world. Her lines reflected the core of the president's message of hope that year and, most importantly, his reminder to Iran's youth that their struggle would not be in vain. As Mr. Obama noted elsewhere in his message, "the future of Iran belongs to young people—the youth who will determine their own destiny." Behbahani's lines captured the contradictions harbored in the defiance of an octogenarian poet and a U.S. president, equally upset with the present and with little power to create change without the participation of young people.

In his 2015 message, as he had done previously in 2013, the president quoted from the poetry of Hafez. Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafez of Shiraz, who died near the end of the fourteenth century, may not be as well known in the West today as his predecessor Jalal al-Din "Rumi"—one of the best-selling poets in the U.S. today—but his poetry is incorporated into the daily rhythms and traditions of the Persianate world in a myriad of ways. People seek out answers to life's questions in his poetry (known as *augury* or "Hafez's fortune") and often place his collection of poems on the *haft-sin* table at Nowruz. In a message that was framed by the president's noting of a "historic opportunity...to pursue a different future for our countries," the choice to quote Hafez, where the constant themes of fate, desire, and mortality often co-mingle, seemed only fitting.

"It is early spring," Mr. Obama quotes the fourteenth-century poet, "try to be joyful in your heart for many a flower will bloom while you will be in clay." If Sa'di's words captured for the president an uncertain hope and Behbahani's words an uncertain defiance, then Hafez's words reflect something seemingly more certain. You will all be in clay. Time passes, life goes on, and flowers bloom—as much for a president in the twilight years of his second term as for those hardliners in Iran and in the U.S. Senate who oppose a nuclear deal. We will all be turned to clay—all of us. But did the president mean to imply that flowers will always bloom around us regardless of what we do? If so, is that an argument to accept a final nuclear deal with Iran or *not*? Doesn't the president desperately want a deal with Iran before his presidency becomes clay?



Hafez's poetry is known for being infuriatingly ambiguous and open to many interpretations. The choice to deploy those lines by Hafez at a time when even an interim deal had not yet been reached was befitting of a political context of uncertainty. It also demonstrates the Obama administration's most ambitious and sophisticated attempt yet to rely on the cultural currency of poetry, as exhibited in one of the language's most complex poets no less, to express the administration's current impressions of the prospect for political reconciliation. If quoting Sa'di was meant to articulate a notion of desired human interaction, an opening salvo directed at resetting U.S.-Iran relations, then quoting Hafez was more of a meditation on the ephemerality of the human condition looking well beyond the current state of political exigency. It was the difference, say, between recounting the conditions that allow a tulip to bloom versus speculating how a tulip in bloom would feel about its future wilted life.

The quotation of Persian poetry has not been the sole domain of the U.S. president. Other actors in the U.S. government have quoted Persian poetry and participated in this project of crafting a cultural idiom to redefine the contours of American-Iranian interaction. In October 2014, in offering her assessment of the current state of negotiations and the work ahead, U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman turned to the words of Sa'di to "have patience; all things are difficult before they become easy." The State Department's Persian-language spokesman, Alan Eyre, has endeared himself to members of the Iranian media and ordinary Iranians through his frequent quoting of Persian literary lore, which he sends out via Twitter and sprinkles throughout his Facebook page. Together with the president's quoting of poetry, these actions form part of the multifaceted process of cultural diplomacy of which one result has been the interim agreement in Lausanne. This use of the cultural idiom of poetry has not been limited to Iran. Speaking on December 17, 2014, upon the normalization of relations between Washington and Havana, the president addressed the people of Cuba directly and quoted a poem by nineteenth century Cuban poet José Martí. Recently, Esther Allen has admirably traced the genealogy of Mr. Obama's use of the poem in translation for *Words without Borders*.

Whether the continued formation and consistent use of a cultural idiom to engage Iran politically will be inherited by future administrations depends as much upon the success of any nuclear deal as it does upon the will of future administrations to recognize Iran as a complex and culturally diverse land. If a final nuclear deal is struck, the cultural diplomacy as inaugurated by the Obama administration, of which the quotation of Persian poetry is but one feature, should rightly be examined alongside the use of sanctions as a cause for such success. If a final deal is not reached, then one can only hope that the crafting of a cultural idiom to engage Iran remains in place, rather than being relegated to the status of curious footnote in the Obama administration's endeavors to navigate an otherwise politically perilous time.

The original Persian of the cited poems:

سعدی: بنی آدم اعضای یک پیکرند / که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند
 بهبهانی: ... اگر چه پیرم ولی هنوز / مجال تعلیم اگر بود / جوانی آغاز می کنم / کنار نوباوگان
 خویشب / حدیث حب الوطن ز شوق / بدان روش سازی کنم / که جان شود هر کلام دل ...
 حافظ: درخت دوستی بنشان که کام دل به بار آرد / نهال دشمنی برکن که رنج بی شمار آرد

Second Biennial Persian Language Educators' Symposium

May 23-24, 2015 Berkeley, California

"Those of us in attendance could almost feel the historic nature of this convening of educators. I haven't felt this kind of energy since our first Camp Ayandeh in 2006. Iranian and Iranian-American educators came together and discussed how we can positively shape the future of our community beginning in the Persian school. This will prove to have a huge impact on our community's future." ~Mana Kharrazi, IAAB's Executive Director

Advancing Heritage Language Education

Persian language educators gather to discuss new solutions, collaborations, and explore ways to develop Persian language education during a historic convening of the Persian Language Educators' Symposium.

By Marriam Zarabi, IAAB Staff

Celebrating years of knowledge and insight about education, identity formation, and youth leadership development, the Iranian Alliances Across Borders' 2015 Persian Language Educators' Symposium gathered over 50 Persian language educators from New York, Virginia, Illinois, northern and southern California, and Canada at the Golestan Center for Language Immersion and Cultural Education in Berkeley, California. To date, over 40 registered Persian language schools exist in the United States. These schools range from organization-based, community-based, summer programs, and higher education. As a community, Persian language schools are committed to providing a comprehensive and in-depth curriculum that affirms educational experiences for Iranian-American youth by providing students with access to the tools of speaking, reading, and writing in their heritage language. Persian language schools fulfill an essential role in our community toward achieving this goal while also providing Iranian-American youth with the opportunity to embrace their cultural heritage in a safe and inviting space.

The IAAB, in close collaboration with directors of Persian language schools throughout the United States, organized its second Persian Language Educators' Symposium to address the growing needs of the community and expand heritage learning across multiple platforms. As our community continues to grow and thrive, we must practice a culture of open collaboration to best meet the needs of new generations of Iranian-American youth. Realizing the importance of heritage education, our combined efforts yielded a successful weekend of unpacking teaching methodologies, best practices, and engaging a dynamic community.

The symposium included workshops, presentations, and breakout discussions on topics including family engagement outside of the classroom, teacher training and classroom management, challenges and best practices in teaching methodologies, landing grants, and administrative challenges. Steering Committee members advised a fluid list of program objectives, further developed and amended during the symposium based on interest and need, as expressed by the educators in attendance. The bicoastal committee members included:

Sanam Akhlagh, Founder and Director of Pardis for Children (New York City)

Negar Mansourian-Hadavi, Director of Chicago Persian School (Chicago)

Yalda Modabber, Executive Director of Golestan Kids (Berkeley)

Ali Sadr, Principal of Iranian School of San Diego (San Diego)

Discussing the role of the Persian School in the community, Mr. Sadr, Principal of the Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD), spoke of the school's thriving community-based education model. Established in 1988, ISSD is affiliated with the San Diego Persian Cultural Center and is one of the oldest schools to successfully build a community center based on its present-day school model. ISSD's outstanding retention rate has yielded an impressive number of graduates and has elevated its program to now hold 44 teaching assistants. Students of ISSD receive language credit on behalf of San Diego Unified School District, the second largest school district in California. Mr. Sadr provided case studies and examples to better develop collaborative efforts across multiple educational institutions and cultural centers. He addressed ways to expand efforts beyond the classroom, positioning what is learned inside the classroom in a broader context, and the positive ways such efforts will expand student knowledge of heritage language and the cultural context.

"The Role of Language in Identity Formation," a panel led by Dr. Jaleh Pirnazar (UC Berkeley), Mr. Aria Fani (UC Berkeley), and Dr. Amy Malek (UCLA), introduced the role of identity formation in an academic setting and the importance of positive peer influence at a young age. Dr. Malek recognized peer groups as a safe space of identity exploration and understanding, asking: "how can we use Persian language schools as a space of positivity so [students] feel like they have a peer group...so that college isn't the first time they feel that being Iranian isn't a bad thing?" Mr. Fani introduced the importance of meeting the needs of multigenerational and "new wave" Iranian-American students. Also recognizing the importance of teaching in a context specific to the generations of Iranians in the classroom, Dr. Pirnazar encouraged educators to incorporate elements that are culturally specific to students and relevant to the twenty-first century while building a positive identity.

To continue these conversations throughout the academic school year and summer months, IAAB created an online portal to serve as a resource center and virtual space for sharing resources, information, materials, lesson plans, and building an online network of peer support. The Persian Language Portal is a two-pronged approach to addressing some of the key needs identified at the symposium, including the importance of having a shared, accessible space for both discussion and staying in contact with schools across the country and internationally. The multi-functional portal allows for uploading articles and educational resources in real time, and a space for user-generated comments and questions. The Persian Language Portal supports educators and educational institutions at all phases of development. Educators and their staff can now coordinate yearly events, such as Nowruz, on a bicoastal or multi-state level, collaborate on various school events during the academic and non-academic school year, and support the many emerging schools in attendance. The Persian Language Portal is one of many first steps toward prioritizing the need for building a stronger community of Persian language schools toward building a unified and engaged community and advancing the role of heritage language learning across institutions.

The Persian Language Portal will help educators meet goals of building more spaces for our youth in Persian schools, collaboration with more heritage language programs, supporting emerging schools, and incorporating Persian language learning in the American classroom. Studies have shown bilingual students "are simultaneously insiders and outsiders" as they are able to see from their own culture in addition to comparing and contrasting other cultures and cultural concepts (Multicultural Living). This also develops a deeper understanding and appreciation for other cultures, languages, and countries, perhaps lessening xenophobia, racism, and intolerance. Bilingual students also develop advanced problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and stronger verbal and spatial skills.

The network of Persian language educators is ever-growing and ever-present in communities across the country. Engaging multi-generational Iranian-American youth, Persian language educators continue building a stronger network with diverse programming and dynamic curriculum. The ability to organize nationally toward advancing heritage education, including creating regular forums for continued communication, authoring publications, and participating in a spectrum of heritage language spaces (including in the American classroom), will continue bringing together Persian language educators across all spectrums, including geographical, pedagogical, and religious affiliations.

Sources

"Heritage FAQs." www.cal.org/heritage/research/. Heritage Languages in America, 2015. Web

Paradowski, Dr. Michal B. "The Benefits of Multilingualism." www.multilingualliving.com. Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw, 2010. Web.

About Iranian Alliances Across Borders

Iranian Alliances Across Borders (IAAB) is the largest grassroots organization dedicated to community building and youth empowerment. Established in 2003 by two former students from Wellesley College and Tufts University, IAAB is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization, based in New York. IAAB empowers youth of the Iranian diaspora community through educational programming and leadership building to enhance connections between new communities, root communities, and communities across borders. This year, IAAB is celebrating the 10th anniversary of Camp Ayandeh, the first and only national high school leadership camp to include over 1,000 participants from 30 states, six countries, and three continents. For more information, visit iranianalliances.org.

Events in San Diego

Persian Cultural Center

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

Mohre Sorkhah, Saturday, August 15, 2015, 8:00pm
Mandell Weiss Forum at UCSD
with Sahahrokh Moshkingalam

Maz Jobrani

September 17-19
www.americancomedyco.com
619-795-3858
B 6th Ave, SD, CA

Art Exhibition Open to Public

From 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (Monday to Friday)
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121
Info: 858-552-9355

Movie Nights

Screening & Discussion
Every First Sunday of the month at 5:30 pm
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121
Info: 858-552-9355

Jong-e Farhangi

Every Second Friday of the month at 7:30 pm
Iranian-American Center • 6790 Top Gun St. #7, San Diego, CA 92121
Info: 858-552-9355

Setar Class by Kouros Taghavi

Registration and info: (858) 717-6389

Tombak Class by Milad Jahadi

Registration and Info: (858) 735-9634

Daf Workshop with Ali Sadr,

Mondays 6 to 7:30 PM at The new Iranian-American Center (IAC)

Santour Class by Arash Dana

Registration and Info: (619) 278-1851

Piano Class by Farid Afshari

Registration and Info: (858) 349-1913

Iranian School of San Diego

858-552-9355

ISSD Registration 2015-2016

Branch I

Sunday September 13, 2015 at 9:30am-12pm
Mt. Carmel High School

Branch II

Thursday, September 10, 2015 at 6-8pm
Mt. Carmel High School
Mount Carmel High School
9550 Carmel Mountain Road • San Diego, CA 92129

Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

(858) 552-9355 www.pccus.org

Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: 858-552-9355 • www.dmfund.org
www.facebook.com/DollaraMonthFund

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)

www.istaucsd.org

House of Iran

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

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 552-9355 • www.iasfund.org
www.facebook.com/IranianAmericanScholarshipFund

Mehrgan Foundation

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

PAAIA

Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans
www.paaia.org

NIAC

National Iranian-American Council
www.niac.org

Book Club Meeting

Last Sat. of each month
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



for latest Events in San Diego visit:

www.chekhabar.com

Del Mar Racing Season

Del Mar, CA 92014
<http://www.dmtc.com>
Date: July 16 - September 7, 2015

Festival of the Bells

San Diego, CA 92108
<http://www.missionsandiego.org/>
Date: July 18 - 19, 2015

Annual LGBT Pride Parade

Hillcrest, CA 92103
<http://www.sdpride.org/parade.htm>
Date: July 18 - July 18, 2015

Film in the Garden: Annie Hall (1977, PG)

San Diego, CA 92101
<http://www.sdmart.org/calendar/film-garden>
Date: July 27 - July 27, 2015

The Art of Music - Opus Orange

San Diego, CA 92101
<http://www.sdmart.org/calendar/art-music>
Date: August 20 - August 20, 2015

ArtWalk NTC @ Liberty Station

San Diego, CA 92106
<http://www.artwalksandiego.org/ntc>
Date: August 15 - 16, 2015



NEW
Visit Persian Art Gallery
at the San Diego Museum of Art

Our web site at
www.pccus.org



SAFETY FOR CHILDREN IN A TECH WORLD

By: Lisa Hildreth, LMFT

I recently attended an educational seminar hosted at my daughter's school by *Cyber Education Consulting*. It was very eye-opening. Especially for a parent with a child growing up in a world where nearly all children have a cell phone by the time they head into middle school (not to mention the kids in first and second grade who carry iPhones). Technology in my childhood was the excitement of our first television with a remote control or a cordless phone in the home. Now days, children have the world at their fingertips at a very young age through computers, phones, tablets/iPads, and online gaming. So what age is appropriate to get your child a phone? That was the burning question. The answer, in short: When would you give them the car keys? There is just as much freedom. In reality, the age at which they are ready for a phone is when *you* are ready and able to talk with them about anything they see without blaming the tech. This includes everything. Sex. Drugs. Whatever they stumble across.

Once you've determined that you are ready to give your child a phone/tech device, there should be a contract in place between the child and parent. This is for the safety of the child, to keep the child accountable and to assist with potential legal issues that could arise. Tips and guidelines for the contract include the following:

- I am required to contribute to the cost of my device(s).
- It is my responsibility to be sure the device(s) are being recharged each night.
- My device(s) must be turned off at ___pm each school night and ___pm in the summer and weekends
- I agree that if I am unable to keep up with my responsibilities, the use of my devices can be taken away from me.
- I will not use my devices to take pictures of nudity, violence or other inappropriate content.
- I will not take a picture or video of anyone without that person's permission.
- I will not use my devices for malicious purposes (Cyber harassment/bullying, crank calling, etc.)
- Do not ever ignore a phone call if the screen reads "Mom/Dad or Gurardian."
- Your devices do not go to school with you. *Half days, field trips and after school activities will require special consideration.
- If your phone is lost, stolen or damaged, you are responsible for the replacement cost.
- Child must go over any new apps/social network accounts/video games with parent prior to use.
- Do not use this technology to cheat (gain an advantage over another person).

- Do not involve yourself in digital drama. Anything you do through technology leaves a trail.
- I will limit the number of people I give my phone number and screen names.
- Mom and Dad (or guardian) will meet all of your followers/digital friends in the real world. No exceptions.
- I will limit the amount of time I am on the devices.
- I will maintain grades/chores/behavior as follows:
- I will not share any personal info while online. This includes, but is not limited to: family member's birthdays, vacation plans, photos, or video without prior approval.
- Mom and Dad (or guardian) will have access to all phone passwords. (Voicemail, social networking, video games...)
- Parents or guardian have the right to go through any devices/accounts with probable cause. Assume everything you do online is being monitored and act accordingly. Let your friends know you are being monitored.

The key is to knowing and guiding your child to keep them safe. Know what they are using their tech devices for. Find out how it works and what it has access to. Who else can see it? What are the privacy settings? When safety settings and a contract are in place, you and your child can benefit from the great things technology can provide!

Lisa Hildreth possess a Master of Science degree in Counseling and is a licensed therapist for children and families both in private practice and school settings.



Public Announcement

Splish and Splash Your Way to Cool Energy Savings

Make a Splash with New Pool Equipment Rebates

As a pool owner, you enjoy a clean pool, but did you know that the energy needed to run a filtration pump and pool cleaner can be a significant part of your monthly energy bill?

By replacing your single-speed or two speed pump and hydraulic cleaner with more efficient models, you can maintain a sparkling swimming pool while lowering your costs.

Splash offers rebates for installing qualifying energy efficient **variable-speed pool pumps**, as well as a new rebate for **robotic pool cleaners**.

Care for your Cool

In San Diego, we use our air conditioner in the summer and heater in the winter. The AC Quality Care Program provides residents with specially trained and skilled contractors to perform year-round Quality Maintenance of your heating and cooling system to help ensure a reliable and energy-efficient operation.

With a \$250 initial rebate, SDG&E customers are eligible to **receive a System Assessment & Improvement for \$50**, a service designed to increase indoor comfort, air quality and energy efficiency. How cool is that!?

Note from Marika Sardar, Associate Curator for Southern Asian and Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art

The latest news from the museum is that the Persian Art gallery will undergo a transformation at the end of June, as we bring out many new works of art spanning the great artistic traditions of Iran in lacquerware, calligraphy, tilework, and painting.

Part of the display will be dedicated to luster-glazed ceramics. We may admire the designs and brilliant glaze on these objects, but it is easy to overlook the amount of work that went into creating them. We are fortunate, however, to have a treatise from the early 1300s that describes the laborious process, written by Abu'l Qasim, a member of the famous Abu Tahir family of potters from Kashan. He tells about the many steps—and the amount of time and materials—that were required to make these lustrous vessels. First, the object would be shaped from a type of clay known as stonepaste and covered with an opacified white glaze. With this initial glaze, the object would be fired in a kiln for twelve hours, then left to cool in the kiln for six and a half days. Next, the object was painted with a special metallic overglaze made of a mixture of red and yellow arsenic, gold and silver marcasite, yellow vitriol, copper, and silver ground with sulphur dissolved in grape juice or vinegar. Once the design was complete, the object was fired for an additional three days in a special kiln where the reduction of oxygen caused the metallic oxides to fuse with the alkaline glaze, turning the painted surface a golden brown.

As you will see in the gallery, all kinds of objects—including pots, bowls, jugs, and architectural tiles—were decorated with this luster glaze, and many were covered with paintings that looks just like the miniature paintings of the day, accompanied with poetry



Illustration:

Bowl with figures and serpents
Iran, Kashan, early 13th century
Stonepaste, with overglaze luster decoration
The San Diego Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Irving T. Snyder, 1964.73



Wall tile with a seated figure
Iran, Kashan, dated July 1204 (Dhu'l Qada 600)
Stonepaste, with overglaze luster decoration
The San Diego Museum of Art, Gift of the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection, 2006.229



What's on now: The summer will bring the exhibition *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861-2008* (July 11, 2015 through October 13, 2015). *Coney Island* explores the lure of this legendary playground through the lens of art created by great American artists such as William Merritt Chase, Reginald Marsh, Walker Evans and Red Grooms.

If you haven't seen them already, two hit exhibitions will continue through the summer. These are *Divine Desire: Printmaking, Mythology, and the Birth of the Baroque* (through June 30, 2015), featuring prints of mythological subjects by sixteenth and seventeenth century European artists, and *Lalla Essaydi: Photographs* (through August 4, 2015), featuring recent work by the Moroccan artist who stages large-scale photographs of women covered in Arabic calligraphy, with compositions based on European Orientalist paintings.

Coming soon: In the fall, we are planning an event with the Persian Cultural Center to celebrate Mehregan, which will help support the purchase of new works of art for the Persian gallery. The museum is also gearing up for the major exhibition *The Art of Music*, which will open on September 26, 2015. It will bring together works of art relating to music from many different cultures and periods of time.

Feel free to contact me with any questions you have about the museum: msardar@sdmart.org.

Summer Savings Tips



- **Set your air conditioner to 78 degrees** or higher. Changing the A/C thermostat from 72 to 78 degrees can save up to 12% of your cooling costs.
- **Switch to fans when you can.** Use a portable or ceiling fan instead of central A/C when you can comfortably do so.
- **Freshen A/C filters regularly.** Make sure the filter in your central A/C is clean so it runs more efficiently.
- **Weatherstrip and caulk** drafty doors and windows to keep conditioned air in and save up to 5% on cooling costs.
- **Power down equipment.** Use power strips or unplug electronics such as DVRs, game consoles and TVs that draw power even when switched off.
- **Make the light choice.** When you replace lights, choose energy-efficient products such as [LEDs](#) and [CFLs](#).
- **Use a pool or spa cover.** Covers can reduce heat loss by up to 90%.
- **Filter your swimming pool for less** when you switch to an energy-efficient, variable-speed pool pump and get one of our [rebates](#).
- **Block direct sunlight.** Close window coverings, or use solar shade screens, reflective films, awnings or trees to shade exposed windows.
- **Target your top opportunities** to save energy and money with the online energy management tools you'll find in [My Account](#).



By Sanaz Majd, MD



Why Your Doctor Won't Prescribe Antibiotics

Have you ever made an appointment to see your doctor, yearning for a prescription for an antibiotic, only to be rejected with that whole "virus" lecture, feeling as though your \$30 copay and 1.5 hour time was wasted? Why are these doctors so stingy with these antibiotics, anyway? I mean, you just simply cannot afford to be sick right now. What's the harm in a little bit of amoxicillin or z-pack?

If you've listened to my earlier podcasts online, you know that there are a lot of misconceptions and problems in the field of primary care. So I can certainly understand his frustration. Let's reveal the truth behind why doctors don't like to prescribe antibiotics.

What Are Antibiotics?

Antibiotics are one of those miraculous cures of the prior century. Before their invention, patients were dying of treatable conditions such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, pertussis and everything in between. But now, they seem to be used for everything under the sun. A little bit of a sore throat for the past two days? What about that ear pain after allergy season begins? Or, that nagging cough that doesn't seem to dissipate after that cold?

Yes, antibiotics surely have their deserving place in the medicine spotlight, saving lives every day. But they only help infections caused by bacteria, not. They don't do a thing for that common cold or flu virus you and your family are plagued with every year (this past year, possibly numerous times).

The Risks of Unnecessary Antibiotics

What is the harm in prescribing them freely?

Antibiotics don't come without risk, both on an individual and a public health level. If you've been listening to the news, you may have heard about a potentially lethal superbug that has recently emerged called "CRE" (Carbapenem-Resistant Enterobacteriaceae). It's resistant to most known antibiotics and difficult to treat. Recently there were several deaths at UCLA associated with this bug, a bacteria that causes death in up to half of those with serious infections. That is astonishing.

How did this superbug arise? Antibiotic overuse, no doubt. Here are some other risks of antibiotics you may not know about, but doctors may see quite often:

1. Resistance: We all maintain a balance of power of various bacteria that have set up shop in our bodies and skin. Don't panic - this is a good thing. We need these bacteria to keep the peace in our bodies. Taking antibiotics unnecessarily will kill off the wimpiest bacteria, allowing the nasty ones to overgrow and take over. These nasty bugs tend to be more resistant to antibiotics, so when you really need that Z-Pak to work, it just won't. What can we use to combat bacteria if the antibiotics we currently have are no longer effective? This is a very frightening reality of our time and a process that we must aggressively prevent.

1. MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus): MRSA is another bacteria that has become resistant to many antibiotics and that has spread widely through the community. It was originally only contracted by hospitalized patients, but nowadays, you've likely shaken hands with numerous people who are carriers of this highly-resistant bacteria that can wreak havoc on the skin by causing pustules and abscesses that need to be drained and debrided surgically. What's worse - they're virtually impossible to eradicate completely. That means, once you become a carrier of MRSA, you will likely carry it for life. How do you catch it? By touching someone who has it. How did it arise? Antibiotic overuse in the community.

2. Clostridium Difficile (C.Diff): This is a bacteria that lives in our colon and overgrows when antibiotics kill off the other good bacteria that keeps it in check. So next time you take that Z-Pak, it may be the one time that C.Diff decides to set up shop in your colon. The result? Severe diarrhea, fevers, weakness, dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, and other frightening symptoms. Because of its potential for causing serious complications, patients with C.Diff sometimes have to be hospitalized. Patients can even die from C.Diff. It's very sad.

3. Allergic reactions: Allergic reactions to antibiotics are common. It's possible to develop an allergy even if you weren't allergic to a certain drug previously. These reactions also have a fatality risk, because although the most common allergic reaction may be an itchy rash, it can occasionally cause anaphylaxis with lip swelling, throat swelling, difficulty breathing, and even "shock." Antibiotics can also cause a severe and life-threatening rash called Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, which often entails a hospital stay.

4. Every time your doctor prescribes antibiotics, he or she must think of these risks and consequences. It's

not something to be taken lightly, and the medical community is quite aware of this harm we are causing to our communities by over-prescribing unnecessary antibiotics.

What You Can Do As a Patient

Both patients and doctors must work together to stop this trend of over-prescribing antibiotics. Here's what you as a patient can do:

1. If you're sick and are wondering if it's anything more than a virus, visit your doctor. Refrain from asking for antibiotics over the phone without being seen-you are doing yourself a disservice by preventing your doctor from making a sound decision after an evaluation and exam in person. How can they decide it's bacteria or viral without looking for pus in your ears, pus in your throat, or pneumonia sounds on exam?
2. Tell your doctor from the get-go that you are not interested in antibiotics unless your doctor suspects your condition is due to a bacteria, not a virus. And that you are there simply for their expertise, not a prescription.

After a thorough history and exam, trust your doctor's judgment. If the doctor says you have a viral condition, then antibiotics are not the solution. If you don't trust your doctor, then it's time you found another one whom you do trust.

When a doctor prescribes you antibiotics, ask questions. Why do they think it's bacterial in origin? Did they see pus in your ears? The diagnosis of "acute bronchitis" is often viral-why did they think it's necessary for you to take antibiotics? Could that sore throat of 2 days in duration be more likely viral than bacterial? Ask questions. And if your doctor can't or won't answer your questions, find one who is happy to.

I always tell my patients that I am treating them the way that I treat myself and my own family. As an example, my toddler twin girls have been struck with a viral syndrome a total of 9 times (yes, that's not a typo...*nine*) since they started preschool in December. I myself have been sick a total of 6 times in the past year (thanks girls!). How many times did we take antibiotics for these viral illnesses?

Zero. None.

Don't get me wrong - antibiotics are life-saving and necessary sometimes...when the illness is caused by bacteria. It's only then that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Until then, I'll pass on that Z-Pack, thank you.

Dr. Sanaz Majd is a board-certified family medicine physician who podcasts and blogs at <http://housecalldoctor.quickanddirtytips.com>.



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

Sharbat are syrup drinks mixed with water and ice, very popular and refreshing for summertime. Here are two recipes for two sharbats. Noush-e-jan and keep cool.

Sharbat Sekanjebin: A sweet and sour drink

Preparation time 30 minutes,
makes 2 medium bottles.

4 cups of sugar
1 ½ cups white vinegar
10 sprigs washed fresh mint
6 cups water
Cheese cloth



1. Place sugar in a pot over medium heat and add 6 cups of water.
2. The water should cover the sugar by two inches. Bring to a boil.
3. Add vinegar and cook for 30 minutes.
4. Wash and place mint in cheese cloth, wrap tightly and place mint in the pot.
5. Cook another 10 minutes with mint. Remove and discard mint.
6. This should result in a syrup. If not thick enough, cook for another few minutes and if too thick add water.
7. Store resulting yellowish syrup in bottles at room temperature.

Sharbat Albaloo: Sour cherry syrup

When serving, mix with two
parts water.

2 pounds pitted sour cherries
2 pounds sugar
Cheese cloth Water



1. Place sugar in a pot. Add enough water to cover the sugar.
2. Cook over medium heat until sugar dissolves.
3. Wash cherries, place in cheese cloth, and knot tightly at the top.
4. Gently lower cherries into the pot. Cook for 15 minutes.
5. Syrup will turn red. For darker syrup leave the cherries in for an additional 7-10 minutes.
6. Store resulting syrup in bottles at room temperature.
7. Reserve cherries for making jam.

Cherry syrup can be used on Faloudeh (frozen noodles) and on vanilla ice-cream.

Nowruz in Other Persian Lands

By: Robert Wilson

Being neither Iranian nor having any family from Iran, experiencing Nowruz in Iran seemed like a doubtful prospect. That's why I planned my vacation to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for March 2015, given that both countries have revived Nowruz (where it's spelled "Navruz") since their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, Nowruz has been celebrated, to varying degrees, in the Turkish republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan, and with particular gusto in the lone ethnic Persian state of Tajikistan.

I'd been advised to be in southeastern Uzbekistan for Nowruz, a region with a large Tajik-speaking population. Tajik is an old form of the Persian language, somewhat closer to Dari than Farsi. The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara are both majority Tajik, and both were Persian cities throughout the Safavid dynasty. It made sense, therefore, that Nowruz traditions would run deep there. But would they really? I went to Bukhara as Nowruz approached wondering just how much Nowruz really meant to the people, given that it had been absent from their lives for 70 years. After the Bolshevik revolution, Nowruz was formally banned, and remained a non-event until 1992. However, the governments of both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan now assertively promote the holiday, and I saw signs wishing the population a happy Nowruz and advertising the public celebrations as I left the airport a week before the holiday. A government asking the populace to go through the motions of a long-repressed cultural event is one thing; it's quite another for a people to truly revive it with all its former depth and meaning. After all, in this country, we have to keep reminding ourselves of the "true meaning" of Christmas, and we didn't lose Christmas for seven decades.

But then, I had to wonder if these countries had ever really lost Nowruz. One of my first stops in Bukhara was its art museum, which challenged the widely-held idea that there was no art for art's sake in the Soviet Union. The museum contains numerous works of art by Bukharian artists that the Soviet authorities would never have approved of, many from the 1960s and 1970s. Some were landscapes, others were of the traditional life of the old city and her people, a lifestyle that was supposed to have given way to the "New Soviet man." I might have forgotten that I was even looking at Soviet-era paintings had it not been for the Soviet-era light fixtures buzzing like chainsaws over my head. Most of the museum's paintings had originally been kept at the artists' homes, away from the eyes of Soviet authorities, until independence made it safe for them to see the light of day. It made me wonder if the same had been true of Nowruz traditions, or at least the spirit of the holiday.

As I left my hotel the morning of Nowruz and walked to Bukhara's main square, Lyabi Hauz, it was clear that this was a major holiday. A week earlier, in Samarkand, I had been struck by how colorfully people dressed, and yet I was told that people



would be "colorfully dressed" at Nowruz. I had to wonder what that would mean, if the bright clothing I saw the week before the holiday was what passed for drab. Sure enough, as I walked along the huge pool in the center of the square, families were strolling past, men in new suits and women in almost dazzlingly colorful dresses, often made of silk (this was, after all, the Silk Road). Many of the girls wore hats with long tassels which, I learned when I encountered a couple in a village earlier, would have indicated that they were newlyweds any other time of the year. For now, it was just part of the celebration.

One of my favorite things to do had been to go wandering through the maze of narrow streets and alleys that made up the old cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. In both cities, I would sooner or later find myself dodging a car as it slowly navigated a narrow lane, because no matter how tight the street, as long as a car could fit through it, someone would try. But this day was different. Instead of a stray car or two, the streets of the old city were full of cars packed with people paying Nowruz visits—the first sign that it really meant something to the people here—and brightly dressed children playing in the streets. After dodging cars and kids for a while, I stopped to ask directions at a house that, like many others, had several people gathered outside. One young man who spoke English well asked if I wanted to come inside, an offer I couldn't refuse.

The house was typical of old-city houses, with several wings facing a courtyard. The family was inside one wing, gathered around a long silk tablecloth on the floor filled with Central Asian Nowruz food. After greeting everyone, I found myself in the middle of a celebration that any Iranian would find familiar. Soon after I arrived, the grandmother gave the eldest boy (around 14 or so) a new suit and tie, her pregnant daughter a blue silk scarf, and a silk tie to her son-in-law. After that it was candy and money for the children, and lots of pictures. After a few minutes of frivolity, and more gifts to exchange, everyone sat around the tablecloth on the floor. On the tablecloth, along with the usual foods of Bukhara—garlicky Bukhara *plov* (rice pliaf), sugared nuts, fresh and dried fruits, and *obi non* (round loaves of bread)—was *sumailak*. Sumailak is the quintessential Nowruz food of Uzbekistan, and is simply wheat flour and ground wheat sprouts boiled for days into a thick paste. It has a sweet taste, almost like a thick molasses. I had seen it cooking in a small village I had stayed at a few days before, slowly boiling in a huge cauldron as an old woman stirred. My guide said it would be boiled like that every day for a week! There was also a pastry I had seen before, a simple square pastry, stuffed with herbs and lightly fried. My guide in the village had told me that the pastry was only made around Nowruz. Dill was the only herb he knew in English. It had a taste that was best described as "interesting,"



but the point is for it to taste fresh for Nowruz. There was also a compote made of tiny green apples and sour cherries they called “Uzbek soda,” which tasted better and healthier than any Western soda.

Once it was time to leave, I said goodbye with the clear sense that for this family, Nowruz was not something that the government needed to prod them into celebrating. From there I made my way to the Ark, the fortress that had been the home of the last emir. The huge square in front of the fort was another popular gathering place for families, and a place for family photos. One family there stopped me to ask where I was from and about America, and one older member spoke English very well. So I asked him what Nowruz had been like in Soviet times. He assured me that it looked “nothing like this,” but he said that people still visited family, and some people would quietly observe the holiday, even though officially it was forbidden.

Back at Lyabi Hauz, where large signs decorated with flowers encouraged people to celebrate Nowruz, there were more people who seemed to need little encouragement. A concert of musicians playing traditional instruments with a modern beat was piped in at Nadir Divanbegi Madrassa on the eastern edge of the square. The facade of the 16th century Madrassa has always irritated strict Muslims with its Persian tilework depicting the mythical Simorgh, but it has been a point of pride for Bukhara residents. Traditional dancers performed under the tilework, and it wasn't long before the locals in the audience, many old enough to have lived some part of their lives under Soviet rule, jumped up and joined in the intricate dance moves. Around the pool, families were reclining around the *tapchan*, platforms with low tables at which Uzbeks and Tajiks prefer to eat, while children ran and played in the adjacent parks, and still others posed for photos around the statue of the ancient storyteller Nassaradin Hoja who taught at the madrassa a thousand years ago. His statue is one of those reminders that 70 years of Soviet occupation was really only the blink of an eye in the region's history, a region that already had centuries of history behind it by the time Alexander the Great arrived.

Nowruz in Uzbekistan is a major holiday, but it only lasts a day or two. Neighboring Tajikistan has five official holidays for Nowruz, plus Sizdah Bedar. So I planned to cross the border the next day. After a long journey, I arrived late the in the evening, and it was dark by the time I arrived in the capital city whose name often amuses Farsi speakers: Dushanbe. Dushanbe began only in the 1800s as a tiny village named after its Monday market. The Tsarists made “Monday Market” an important outpost, and in the 1920s the word “Market” was dropped as Dushanbe became the capital of the Tajik SSR. Even though I arrived well after dark,

the taxi station was humming with activity. I don't know how busy it would be any other time, but on this evening it was full of brightly dressed people greeting each other with flowers and sweets, making it feel like no ordinary Sunday night. The ride to my hotel took me along the former Lenin St., now Rudaki Avenue. Along with many more pedestrians than I expected for that time of night, it was partly lined with green, white, and red lights, the colors of the Tajik flag, with its yellow emblem between the rows. As in Uzbekistan, there were frequent signs promoting the holiday.

The city seemed just as festive the next morning as I walked through Rudaki Park. The park was filled with families picnicking, young couples walking hand-in-hand, and traditional/modern music playing from several stages around the park and other parts of the city. As I took a short-cut through a residential neighborhood, I was invited to join a wedding feast at a private home. After I was introduced, a plate of Tajik plov was brought out. I was told that this was Nowruz plov, and sure enough, it was sweet, with raisins and other dried fruits that aren't normally found in Tajik plov. After my enjoyable and very filling detour, I made my way to another park, where a surprise was awaiting me: the park entrance was a scene out of Persepolis. Huge pillars topped by pairs of winged bulls and stone doorjambes filled a huge section of the park, part of Tajikistan's effort to build a sense of nationhood based on its Persian heritage. Beyond that sat rows of delicately carved wooden pavilions and *tapchans* where families enjoyed the holiday as traditional music played on the speakers. Wheat sprouts sat on the Tajik version of Haft-seen tables, some spelling out “Nowruz Mobarak” in the Cyrillic letters that are still used for the Tajik language. There was certainly no shortage of people inviting me to sit down with them, and any doubt I may have had about the enthusiasm of the people for the holiday was put to rest as everyone I talked to couldn't wait to tell me about Nowruz traditions.

The next day I had lunch in a restaurant with the simple name “Persian restaurant.” The owner was Iranian, and he told me he splits his time between Tehran, Dushanbe, and Brussels. He likes to be in Dushanbe for Nowruz because of how festive the holiday is there. Well, for me that settled it once and for all: if an Iranian man was happy to be in Tajikistan for Nowruz, then the holiday was much more than just some hollow tool of governments to create a national identity. Clearly, the holiday had survived the years of Soviet rule, and remained a real part of the people's identity. That was not the only discovery I would make in this fascinating and little-known part of the world, but that's a story for another time.

The role of music in language learning for young children

Aitak Ajangzad, Ed.D.

Founder & Creative Director -Yekibood Children
www.Yekibood.org



What is the link between music and language learning? How can music and singing affect young children's language learning? How early on can this education start, and how can it help the healthy development of young bilingual/multilingual children?

There is an internal and intrinsic link between culture, music, and language which strongly influence children's understanding of the world and their cognitive development beginning in their very early days. Aside from physical and psychological health benefits, music is known as a strong means in communication and transfer of knowledge. The role of music in promoting communicative skills is significant. From the cultural standpoint, throughout history, music has functioned as a way to preserve the various cultural tunes and traditions, therefore naturally providing tools for cross-cultural understanding and communication among people.

As young infants' auditory skills develop even before birth, the lullabies and nursery songs sung for children by parents form the very beginning stages of children's musical and language development. In fact, through choosing an appropriate sound and musical environment, parents expose children to their collective cultural heritage. Therefore, the cultural and sociocultural environments in which children grow up strongly determine their cultural understanding and meaning-making as they mature.

On the other hand, the communicative nature of music both inspires learning as well as motivates children to respond both vocally and physically. A single tune has the ability to elevate children's spirit, transfer cultural knowledge, bring about self-expression and communication through their bodies, as well as produce vocal responses. The magic of music has mesmerizing powers in fostering children's language and cultural learning in a joyful manner.

Focusing on the population of young Iranian children of Diaspora, who are growing up in various parts of the world by either one or two Iranian parents, music can be a very effective

means in fostering second/third language learning. For most families, raising Persian-speaking children who are immersed in multiple cultures from birth has become a challenging task.

Along the same lines, the very important aspect of healthy development of a sense of belonging and identity is a major issue among children and families of Diaspora. The social and cultural environment that a musical early childhood setting provides gives children the opportunity to experience music, culture, and language among other peers, and gain a joyful shared experience—which helps children create a sense of belonging, shaping and building their identities from an early age.

Using music as an early intervention can build a foundation and facilitate healthy social growth and cognitive development of bilingual children. By providing an environment in which music, culture, and language are linked and practiced at the same time, children have the opportunity for self-expression and cultural awareness, while developing their language skills mainly through play and interaction with peers, providing them a whole body approach in learning which involves both their bodies and minds.



Yekibood Songs: Cheshmak

Considering the significant role of music in children's language learning, Yekibood Children, an innovative Persian school in New York and Virginia, took the initiative to create the first educational music album specifically made for the young Persian children of Diaspora. "Yekibood Songs: Cheshmak," is a beautiful collection of 14 songs, composed and creatively adapted for Persian speaking children, as well as the grown ups who still enjoy the playful spirit of children's music! The majority of the songs in this album are used routinely in Yekibood classes, aiming to familiarize children with cultural notions, as well as providing a chance to practice basic lingual elements such as numbers, colors, animals, and the concept of opposites within an entertaining and educational context. In order to build a musical bridge between cultures and make Persian learning more relevant to children's everyday activities, few creative adaptations of children's world music repertoire have been included in Persian. If you are interested in learning more about the music album, you can check out Yekibood's website under "Educational Products," where you can listen to few preview tracks and also order the CD. <http://yekibood.org/wp/store>



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Growing up Iranian-American in Kansas City



Learning I Was Different

By Marriam Zarabi

How do you describe an experience of difference, or other? Raised by Iranian immigrant parents in an active Iranian community, I aim to draw on my own memory and experience of difference to explore my ethnic identity as a first generation Iranian-American raised in Kansas City.

Learning I was Different

My earliest memory of learning I was different was as a Girl Scout. In the fifth grade, Girl Scouts was my social outlet to American culture: the social space outside the classroom brought the privilege of gossiping about peers, clothes, TV, and movies and eating American snacks. This was my version of *dore*. I'm sure my parents were fond of the leadership qualities, problem-solving, and goal-oriented attitude the Girl Scouts promised to inspire and I loved the snacks almost as much as I loved my newly discovered freedoms. I'd take a Rice Krispie over *shir-berenj* or Capri-Sun over tea any day. For half an hour every Wednesday, I blended with my peers, enjoyed trail mix with M&Ms instead of *ajil-shirin*, ate fruit snacks instead of real fruit, and enthusiastically welcomed other processed sugars. Girl Scouts was my personal translation to American culture.

Every year Girl Scout troops living in the greater Kansas City area congregated at a middle school to celebrate "Cultural Swap Day." Troops chose a country of their choice to showcase by preparing an exhibition booth decorated with a memento, small food sample, and also a song, dance, or skit related to the country's culture. For every booth visited, we received a stamp in a fake passport. Years prior, my Girl Scout troop chose Ireland, Argentina, and India. One particular year, we all seemed to be dumbfounded during our brainstorming session. *Could there be any other cool countries to pick from?* Thinking, thinking, thinking...when a troop mother asked:

Marriam, where are you from?

Translation: it is time to put your culture on display!

Without a pause, *my parents are from Iran...* my memorized and very well rehearsed response.

I'm sure you've connected the dots. I was devastated. My one-size-fits-all escape to American culture, my newly discovered freedom and ultimate escape from my loud, ever-present family was ultimately destroyed. I knew there was no turning back. I knew my mom would be overjoyed; she would share the news with extended family and our large yet intimate circle of Persian-and-proud friends.

It was quickly decided that we would showcase Iran and the best way to really expose my troop to Iranian culture, was, of course, to have a show-n-tell of the *haft-seen* table, or ceremonious *Norouz* New Year table, at my house. Not only would I have to explain why I didn't celebrate Christmas, I would also have to explain that I didn't eat meatloaf, I didn't have Ranch dressing (we prefer lemon juice or olive oil and vinegar as a dressing), I didn't have

string cheese (we prefer feta), and oh, that smell? Probably fried onions for the stew.

But we do celebrate Thanksgiving.

Yes, with turkey.

No, with basmati rice.

Iranian food, customs and traditions, literally everything that made me different, displayed to my peers, *at my house*. I should call the *National Girl Scout Headquarters*, I thought, *and we should just host Cultural Swap Day at my house. Who needs a small exhibition booth when you have a house—and bonus, family included—to exhibit.*

Ethnic culture, meet America. Girl Scouts, meet my ethnic culture. Would you like some tea?

Cultural Swap Day was a fun project for my mom; she enjoyed collaborating with the troop mothers and giving weekly show-n-tell presentations leading up to the event. We created stationary as our memento and the *khorest* to my *pollo* was our performance: Iranian dancing. I did not even dance alone in my room. How was I supposed to dance, in front of my friends and 500 other girls my age and older, alongside my mom, Iranian-style? Iranian-style dancing involves hand and wrist gestures very similar to changing a light bulb and an occasional hip swing. I was a strategic mastermind at hiding in the bathroom or behind a couch when even a single note of Iranian music was played at an Iranian party, or *mehmoony*. The dancing circles they formed, transplanting me in the middle, coaxing me to swing my hips or give a little attitude, was any child's worst nightmare. If you thought your experience of peer pressure during elementary school was rough, I promise you it does not compare to the peer pressure I faced during an Iranian *mehmoony*.

After our cultural swapping, eating, and stamping, it was time for our dance. As the MC welcomed my troop to the stage, I calculated the distance from the front of the stage to the stage emergency exit. It was too far. *Will I really be fined for pulling the emergency fire alarm on my way to the stage?* I was technically in need of an emergency evacuation. My mother's cheers interrupted my exit plan and once again, there was no way out, and once again, I was stuck. You would assume I would be used to this by now, but every time was like a painful re-introduction of how I was different, and the creative ways in which my mother insisted I "swing my hips a little" or give a little *gher* never helped. I don't remember the dance and I don't remember the crowd's reaction, but I remember *ghering* with my mother and my mother gushing with joy. With every wrist-twist and failed hip swing, I thought *I can't believe I'm on display for a Girl Scout activity...how long is this Ay Anar, Anar song...will we have tea after this?*

Receiving our patch for Cultural Swap Day was a team effort. *Was that so bad?*, my mom asked rhetorically as she made the final stitches on my patch.

You have no idea.

Marriam Zarabi

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