

Global Dialogue

2009 Arab & American Business Fellowship Program

By; **Fatima Salaheddine**
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In his recent address to the Muslim world, President Obama said: "I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect..." After putting forward 18 specific proposals, the President went on to say: "All these things must be done in partnership."



2009 Fellows

On Thursday, October 22, Business for Diplomatic Action and the Young Arab Leaders convened a forum at the Ritz Carlton Washington, DC at the close of the 2009 Arab & American Business Fellowship program. The forum brought together leaders from the U.S. and Middle Eastern governments, from the American and Arab business sectors, from civic groups and the Arab-American Diaspora communities to develop creative solutions to the recommendations that President Obama made in his Cairo address. The ultimate purpose was to forge new partnerships between the United States and the Arab world, and between the public and private sectors in both regions, that can help move



Mr. Rami Makhzoumi

this agenda ahead.

The Arab & American Business Fellowship

program exchanges mid-career professional between the Arab world and the United States to participate in a three-week fellowship. The fellowship is designed to promote business and diplomatic understanding between the peoples of the United States and the Arab world. It is the only private-sector led exchange program that focuses on cultivating today's global leaders. The Fellowship seeks to:

- **Equip participants with a deep understanding of issues** important to each region to positively shape future economic relations between the U.S. and Arab worlds
- **Expose more Americans and Arabs to each others' cultures and leaders** through meetings with business groups, universities, nonprofit and civic organizations, government and media
- **Inform companies' strategic planning processes** with insights into Arab and American business cultures that fellows can share with colleagues and integrate into training programs.

Now in its third year, the Fellowship Program brought 15 young business leaders from the Arab world to the United States and sent 12 young business leaders from the United States to the Arab world in recent weeks. The fellowship program is organized by Business for Diplomatic Action (New York), the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy (Iowa), Young Arab Leaders (Dubai, UAE) and the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce.

While in Washington, D.C. the Arab fellows met with a wide array of decision makers, including Members of Congress, Obama Administration officials, U.S. business leaders, policy think tanks, and media persons. These included Members of Congress such as Jim Moran (D-Virginia), Joe Wilson (R-South Carolina), and Betty McCollum (D-Minnesota). The Honorable Rochelle Lipsitz, Assistant Secretary & Acting Director General of the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service also hosted the delegation along with senior members at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Arab business fellows from Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the U.A.E. traveled to Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Washington, D.C. American business fellows visited Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and the United Arab Emir-

ates. The program was hosted by corporate sponsors including Dow Chemical Company, Motorola, Mid-American Energy, RR Donnelley, and DDB Worldwide Communications Group among others.

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The closing conference to the 2009 Arab & American Business Fellowship Program began with the Business for Diplomatic Action's President; Keith Reinhard's opening remarks in Arabic, which set the tone for an incredibly inspiring, action oriented day. Let me repeat. Keith Reinhard delivered his opening remarks in Arabic...it wasn't just a greeting or hello, but his entire opening spoken in Arabic. A language he is not fluent in. I cannot tell you how many of our new Arab friends were deeply appreciative of this gesture. The energy in the room was palpable. There was much to celebrate, debate, and build upon....a



Mr. Rami Makhzoumi

recognition of how much there is yet to do, that in many ways we've only just begun.

Memorable Moments from the Conference:

- **Rami Makhzoumi, President & CEO,**



Future Pipe & YAL Board Member –
"Issues surrounding unemployment in the region are our most pressing concern. By 2020 we will have the world's largest youth population and must create over 1 million jobs if we have any hope of stability. Job creation and employability in the region is also critical for curbing radical thought. There is a brain drain happening in parallel as the best and brightest minds, educated abroad are choosing to stay abroad and not come back to the region. The United States has choice in whether or not they engage with the Arab world on these issues and further programs like the AABF."

This poem was quite inspiring. It was read by panelist; Barbara H. McAllister as a part of an opening and participation in a panel, "Breaking Cultural Stereotypes." Fellow panelists included John Zogby, Nesrine Halima, Sheik Sultan Al Qassemi and Moderator, Jeff Weintraub.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes, by definition are fixed assumptions
Others Hold About You and Me.
Often inaccurate, based on exaggerated tv images,
Or passed down by families generationally.

Stereotypes, framed pictures in our minds
Whether seen or unseen.
Constrain opportunities to collaborate or grow
And often demean.

What we've learned during this brilliant BDA* Fellowship,
An accelerated and safe environment to explore.
All is not what it seems; one size doesn't fit all; to every story, there's more.
The key nugget we will all take away from this experience is:
We are all human beings at our core.

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109 Year-Old Arab American Lives On

By; Ameera David (Arab Detroit)

She enjoys apple picking at the local farm, taking trips to the ocean for her favorite lobster, and chatting with loved ones about history, politics, and sports. If you ask her how she does it, she'll reply "I just keep moving". At 109 years-old, Rose Haddad is living the dream of many—that of a fulfilling and prolonged existence. Remarkably so, she has thus far seen the growth of 21 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great grand children. And while it's not officially verified, Rose is thought to be the oldest living Arab American. Born Ramza (Rose) Homsy on April 15, 1900



in Damascus, Syria, she and her family later immigrated to the United States in search of better opportunities and a more prosperous economy. First settling in Ellis Island by boat, the family soon moved to a suburb of Boston, where they became members of St. John of Damascus Antiochian Orthodox Church. After her husband, John Haddad, passed away in 1960, Rose took it upon herself to become self sufficient. At the age of 65, she acquired a driver's license and went on to work for many years at a local hospital. Despite increasing age, she continued driving her own car until the age of 96.

Throughout her life, she has been privileged to see much of the U.S. and Europe, and has twice traveled back to her homeland Syria; however, there is no place she would rather be than in her home city, spending quality time with her children and grandchildren. Although Rose is certainly seasoned in age, her grandchildren say their "Taita" (grandma) has remained forever young in spirit. Granddaughter Rose Stamboulides recalls how much fun she had living with her grandmother upon first moving to the Boston area. "I remember my girlfriends would come over before leaving to go out for the evening, and they never wanted to leave because they enjoyed her company so much. In fact, one time, they asked me if we could take her out with us. So, we did! We went to a "hafla" (party) at a local church and danced the night away," says Stamboulides. But what truly keeps her going? Grandson Richard Nawfel believes it's her sense of humor and will to laugh. He says "Even though she just began using the assistance of a walker, I always hear her say 'I hope to get rid of this thing someday!'" In addition to laughter, Stamboulides believes it's her grandmother's desire to remain relevant. "Her attitude towards life is very current and realistic. She can carry on a conversation about current events, and she even went to the polls to vote in the 2008 Presidential election." Perhaps it's also her strong belief in life truisms such as "patience is a virtue" and "never worry about the little things" that have kept her going. While we may never be able to acknowledge one factor as the secret to a long life, we do know that Rose's determination to laugh and love is an example to live by.

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We are all human beings at our core.

Whether we choose to wear traditional wrap, uncover or we're louder than the others. Practice religion strictly or liberally. We are all fundamentally seeking peace and progress in this world. We each want our kids to achieve more than we.

So, my sincere thanks to Intel, BDA, My caring Arab and American Fellows

My new sisters and brothers.

The dialogue has been opened wide and so have our hearts.

Let's continue breaking down barriers.

Let's chart a fresh new start.

We are the leaders.

We have been chosen to do this work.

The change that comes about, our collective futures,

Will be simply that we never gave up.

Simply because our work never stopped.



Mr. David Hamod, His Excellency Ambassador Adel Al Jubeir, & Mr. Rami Makhzoumi

• **Earl Shipp, President, Dow IMEA** -- "Dow is just one company, we can't do everything, but we do what we can. And we believe in *investing in people*. We are committed to the development of people, investing in the Human Element."

• **Barbara McAllister, AABF American Fellow, Intel Corp.** -- The predominant Western stereotypes of women in the Middle East are that they are not educated, don't have freedom of choice, and that they are not held in high esteem or holding powerful positions in Middle Eastern society. On that point, let me just say, "*Arab women are holding down. We were so impressed by the amazing women we met, they blew through every stereotype.*"

• **Farah Pandith, Special Envoy for Muslim Communities, US Department of State** -- Gave a candid and impassioned plea for us to be honest about the challenges we face when building bridges with the Middle East and urged us to continue to forge uncommon partnerships. "*How we talk about these issues matters.* There are vast nuances and distinctions in the Arab world. Muslim communities are not a monolith and we must be respectful in how we engage on these issues so that we don't perpetuate stereotypes."

• **John Zogby, Zogby International** -- "*56% of 18-29 year olds in the US have passports, this is a truly global generation. These Globals are not just the bi-coastal and wealthy, they are everywhere and the planet is their playing field. They are engaging with the world and the world is a key influencer.*"

• **Pradeep Ramamurthy, White House Office of Global Engagement** -- "*America is back, and we're listening.* Our engagement with the world is not driven by terrorism. The Cairo speech President Obama delivered was meant to shift the dialogue to one of mutual respect and to engage citizens, not governments. Fundamentally, governments should enable people to connect to people. This is not about an Administration, it's about a generation."

His Excellency; Adel Al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States, hosted a "sendoff reception" at the Saudi Embassy in Washington for the 27 delegates and 150 guests. He noted, "Fostering business-to-business relationships is a critical part of building a foundation of mutual understanding for future generations of the Arab and American business communities." David Hamod, President & CEO of the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the "extraordinary commitment of these rising business leaders, from both cultures, who are dispelling stereotypes while laying groundwork for future business deals between the United States and the Arab world."



Mr. Keith Reinhard