

Subj: **Ya habibi**
Date: 7/3/1999 12:11:20 PM EST
From: d.umn.edu (Jing)
Reply-to: j@d.umn.edu
To: rayhanania@aol.com, rhanania@hanania.com

I enjoyed your article "Ya habibi." I am beginning to realize that my childhood experiences as an Arab-American are not unique. My grandfather also came to this country in the 1920s. However, he married an American and tried very hard to replace his Arab heritage with American customs. On some level he succeeded. My mother always told the story of how when, as a teenager, she decided to get a job, my grandfather said "Oh, no honey, ladies don't work!" She pointed out to him that they were no longer in the old country. My grandfather thought about it for a few days, then decided to help her apply for the job. I didn't know my grandfather had an accent until I was 10 years old. My friend asked me where my grandfather was from. I looked at her, rather puzzled at such a question and said, "He's from New Jersey!" "No, no," my friend insisted, "he has an accent, where is he from?" "An accent?" I asked, "does he?" My mother hid a lot from me, but as I grew older I realized that my grandfather and mother experienced a lot of discrimination because of their heritage. My father, however, was a blonde-haired, green-eyed American of Dutch ancestry. My brother and I "pass." People can never figure out what ethnic background we have. (I always teased my mother saying that she diluted the superior Arab blood by marrying a white honkey!) Regardless, it hurt me very much when in high school I was forced to read "Exodus" in a history class. The fact that this was a work of propaganda was never discussed. As I have begun to rediscover my Arab heritage, I have discovered that as a child, my ideas about my Arab heritage, and therefore about myself were formed by the American media. I hope that in the future, Arab-American children will never come to view themselves through the eyes of a hostile media. As a journalist, you have already identified this as your greatest challenge. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Edie (Aida) D