Enduring upheaval, she personifies the importance of family and the Palestinian determination to get back what was lost.

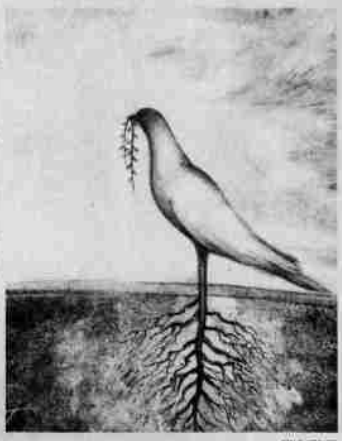
An Arab grandma's bequest

By Samah Jabr

Grandma is our heart. Mother to 11 children and grandmother to 35, she brought us all up with dishes of lemon-flavored milk and crispy pudding, magical tales and a tremendous amount of love. She personifies the importance of family to us and makes us who we are in our Arab world.

We invited her over to our house recently. I wish the world could have peeked in our window to see us as we really are. Surely, seeing our granny and us and her great-grandchildren running in and out of the room would make clear to the world why Palestinians resist so hard. In my own heart and, I'm pretty sure, in the hearts of my mom and dad and brother and sisters, not to forget many beyond our immediate family, there resides a determination that our grandparents have bequeathed to us.

The *nakba* (the Israeli occupation of Palestine) hit grandma's family hard. In 1948, the Zionists took over, stirring fear and uprooting our people. Grandma's family was forced to walk out of their house and into trucks, going they knew not where.



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They had to leave everything behind: clothes, money, furniture, 14 pairs of doves, a great jasmine tree that our grandfather planted in honor of their wedding. The personal effects did not matter much to the family, but the idea of leaving living things like the doves and the special tree broke their hearts. Our great-grandmother died on the truck.

Our grandfather, a respected teacher, eventually got the family to Jerusalem. There, he got a job as principal of the only school for orphans in the ancient city at the time, Dar Al-Aytam School for Boys. The family lived in a beautiful old house set high on a knoll in the Old City. Built 450 years before our grandparents moved in during the regime of the great Muslim ruler Saladin, the house had traditional arched windows and doors. The family could stand on their little balcony and look across the tight mingling of elegant houses to the esplanade of Haram al-Sharif. The Dome of the Rock Mosque was in full view.

Although my grandparents and all their children adapted to and enjoyed their new home in historic Jerusalem, it was not in them to forget what they had lost or left behind. Jaffa was not far away, but they could not go back and get the tree to transplant or the doves to put into a new cote.

In 1967, trauma again. War descended on the rest of the land we had always known as Palestine and Israel began an occupation I have lived with my entire life. It was a dreadful transition, and many of our young Palestinians reacted with furor. One of my grandmother's sons heard the news of the occupation. He did not come home that night, and my grandparents heard nothing from him or about him until Sept. 8, 1969, when they read in a newspaper that he was responsible for a bus bombing in West Jerusalem. He was incarcerated; three of his brothers were sent abroad into exile and our family's glorious old house was confiscated.

This was, in effect, the beginning of continual suffering for all of us. Our grandma survived. Even today, she sits like one of our uprooted olive trees, roots a detached tangle, branches weeping, but dignity remaining. Our grandfather did not survive the upheaval and died soon after it was clear that he would not find his son and that his other sons were no longer content to study and spend their lives held tight in the arms of a loving family.

Today, we sit together as Arab families do, but not in the happy circumstances in which grandma grew up. Grandma will have to stay the night because we dare not drive her home, a few blocks away, during the curfew imposed on us. I watch her as we sit in our living room drinking rich Arabic coffee. She sips her coffee with us, delighted that we have brought her to be with us. She would like the evening even more if we'd give her just one cigarette, but that won't happen.

At one point, she says, "I won't live long enough to go back to my house in Jaffa. But you, kids, do not forget our house in Jaffa. It is yours."

The rest of us do not speak. We do not bring up the declarations and conventions and United Nations resolutions that speak of the right of return, the inalienable right of human beings to own property and to find validity in their lives through their heritage and their traditions. We do not want to trouble her dream of us going home even if she can't.

Don't worry, grandma. We Palestinians do not trade our rights and our heritage. This determination to stay is what makes us your heirs. Jaffa, Acca, Haifa and every single Palestinian town and village remains in our minds and hearts through the stories we've heard from our elders — from you, Granny. We will not go until this time of war ends and we return to ourselves what is ours.

Samah Jabr writes for the Palestine Times (London).

In 2001, a diversity oddity: Few minorities at helm

By Don Rooney

It's here! 2001! The Year of the Space Odyssey! And, while we don't yet have a big wheel in space with Pan Am shuttles every couple of hours, as in the movie, we do indeed have the beginnings of a space station in orbit, housing three astronauts.

My sharpest memory of seeing that movie comes from the mid-'70s, when it was reissued in wide screen with stereo sound. My college friends and I piled into someone's van and drove to a midnight show.

As I sat in the audience, dazzled by the special effects, a thought occurred: The people on this space odyssey set in the next century were a *bunch of white guys.*

I looked around at my college friends. More women than men. Two of the women were African American, engaged in a continuing debate over who was cuter, Jermaine or Tito. Of the guys, two of us were plain old white guys; another guy I didn't know all that well was Asian, but my best friend of the group was Hispanic. In my smug collegiate confidence, I decided that things would, in actuality, be a lot different in terms of race and gender when the real 2001 arrived, because of all the progress we were making in the '70s.

So, at the risk of sounding like a quota-counting liberal, I figured it's time to take a look around at the actual race/gender count of the real 2001.

My family? Sorry. I married a white girl and — no surprises here — had three white kids. (We're all lapsed Catholics, if that counts.)

Ah, but my middle-class, suburban neighborhood? Our next-door neighbors are a retired couple; the wife speaks with the thick accent of her native France. The house across the street houses an extended Bosnian family, who moved in when the Vietnamese family that had been living there made a lot of money with its Asian market and moved to a bigger house.

Next to them is an African American family with a big above-ground pool surrounded by a two-story deck. A Hispanic brother and sister, each with their respective families, live in adjoining houses on the other side of the Bosnians.

That's progress, I think to myself. Of course, the guys making all the big decisions for our block, our township supervisors — they're all *a bunch of white guys.*

My workplace? OK, right away, that's different, because I work in television, where they try mightily to put as many races and genders in front of the camera as they can, thanks to a combination of that government-mandated quota rule and pressure from viewers and sponsors. Still, at my particular station, the people hiring all those different races and genders — the managers and directors — are ... drum roll, please ... *a bunch of white guys.*

At the television station where I work, the people hiring all those different races and genders are a bunch of white guys.

Our state? Please! Ridge and his cabinet? Two words: *white* and guys.

Our new President? Hmm. It seems there are female, African American and Hispanic appointees in the cabinet. Then again, that potential cabinet is being chosen by the real power brokers, Cheney and Bush and their advisers, most of whom are — you guessed it — a *bunch of white guys.* I'm supposing the progress the cabinet appointees show is that there is racial and gender diversity among conservatives.

Oh, yeah, and the astronauts living in our space station in 2001? Three white guys.

Don Rooney (rooney@panetwork.com) is a white guy weatherman somewhere near Harrisburg.

Tomorrow: Acel Moore takes the "Urban Perspective". The rigors of assisted living arrangements.

Clintons left the way they arrived – copping pleas, issuing denials

By Alvin S. Felzenberg

'He went out the way he came in. No class."

So John F. Kennedy remarked after watching Richard Nixon's 1962 "last press conference." Kennedy's erstwhile rival had just told reporters they would not have "Nixon to kick around anymore."

What would Kennedy or Nixon think about how the Clintons went out? Clinton did say in his first minutes as an ex-president that he "is still here." His wife, the senator, is poised to wield influence uncommon for a freshman.

Both left the White House the way they came. Even before he was elected, Clinton had denied Gennifer Flowers' allegations about their affair. On his way out the door, he copped a plea about another lie.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who never explained how she turned a $1,000 cattle-futures investment into $100,000 or how subpoenaed Whitewater documents mysteriously appeared 18 months later, changes residences under suspicion. Some think that her $8 million-dollar book deal with a corporation that has dealings before the Senate, and solicitations of nearly $200,000 in gifts contain the seeds of future scandals.

Neither Clinton has gone away. Like Richard Nixon, they will plan their comeback in New York. Months in the making, their move took on operatic proportions.

First came exit interviews in which the self-pitying soon-to-be-ex-president castigated the Republican Congress for not apologizing for impeaching him. At the very time he was professing to have preserved the presidency, Clinton was negotiating his way out of a possible indictment.

Then there was the long good-bye that had the chief executive, who fancies himself a constitutional expert, doubting the legitimacy of his successor's election. His venue was Chicago, where Daleys reign and the dead remain politically active.

The Hillary Clinton swearing-in fund-raisers were next. A normally restrained Senate ceremony was repeated in rally-like fashion at Washington's Mayflower Hotel and New York's Madison Square Garden.

Exceeding the Clintons in poor taste was his 90-minute farewell.

Exceeding them in poor taste was the ghoulishly self-indulgent 90-minute farewell Clinton delivered at Andrews Air Force Base. It was like the old Groucho Marx tune "Hello, I Must Be Going," and it detracted from what was to have been Bush's moment.

Interspersed among these four acts was the barrage of recess appointments, executive orders, proclamations and regulations. Yes, Clinton's predecessors used some or all these devices. None, though, evoked so many on their way out or with such a baldly presented aim of circumventing Congress, state governments and public debate.

Then came the pardons. In his last hours in office, the man who promised the "most ethical administration in history" did more damage to his place in history than did all his detractors combined. In addition to pardoning his half-brother for a drug offense, an ex-congressman for his conviction for statutory rape, and a Whitewater business associate with a capacity to retain a G. Gordon Liddy silence, Clinton extended his well-known empathy to a fugitive who defrauded the U.S. Treasury of $50 million in taxes and traded illegally with Iran. He also commuted the sentence of four of his wife's constituents whose representatives had met with him.

Common threads run through the most suspicious of the nearly 200 Clinton gestures of mercy: access to the Clintons or a proven or potential ability to benefit them.

Unable to reverse Clinton's pardons, Congress might ascertain why fugitive Marc Rich, a client of Clinton's former counsel Jack Quinn, received a presidential largesse denied those who committed lesser offenses, but were represented by less well-connected attorneys. Legislators could probe contributions from Rich's ex-wife to the Democratic Party and Clinton's coffers, and how much influence this bought with Clinton. Any such investigation would document abuse of the presidential power to pardon — no matter how legal. For that presidential prerogative to have any meaning in a republic, as the framers noted, it must be used sparingly and impartially — neither of which Clinton did.

Alexander Hamilton wrote that the power to pardon "would naturally inspire scrupulousness and caution" and that "the dread of being accused of weakness or connivance would beget equal circumspection, though of a different kind."

Well, "caution" was never Clinton's trademark, but "weakness" and "connivance" run throughout his legacy. Had he shared Hamilton's concern about appearances or let fear of embarrassment govern his behavior, Clinton's would have been a happier and more productive presidency.

Alvin S. Felzenberg writes and lectures about the American presidency. He directs the Mandate for Leadership 2000 project at the Heritage Foundation.

Worth Repeating

A democratic statesman

What Ronald Reagan has done is incorporate our past into a new perspective on the American future, of which he has given us the outlines... But the outlines are clear enough — a rediscovery of the importance of individual self-reliance, without which programs incorporating political compassion end up in perpetual frustration; a renewed emphasis on those moral values that bind individuals to their families and communities and that give the ultimate meaning to lives; an affirmation of individual enterprise, energized by low rates of taxation, as the key to economic growth; and perhaps most important a revival of the spirit of patriotism...

Irving Kristol, at a 1988 American Enterprise Institute dinner Republished in the Weekly Standard, Feb. 5

(Former President Reagan celebrates his 90th birthday tomorrow.)



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