

# ciMAG



U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative



EMY **شباب  
متمكن**  
Empowering Moroccan Youth

Connect  
Institute





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# ***Gnaoua: The soul of African music.***

The culture of Gnaoua appeared three centuries ago in the city of Essaouira called also "Mogador" or "the city of wind". This latter was built by Sultan Mohamed ben Abdellah in 1764 as a port for trade and exchange between Africa and Europe. In this period of time, various races, ethnicities and communities lived together under the same rules and values which led Essaouira to become a melting-pot of art, diversity and tolerance.

The origin of the Gnaoui population is generally from the west and central Africa. Due to the political and trading affairs with the Maghreb, they adopted Islam alongside with their traditions and culture which had been reflected in their music and the ritual of possession called Jedba. Hence, Gnaoua represents the soul of the African music and a time travel to the roots.

Gnaoua music is a spiritual ritual of healing and deliverance for the body and the mind under the effect of mesmerizing rhythms and tones that originated mainly from the sub African and Islamic culture. During the ritual, the master Maalam begins to play Guembri , the main instrument, alongside with prayers that glorifies the prophet. Thus, the audience dances under the sacred rhythms until they slightly lose control of their bodies in a spiritual and cultural ambiance. For the lovers of the Gnaoua art, known also as Tagnawite, the Gnaoua World Music Festival is a foremost annual platform that enables musical exchanges and new artistic connections worldwide offering the enormous public free accesses to the entire performances: Mogador becomes a Mecca for artists and musicians.

The 19th edition of this festival welcomed a myriad of musicians from around the world, weighty names as SONGHOY BLUES, MAALEM EL KASRI, MAÂLEM AHMED BAQBOU, HOBA HOBA SPIRIT and others, have enchanted the audience with marvelous rhythms and astonishing melodies. What is truly unique about the Gnaoua music festival is the human fantasia that you can recognize in every single corner of Essaouira, people from diverse socio-economic status, with outlandish styles and backgrounds are reunited in the same spots to celebrate the Gnaoua music and its history. Tagnawite, is an authentic heritage that should be preserved for the future generations. In fact, an annual and hefty rendezvous as the Gnaoua festival would superbly assure its survival and progress.



**Article by :**  
**Oumaima Fathi**



**Photo by: Ayman**  
**Abdelilah**

# My story as a Moroccan student

Which school is the best? Should I pick medicine or engineering? Which field of study will allow me to land a good job? Both students and parents are trying to find the “right” answers to these questions. In this article, we will discover the story of Adil, a 23 year old student at the ENSA of Agadir, who like many other young Moroccans, was subjected to the same questions.

Talking about his high school experience Adil declares that: “It took me two years to get my



*baccalaureate degree. I failed the first time because I was lost and I didn't like what I was studying. When I finally got my degree in 2012 in mathematical sciences, I taught that it was the end of my struggle, but it was only the beginning.”*

When asked to give more clarifications about the nature of those struggles he says :“I understood that in order for me to be what I aspire, I have to get high marks like 16 and 17 , but I only got 12,82. And that literally destroyed me and my aspirations.”

He continues: “After giving it a taught, I figured that in order for me to study what I want, which is engineering , I have to get into a private school so I chose the CPGE.”

Adil confesses that even though he had to pay the school fees, seeing as it was a private one, he didn't regret it back then because: “I prefer to pay and study at a good school with both good professors and good mentoring than waste my time at university.”

Adil describes his experience at the private school: *"In the first trimester, things were going smoothly at the CPGE and I was doing well. But, after a while, things started to get bad; I have started feeling bored and exhausted. I knew then that I have to make a decision. I decided to start thinking about what I really want and what are the things I have to do to get there. That was my sole preoccupation for about 6 months."*

He decided to take his chance for a second time and apply for public engineering schools: *"I didn't really believe I will be selected. So I continued studying at the CPGE, even though I was feeling a lot of pressure both financially: Because I wasn't from a rich family so it was hard paying for the private school, and emotionally: Because I was tired and I hated it there."*

Then finally a glimmer of hope emerged: Adil's name was in the list of those who will be taking the entrance exam to the ENSA: *"But I wasn't all that enthusiastic about it and I didn't feel relieved until I finally got fully accepted at the ENSA. Now, I am a third year computer engineering student there."*

But he confesses that being a student at the ENSA isn't that great: *"I was happy at the beginning. But after spending some time at the ENSA, I lost my motivation. I figured out that all Moroccan schools play by the same rule: To "swallow" the course and to "vomit" it all in the exam. I wasn't learning the necessary knowledge to succeed both on a personal and a professional level."* Adil figured out that the only solution to deal with those incompetencies and inadequacies is through self-learning. *"One of the things that are helping me to do so is Connect Institute: Every time I am there, I get to learn a new thing. It is offering me the chance to meet new people that have the same interests as me, people who appreciate music, theatre and other things that are considered useless in our society. People who are willing to listen to everything you have to say without judging who you are. These same people are there to offer you advice, constructive criticism and help. I am learning how to speak in front of a public and how to discuss different topics using a well constructed language."* At the end of the interview Adil confesses: *"Since the day I joined Connect Institute, I found my true self and I learnt to embrace who I am. I am also learning how to manage and value my time more and more. "*



**Fatima Zahra El Hafa**

# Point d'interrogation

Vivre dans une société comme la nôtre n'est pas une évidence. Complexes, intolérance, conformisme, misogynie, patriarcalisme et hypocrisie: notre société manifeste tous les symptômes d'un état morbide, dont les origines sont enracinées et structurelles. Une culture stagnante, une éducation nationale défailante et un système de valeurs infertile ont, ensemble, façonné un individu à l'esprit appauvri; dépourvu de discernement, d'outils de jugement ou d'analyse et peu innovant; caractères inhérents à la distinction humaine et indispensables à la vie productive. Notre société est malheureusement loin d'adhérer à son époque ou encore de contribuer à l'essor de l'humanité. Elle ne représente ce que pourrait être une société humaine que dans ses aspects les moins glorieux. La société marocaine, à l'instar de ses semblables arabo-musulmanes, se voit comme une grande communauté religieuse, et non comme une société où chacun a le droit de vivre librement ou différemment. Elle se nourrit du traditionalisme, du conservatisme religieux, des influences orientales islamo-fascistes et du socialement admis. Elle écrase, par conséquent, tout changement potentiel, ainsi que tous les bienfaits qui s'ensuivraient de la diversité et la libération de l'esprit.

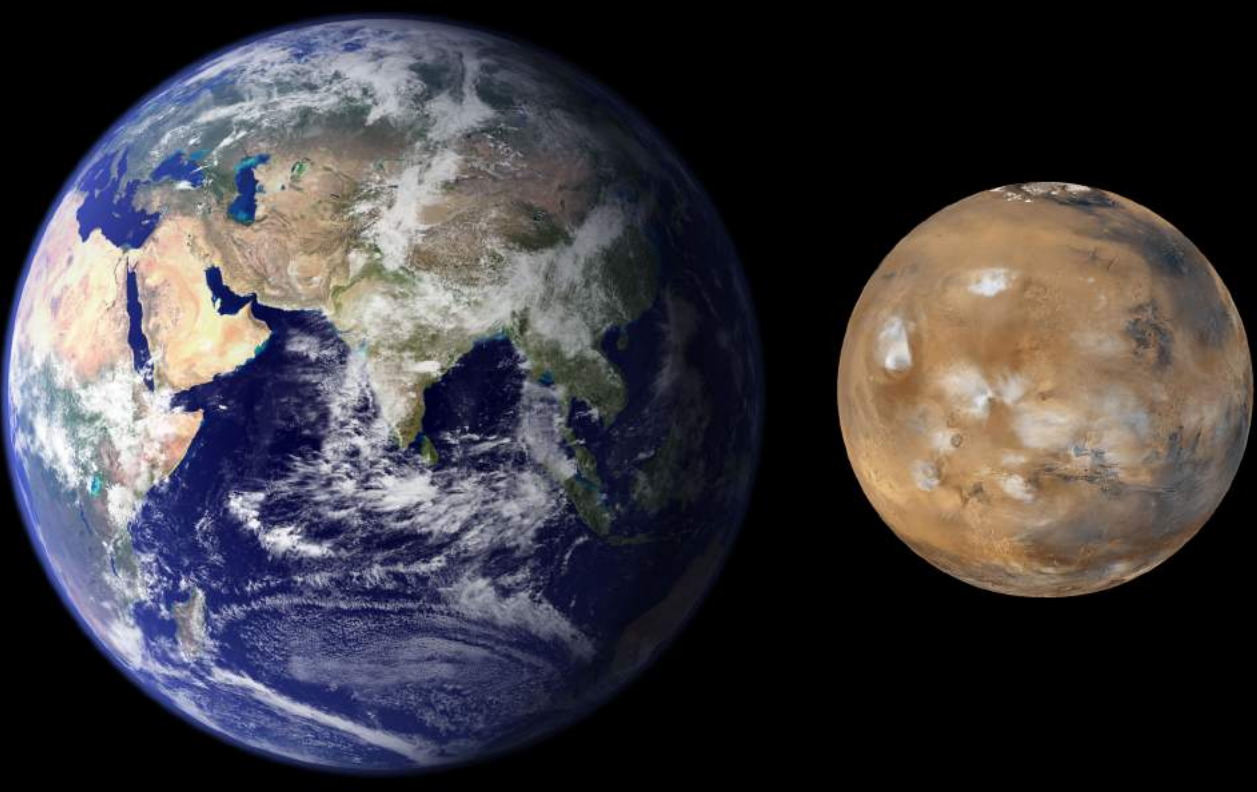
Il est de notre devoir, en tant que jeunes, de remettre en question ce système de valeurs prédominant, et de réfléchir à son apport à la société et à soi-même, autre que le sentiment de pseudo-confort que l'on peut se procurer en s'y aliénant. Aujourd'hui, le monde occidental illustre un modèle admirable de développement, s'étant basé sur la rationalité, la productivité, et le respect des libertés individuelles. Un simple aperçu de l'histoire permettrait de découvrir que tout a commencé avec la libération politique, sociale et spirituelle de l'emprise du sacré, en faveur de l'humain et de la raison. Cette émancipation a donné lieu au système laïc et démocratique, axé sur la primauté de l'individu.

Ce n'est pas un signe de bonne santé mentale d'être bien adapté à une société malade- Jiddu Krishnamurti. Les grands esprits, à travers les siècles, se sont toujours détachés de la foule, pour pouvoir respirer librement et réfléchir lucidement, loin de dogmes, de préjugés et de modèles dominants.

Nous avons de grandes opportunités pour échapper à cette médiocrité envahissante : un accès libre aux créations de l'esprit les plus amples et les plus fascinantes : les sciences, les arts, la philosophie... Plus encore, nous sommes dotés de l'arme la plus puissante de l'émancipation : l'intelligence! Les valeurs et le bon sens ne nécessitent pas de formation ou de manuels religieux car elles sont très intuitives! Il suffit, simplement, de libérer son esprit et de réactiver son raisonnement pour remettre en cause ses convictions et ré-appréhender le monde, plus lucidement cette fois.



**Safaa Isaad**



Rachida Akdaich

## An old conflict

I was completely focused on my computer's screen, openmouthed. My friend who was sitting next to me could not ignore the expression drawn on my face, so she asked me: "What are you watching?" Hyped up, I answered: "it's a simulation video, made by some scientists, that shows how to turn Mars into Earth". By the time I finished my answer, she gave me a clear "I couldn't care less" look followed by: "Those people are crazy, we can't turn Mars into Earth". "How do you know that?" I replied. "God said it. We were created on Earth and we shall all die on it. You know most of those scientists are atheists, they don't believe in God so they don't know that it's impossible. Those are the same people who tried to make a human being from scratch".

To be quite honest, her answer did not shock me, I have heard worst. I felt too lazy to start arguing with her yet her answer triggered a series of questions in my head: When did God say that we can't transform Mars into Earth? I must have missed that part. And if it is true, why do we always reject every scientific experience that touches our beliefs? Will our faith be shaken if we find that, guess what, Elon Musk was right, we can for fact turn Mars into a second blue planet? Can our faith stand up to every scientific truth that the universe reveals?

I can't give a strict statement about the relationship between science and religion, but I do know this: Science's major goal is to discover the unknown secrets of the natural world; it is what makes humans' lives better. So stop chaining it up and fighting against it. Open your mind beyond what is comfortable and don't let your faith deprive you of the joys of discovering the world and the big universe. Please don't let the fear of knowing too much stop you from seeking the truth.





## What makes us a good community?

Before I joined Connect Institute, community wasn't a familiar word to me. I used words like family, friends, and comrades. But I never used the term community, for the simple reason that I've never belonged to one. Not in the real meaning of the word anyway. Because the way I see it, a community needs to have specific elements.

First, a community needs a leader and he has to have a vision, a sense of "what is right", the ability to teach and mentor, and also

humor.

Now that we have the leader, the community needs a purpose that answers the question "why?". Why am I part of this? Why does it exist? Everyone in the community should be able to answer these questions in order for them to help the community reach its goals and objectives.

Any community should also have ground rules. It's crucial for the durability of the community that

everyone agrees on a moral and behavior code.

And most of all, the community needs citizens, if we may call them so, who share the leader's vision and commit to see it through.

In Connect Institute, we were able to combine all these elements and more. We share the same why fore, the same values, the hope for a better education and a better society. Most importantly, we share love and friendship which makes us the best community.



**Marya  
Joudani**



Be  
grateful

The  
*attitude*  
of  
*gratitude*

**"The essence of all beautiful art,  
all great art, is gratitude."  
— Friedrich Nietzsche**

Nowadays, we are always busy with our daily tasks, completely absorbed by the material side of life. We acknowledge less and we don't value what we already have. Maybe we became less communicative and attached to all sorts of technological tools that we use abusedly but not correctly. Those tools were only invented to enhance and facilitate our relationships and our communication with others instead of damaging them.

Living a lifestyle full of conveniences like being healthy, serene, having the freedom of expression, learning something new from someone, being surrounded by thoughtful positive people who push you to do your best and so on; these are all wonderful blessings that we may take for granted, while in fact we should be grateful and thankful for. Because these elements are more valuable than we might think.

At the Greater Good Gratitude Summit, a day-long event featuring research funded by the Greater Good Science Center's "Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude" program, Dr. Philip Watkins of Eastern Washington University has explained in a presentation of his how gratitude enhances cognitive and social processes. He proceeded by asking this question: "how does gratitude help us live well?" and found out that the answer is that gratitude enhances well-being by amplifying the good in one's life, and that concerns the emotional experience, the ability to cope, the cognitive process and even relationships.

The professor of psychology has explained how gratitude enhances our cognitive process, helps acquiring happy habits of thought and trains our brain for happiness. He, thus, cited the findings of a randomized controlled treatment study from the journal of positive psychology that shows that grateful recounting produces a pattern of well-being growth, but why? Simply because grateful recounting trains cognitive habits that in turn enhance happiness: noticing the good, making positive interpretations of good events and reflecting more positively on your past. So gratitude enhances the good in both our thinking and social process..He added that gratitude is a moral and prosocial emotion: gratitude is a moral barometer as it indicates the climate because when people feel they are grateful they feel they are great to others, a moral motivator of prosocial behavior as when people are grateful they feel they are doing good to others, and a moral reinforcer as gratitude provides reinforcement for both the benefactor and the beneficiary of the act of gratitude.

He added that, gratitude also has social benefits. In one of his studies, he asked people to list 10 persons that they knew very well and then he asked them to note whether they were grateful, ungrateful or neither and whether they were happy, likeable or likely to help. And he found out that grateful people were happier, much more likeable and were likely to help in the future. He also claimed that other researches show that gratitude enhances our desire to affiliate with others, enhances our communal orientation toward others because it boosts our tendency to include others (inclusive emotion), thus, ameliorates our prosaically behavior. And finally, gratitude improves our relationships because it helps us find new relationships, reminds us about relationships that were important for our well-being and helps us bind relationships that were important to us.

This informs us largely about how gratitude amplifies the cognitive processes and even the social one. The German theologian and philosopher Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) says that: "In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give and that it is with gratitude that life becomes rich". Let's all be grateful, and seek a rich and meaningful life, let's have an attitude of gratitude and all the best will come right a head for us and for our community.

**Yasmine  
Boujerfaoui**



