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17

ATLAS CURVES by Ayman Abdelilah



EMY **شباب
متمكّن**
Empowering Moroccan Youth



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PEACE LILIES

PEACE. This vague word that beholds all the beautiful feelings of comfort, tranquility, and calm is not only reflected on the youth frequenting my Connect Institute, but also the flowers in our office have their peace-slice. It is very rare in my beloved country to gather a large number of youth who have different ages, backgrounds, and preferences without any arguments arising among them. Besides interacting together most of the time, our youth do not only respect their differences but they see them as a raw material from which they can extract a variety of products in music, theatre, handmade creations, and web areas. Going back to the flowers, in the western culture, they are a symbol of good will; which in this case our good will to build a better Morocco for the generations to come.



Hannah Isbell

MY MOROCCAN EXPERIENCE

This week marks my last week that I will be spending here in Morocco. My last moments here are quite bittersweet, as I am looking forward to returning home to my family, friends, and the familiar surroundings of Seattle, but I have also grown used to getting up every morning and coming to spend my time at Connect Institute.

I came to Connect Institute to learn about the educational system here in Morocco, but I learned about so much more than that in the past three months. Many of these things are important life lessons that (hopefully) I will not lose sight of when I get home.

Here are just a few examples of these lessons:

- It is a good idea to get outside of my comfort zone. I experienced this not only physically, but also on an emotional level, especially during my travels around the country and from hearing different stories from the people I met. Some of these things really made me question the world around me.
- I learned what it really means to 'live simply'. In the US, 'living simply' is kind of a hipster trend that means you don't like to wear shoes, you live in a tiny home, and you drink your specialty coffee from the farmers market out of a mason jar. There is just a snooty feeling to it, and it almost ruins the entire point of living simply! Here, it means not living in excess, and taking life as it is. Life itself is just more pure, and people take life as it comes to them.
- I became more comfortable with talking in front of groups of people. I think this barrier was somewhat destroyed when the lovely Malika Zarra made me sing in front of God knows how many people during her workshop here at CI. Although I was not happy with her for making me do that in that moment, I am thankful for that time in retrospect.
- Lastly, and I think the most important lesson I have learned, is to just get off of my high horse. I have become very familiar with the fact that my own way of doing things is not necessarily the best way, and things that I may think I know are not always correct. I have become more accepting to this idea, and I am happy about this because I think it will help me in the future to be more open to what others have to say, and be open to the fact that I could be wrong about something.

These examples are just a few of the lessons I have learned, and I am more than happy that I decided to work with Connect Institute. It was a rewarding experience that I would not trade for anything, and I am very happy to have met all of the new friends that I made here in Morocco.

I also just wanted to say thank you to everyone who made me feel so welcome here, as these past few months would have been much more difficult without you all. Each person that I have met at Connect Institute has something special about them, and it was an absolute joy finding out all of these little things about you all. Thank you for welcoming me to your country, and my door will always be wide open to any of you.



Soukaina Hermas

MA SOCIÉTÉ IDÉALE

Une nouvelle occasion pour raconter notre quotidien dans le plus beau pays du monde s'est présentée. Cette fois nous avons accentué notre discussion sur l'état délabré des hôpitaux, des participants ont raconté leurs expériences. Nous avons ri aux larmes, tellement les anecdotes racontées étaient improbables de se dérouler dans ce lieu. Mais je suis certaine qu'au fond de chacun de nous c'était des larmes de tristesse non de joie qui coulaient.

Cette discussion m'a laissée un goût amer de la réalité. Et je me suis mise à réfléchir, à penser, rêver pour être précise. J'ai rêvé d'un monde meilleur, d'une société marocaine meilleure. Puis je me suis aperçue que j'ai les pieds sur terre et que ma petite taille ne me permet pas d'avoir la tête dans les nuages. Hélas, je n'ai pas pu faire comme Platon, imaginer la « Cité Idéale » et avoir une vision sur ma propre utopie.

Pour ne pas baisser les bras, et être pessimiste, je me suis demandé si c'était possible de détacher l'idéal de la perfection, et lier l'idéal à quelque chose de plus concret. La société est constituée de plusieurs individus, chaque personne diffère de l'autre. Ce qui me paraît idéal pourrait être trop perfectionniste pour lui, et très standard pour elle. Ma société idéale devrait être réaliste je sais que c'est paradoxale mais c'est MON imagination.

Mon rêve est simple mais complexe. Je rêve que chaque personne prenne sa responsabilité sans attendre que les autres en fassent de même. Ma société idéale est réalisable si nous mettons la main dans la main et nous nous mobilisons pour rendre ainsi.



Badereddine Bouzoid

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Since this number of the magazine is published in Mars, I would like to highlight the UN's international women's day, March, 8th.

There are so many issues facing humanity today. One of the most complicated ones is poverty, and when it comes to Morocco, according to the World Bank data 8.9% of the population were below poverty line in 2007. So, how can we solve this?

Well, I have never noticed the relationship between women and poverty until it was mentioned by the author Christopher Hitchens during a debate with the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair. He said: "The cure for poverty has a name, in fact: It's called the empowerment of women."

For this reason I chose to mention some Moroccan women whom really showed great competencies in leadership, intelligence, and strength. These women helped erase to the stereotypes that promote women's weakness and their biological role of reproduction.

Group Explore:

This group was created at connect Institute, a space to empower Moroccan youth and develop their problem solving skills. I was lucky to be part of this group among three other ladies: Jihan Nini, Soukaina Hermas, and Najat Ayaou. "Group Explore" is a concept in which we motivate women to travel and discover many places around Morocco, facing the stereotypes and cross the barriers that society set for them.



Kawtar Hafidi

The Moroccan woman Kawtar Hafidi has been named as the director of physics at the U.S department of energy's (DOE) Argonne National Laboratory. This militant woman had her degree in Physics from Mohamed V University; 1995. After that she moved to Paris Sud University where she received her PhD. She has written many contributions in the field of quantum physics. Besides, she works as an associate chief at Argonne laboratory.



Merieme Chadid

Merieme received her PhD in Astronomy and Space from Paul Sabatier University. She was an astronomer, and first Moroccan citizen, to set foot on the South Pole (Antarctica). In 2006, she was the leader of an international scientific team that installed a major astronomical observatory in Antarctica and that was when she placed the Moroccan flag at the South Pole.



Zineb Ben Hassoun

تأنيب ضمير

سالت دموعي في لحظه يأس.. أحسست بحرقه تقطع شرايين قلبي الذي أنقهر وهو يحاول النجاة من ذلك البصر الهائج.. عواصف عنيفة و أمواج كسرت كل ذرة أمل لقلبي في النجاة.. ما الفائدة.. فالقارب الذي كان يحملني ابتلعه محيط الحياة.. تركني وحيدة أسبح و أسبح إلى أن خارت قواي.. و تشنجت ذراعي.. ظلمة السماء و غياب ضوء القمر و تلاعب الأمواج الصارخة بي حطم عزيمتي.. أحببت قاربي كثيرا لكن زرقه المياه أغرتني.. غصت لاكتشف عالم المحيط الأزرق.. وعندما صعدت وجدت قاربي قد ضاع مني و غرق.. فانقلبت الأمواج علي و انهالت العواصف بلا رحمة ولا شفقة تقلبني بين أحضان المحيط العميق وحيدة أصارع الموت.. هكذا يفعل تأنيب الضمير.



Ayman Abdelillah

WORDS & PICTURES

Le cycle de la vie et de la mort me fascine. Toujours lié à une présence physique et sociale, ce cycle me paraît incomplet. Les vivants peuvent mourir sans quitter leurs corps et les morts peuvent mourir encore une deuxième fois, assassinés par leurs successeurs.

Aujourd'hui à la place de ces tombes judéo-chrétiennes on retrouve une terrasse de béton morose et mal finie. Le refuge de quelques amoureux fugitifs et des égarés qui cherchent à allumer un joint ou boire un verre sans se faire attraper par la morale de la société qui les chasse partout où ils vont.

La même image se reproduit en bas, sur la terre désertée de ce quartier blanc qui, aujourd'hui n'est plus.

En 1955 la date de prise de cette photo, dans les maisons comme dans les tombes, il y'avait de la vie. Si la nature a choisi que les habitants du quartier quittent ce monde. Leurs successeurs ont choisi que les habitants des tombes subissent le même destin. Ainsi lieux, mémoires, vivants et morts ont tous été enterrés de nouveau.



SMOKE, SHAKE, SHAME BY ROLAND BARTHES



Khadija Amahal

HCHOUMA

In the most developed countries, governments place great deal of importance on education . That's due to its necessity and importance in order to grow healthy minded generations. Whatever the mission parents start at home to raise their kids and provide them with love and care, school continues to carry this mission by helping these kids sharpen their talents and skills, and prepare them for bigger responsibilities in the future.

One of the main aspects educational institutions focus on is the freedom of speech. During childhood, kids are like a sponge that absorbs anything they are exposed to. They start asking questions about things they are surrounded with , and it's the parents and school's duty to answer them and fill the gaps in their minds. However, in our Moroccan institution this freedom of thought and speech is very narrowed. Since we were kids we had red lines we couldn't approach and whenever we wondered why, we received the famous answer "Hchouma". This one word reply was capable to shut our mouths and discourage us to speak again.

Regardless of the development and advancement that took place around the world, including my country, the phenomena of "Hchouma" still exists in our society. There are many reasons why people use this term, because how on earth would a five year old child say something inappropriate if it wasn't something he learnt from his parents?! That's why, the only logical explanation I can come up with is that people who use this word, lack sufficient knowledge to answer. Therefore, they refuse to be honest with their children and simply say "I don't know". Instead, they block their kids' process of learning and limit their freedom to express.

The negative effect of this habit we inherited from one generation to another, is that it leads to the birth of very narrow minded people who accept whatever is given to them and refuse to discuss many crucial issues under the veil of "Taboos". It also contributes to the birth of citizens who don't know how to control their emotions, nor to confess their true feelings to others who might give them help.

The word "Hchouma" might be a part of our identity and long history, but we need to take into consideration its long term effects. Because the truth is that this word destroys more than it builds. That's why, it's up to us as new and future generation to control its use by putting it in the right frame, or else to find an alternative that results in more open minded communities.



Oumaima Fathi

WOMEN WHO RESHAPED MOROCCO'S HISTORY

Moroccan women's history has been full of pioneers and unexceptional personalities who reshaped our society. Women who inspired generations, who fought for equal rights and who succeeded in a patriarchal society.

Fatima Al-Fihria, is the founder of the oldest university in the world, Al-Qarawiyyin in the imperial city Fez, where she founded one of the ancient libraries of all time. In May 2016, the library has been restored and reopened to the public, with a collection of over 4000 manuscripts including a 9th century Quran.

Khnata bent Bekkar, the wife of Moulay Ismael, is an influential woman who ruled Morocco for twenty years after the death of her husband. She even succeeded in directing Morocco out of the crisis that lasted for thirty years.

In the era of French colonialism, Moroccan women played a major role. They thus demonstrated against the colonialists in many regions of the kingdom, for instance, in Rif Mountains alongside Abdelkarim Khtabi. At that time, one of the key militants was Malika al-Fassi, the only woman from Istiqlal party who signed the independence manifesto in the 11th January 1944. She also provided education for unprivileged women.

After the independence, several organizations addressed the women's rights issues in Morocco. Princess Lalla Aicha, King Hassan II's sister, was the president of a women's organization called the Union Nationale des Femmes Marocaines. She, indeed, played a great role in advancing women's rights movement in Morocco.

However, Moroccan women have not only marked the political and social view but also literature, sports, music and various domains.

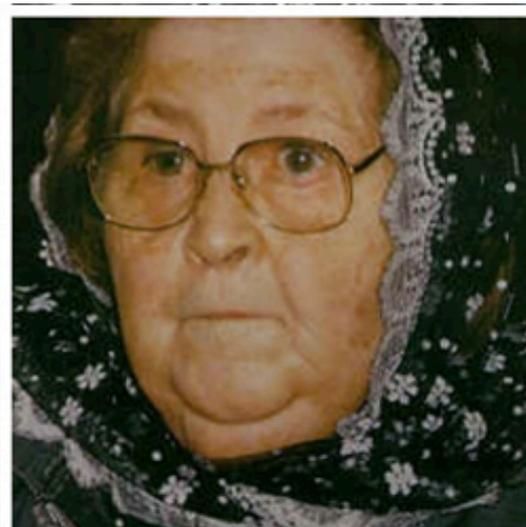
Touria Chaoui was the first Moroccan and Arab woman to become a pilot, by the age of 16. In athletics, Nawal El Moutawakil is an icon and a role model for many other women. She is a former hurdler who won the women's 400 meters hurdles at Summer Olympics in 1984 and became the first female Muslim and African Olympic champion. In 2007, she was named the minister of sports.

In literature, Laila Lalami, a very popular figure who was the first Moroccan author to publish a book in English. She started writing fiction and nonfiction in 1996. In 2016, Lalami was named both a columnist for The Nation magazine and a critic-at-large for The Los Angeles Times Book Review.

Fatima Mernissi, a critical and inspiring personality, whose books and works exceeded boundaries and traveled the globe. Her book "Beyond the Veil" was translated into numerous languages. She is a weighty reference in anthropology and sociology.

Another important female figure who changed the Moroccan society, through her inspiring social work and tender heart, is Aicha Echana. In 1985, the Moroccan Mother Theresa founded the association "Solidarité Féminine" (ASF), which defends women's rights and helps single mothers in Morocco.

Morocco, throughout history, had limitless examples of successful, intellectual and inspirational females who inspired different fields, who proved that willpower, hard work and perseverance are the key to succeed. Through their stories, these women enlighten the path for next females who will take the lead to change their home countries and the world.





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