

# BARQIYYA



## Word from the Director

### Amending Area Studies Bill HR 3077

I would have liked to use this space to tell you about the course-The Nile River: Interdisciplinary Perspectives-which the Program has sponsored again this year in January. Or, I would have liked to give you highlights about the Forum for Korea-Middle East Cooperation that was hosted by AUC and the Program in mid-December, which might become an annual event, alternating between Cairo and Seoul. In the coming issues, inshaallah, for I feel I cannot avoid the dangerous Bill HR 3077 waiting to be voted on in the US Congress, after having already passed through the House.

If approved and signed by the President, this bill could have a chilling effect on Middle East and Area studies in general. The bill, among other things, proposes the creation of a government "Advisory Board," (sounds cozily patriarchal, doesn't it?) to monitor the activities of the centers that receive "Title VI" money from Uncle Sam. Our Program is not eligible for the subsidy, although we are at an American university and a large number of our graduate students are Americans. Therefore, we will be spared some heavy breathing by members of the Board, which could make us a safe haven for free thought (one way of feeling democracy in the Middle East is by suppressing it in America!) Nonetheless, the stakes are intellectually high for everyone.

The premise behind establishing the Board that would decide on who gets the money is that M.E. and Area studies in general have failed to serve American foreign policy and its beneficent goals, and they are dominated by scholars: who are under the influence of the disorienting work of the late Edward Said; who are leftists and Arabs and Muslims (note the mixing of apples and oranges), i.e. anti-American; who failed to predict Islamic revival; who are critical of Israel-ergo, anti-Semitic; who are enamored of the-

ory and not agile enough to study reality without theoretical crutches. Such "re-presentation" of M.E. studies has been challenged by a number of M.E. scholars, including in a January essay by Zachary Lockman, a historian at N.Y. University, in MERIP Online. The propagators and promoters of the Bill come from an alliance of pro-Israelis and Neo-conservatives.

What I want to underline is that successive US governments countenanced little interest in listening to what many M.E. scholars had to say; or, to be more accurate, they lent their ears only to those who were part of the circles of power in the first place and who told power what it liked to hear or was politically expedient. Had they sought opinions from other sources, the mess we are all in would in all likelihood have been avoided.

The present administration in particular, is a perfect non-listener. When it decided to invade Iraq, it did not heed the voices of millions in the streets around the Globe, the UN inspectors, two of its main NATO partners, and even its own intelligence analysts. How do you suppose it was going to listen to the opinions of mere scholars who offered well-researched, theoretically-informed, and nuanced picture of Iraq? The administration already had a bad theory and an objective, and it made reality listen to these.

Yet the Bill requires the concerned M.E. studies centers to "foster debate on American foreign policy from diverse perspectives," if they are to receive Title VI money.

I propose the following amendment: "the U.S. government in formulating its foreign policy henceforth shall give due consideration to these diverse perspectives." 🙏

Dr. Sharif Elmusa

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## In the Name of Nationalism

News media in the United States tends to portray the Middle East (not including Israel) as a unified Arab and Muslim whole, where nationalities are irrelevant. Although this may be completely true in the Middle East's struggle against the influence of the West and hate for the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the media has created a far more encompassing image. Perhaps this is why I was quite surprised by a conversation I had with a Jordanian a few years ago, while I was studying Arabic in Irbid. Knowing that Jordan has a very large Palestinian population and that there is high competition for good jobs, I asked a Jordanian student if the street sweepers were Palestinian. He responded, "O, no! Those are Egyptians." His tone made it sound as if only Egyptians would accept such a job. After hearing this comment I was interested in learning about the social status of other non-Jordanians.

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# MIDDLE EAST TALKS



## Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, and the Caliphate Discourse at the Turn of the 20th Century

Initially, it was a group of Ottoman intellectuals known as Young Ottomans who, from their exile in Europe in the middle of 19th century, began formulating ideas and programs of Pan-Islamic nature for the survival of the Ottoman Empire. By the second half of 19th century, the Ottomans lost most of the territories in Africa to France and Britain and in Europe to Russia and the newly independent Balkan states. Modernization policies also had an adverse effect by plunging the country into bankruptcy under the burden of European loans. In the second half of the 19th century the country also witnessed an influx of Muslim refugees, especially, intellectuals from the Muslim countries that were subjugated by European powers (India, Algiers, Crimea and Central Asia Khanates). These intellectuals informed the Ottomans of the plight of the Muslim peoples and of their disabilities under foreign rule. As a result there was a growing discontent and resentment against the European powers, their policies towards the Ottoman Empire as well as the larger Muslim world in general. At the same time, because of the colonization of most Muslim countries, the Ottoman Empire was seen as the last stronghold of the Dar-al-Islam by intellectuals both inside and outside the country.

In addition, it became clear to the Ottomans that separatist tendencies ran much higher in the territories where Christian subjects of the Empire were in majority, than among the Muslim population which-although comprised of different nationalities-was not yet thinking of themselves in national terms (maybe only with a notable exception of Albanians). Thus Pan-Islamism and the Caliphate was seen as the most efficient political ideology that could ensure the loyalty of the Ottoman Muslim subjects and integrity of the state.

Of all the Ottoman Sultans it was Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1908) who came to be regarded as the main ideologue and promoter of Ottoman Pan-Islamism and the Caliphate. In the beginning of his reign sufficient momentum was created to implement Islamist policies that would strengthen the internal coherence of the Empire. Soon after Abdulhamid's ascendance to power the first Constitution of the Ottoman Empire was adopted that designated Islam as a state religion.

Under Abdulhamid's rule the Hejaz railway, perhaps the most important project of Abdulhamid's reign, was built. Reportedly, Abdulhamid himself always spoke of it as "my greatest dream." If we remember that by the turn of the 20th century the railway politics was somewhat reminiscent of today's oil politics, we can grasp the importance the Hijaz railway construction for Muslims all over the world. Half of its funds came from private donations by Muslims; the contribution of Indian Muslims was particularly significant. The Hijaz railway (Damascus to Medina line) came to be regarded as a symbol of capability of Muslims to resist

European superiority by showing what the united efforts of the Muslims could achieve (Ozgan 108-109).

However, by the end of the 20th century the Ottomans' claim to the Caliphate began to be contested by Western power and by Arab intellectuals within the Empire itself.

The first challenge to Abdulhamid's Caliphate came from London in 1880 where Louis Sabunji, a Catholic reverend of the Syrian Church, started the publication of an Arabic paper, Al-Khalifa. The very first issue of this paper, after tracing the history of the Caliphate, concluded that the Ottoman claim was a fiction. Al-Khalifa also charged the Ottomans with the suppression of the Arabs and urged the Arabs to rise against Ottoman rule.

The British were also growing weary of the influence that Sultan Abdulhamid enjoyed among the Muslims of India due to his Caliphal status and suspected him of intrigues against the British authorities in the subcontinent. In the environment of suspicion

and fear of Pan-Islamic sentiments, the British orientalist and politicians started designing schemes for replacing the Caliphate of "Unspeakable Turk" with an Arab Mecca-based Caliphate. The political authority of which would only be constrained to the Hejaz, while religious authority would be recognized universally.

Both British and Arab supporters of a future Arab Caliphate were keen on emphasizing that classical theory of Caliphate required the Caliph to

be of Qureysh descent, the requirement which Ottoman Sultans apparently didn't fulfill. In 1881 the English writer Wilfrid Blunt in his "The Future of Islam" called for a Quraishi Caliphate limited to spiritual matters to be established in Mecca under British Protection (Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islam 241).

The political project of Arab Caliphate ultimately culminated in the Arab Revolt led by Sherif Hussein of Mecca. Although, his revolt was supported by many Arab intellectuals of the time such as Rashid Rida, who even traveled to hajj in 1916 to show his solidarity, Sherif's attempts to acquire wider international recognition as the Caliph of all Muslims failed. After the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the Sherif could secure bay'ah only from Hejaz and from the British-protected Iraq and Transjordan, where his sons became kings. As the Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam writes on the bid of Sherif Hussein for Caliphate, "with so many others [Egyptian King Fu'ad, Yemeni Imam Yahya, and many others] aspiring to the Caliphate and with much of Islamic world seeing him as a British client who had betrayed the caliph during WW I, Husayn's claims evoked rejection almost everywhere" (Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam, 242). 🌱

By Alima Bissenove

I observed that in addition to Egyptians, Iraqis and Pakistanis were generally looked upon as inferior. Even Palestinians, who made up the majority of the population in Irbid and had Jordanian citizenship, were considered lower status than "true Jordanians." My first trip to the Middle East completely disrupted my previous conception of pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism (at least on the micro level) as I discovered that American media was misleading and that nationalism played a much bigger role in the lives of the Middle Eastern people.

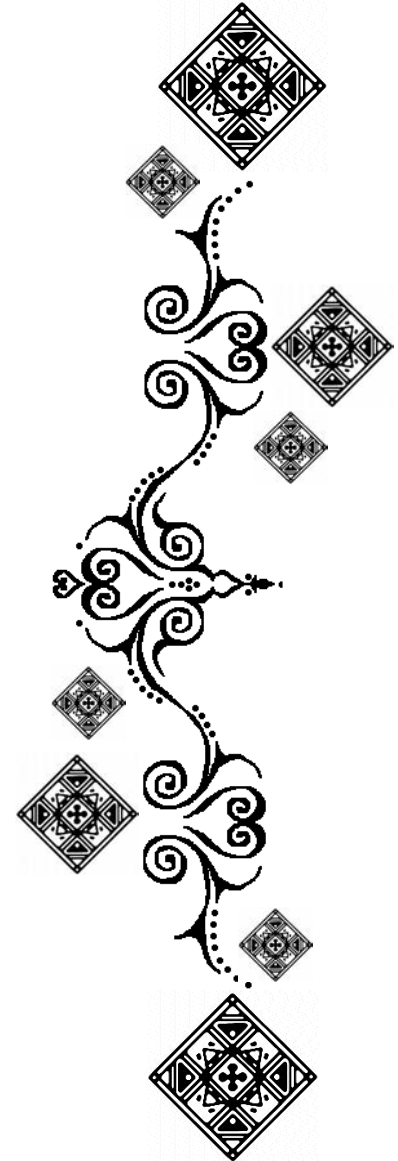
I found through other personal experiences in Egypt that the social structure based on national identity is not unique to Jordan. Most of the countries in the Middle East, if not all, use nationalism to justify discrimination (despite most being fellow Arab and/or Muslim). My wife recently went shopping at a local supermarket with our children when a man she didn't know picked up our daughter and carried her around the store. When my wife showed discomfort with a strange man walking off with her child (something that is not socially acceptable in the United States), the man stopped and explained that she shouldn't worry. "I am not Egyptian," he declared, "I am Turkish." My wife, worrying over that fact that he was a stranger and not over his nationality, didn't know how to respond. However, the man seemed to believe that his nationality settled everything.

The Gulf region is also a good example where nationalistic views discriminate against non-Gulf Arabs. Egyptians who

share the same religion and similar values as other Gulf Arabs are usually given lower paying, dirtier, or harder labor than other nationalities. Secondly, Palestinians receive a lot of verbal support from Arab nations, including the Gulf, but how are the Palestinians treated within those countries' borders? Although some countries are better than others, the fact is that sharing a religious and ethnic heritage appears unable to create solidarity among all the Muslim Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa.

So what is the point of all of my observations? It is not that discrimination exists among a people with common ethnic and religious backgrounds. That is certainly true in many other parts of the world including my home country. The point is that no one seems to acknowledge the existence of discrimination in the Middle East—at least not publicly. It has also been my personal experience that when I bring up the topic of discrimination or racism with my Arab colleagues at the university or with other acquaintances, they dispute that there is a problem or that it even exists. Many point out the history of America and contrast that with the history of the Middle East, explaining that Islam does not discriminate against race or color. I agree, however, nationalism does. Nationalism which is embraced by millions all over the world fosters division among us all, including within the Arab world. The sooner we realize this rather than deny it, the sooner we can work to overcome it. 🙏

*by Randy Crisler*



## OVER POPULATION AND POVERTY ~ CAIRO'S UNSEEN DISTRICTS ~

On the outside, the Mansheyet Nasser and Zabbaline districts located in the heart of Cairo give little indication to the disastrous mishaps that carry on behind. Beyond the outer walls, another part of Cairo exists, secluded from the eyes of every-day people who might pass by these areas constantly, and not realize that the nucleus of poverty-stricken life resides behind. Yet they are the epitome of reality; world's of twisted turmoil and ghetto-conditions that go far beyond misery.

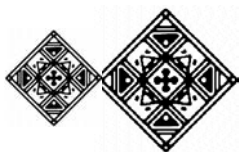
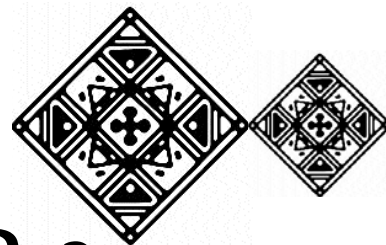
The living conditions extend from basic poverty to destitution, and go beyond to

areas absolutely unfit for human residence. The Zabbaline district in particular, being Cairo's local garbage disposal area, is 'home' to many men, women and children, as well as various other animal species. The question as to why people should become subjected to such conditions of destitution is one that can be approached from many directions, first and foremost of them being over-population, and its various unfavorable consequences.

Cairo is subjected to the constant influx of people. According to research from Arab Society: Class, Gender, Power, &

Development (Hopkins and Ibrahim, AUC Press) problems arise when villagers leave the rural areas, and head for the city in hope of bettering their conditions, both domestically and financially. Socioeconomic problems generate quickly however, when they do not find the opportunities they seek, and hence the city becomes crowded with thousands of unemployed people. Many wind up in the urban and often poverty-stricken parts of the city. The areas are usually the most deteriorated and on the verge of collapse, but are the only refuge for those in desperate need of affordable or free accommodation. According to the text, the areas

# Poetry Selec -



## ECHO & ELIXIR 2

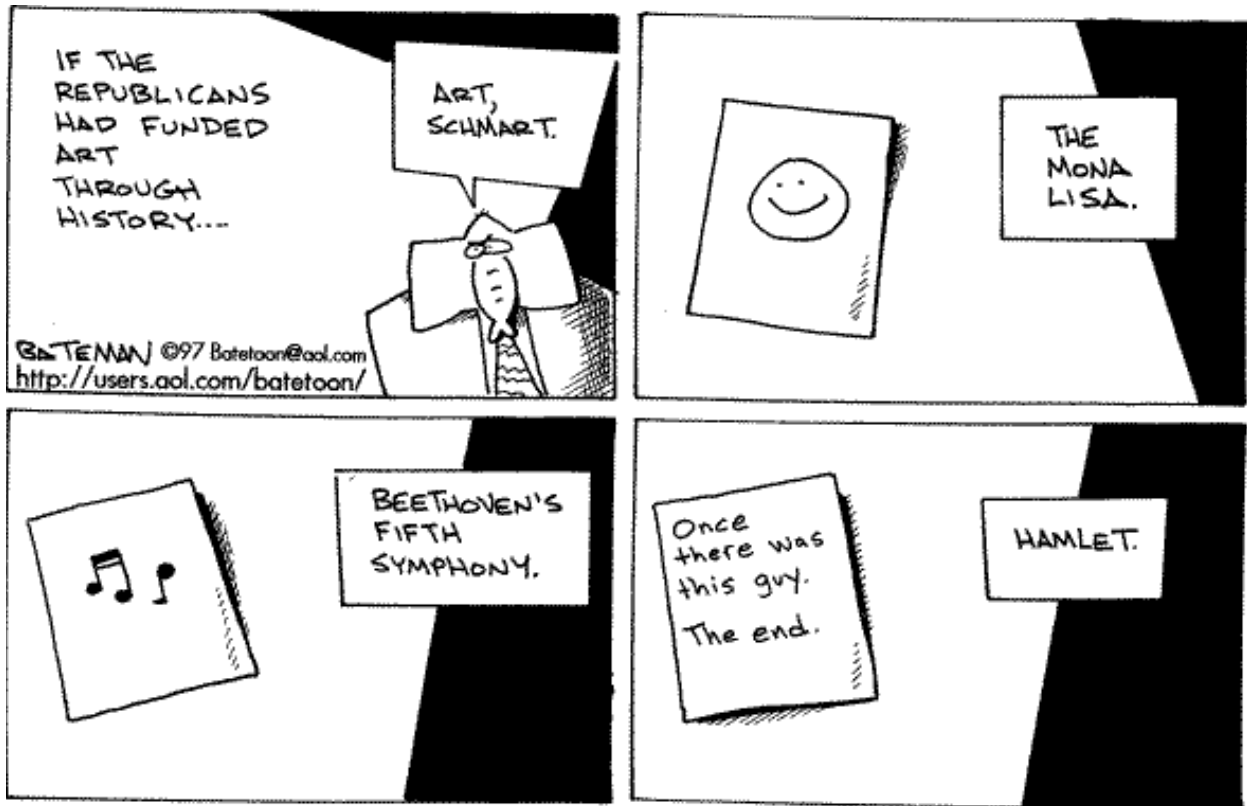
By Khaled Mattawa

Cairo's taxi drivers speak to me in English.  
I answer and they say your Arabic is good.  
How long have you been with us? All my life  
I tell them, but I'm never believed.  
They speak to me in Farsi, speak to me in Greek,  
and I answer with mountains of gold and silver,  
ghost ships sailing the weed-choked seas.  
And when they speak to me in Spanish,  
I say Moriscos and Alhambra.  
I say Jews rescued Ottoman boats.  
And they speak to me in Portugese,  
all my life I tell them, coffee, cocoa,  
Indians and poisoned spears.  
I say Afonso king of Bikongo writing  
Manuel to free his enslaved sons.  
And Cairo's taxi drivers tell me  
your Arabic is surprisingly good.  
Then they speak to me in Italian,  
And I tell them how I lay swaddled  
a month's walk from here. I tell them  
camps in the desert, barbed wire, wives,  
and daughters dying, camels frothing disease,  
the sand stretching an endless pool.  
And they say so good so good.  
How long have you been with us?  
All my life, but I'm never believed.  
Then they speak to me in French,

and I answer Jamila, Leopold, Stanley,  
baskets of severed hands and feet.  
I say the horror, battles of Algiers.  
And they speak to me in English  
And I say Lucknow, Arbenz, I say indigo,  
Hiroshima, continents soaked in tea.  
I play the drum beat of stamps. I invoke  
Mrs. Cummings, U.S. consul in Athens,  
I say Ishi, Custer, Wounded Knee.  
And Cairo's taxi drivers tell me  
Your Arabic is unbelievably good.  
Tell the truth now, tell the truth,  
how long have you been with us?  
I say my first name is little lion,  
my last name is broken branch.  
I sing "Happiness uncontainable"  
and "fields greening in March"  
until I'm sad and tired of truth,  
and as usual I'm never believed.  
Then they met through congestion,  
Gritty air, narrow streets crowded with  
Pepsi and Daweoo and the sunken faces  
of the poor. And then we arrive, Cairo's  
taxi drivers and I speak all the languages  
of the world, and we argue and argue about  
corruption, disillusionment, the missed chances,  
the wicked binds, the cataclysmic fares.

### About the Poet

Khaled Mattawa was born in Benghazi, Libya where he had his primary education. In 1979 he emigrated to the United States. He lived in the South for many years, finishing high school in Louisiana and completing bachelors degrees in political science and economics at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He went on to earn an MA in English and an MFA in creative writing from Indiana University where he taught creative writing and won an Academy of American Poets award. A professor of English and Creative Writing at California State University, Northridge, he has published poems in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *New England Review*, *Callaloo*, *Poetry East*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Black Warrior Review* and *The Pushcart Prize* anthology. He was awarded the Alfred Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University for 1995-96. Currently, he is assistant professor of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He read this poem on February 12, 2004 at Emerging Voices Series, organized by English and Comparative Literature and the Creative Writing Program at AUC. It is available in his poetry collection, *Zodiac and Echoes*, 2003. To find out more about Khaled, visit his site : <http://www.webdelsol.com/mattawa/>



Courtesy of users.aol.com/batetoon/

### Untitled

They beg me to remember.  
They plead, and I hear them  
in melodies long forgotten. I see them,  
in smiling, imaginary faces  
in the doorway.  
And I feel them,  
in phantom hands that slide through my hair.  
I smell them.. perfumed air that drifts...  
I sit in its midst, and I am overcome, bound,  
confined in cocoons of invisible air  
as thick as fabric.  
I am incapable of understanding  
and of fighting what I cannot understand...  
Immune? No longer,  
to whatever (bliss? agony?)  
a presence and absence causes.  
It retraces and rebels  
against the will of my logic.  
Only a certain madness  
continues to stand  
against whatever scrap of reason  
residing against the corners of this dusty mind.  
rain...  
wash....  
... no avail.  
It still clings, like wet leaves  
to the surface of running rivers.  
Running rivers that should  
(but don't... won't?)  
lead me far,  
far  
away.

By Magda Elsehrawi

## Dream of Escape

What a dream is that dream  
Dream of escape.  
Escape from our awful life,  
awful days.  
Awful things.  
Escape to a place where there  
is no place.  
Escape to sky... escape to fly  
there, there... and there.  
Anywhere, with no fear.  
I want to be born again...  
Newborn, without pain.  
I've lost all my patience.  
I've never known my real soul.  
Everybody will ask:  
Who is he?!  
... and my answer will be,  
he is  
The Sea.

# Absentee Voters Unite!

Having just arrived back in Egypt from an extended stay in the United States, I can assure that the American election campaign is full speed ahead. Military service, past affairs - all the usual information is being dug up and thrown around. Vietnam is proving to be just as important as the position of the candidates on Iraq.

I have a secret to tell: I have never once voted in an American presidential election. My explanation for such inaction as a conscious, politically-concerned adult lies in my identity as a Palestinian-American. Repeatedly I assured myself that because my interest lies in American foreign policy, especially as it pertains to Palestine/Israel, that my vote would not make a difference and that there are no alternatives to American foreign policy in the region. Would the Democrats offer a different view than the Republicans on the issue of Palestine? Perhaps softer in the rhetoric but substantially the answer is no. Both parties in America strongly support Israeli policies and both seek the Jewish American vote. Yes, there are a handful of American politicians who actually dare to speak out against Israel, however the overwhelming majority play along the same tired and counterproductive political lines. So, while I try to justify not voting when I know and understand the importance of practicing citizenship, there has been no bigger justification to vote until now.

George W. Bush has compelled me to reconsider my position on voting in the US. This President and his administration have taken American political and military action on the world scene to unprecedented extremes: the invention of pre-

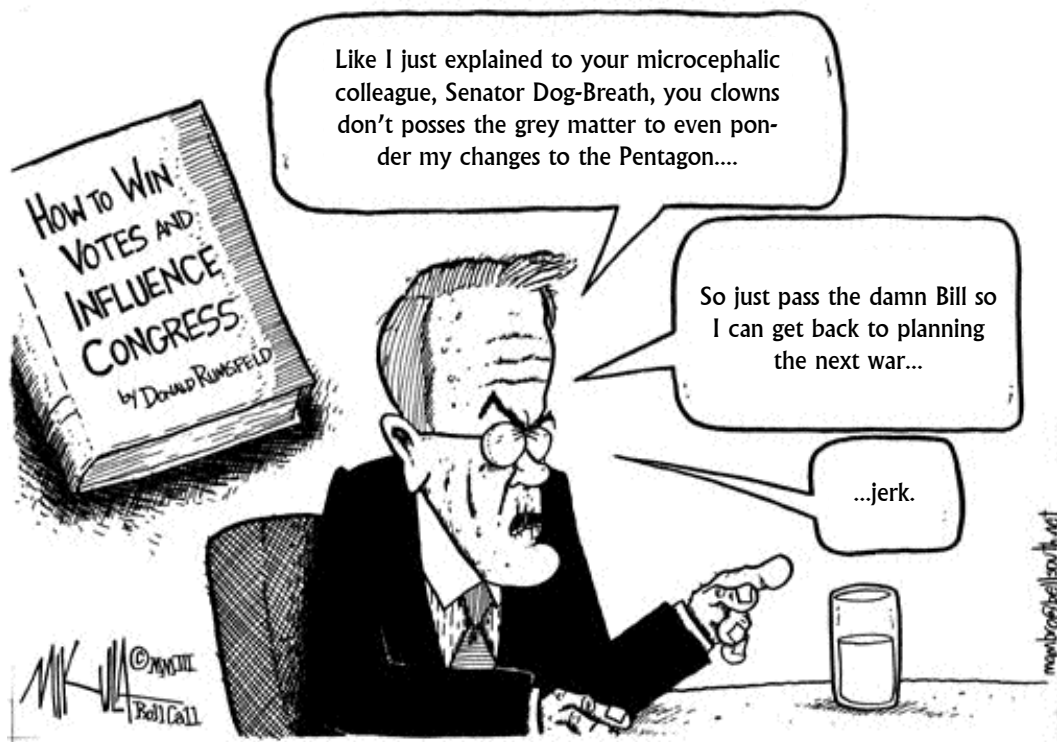
emptive wars to bring peace and security (?!) and 21st Century imperial interests. One author describes it as the 'Israelization of American policy.' Thus, the United States has done wonders to alienate itself on the world stage. While 20 years ago Arab-Americans or Middle Easterners might have said the US was a land of opportunity, the association is quite different today.

My current position is of a concerned world citizen and a Palestinian-American. This Administration's appetite for domination in the region is something that cannot be separated from the issue of Palestine/Israel, corrupt Arab governments, or the inability of the populations of the region to act. While I know that John Kerry has the same ideologically pro-Israel stance that many of his predecessors have, the time has come to stop Bush & Co. for the sake of the U.S., this region and the world.

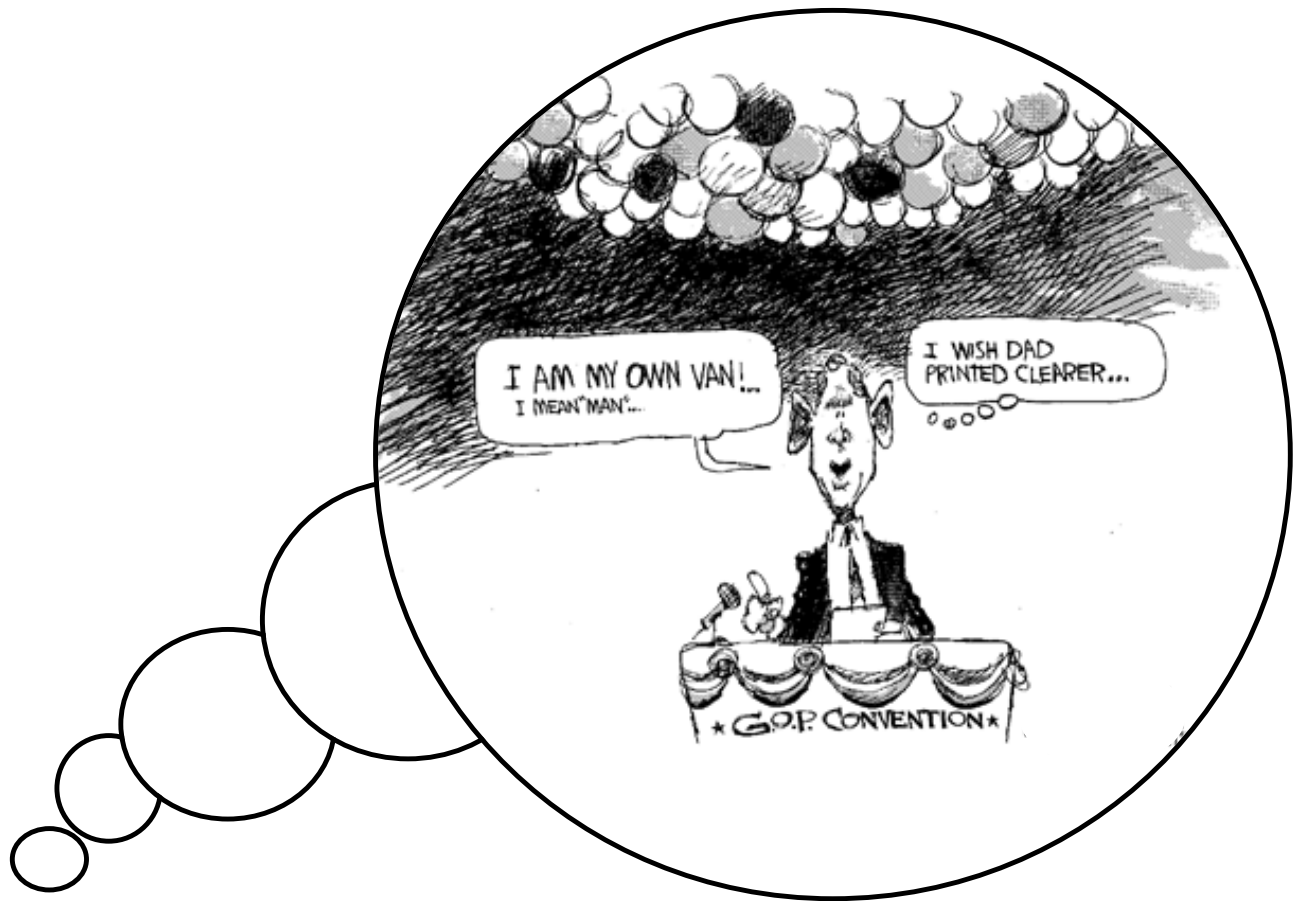
This is a call to all Americas at AUC. If you feel the way I do about the current administration, please join me in voting Bush & Co. out of office this year. Let's send a message: going against the majority of international public opinion will not be tolerated.

I for one will not let the luxury of being able to vote slip away anymore. The practice of democratic citizenship is a responsibility that we must all strive for if we are to produce or influence any change in the environments in which we live. 🙌

by Jumana Bishara



Courtesy of [www.Bushisms.com](http://www.Bushisms.com)



Cartoon by Mike Luckovich  
 Courtesy of [www.bushisms.com](http://www.bushisms.com)

**Over Population and Poverty continued...**

"These (urban) areas have become infested by vice, violence, organized crime and religious extremism" (70). Problems such as these become inevitable when survival is the main endeavor for people who have no home, nor income from the government. Hard manual labor is the prime source of survival, especially in the Mansheyet Nasser district, where people seem to have created their own empire within the deteriorating, mud-brick suburb. Within, both men and women set about working with their hands, making pots, clothes, electrical wires, shoes or figurines. In many cases, the homes are 'attached' to the work place, located either next door, or on the floors above or below. With an abundance of children swarming through the tight streets in the area, and not in school, they will (as they have for generations) eventually take on the profession of their fathers. In Zabbaline, the main profession is the manual sorting of trash and preparing it for recycling. People (including whole families) live in the areas where they sort their piles, again

with their children as the extra pair of hands. For these children, education becomes a secondary choice, and not a privilege.

In the places such as Mansheyet Nasser and Zabbaline, over-population does not arise only due to the inflow of migrants from rural areas and lack of opportunity. Lack of health care services that promote awareness to birth control and contraception procedures are also a problem. The text suggests that the lack is due to the government cuts in funds to the areas, leading to the deterioration of health and medical services, education and security. They are a secluded and deliberately snubbed part of society, where people on the 'outside' are oblivious to their conditions and needs. With little or no employment opportunities, no government funding, and no local institution to provide even the basics of birth control, their situation only gets worse. Sadly however, birth control may not be a favorable option even if it was provided, due to the dependence on children for manual labor. With the government adopting a passive role in providing

change and improvement in the lives of these people, implementing their policies of privatization and financial adjustments the people in these secluded districts feel alienated by their government and abandoned by the system that does not provide them with even their basic needs - needs that are hindered and hence create their crowded, destitute state in the city's most deteriorating and dehumanizing areas. The situation is a serious one.

The people of Mansheyet Nasser and Zabbaline are real, their situation is a growing problem that needs to emerge from behind the walls, and solutions need to be found. Cairo is not a city that severely lacks money or facility. The country as a whole has managed over the past decade to reach peaks of technology, spending millions on projects that have proven themselves successful (for example, the launching of satellites, or the founding of Toshka, among others). How is it that Cairo has come this far and still has sons and daughters living under mountains of trash and compost, or in tight, humid



*Courtesy of Sherif Arafa, Rose-el-Youssef Cartoonist*

**CONTACT US....** If you have any questions, comments or contributions (creative writing, articles, or pictures) please feel free to contact us. Our email is [mesprgrm@aucegypt.edu](mailto:mesprgrm@aucegypt.edu), room 241 SS building, extensions # 6165 and 6164.

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