



COMMUNITY
CINEMA

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ARUSI

PERSIAN WEDDING

By Marjan Tehrani

Set against the turbulent relationship between the United States and Iran, Iranian-American filmmaker Marjan Tehrani captures the struggle and excitement of Alex and Heather as they plan a Persian Islamic wedding in Iran. But when Alex's Iranian-born parents and Heather's conservative American father meet for the first time, cultures clash and test the couple to their limits.

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FROM THE FILMMAKER

I will never forget the Iran-U.S. hostage crisis in 1979 that lasted 444 days. I was barely six years old at the time and my brother was 10. I remember one day he came home terrified because some kids had threatened to beat him up because our dad was Iranian. I think it was from that day that I decided to keep my Iranian heritage more or less to myself. As the years passed, Iran didn't seem to dissolve away in the news like other countries. There was an unsettling animosity towards Iranians after the hostage crisis that never seemed to fully disappear and after the Algiers Accord was passed in 1981, the US severed all ties with Iran. Today, 27 years later, there are still no diplomatic relations between the two countries.

My father, however, always kept his country close to his heart and continued to travel back and forth throughout the years. After losing my American mother to cancer when I was 9 years old, my father became our primary care provider and because of this, my brother and I lived between two very different worlds: inside our home there were many aspects of Iranian tradition and culture practiced and outside of our home, we lived like two American kids. However in many ways, I don't think my brother and I ever felt like we fully belonged to either culture. Ever since I can remember, I have been answering questions about Iran's government and political policies as if I am suppose to be an expert on the topic. For me, there has never been a separation between the personal and the political when it comes to these two countries in relationship.

So in 2004, my brother and I were finally granted Iranian passports, which meant we could travel to Iran for the first time since we left as children before the hostage crisis. I was eager to see Iran with my own eyes. While planning for this trip, my brother decided that he wanted to take his American bride to Iran and amongst my father's Iranian family and friends, have a Persian wedding. With the onset of the U.S. Iraq war and tensions high between the U.S. and the Middle East, many people questioned us taking a trip to Iran at this time.

However, we were all determined to go and I saw this as an amazing opportunity to follow my brother and his bride Heather on their journey with a camera. I wanted to follow them as they dealt with the complicated logistics of taking the trip, encountering family conflicts and trepidation and interacting with everyday people in Iran. Through their experiences, both individually and together, I wanted to see another version of Iran than what I was used to seeing in the news. I also saw this an excellent opportunity to make sense of the tainted relationship between two countries that have had a complicated rapport for the last 60 years and to interweave this history in with the couple's journey.

As an Iranian-American filmmaker, and as a sister to the groom, I was in a very unique position to gain intimate access to a fascinating country that has been sealed off to Americans (and most Western countries) for a quarter century. In this process, I learned so much from the people we encountered along the way. From those who live in the oldest traditional village in Iran, Abiyanee, to the ancient capital of Esfahan, to the bustling modern capital, Tehran, the film is an

honest and diverse portrayal of Iranians' daily struggles for personal and political freedom and their desire to connect to the Western world. On the same token, it was amazing to see the Alex and Heather transform throughout their journey and truly embrace Iran from their new experiences while shedding their past conceptions. I too was transformed in the process of making this film. I came up against many challenges in telling such a personal story and trying to find a balance in the retelling a very complicated multi-dimensional history.

Ultimately it was my goal to tell an intimate and personal story that was accessible and universal at the same time. I hope that the audience walks away from the film with a deeper understanding of Iran/U.S. relations. Over time, the actions—and reactions—of these governments have caused enormous misunderstanding and misconception among their citizens, resulting in the absence of even the most basic opportunities for exchange. Both Iranians and Americans have been forced to rely on politicized media representations that have been stripped of their multidimensional perspectives. This film takes the opportunity at this critical time in the history of U.S. relations with the Middle East to explore the metaphoric connection between two culturally diverse individuals in a marriage and two polarized countries in a relationship. While you take the journey to Iran with Alex and Heather, I hope you are able to connect with what it means to be of a mixed complex identity or to marry into another culture. As relations between Iran and the U.S. continues to be volatile and fraught with finger pointing, I also hope that you are able to gain a deeper understanding of pivotal historical moments in history where Iran and the U.S. have both played a role. I believe that understanding the past opens the space to move forward and create new possibilities for future relations.

Marjan Tehrani, Filmmaker, ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING



THE FILM

When Alex and Heather decide to have a Persian wedding, Alex's sister, filmmaker Marjan Tehrani, documents their experience. The couple plans to travel to Iran, where Alex's extended family lives, to celebrate their wedding, but in order to do so, they must first marry under Islamic law. So even though they are already married, Alex and Heather marry again in the Iran Interest Section of the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C.

As a Christian marrying an Iranian American Muslim, Heather has had to overcome the objections of her father, whose feelings are colored not only by religious belief but also by political views. A meeting of the two families becomes tense when Alex's stepmother asks about American Iranian relations and Heather's father voices his support of President Bush's Middle East policies. Although Heather's family opposes the trip to Iran because of safety concerns, she and Alex proceed with their plans.

Scenes of the couple's travel preparations are interspersed with documentary footage of historical events in Iran during the latter half of the 20th century, when Britain's exploitation of Iran's oil resources led to the nationalization of the oil industry and the expulsion of the British by Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1951. After a British- and American-instigated coup against the democratically elected

Mossadegh put Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in power, the country embarked on an effort to modernize and Westernize. But when the shah's policies resulted in revolution, he fled the country. Then in 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini became Iran's leader and instituted measures to purge Western influence from the country and make it a strict Islamic state.

Strained official relations between the United States and Iran notwithstanding, Alex and Heather receive a warm and enthusiastic reception from Alex's family in Tehran. Family members reminisce about Alex's own parents and their interfaith marriage, and as the wedding day approaches, the women of the family take charge of preparing Heather for the event, a far more elaborate affair than she expected.

The words of President Bush's "axis of evil" speech provide a frame for the film, articulating U.S. policy toward Iran. Despite the two governments' strong differences, the picture that emerges from the film is more mixed. Some Iranians express a sense of uneasiness toward the United States, but in their travels to the ancient cities of Abaniyeh and Esfahan, Alex and Heather have met average people who clearly have strong positive feelings for America. As Heather's father says about Iran, "The situation is not clear."



INDIVIDUALS FEATURED IN ARUSI (PERSIAN WEDDING)

Alex and Heather Tehrani
Marjan – Alex's sister
Duane – Heather's father
Reza – Alex's father
Katy – friend of Reza
Massoud – young male friend of Reza
Keshvar – village woman in Abiyaneh

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Snapshot of Iran

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with settlements dating back to 4000 B.C. The name "Iran" derives from the Proto-Iranian term Aryanam, which means "Land of the Aryans." Known as Persia until 1935, Iran's official name is the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Country Facts

- The capital and largest city is Tehran; the official language is Persian, or Farsi.
- Islam is the official religion. About 90 percent of Iranians are Shiite Muslims; the remainder, mostly Kurds and Arabs, are Sunnis.
- Slightly larger than Alaska, Iran is the 18th largest country in the world in area and has a population of 70.5 million.
- A majority of Iranians are ethnic Persians; approximately 25 percent are Azerbaijanis; a small percentage are Kurds.
- Iran occupies a strategic location on the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, which are vital maritime pathways for crude oil transport.
- Three of the countries bordering Iran—Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq—are marked by political instability and military hostilities.
- The government is a theocratic republic, with ultimate political and religious authority vested in the Supreme Leader (currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) who is appointed for life. The Assembly of Experts, a popularly elected body, is charged with determining the succession of the Supreme Leader, reviewing his performance and deposing him if deemed necessary.
- The president (currently Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) is head of the government and is subject to the authority of the Supreme Leader.
- The legislative branch is the unicameral Islamic Consultative Assembly, or Majle; a majority of the seats are currently occupied by conservative Islamists.
- The legal system is based on Sharia law.
- Oil provides 85 percent of government revenues. With an inefficient, largely state-run economy, Iran experiences double-digit unemployment and an inflation rate of 26 percent (as of June 2008).

Status of Women

Many of the freedoms women enjoyed were reversed after the 1979 revolution as part of the effort to remove the influence of Western culture. Schools and other public places became sex-segregated, and women were required to cover their heads. Compared with other Muslim countries, however, Iranian women have a relatively high degree of freedom, including driving, buying and selling property, running their own businesses, and voting and holding public office. They make up about a quarter of the workforce, a third of all government employees and more than half of all college students.

Festivals and Religious Observances

- *Ramadan* is observed during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The most sacred time of year for Muslims, this is a month-long period of spiritual reflection during which the observants fast each day from sunrise to sunset. It ends with the sighting of the new moon and a three-day festival called Eid al-Fitr.
- *Shab-e Yalda* is a festival dating back to ancient times. Celebrated on December 21 (the winter solstice), it marks the birth of Mithra the Sun God, who symbolized light, goodness and strength on Earth. Despite the advent of Islam and Muslim rituals, Shab-e Yalda is still widely celebrated in Iran. It is a time when friends and family gather together to eat, drink and read poetry until well after midnight.
- *Now Rooz* (no-rooz), the Iranian New Year, is Iran's most important festival. It is celebrated on the first day of spring (March 21). Now Rooz marks the beginning of two weeks of feasting and visiting friends and relatives. Schools and offices are closed.

A Taste of Persia

Like the country itself, Persian food has a long and varied history going back to ancient times. Accounts of Greek historians from the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. describe the great feasts and variety of delicacies found in ancient Persia, noting the elaborate preparations and abundance of ingredients. The cuisine has benefited from the invasions and migrations that have taken place over the centuries as conquerors and travelers have brought new food preparation ideas with them. In turn, Persian cooking highly influenced the Arab, Ottoman and Indian culinary cultures.

Characterized by a delicate but flavorful palate, Persian cooking uses a variety of spices and seasonings, such as cardamom, cinnamon, saffron, cumin, onion, rosewater, honey and pomegranate juice. Fragrance is as important as taste, and Iranian food is prepared with such delicate subtlety that every ingredient can be tasted and every aromatic spice appreciated. Color is also important, and a spread of Persian dishes presents a rainbow of grains and berries as pleasing to the eye as to the tongue. Although rice and nan—a flatbread that comes in several varieties—are staples of the diet, Persian food is quite healthy, using only small amounts of red meat (usually lamb or beef) and emphasizing larger amounts of grains, fruits and vegetables.

Traditionally, diners sit on the floor. At a typical meal, the host places large platters of food on the sofreh (tablecloth) that has been placed on top of a floor rug. Diners sit cross-legged in front of individual place settings. Unless they are related, Iranians of the opposite sex do not sit next to one another while eating. Talking is kept to a minimum—all the better for the diners to savor the visual beauty and olfactory and gustatory pleasures of the culinary display before them.



Glossary of Islamic Terms

Arab vs. Muslim – “Arab” is an ethnic reference. It generally refers to someone who can trace his ancestry to the tribes of the Arabian peninsula or to someone whose first language is Arabic. It does not refer to religious identity. Although most Arabs are Muslim, some are Christian, and a small percentage belongs to other faiths. “Muslim” is a religious reference. It designates a follower of Islam. Muslims comprise large portions of the populations of the Middle East as well as those of Southeast Asia, northern Africa and parts of southeastern Europe. Although Islam is often associated with the Arab world and the Middle East, fewer than 15 percent of Muslims are Arab. Examples of non-Arab Muslim countries are Turkey, Albania, Indonesia and Iran.

ayatollah – a high-ranking Shia cleric, an expert in Islamic jurisprudence, ethics and philosophy.

fatwas – the rulings of Islamic scholars.

hadith – the collective body of literature on *sunnah*, the body of Islamic custom and practice based on the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds. Muslims consider the hadiths to be essential supplements to and clarifications of the Qu'ran.

hajj – Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the five pillars of Islam. Hajj is required of every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to travel.

imam – an Islamic leader, often of a mosque or community; a spiritual leader who leads the prayer during Islamic gatherings. Also see “mullah.”

Islam – one of the world's three monotheistic religions, along with Christianity and Judaism. The word “Islam” comes from an Arabic root word meaning “peace” and “submission.” The five pillars of Islam refer to the five formal acts of worship that are central to a Muslim's faith: kalima – testimony of faith; salaf – prayer; zakaf – almsgiving; sawm – fasting and hajj – pilgrimage.

jihad – an Arabic word meaning “the struggle;” jihad is a religious duty of Muslims, that is, to “struggle in the way of God” or “to struggle to improve one's self and/or society.” The term has taken on both violent and nonviolent meanings. In the West, jihad is taken to mean “holy war;” but it can simply mean striving to live a moral and virtuous life, which includes spreading and defending Islam as well as fighting injustice and oppression.

mullah – a Muslim who is learned in Islamic theology and sacred law; in many parts of the Muslim world, “imam” is used instead of “mullah.”

Qur'an – the central holy text of Islam. Muslims believe that the words of the Qur'an were directly revealed by God, through the Prophet Muhammad.

Sharia – the body of Islamic religious law. The term means “way” or “path to the water source;” it is the legal framework within which the public and private aspects of Muslim life are regulated. Sharia deals with many aspects of day-to-day life, including political, economic, banking, business, contractual, familial, sexuality, hygiene and social issues. Sharia law comes from a combination of sources, including the Qur'an, the hadiths and fatwas.

Shia and Sunni – the two major denominations within Islam. The division between the two dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad and the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation.

Sunni Muslims believe that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job, which is what was done after Muhammad's death. The word “Sunni” in Arabic comes from a word meaning “one who follows the traditions of the Prophet.” The vast majority (85 percent) of Muslims are Sunni.

Shia Muslims believe that leadership should have stayed within the Prophet's own family, among those specifically appointed by him or among imams appointed by God Himself. The Shia believe that leadership should have passed directly to the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali. The word “Shia” is shortened from the historical Shia-t-Ali, or “the party of Ali.” Throughout history, Shia Muslims have not recognized the authority of elected Muslim leaders, choosing instead to follow a line of imams whom they believe have been appointed by the Prophet Muhammad or God Himself.

Persian Wedding Customs

Couples marrying in Iran must follow the precepts of Islamic law, which says that a man and a woman have the right to choose their partner and should not be forced into marriage.

A *mahrieh* is a gift, mandatory in Islam, given by the groom to the bride. The gift can be intangible or negligible or it can be substantial, such as investments or real property. The mahrieh may also be divided into portions, with one portion to be given to the bride at marriage, the other to be given to the wife if she is widowed or divorced. The mahrieh is a way of emphasizing the importance of the marriage contract and preparing the husband to fulfill his marital responsibilities. The practice of setting up a bride price is becoming ceremonial for most modern couples, who often settle for a holy book, a gold coin and some flowers.

The Iranian wedding ceremony, the arusi, has local and regional variations, and like many other rituals in the country, it goes back to the ancient Zoroastrian tradition. There are two stages to a marriage, usually—but not always—taking place on the same day. The first is Aghed, meaning “knot;” the legal process when both parties and their guardians sign a marriage contract and a mahr (bride price) is set to guarantee the financial well-being of the bride. The second stage is Jashn-e Aroosi, the wedding reception. This encompasses the actual feasts and celebrations, which traditionally last from three to seven days.



The ceremony takes place in a specially decorated room with flowers and a beautiful and elaborate spread called Sofreh-ye Aghd, which is set on the floor facing east, the direction of sunrise (light). The bride and bridegroom are seated at the head of Sofreh-ye Aghd in order to face the light. Among the items placed on Sofreh-ye Aghd are the following:

- A mirror and candelabras to represent light and fire, two very important elements in the Zoroastrian religion
- A specially baked and decorated flatbread with the blessing Mobaarak-Baad written in calligraphy on it
- Gold to represent prosperity
- Honey and crystallized sugar to sweeten life
- Eggs to symbolize fertility
- Espand, a popular incense used in many Zoroastrian religious ceremonies and rituals to purify and keep the evil eye away

A scarf or shawl made out of silk or other fine fabric is held over the couple's heads throughout the ceremony by various married female relatives. First the bridegroom is asked if he wishes to enter into the marriage contract, then the bride is asked the same question. The first time she remains silent. The question is repeated three times, and the last time she says, "Yes." Making the bridegroom wait for the bride's answer signifies that it is the husband who seeks the wife and is anxious to have her and not the other way around. In well-to-do families, each time the bride is asked the question, the groom's mother or sister places a gold coin or a piece of jewelry in the bride's hand, symbolically encouraging her to say yes.

Mohammad Mossadegh, Iranian Nationalist

Mohammad Mossadegh (1882–1967) began his political career as a young man. He studied political science and law in Tehran and in Europe, and at various times he served as minister of Finance, Justice, Foreign Affairs and Defense. A passionate supporter of Iran's political and economic independence from foreign interference, he wrote and spoke against concessions and special privileges given to foreigners within Iran. Because of his fervent opposition to inept and restrictive government policies, he spent about 25 years—approximately half his political life—either in prison or exile. Despite persecution by the monarchy, he enjoyed overwhelming popular support and was elected to represent Tehran in the Iranian parliament.

In May 1951, Mossadegh was elected prime minister of Iran. He sponsored laws for clean government, defended freedom of religion and promoted free elections. He implemented many social reforms and fought for the rights of women, workers and peasants. Earlier, he had begun working to put an end to decades of British political interference, economic exploitation and plundering of Iran's natural resources. His main target was the majority British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which cheated in its payments to Iran and showed contempt toward its Iranian oil workers. Soon after becoming prime minister, Mossadegh nationalized the oil industry and ousted the AIOC from the country. Threatened by these policies, Britain began to undermine Mossadegh's authority. They plotted with the CIA and succeeded in a violent overthrow on August 19, 1953. Mossadegh was arrested, along with hundreds of his followers, who were imprisoned, tortured and even murdered. Mossadegh was tried and convicted of treason.

After three years in solitary confinement, he spent the remainder of his life under house arrest in his ancestral village of Ahmad Abad.

Timeline of United States–Iran Relations

For most of its history, until the late 20th century, Iran (formerly Persia) was ruled by a succession of dynasties. The most recent one—the Pahlavi dynasty—came to power through a military coup in 1921. The following is a list of selected key events that shaped relations between the United States and Iran.

1907 – Britain and Russia sign the Anglo-Russian Agreement to divide Iran into spheres of influence, with Russia having dominance in the north and Britain in the south.

1908 – Oil is discovered; the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company is formed soon thereafter.

1926 – Former military commander Reza Kahn is crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi.

1941 – The shah's pro-Axis allegiance leads to his deposition in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

1951 – Mohammad Mossadegh is elected prime minister; the Iranian parliament votes to nationalize the oil industry.

1953 – Mossadegh is overthrown in a coup engineered by British and American intelligence agencies.

1963 – The shah begins a campaign to modernize and Westernize the country.

1979 – After months of riots, strikes and demonstrations, the shah and his family flee Iran.

The Ayatollah Khomeini returns; the Islamic Republic of Iran is proclaimed.

Militants take 52 Americans hostage inside the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

1980 – The Iran-Iraq war starts, in which the United States backs Iraq.

1981 – American hostages are released after 444 days in captivity.

1995 – The United States imposes oil and trade sanctions over Iran's alleged sponsorship of terrorism.

The years from 2002 to the present have been marked by U.S. accusations that Iran is enriching uranium in order to produce nuclear weapons. Iran claims that its enrichment program is for peaceful purposes (energy) and continues its nuclear development activities. Iran is also accused of supplying arms and financial backing to Lebanon's Hezbollah group in its fight against Israel and to insurgent groups in Iraq.

2002 – President George Bush calls Iran part of an "axis of evil" (along with Iraq and North Korea) because of long-range missiles being developed there.

2004–2005 – After several years of liberal/reformist rule, conservatives regain control of the government.

2008 – Barack Obama calls for direct talks between the United States and Iran.



THINKING MORE DEEPLY

1. What expectations does the excerpt of President Bush's speech set up at the beginning of the film?
2. Walking arm in arm with Heather in Tehran, Alex says that he doesn't feel comfortable because everyone is staring at them. Why do you think he feels this way?
3. Do you think that Alex and Heather were adequately prepared for the trip to Iran? What else could they have done to ease the culture shock they both experience?
4. What seems to be the feeling of Iranians in the film toward America?
5. How would you characterize Mohammed Mossadegh, who was overthrown in 1953, compared with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's current president? Do you feel that Mossadegh's demands regarding profit-sharing from the oil industry were unreasonable?
6. Do you agree with Alex's stepmother that the United States is responsible for the lack of democracy in Iran? Why or why not? Why has the United States supported repressive regimes such as Iran under the shah's rule?
7. Based on what you saw, do you agree with Bush's statement at the end of the film that "people should be concerned about Iran?" Why or why not? Why do you think the filmmakers used statements by President Bush to bookend the film?
8. What changes would be necessary in order for the United States and Iran to resume normal diplomatic relations? Is it incumbent on the United States to reach out first? Why or why not?
9. Before seeing this film, what was your image of Iran? Has this film modified that image in any way? If so, how?



SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Inquire into your local World Affairs Council affiliate's (see Resources) educational programs about Iran. Work with them to organize a panel discussion or debate in your community about President-elect Obama's proposal to have open dialogue with Iran. Invite local schools and colleges to participate.
2. Become informed about ways the United States can negotiate with Iran without resorting to military action. Information is available from the Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI) (www.campaigniran.org/casmii/index.php?q=node/2419). Express your views in letters to your congressional representatives or to the press.
3. Get involved in Sister Cities International (SCI) programs that foster understanding between the West and the Muslim world. Find information on the Islamic Partner Initiative, part of SCI's citizen diplomacy movement, on the SCI website (see Resources).
4. Explore the options for interfaith dialogue in your community. Call on religious leaders in your community to help organize and participate in a series of presentations exploring different faith perspectives on current national and international issues.
5. Learn how you can create a "cooperation circle," an interfaith network for collective action on a variety of issues. Guidelines are on the website of the United Religions Initiative (www.uri.org).
6. Introduce your community to the delights and pleasures of Persian food. Gather a group of people who love to cook, and prepare a meal to celebrate a community event, a holiday or the beginning of a new season.

For additional outreach ideas, visit www.itvs.org, the website of Independent Television Service. For local information, check the website of your PBS station.

RESOURCES

<http://www.answers.com/topic/Iran> – This site provides a basic history of Iran.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran> – This site provides a history of United States-Iran relations.

<http://www.cia.gov> – The Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook contains factual information on countries throughout the world.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/790877.stm – This site describes Iran as it is today and contains a link to a timeline of key events.

<http://www.rfpusa.org/links/other.cfm> – This resource provides links to dozens of interfaith organizations working for peace and justice.

<http://islam.about.com> – This site explains basic Muslim religious beliefs, holidays and customs and corrects erroneous information about followers of Islam.

http://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/iranian_marriage_ceremony.php – This site describes the historical customs and beliefs underlying the Persian wedding ceremony.

<http://www.cmep.org> – Churches for Middle East Peace is a coalition of 22 public policy offices of national churches and agencies—Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant—that advocates for sound U.S. policy to achieve and maintain just and stable relationships throughout the Middle East. Among its principal advocacy concerns are: the avoidance and resolution of armed conflicts; human rights; arms control; foreign aid and the unique nature of Jerusalem, sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

<http://www.sister-cities.org> – Sister Cities International is a nonprofit organization that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. and international communities. The aim is to build global cooperation at the municipal level, promote cultural understanding and stimulate economic development.

<http://www.worldaffairscouncils.org> – The World Affairs Councils of America (WACA) is a national organization that empowers citizens to participate in the national debate on world affairs; builds citizen support for American engagement in the world; stimulates communities to interact effectively in the global economy; helps people relate their local concerns to global issues; improves international education locally, nationally and internationally and fosters international interests in America's young people. The WACA is composed of 88 freestanding councils around the country.

<http://www.paaia.org> – The Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian-Americans is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian, national grass roots membership organization dedicated to promoting an accurate and positive image of Iranian Americans and to building a highly respected and influential voice for the Iranian community in the U.S. political process.

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c742.shtml> – Women Make Movies facilitates the development of feminist media through an internationally recognized Distribution Service and a Production Assistance Program. Obtain a copy of ARUSI PERSIAN WEDDING at the link provided above.

ARUSI (PERSIAN WEDDING) WILL AIR NATIONALLY ON THE EMMY® AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS* IN MARCH 2009. CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS.

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ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the Independent Television Service. ITVS COMMUNITY works to leverage the unique and timely content of the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens* to build stronger connections among leading organizations, local communities and public television stations around key social issues and create more opportunities for civic engagement and positive social change. To find out more about ITVS COMMUNITY, visit www.pbs.org/independentlens/communitycinema.

