

America in the Memory of an Arab

Zaher Abed

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Zaher Abed an Egyptian-American offers his personal account of life in America. He begins with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and continues through the autumn of 2004. Abed's "observations and reflections on the American Society" are sprinkled liberally amongst the glimpses into his own experiences and those of his children ex-wives and current wife.

The author's observations center on three major themes—war ("especially the preemptive war adopted by the Bush Administration") institutionalized religions and the concept of marriage which in his experience gained from four marriages has become merely a commercial transaction.

Abed's memoir written loosely in the form of a diary is unfortunately hard to follow and replete with grammatical errors awkward changes in tense misspellings and misuse of punctuation. An editor could have helped not only with these problems but also with tightening the manuscript's excessive length. The scant biographical information is riddled with the author's repetitious rants: he protests against "evil" missionaries religious leaders who are "wrapped in their pretentious garments of righteousness" and the "so-called American democratic system" which "oppresses the voters through misleading ads."

While these views are thought-provoking they would be more valuable to readers if they were not repeated so often or interrupted so frequently with extraneous and inappropriate details. For example the author is fond of detailing his sexual proclivities. Abed's current wife Marla a Columbian woman with one child is involved in numerous asylum interviews before their marriage and immigration hearings afterwards. The content of these hearings would have been illuminating since they took place in the post-9/11 years when asylum and/or legal immigration status must have been difficult to obtain. Instead Abed inserts comments about their pre and post-hearing sexual activities which seem gratuitous and out of place amidst so serious a discussion.

Included throughout the narrative are Abed's complaints about the US judicial system and his grievances against organized religion. After participating in numerous child-support cases he concludes "Justice for all in the American system and for that matter in the world is a popularized myth." Religious leaders become targets of some of his most negative metaphors: Scientologists he writes are "the most poisonous rodents" and "conservatism wraps itself around the Pontiff's neck as a poisonous snake."

Abed certainly has some worthy and relevant opinions concerning the mistakes the American government has made since 9/11. A more rational presentation of these thoughts in a format free of biased rants and un-edited language would be of interest to a wider audience. As this memoir now exists it will probably interest only the author's friends and family.

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