

A New Day: Readings by Afghan and Iranian American Writers

Friday, March 12, 2010, 7 PM

Asian American Writers' Workshop

16 W 32nd St, Suite 10A New York, NY 10001



"Sabzi and Me" Photograph by Aphrodite Desiree Navab, 2006

Celebrate Now Ruz, our common New Year, with an evening of fiction and memoir by ground-breaking writers from the Afghan and Iranian American diasporas. Acknowledging the deeply entwined histories of our peoples and the overlapping richness of our literary traditions, this reading is inspired by our desire to forge new artistic collaborations in the US, where the breadth and insight of our many stories are most urgently needed.

Join contributors to the forthcoming *Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature*--**Naheed Elyasi**, **Sedika Mojadidi** and **Sahar Muradi**--along with best-selling

novelist **Dalia Sofer**, debut novelist **Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet** and poetic prose writer **Aphrodite Desiree Navab** for readings and conversation to welcome in the new year.

This event will be hosted by **Zohra Saed**, co-director of the *Association of Afghan American Writers*, and **Manijeh Nasrabadi**, co-director of the *Association of Iranian American Writers*.

Sponsored by the Asian American Writers' Workshop (aaww.org), the Association of Iranian American Writers (www.iranianamericanwriters.org), the Association of Afghan American Writers (www.afghanamericanwriters.wordpress.com) and Arte East (arteeast.org)

\$5 cover charge. A collection will also be taken to support the Committee to Protect Journalists. cpj.org

See author bios below for more information:

Naheed Elyasi fled Afghanistan in 1982, three years after the Soviet invasion. Her family walked across the mountains into Pakistan, where they lived for one year before being accepted as refugees to the United States. Naheed grew up in North Carolina, where she studied Communications and Public Relations. After completing her degree at East Carolina University, she moved to Atlanta, where she studied Fashion Design. Her love for fashion brought her to New York in 1999, where she worked as an assistant designer at Maggy London and in the production department at Marc Jacobs. She eventually left fashion to pursue a career in not for profit, and joined School of Hope, an organization that raised funds for schools in Afghanistan. Naheed is currently the Director of Communications at the Council for Economic Education, and a contributing writer for Zeba Magazine.

Sedika Mojadidi is a documentary filmmaker who has produced both independent films and television projects. Her film work includes two experimental documentaries shorts on Afghanistan, *Kabul, Kabul* and *Zulaikha*, both distributed by Third World Newsreel. Her feature length documentary, *Motherland Afghanistan*, about her father's struggle to make a difference as an OBGYN working in Afghanistan, aired on the Independent Lens Documentary Series and screened at the AFI Film Festival. The United Nations Populations Fund,

(UNFPA) hosted national screenings of *Motherland Afghanistan* to raise awareness about the maternal health fistulas crisis in Afghanistan and globally. Sedika has lectured extensively on issues of Afghan identity, maternal health and filming in Afghanistan throughout the country. Her writing will be published in an anthology of Afghan American writing. Currently, Sedika is a supervising producer on a medical series, *Boston Med*, for ABC News in the long form documentary unit.

Manijeh Nasrabadi is co-director of the Association of Iranian American Writers (iranianamericanwriters.org). She received her MFA in creative nonfiction from Hunter College, where she also taught creative writing workshops. She was a 2008 recipient of a Hedgebrook writing residency. Currently, she's a doctoral student in American Studies at New York University. Her essays and articles have appeared in *About Face* (Seal Press), *Hyphen Magazine*, *Tehran Bureau* and *Callaloo*.

Sahar Muradi was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. She and her family emigrated to the United States when she was three years old. She grew up in New York and Florida. Sahar received her B.A. in Literature and Creative Writing from Hampshire College, and her M.P.A. in International Development from New York University. Sahar has written extensively about her family experiences, as well as reported on current events in Afghanistan. Her writing has been featured in literary magazines, newspapers, as well as read on public radio. In 2003, Sahar returned to her native Kabul to work for two years. She helped coordinate a donor conference with the Foreign Ministry, as well as managed a small grant program for civil society development. She is currently a Program and Trek Coordinator for the international organization, buildOn. She lives in Brooklyn. She is co-editor of the first Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature (University of Arkansas Press, forthcoming).

Aphrodite Désirée Navab is a Greek Iranian American artist and writer based in New York City (b. 1971, Iran). She uses visual art and writing to investigate transnational issues in art, education, cultural and women's studies. The world premiere of her solo show, *She Speaks Greek Farsi* was at ICC Athens, Greece. Navab's creative nonfiction and fiction are published or forthcoming *Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora*,

Homelands; Women's Journeys Across Race, Place and Time and other anthologies. She is currently writing her novel.

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet teaches Middle Eastern history and directs the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Her books include *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton University Press, 1999) and *Conceiving Citizens: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in Modern Iran* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2010). She is also completing a book on America's historical relationship with Iran and the Islamic world entitled, *The Making of the 'Great Satan': A History of US - Iranian Relations* (under contract with Princeton University Press). Her first novel, *Martyrdom Street*, will be published by Syracuse University Press in 2010.

Zohra Saed received her MFA at Brooklyn College. Her poetry and essays have been published in numerous anthologies and journals. Most recently in *Gallerie International Journal: Afghanistan* Ed. Bina Sarkar (India: 2009); *The Crab Orchard Review* (Summer/Fall 2009); and in *Speaking for Herself: Asian Women's Writings* (Penguin India Books: 2009). She has performed as part of the cast of the legendary theater director Ping Chong's *Undesirable Elements* in 2000 and in 2007, where the ensemble cast performed at the first National Asian American Theater Festival. She is co-editor of the first Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature (University of Arkansas Press, forthcoming).

Dalia Sofer was born in Tehran, Iran. At the age of eleven she moved to New York, where she attended the Lycée Français de New York, and later, New York University. Dalia received an MFA in Fiction from Sarah Lawrence College and has been a resident at Yaddo. She is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award, of the 2008 PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship, and of the 2009 Sami Rohr Choice Award. Her novel, *The Septembers of Shiraz*, was selected as a 2007 *New York Times* "Notable Book of the Year," was a finalist for the Jewish Book Award in 2008, and has been (or is in the process of being) translated and published in sixteen countries, including France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Israel, and Brazil. She has published essays in various anthologies, and has been a contributor to *Poets & Writers* magazine, the *New York Times Book Review*, the Academy of American Poets' National Poetry Almanac, and NPR. She lives in New York City.