



HUMANS OF MOROCCO

إنسان من المغرب





ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JACKIE BARBER

Jacqueline Barber is a rising senior in the School of Literature, Science, and Arts, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with minors in both Community, Action, and Social Change and Afro-American and African Studies. After conquering the feat of graduating from the #1 public university in the country, she plans on continuing her education in pursuing a Masters of Social Work at the University of Michigan and then once again in obtaining a J.D. at the University of Michigan's Law School. However, before all of this, Jacqueline has aspirations on traveling abroad and doing Peace Corps work, as her studying in Morocco has made her more interested in learning about intercultural relations and encouraging others to do the same, both locally and globally.

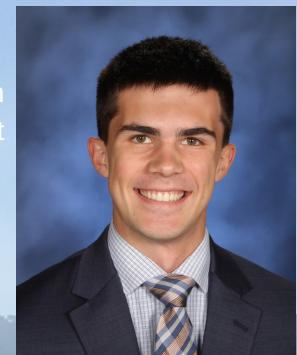
KEVIN HOWARD

Kevin is currently a sophomore pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration with emphases in Strategy and Marketing. Morocco taught him that it's fun to explore different cultures. He plans to work in consulting after graduation.



MONA ISKANDARANI

Mona Iskandarani is currently a senior majoring in Economics with a double minor in Business Administration, and Arab and Muslim American Studies. She plans to attend law school and eventually work in corporate law. Visiting Morocco has increased her desire to work globally and bring political correctness to cross-cultural traditions in international business.



RASIKA RAGHAVAN

Rasika Raghavan is currently a sophomore pursuing music at the University of Michigan. After graduating, she hopes to work in the entertainment industry as a creative marketing director. Her immersive experience in Morocco offered her insight on the nuances of international marketing strategies.



GARY SANDHU

Gary Sandhu is graduating with a B.S. in Computer Science and Statistics. Morocco has opened his eyes to the ubiquity of culture in global business strategy. He plans to work in investment management while leveraging knowledge gained from experiences like these to advance non-profit programs.

LAUREN WARD

Lauren Ward is a sophomore at Ross, where she is pursuing a BBA with concentrations in international strategy and marketing. Since going to Morocco, Lauren's desire to learn more about business strategy has only increased, as the strong overlap between business and culture is something she wishes to explore further.



Introductory Thoughts

The goal of our project was to explore the business and cultural differences between Morocco and the United States. Due to the political climate and the negative connotation associated with the Middle East, we felt inclined to explore the culture from an everyday perspective. We wanted to give the people of Morocco a voice to express their opinions on various topics, instead of allowing stereotypes to dictate the way they are perceived. While in Morocco, we interviewed people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. These ranged from stay at home moms to members of the chamber of commerce.

When we returned to the United States, we interviewed people who had similar experiences, and compared their viewpoints. We wanted to juxtapose the various opinions that people have depending on the country they reside in, their culture, their financial status, and other various factors.

As we conducted our research, we dove into the different lives of the Moroccan citizens. We learned that our perception of the roles of women in business in a Muslim majority country, the professional perception of Morocco, and the perception of culture were all drastically different from what we actually found there. We also learned the importance of understanding culture when participating in international business, and respecting the different traditions that exist in different countries. Cultural competence is the number one reason businesses fail in internationalization, and by stressing the value of each individual's interests globally, success is evident.

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NADIA BOUTBI

FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR • MOROCCO

BY RASIIKA RAGHAVAN

Nadia Boutbi is the first female entrepreneur in the medina of Fez, Morocco. She has maintained success in her shop as the first woman entrepreneur in the medina. She and her husband custom make everything that they sell, adding a touch of soul and passion into every item purchased. Nadia serves as a role model and leader for her community.

What are some of the things or people that inspired you to become a woman in business?

I really liked the concept of having my own business and being a leader, so I decided to focus that on my passion of art and making things. My team and I handcraft everything to ensure our products maintain a level of high quality and authenticity.

"I was the very first women to open the shop in the medina, and there was a lot of intimidation being around all men all of the time."

What are some of the biggest challenges you faced as a woman in business?

I was the first woman to open a shop in the [Fez] Medina. The typical gender roles are reversed: my husband makes everything we sell, and I'm in charge of the sales portion. I faced intimidation being around men all the time, so I had to prove myself in this environment.

What are some of your biggest accomplishments in terms of business?

Opening up this store and being able to inspire other women to open up their own shops and follow their dreams. There is a woman shop owner who opened up the shop right here in this medina and she says I inspired her, so I really feel accomplished because of that.



KATE RYAN

FEMALE ENTREPRENEUR • AMERICA

BY RASIIKA RAGHAVAN

Kate Ryan has become a prominent presence on State Street with her fashionable boutique, Verbena. The young company offers various stylish dresses, shoes, and accessories. Kate decided to pursue her entrepreneurial dreams after graduating from Michigan State University. Kate transformed a small space into Verbena with the help of fellow female entrepreneurs and the encouragement of her father. The store is a major success and is soon to be celebrating its three year anniversary.

What are some of the biggest challenges you faced as a woman in business?

I am still a young woman in business and so far, I have not had to face problems or gender-based issues. I have been fortunate enough to be surrounded by a supportive community that has not posed obstacles for me because I am a woman.

What are some of the things or people that inspired you to become a woman in business?

I think just being part of the Ann Arbor community has inspired me because I am constantly surrounded by female entrepreneurs and influences. Definitely seeing someone like Sava Lelcaj Farah open successful businesses like Savas right next door to my own business has significantly impacted me, and I love being able to serve other women everyday that are independent and driven.

What are some of your biggest accomplishments in terms of business?

Verbena is definitely my biggest accomplishment. I came from MSU with a degree in Interior Design, and the project for Verbena sprung up a few years ago because my father originally had a store in this space that competed with the MDen. When the MDen bought them out, we were able to keep some of the square footage and start Verbena. Just seeing how popular the store is and how much it is growing is my greatest achievement so far.



President of the Chamber of Commerce, pictured right

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF CASABLANCA

BY GARY SANDHU

The Chamber of Commerce is a government-sponsored institution that provides professional service consulting for small businesses. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce provides small businesses with tax and human resource assistance. To enable self-reliance, the C.o.C. pushes small business owners to form associations to better represent themselves and their interests.

"The Moroccan economy has evolved dramatically and rapidly."

Does the C.o.C. help companies establish internationalization and if so which professional services do they consult on?

The Chamber of Commerce normally focuses resources on assisting small businesses with local issues. By providing professional service assistance to small businesses, we help companies grow and eventually reach the point of considering internationalizing. In the case a company wishes to internationalize, the chamber assists in many ways, mainly by helping companies establish connections with the necessary business partners in the country of interest. These connections reduce the risk of internationalizing. In addition, if a company considering this strategy needs any professional service, we fill that void.

How have you seen the business environment change in the last 10-20 years

Like we have seen anywhere in the world, the Moroccan economy has evolved dramatically and rapidly. In order to respond to this rapid evolution, the Moroccan state has created several projects with a long-term view. For example, a plan to develop the Moroccan air culture sector is known as "the green plan." The plan called Moroccan tourism is called "2020 Vision," and Morocco has used these plans to face aggressive changes worldwide. For example, from 2016 to 2021, Morocco will have increased their presence in the automobile industry. For example, in the automobile industry they export parts, engines, and whole vehicles. Globally, it is a very positive time and these programs are helping to stimulate Morocco's economy. Morocco has contingency plans with their exporting partners. This is useful in the event that their partner countries' economies decline, Morocco's plans will still continue on. The level of renewable energy plans are centered around limiting the amount of influence of exported energy.



Andy LaBarre
Executive Vice President & Director of Government Relations

"We're shifting more and more to a service-based economy."

What's the next biggest economic driver for Ann Arbor?

Probably the application development that comes from the vehicle automation testing going on over on the Eastern part of the [Washtenaw] county. There's Mcity at UofM, and the American Center of Mobility (ACM) over on the old Willow Run site in Ypsilanti. This tech development is looking like a huge prospect for Ann Arbor's future economic growth.

ANN ARBOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BY KEVIN HOWARD

The Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber of Commerce is a 1,200-member community organization that actively facilitates, educates and advocates on behalf of its members through our services and programs. Chamber member offerings include numerous networking opportunities and events, educational seminars, leadership development, and special offers to Chamber members from Chamber members.

How does the C.o.C. help companies establish internationalization, and if so, for which professional services do they consult?

We don't consult with companies. We help members who are doing international trade with the certificate of origin process. That's a required component of international trade and a step among many. We don't do anything beyond that.

What changes have you seen in the business world in America in the last 10-20 years?

We're shifting more and more to a service-based economy. We're dealing with automation and, frankly, a generational shift in terms of the population. That's before we talk about healthcare, before you talk about a more globalized world and all that that brings with it. I don't think there's one answer that's more or less valid than the next, but the shift away from manufacturing and industrial-based economy to a service-driven economy is monumental.



Hamza Lahmidi

ESCA STUDENT

•BY JACKIE BARBER•

Hamza Lahmidi is a rising graduate in the Spring of 2017 from the International Institute for Higher Education in Morocco. IIHEM is a private, degree-granting institution for higher education in the areas of management, science and technology, and Hamza is a management major who hopes to eventually go into management consulting. Though he is a proud Moroccan resident from Rabat, he has aspirations of traveling internationally to Europe, Latin America, and America for both business and pleasure, particularly to conduct research in the automotive industry.

Do you feel optimistic about the future of Morocco in regards to international trade and the countries surrounding it?

No, I do not feel optimistic about the future of Morocco in regards to international trade, because history has taught me that those trades were only profitable to more developed and powerful countries, with no guarantee of any sort of win-win situation. But, I do feel a little optimistic regarding future trade with other African countries. The political stability is increasing slowly but surely, which will hopefully contribute to better business relations in the richest continent, also known as Africa (rich in terms of raw materials of course).

Tell us about your life up to college and your goals for after?

My life in college cannot be described in two or three lines. My goals after college are to apply for internships abroad, experience different cultures and perspectives, create and search for business opportunities to seize, and to eventually work in an automotive-related field, specifically automotive journalism.

What is your perception of the United States as it pertains to business?

I see the U.S. as the most powerful country in the world with the most profitable markets, so any business relations with the U.S. will represent a very interesting and considerable business opportunity.

How do you feel about the future of the trade relations with the United States?

Unfortunately, I don't feel very optimistic about the future of the trade relations with the United States, especially from a Moroccan perspective. Morocco needs consistency and stability in its development, which is achievable only through the development of the country's economy. With the U.S economy investing more in Wall Street and rising markets like Silicon Valley, I do not see many positive situations for Morocco in its trade relations with the U.S.

What aspect of the Moroccan economy made you want to go into business?

The Moroccan economy is not fully developed. It leaves many unexplored paths for future young entrepreneurs such as myself to establish or contribute to the development of flourishing, long-lasting businesses that can eventually become industry leaders. The geo-strategic position of Morocco is a very interesting asset for the national economy too.



Amber Blanks

ROSS STUDENT

•BY JACKIE BARBER•

Amber Blanks is a 2016 BBA Graduate from the Stephen M. Ross School of Business. In that same fall, she continued her education and began pursuing her Master's of Accounting (MAcc) degree at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business, from which she will be graduating in winter 2017, later completing the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam. Her undergraduate resume is extensive, having been a Former Research and Program Assistant for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at her alma mater, a former Academic Success Partner at the Office of Academic and Multicultural Initiatives, and a former Office Assistant at the U-M Center for the Education of Women. Currently, she is an intern for Internal Audit and Compliance Department at the University of Michigan Credit Union. She loves to give back to her Detroit community through mentorship and volunteering, and has a long-term goal of lowering the deficit of Detroit Public Schools.

What aspect of the Moroccan economy interests you?

Morocco is a country with great resources that would help the U.S. economy. The people there are serious about cross-continental trade, and those are relationships the U.S. needs.

What is your perception of the United States as it pertains to business?

In my opinion, the U.S. is a leader in business. However, the US can be so determined to be biggest and greatest that they don't help other countries, even when the resources are there.

How do you feel about the future of the trade relations with the United States?

I think that the U.S. economy will potentially start to need or rely more foreign imports, so it's important for the U.S. to keep up foreign trade relationships.

Do you feel optimistic about the future of Morocco in regards to international trade and the countries surrounding it?

Yes, I do! Trade is needed everywhere where there is a working economy.

Tell us about your life up to college and your goals for after?

I attended Cass Technical High School and came to Michigan in 2011. I had no experience abroad until I went to Shanghai with the university, and Morocco with Professor Branch. Both were life changing experiences! My goal is to get a great experience at EY, the accounting firm where I will be working, and ultimately work for Detroit Public Schools to help relieve the budget deficit.

BRAHIM ALLALI

ESCA SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

BY MONA ISKANDARANI

Dr. Brahim Allali holds a PhD from HEC Montreal, where he was a professor from 2004-2015. Before dedicating himself to teaching, training and research, Dr. Allali worked for many years in industry, banking and business services.

He has also taught in numerous institutions in Morocco and abroad, including ISCAE, Al Akhawayn University, Toulouse Business School, and the Institut de la Francophonie pour l'Entrepreneuriat (IFE) in Mauritius.

He is also a consultant in international management and development to numerous national, foreign and international organizations including the World Trade Organization and the World Bank.

What do you think the future of U.S. trade relations with Morocco will look like?

The free trade agreement between Morocco and the U.S. has supported international trade here very well. There are many opportunities between the two countries. After solidifying its European market position, Morocco is well suited to secure new opportunities in the United States.

How have you seen the business climate change in Morocco over the last several years?

The new king, who has been in power since 2000, has been doing a lot to make the business environment in Morocco very conducive to business. A lot of measures were implemented to help Moroccan exporters and businesspeople in order to improve the way business is done in Morocco. I think that the environment right now is very stable and will develop in the future.

What would you do if you wanted to internationalize a business in the United States?

I think the first thing to do is to go to the United States and study the markets. Do some research to find out about opportunities either within the United States, or other countries in North America. There are a lot of opportunities between these three countries and there is a huge potential. Moroccans have to go there first to acquire knowledge of the markets, acquire knowledge of the culture, and to prepare themselves to be export ready. After that, they can find and exploit opportunities, and utilize the existing complementary structures in Morocco.

How did you become a professor of business?

I am passionate about teaching business and doing business. I am a consultant for many organizations and I want to spread that knowledge. I simultaneously teach and apply what I know to my life, and that's why I became eager to teach others -- to communicate what I am passionate about to other people.

What is your perception of the United States as it pertains to business?

I spent one year in Texas in 1992 and I was very impressed. America is a country I love, and I do believe it's a country of opportunity. I believe if you want to do business, you cannot do it without focusing on internationalization in the United States. It's the right place to start if you want to expand to other countries, and I think that it's a very promising country when it comes to doing business. Morocco has a chance to have a free trade agreement with the United States and a free trade agreement with Europe, and I think we can be the intermediary between the U.S. and Europe.



ANURADHA NAGARAJAN

ROSS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, PROFESSOR OF STRATEGY

BY MONA ISKANDARANI

Dr. Nagarajan is a faculty member in the Corporate Strategy and International Business department at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Her primary research interests include the study of emerging industries, technology strategy, and the competitive implications of inter-organizational arrangements in highly uncertain, networked environments. We asked Dr. Nagarajan a couple of questions to gain an American insight on the future of Morocco's international relations with America.

What do you think the future of U.S. trade relations with Morocco will look like?

For the next four years, it's uncertain. International trade relations with America are uneasy right now due to the tense political climate. As it stands, business in the Middle East is generally viewed as unstable due to poor media portrayal, but it truthfully depends on the administration in power.

How have you seen the business climate change in Morocco over the last several years?

I have heard about it only on the news. It is more neutral, because I watch BBC and hear both positive and negative things about Morocco. I would say the business climate has become more positive over the last few years, but this depends on your information outlet.

What would you do if you wanted to internationalize a business in Morocco?

I would look at political climate first, then see what kind of arcade framework exists. Then I would look at what the firm makes and what capabilities the firm has, and how to leverage that in different contexts.

How did you become a professor of business?

I like teaching a lot. I like that there is a lot of independence in what you do and how you do it, and strategy is the most thought provoking. I took a position at Ford Motor Company in order to stay close to my family. Within my first week, I applied for the PhD program at Michigan.

What is your perception of the United States as it pertains to business?

Very positive, very innovative, truly a capital market. More than other countries, the United States has an opportunity to give everyone the choice to succeed, and I've noticed less corruption here than in other countries.



This interview has been translated from Arabic

Karima Ghalil

A Moroccan Mother

BY MONA ISKANDARANI

"The amount of women who are now enrolled in universities is also quickly expanding, increasing the amount of women who will be in the work force in the future. I encourage my daughter to study hard and accomplish whatever career goal she has set."

Karima is a stay at home mom in Rabat, Morocco to her son and daughter, Haytham and Marwa. Before becoming a stay-at-home mother, Karima worked in a medina shop by herself. Now, she has dedicated her life to her family. Her hobbies include spending time with her husband and children, and watching her favorite Turkish dramas. She also loves to cook and feed people, and host exchange students from all around the world.

How have you seen the role of women change in Morocco?

Women have become more social and go out much more than they used to. Women can do anything we want, and we do not live in a conservative environment where women are limited in what they wear and what they do.

What are your hobbies?

I like to watch Arabic soap operas and Turkish dramas, cook, and spend time with my family and friends. I also like to listen to Moroccan music, visit the local mosque, and go to the beach. The beaches in Morocco are very beautiful.

How have you seen the role of women change in the work force?

The amount of women who are now in the work force is at an all time high. Women are allowed to do as they please, and choose whether they want to work or not. The amount of women who are now enrolled in universities is also quickly expanding, increasing the amount of women who will be in the work force in the future. I encourage my daughter to study hard and accomplish whatever career goal she has set.

Where did you see yourself ten years ago?

Ten years ago, I knew that I would be raising a family and having kids. When I was young, it was my time to work and study. Now, it is my turn to be there for my kids and make sure they are given as many opportunities as I can give them.

What are some of the fears that you have for your family?

That they do not get some of the things they want in life because we lack money. However, I want them to study and try to support them as much as I can so money does not interfere with their lives.



Glenda Ward

An American Mother

BY LAUREN WARD

Glenda Ward is a working mom from Orchard Lake, Michigan. After spending most of her life in the work force, Glenda has insightful opinions on women in the American workplace, and how that has changed since she began working as a teenager.

How have you seen the role of women change in America?

More women stayed home and didn't work. The economic situation in the country has forced more women to have to work. When I grew up, women didn't need to work because a man's salary could sufficiently cover the cost of living. Today, women still do most of the housework, so that hasn't really changed, but now there's the added dimension of working outside the household too.

How have you seen the role of women change in the work force?

"Well, I've seen things change both on the surface and underneath. More women are in higher positions now than when I started [early 80s], so there's no doubt women are advancing in their careers. However, I still don't see women progressing as high as I think they could and should. Sometimes, women build a glass ceiling or create a sticky floor [meaning they won't move themselves even when given the opportunity], in part due to societal gender roles.

They don't want to work like most men in corporate do, with 14 hour days and no work/life balance. This is understandable! As natural caregivers, most women can't and have no desire to sacrifice their families for their jobs.

Where did you see yourself 10 years ago?

"10 years ago, I wanted more roles and responsibilities. I ended up forgoing a multitude of opportunities in that sense so I could have more family time. I was stuck in my own sticky floor, you could say. I also didn't see myself in the position I'm in now. Different mergers, acquisitions, and buyouts caused much job dissolution at my firm. 10 years ago, I thought company was viable and that business would be good until retirement. I've been working since high school, with 8 years at GM and 31 at Electronic Data Systems [EDS, bought by Hewlett-Packard (HP) in 2008]."

What are your hobbies?

"I like to watch game shows, crime dramas, and Judge Judy."

What are some of the fears that you have for your family?

"My daughter not reaching her full potential for whatever reason, and me not being around to see my family do great things."

"Sometimes, women build a glass ceiling or create a sticky floor for themselves. They don't want to work like most men in corporate...This is understandable! As natural caregivers, most women can't and have no desire to sacrifice their families for their jobs."



AMAPPE

L'ASSOCIATION MAROCAINE D'APPUI À LA PROMOTION DE LA PETITE ENTREPRISE

BY LAUREN WARD

THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH, COURTESY OF LAUREN WARD



Directors at AMAPPE

What is the local response to refugee inclusion?

Morocco has a history of being an open asylum to refugees, and this is understood throughout the population. Refugees are generally accepted well, as Moroccan hospitality calls for citizens to look out for one another.

AMAPPE is a Moroccan organization that works to support the promotion of small businesses. More specifically, they work with refugees from the Middle East to find ground for their small business ventures by providing capital and socioeconomic guidance. By promoting and ensuring the entrepreneurial pursuits of refugees, AMAPPE continues to uphold the highly regarded value of Moroccan hospitality.

What are the biggest issues you see with accepting refugees?

There is usually a large culture shock when it comes to work schedules. Refugees from other countries are used to operating on different schedules, so it's a little hard for them to adjust sometimes.

What are ways that we can help refugees come into Morocco?

AMAPPE has no influence over who can get in and out of the country, but getting them on their feet and comfortable in Morocco is one of the things we try to establish by helping them create their own businesses.



James Hathaway

Professor, Michigan Law

BY KEVIN HOWARD

James Hathaway is a leading authority and the Distinguished Visiting Professor on international refugee law at the University of Michigan. From 2008-2010, he was on leave to serve as dean of the Melbourne Law School where he established Australia's first JD law program. He has published over 80 journal articles, and was a founding patron and senior adviser to Asylum Access, a nonprofit organization committed to delivering innovative legal aid to refugees in the Global South. He is also on the council of international protection to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

What are the biggest issues you see with accepting refugees?

There's a phenomenon throughout the world called "refugee warehousing." When refugees arrive, sometimes they're just stuck in camps. Other times, we "warehouse" them literally by simply not giving them the ability to work, start a business, or look after themselves and their families. And what that does is that can actually engender a really negative reaction from the host community. If you see refugees, and particularly if there is a lot of them, and you think that they're not earning their way in the world, that they're sort of drains, then you begin to resent them or fear them or both. So part of the trick is to actually liberate the productive potential of refugees in ways--and this is the critical point--that link them to the communities that receive them. So it's not that refugees are getting all sorts of opportunities that the host places don't but, rather, if you see refugees coming in, and you see new economic activity beginning that includes you as part of the host community, then you neither see refugees as lazy bastards or drains but you see them as engines for development, which is actually both smart and counters a lot of what you just described as sort of the negative reaction to refugees.

How do employers view refugees?

That's a great question. What's really intriguing is that when you saw the response to the so called Muslim ban, who was standing up first and foremost against it? Companies. And I think employers really do realize that there's a global market for talent and I think in particular, for example the Syrians, they have recognized that there are masses of talent in people who were forced to flee. So that's not universally true, some refugees come with a really bad skill set for where they end up. That's partly because maybe we resettled them to the wrong places. You have to put a little more thought into how we do all that. There's a book by an Oxford scholar, Alexander Betts, called *Refugee Economies*. He shows that refugees, given the opportunity, are massively productive for employers. He's looking mainly at Africa, but I think the same lessons apply. Again, these are people who can't afford to fail. They have to succeed because they have nowhere to go back to. So if they're given the right support in the first year or two, and they're going need support in the first year or two with language and otherwise, I think after that refugees tend to be disproportionately productive. I think overall we know, and this is both refugees and immigrants, that those who don't start off their life in America after their first few years tend to be actually more economically productive than the average native-born American.



Abdelmajid Hajji

PROFESSOR OF
INTERNATIONAL MEDIA AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS

BY LAUREN WARD

Abdelmajid Hajji teaches courses on international media and public relations at the Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, and has extensive insights on how media is framed in the West versus the Middle East.

How did the role of the Arab Spring shape the way the West views Islam?

Social media played a primary role in how the Arab Spring even started. All over the world, people, mainly millennials, were able to see what was going on with these uprisings across the Middle East, and it was very easy for information to get misconstrued. The West already holds a very twisted stereotype of the Middle East, and the portrayal of violence hasn't seemed to helped that very much. Acts of protests are often mixed with ISIS's acts of terrorisms, and it only makes social media a more muddled place to receive information on these topics.



Evelyn Alsultany

DIRECTOR, U-M ARAB AND MUSLIM STUDIES PROGRAM

BY GARY SANDHU

Evelyn Alsultany is a professor at the University of Michigan, and teaches courses on media representations, U.S. cultural and racial politics, and Arab and Muslim Americans. She also coordinates student internships at Arab and Muslim American organizations in southeast Michigan.

How did the role of the Arab Spring shape the way the West views Islam?

During the Arab Spring, I thought that it was an opportunity for "the West" to view the Middle East differently. Orientalist discourses have long framed the Middle East as incapable of democracy and freedom and in need of Western intervention to initiate social change. There are also common discourses that position Arabs and Muslims as incompatible with liberal values. But the Arab Spring challenged all of these assumptions by showing Arabs as agents of social change and as embracing democracy and liberal principles. I believed that the Arab Spring had the potential to radically challenge these stereotypical perspectives, but little has changed. The fact that many of the revolutions resulted in more repressive governments has not helped the people or the image of Islam in the West.

Reflections

WORDS FROM THE HUMANS OF MOROCCO TEAM

As we come to the end of sharing our exploration with you, we want to take a moment to reiterate some pivotal moments from our experiences in Morocco. After learning extensively about the relevance of culture to business, we firmly believe that the existence of our new found paradigms would be impossible without this trip. With special thanks to John Branch, Chris Tarnacki, Nisrine Attar & the IES Abroad team, the Humans of Morocco leave you with our final thoughts and reflections on this phenomenally immersive experience.

Each of us was motivated to apply to the Global Practicum course in Morocco for different reasons. Between exploring new cultures and understanding international trade strategy, we all felt like the obvious overlap of culture and business was something worth exploring. Being students at a high-paced academic institution, we wanted to step outside the box with our exploration for this course, and really focus on the importance of culture in all situations. Everything in school is systematic, and it's hard to make the connection between school and real life. After being in Morocco for approximately a week, we came back with new and improved global paradigms. We got lost in medinas, stuffed ourselves with tagine, and basked in the Moroccan sun, meticulously recording these experiences to apply in all aspects of our lives.

Our main understanding of Morocco's cultural landscape was that it was heavily Arab with French influence. However, the common connotation associated with Arab culture is "extreme conservatism." Often, Americans perceive the values driving conservative culture as demanding subservient women or enforcing strict traditions on their children. Despite being American students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, we prepared for our experience in Morocco based off preconceived notions of conservative features associated with Arab culture.

Once we landed in Morocco, the culture shock did not stem from how "conservative" the culture was, but rather how free and open Moroccans were. Although many women did dress traditionally, the college girls were heavily inspired by French make-up and fashion, wearing styles very similar to our own.

The various professors and companies we visited in Morocco were hospitable and comfortable dialoguing about cultural stigmas that affect international relations. We got scrubbed at the Hammam, an experience in which the neighborhood women would comfortably bathe in the same room without insecurity or shame expressing their natural, body positive mindset that America and the West consistently struggle with today. If businesses hope to be successful in marketing to the demographics in Morocco, they must genuinely understand the values supporting and driving the culture there. The antiquated stereotypes American media portrays in regards to Arab countries can negatively affect American businesses attempting to communicate successfully with countries, such as Morocco.

In order to conduct meaningful dialogue in Morocco, businesses should understand the European trends that have led to a hybrid culture. Noting the obvious influence of French over Arab culture, and recognizing the progressive facts of Morocco's culture,

especially in regards to Moroccan women.

After having constructive debates with multiple Moroccan students, it is clear that they are patriotic and proud of their country's efforts to be an ally to powerhouses like America. Several Moroccan students referenced Morocco actively working against terrorism, expanding trade, and opening channels for communications. Businesses need to increase their overall cultural competence during international negotiations with Morocco by first reinventing their notion of gender roles and stereotypes in Morocco across different generations and regions, acknowledging the prominent French presence, and appreciating the hospitality and openness of the Moroccan population.

Whether it was scraping off our dead skin at the Hammam, haggling with shopkeepers, touring imperial palaces, or dancing in EDM nightclubs, our Moroccan experience was nothing short of educational. This trip was different in that it was educational culturally, and everything we experienced was a lesson. That's the thing with culture, though. You never really know or understand it unless it's taught to you, but in this case, teaching and learning are really just synonyms for experiencing. •



