



# IRANIAN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

MANA KHARRAZI

IRANIAN ALLIANCES ACROSS BORDERS

[www.iranianalliances.org](http://www.iranianalliances.org)



**IAAB** strives to strengthen the Iranian diaspora community through leadership and educational programming that encourages collaboration and solidarity across various borders and multiple communities.



## Community Challenges

- Lack of Accurate Statistical Information
- Diversity of Experiences and Divisions
  - Religious
  - Political
  - Socioeconomic
  - Generational
  - Waves of Immigration



## DC-MD-VA Community

- Large Population
- Community Support
  - AA Groups in Persian, Walkathons, Social Services
- Cultural Centers
  - Language Programs/Schools, Events
- Unique Youth Experience
- National NGO Presence



## Our Youth

### -Social Experiences

- Demonized Community (post-911 generation)
  - Self Confidence, social struggles, expectations of parents, discrimination

### -Community Experiences

- Religious, Political, Socioeconomic Divisions

### -Identity

- Sense of belonging, self love, community, language
- Misconceptions of what it means to be Iranian American



**CAMP AYANDEH** and **CAMP JAVAN**, both through positive and inclusive environments, allow campers to develop leadership skills, foster strong friendships, and gain a deeper understanding of culture and identity as youth within the Iranian diaspora.

1000+ campers since 2006



- Inclusive Space that Celebrates All Diversity
- Conversations about Community Challenges
- Team and Trust Building Activities
- Art, Theater, Music
- Network of Mentors and Role Models
  - Counselors/Staff with Shared Experiences
  - Speakers within Various Fields/Interests



## Building Community Spaces

- Create a Community Space that Engages Parents and Families
- Use Social Media as Recruitment/Retention Tool
- Build Informal Social Space for Youth
- Facilitate Identity and Cultural Discussions
- Incorporate Kinesthetic/Experiential Learning
- Empower Alumni and Active Students as Leaders
- Sense of Loyalty, Commitment to Programs





# OURSTORY: ADDRESSING THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE CLASSROOM

“MY DAUGHTER HAD TO READ NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER IN MIDDLE SCHOOL. SHE CAME HOME CRYING BECAUSE HER CLASSMATES RIDICULED HER FOR BEING IRANIAN.”

-PARENT OF 15 YEAR OLD IRANIAN AMERICAN

YOUNG IRANIAN AMERICANS GRAPPLE WITH QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY AND INCLUSIVITY EVERY DAY IN SCHOOL AS THEY FACE AN INCREASING LEVEL OF DISCRIMINATION. IAAB ENCOURAGES PARENTS AND STUDENTS TO ACCESS AND TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR NARRATIVES, TO LEARN THEIR HISTORIES, AND TO AFFIRM THEIR TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITIES.

IAAB SUPPORTS STUDENTS' RIGHTS TO LEARN ABOUT AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR OWN HISTORIES, AND TO ACCESS CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL AND AFFIRMING EDUCATIONAL SPACES. IAAB RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE DEVELOP SOCIAL ANALYSIS, LEADERSHIP, AND SOLIDARITY WITHIN AND ACROSS COMMUNITIES - HALLMARKS OF A MEANINGFUL EDUCATION.

IRANIAN PARENTS AND STUDENTS CAN TAKE ACTION ON A LOCAL LEVEL TO HELP SHAPE THEIR SCHOOL DISTRICT'S CURRICULUM FOCUSING ON THE MIDDLE EAST. THROUGH IAAB'S OURSTORY CAMPAIGN, MEMBERS WILL ADDRESS THEIR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS' SHORTCOMINGS REGARDING TEACHING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST.

Partners – Hamid Rahmanian, *The Shahnameh* and Firoozeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi*



## Tackling Youth Issues in the Family

- Family Identity/Oral History
- Language & Culture
- Sexual Expression
- Substances & Abuse
- Community, Academic & Peer Pressure
- Mental Health

### *The Tough Conversations*



## IAAB Programs

### **-Programs:**

- International Conference on the Iranian Diaspora
- Summer Leadership Institute: Camp Ayandeh and Camp Javan
- Student Summit
- Campus Action Network (ICAN)
- Persian Language Educators' Symposium

### **-Campaigns:**

- MO' IAAB, Less Problems: Mobilizing and Organizing
- OURSTORY: Addressing the Middle East in the Classroom
- Make it Right: SWANA and Sanctions

### **-Intergenerational:**

- Mentorship Program
- Ambassadors and Youth Ambassadors



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