

Maysoon Zayid



Maysoon Zayid is a Palestinian actress, comedian, writer, and tap dancer. Born and raised in the United States, Maysoon spent her summers in her parents' village, Deir Debwan, and her maternal grandmother's village, Beitin. She traces the roots of her comedy career to her summers in Palestine. There was no Internet, so Maysoon would sit with her aunts as they cross-stitched and gossiped. She became the star of these gatherings by heartily joking about relatives and weddings. Maysoon, her siblings, and her cousins would put on weekly variety shows for their relatives, singing, dancing, and telling jokes in exchange for pocket change to buy treats. Her summer vacations also included trips with her grandparents to Rukab Ice Cream in Ramallah and the Dead Sea.

Maysoon graduated with a BFA in acting from Arizona State University and frequently returns to her alma mater to teach. She has a neurological disorder that affects her coordination due to an accident at birth. Early in her career,

she realized that the entertainment industry was biased against her disability and her ethnicity, so she turned to standup comedy to find her voice. As a professional comedian, Maysoon has toured extensively worldwide, including in her beloved Palestine. She made her international standup comedy debut in Bethlehem at Dar Annadwa in 2002 and has performed in Jenin, Hebron, Ramallah, Haifa, Nazareth, and Jerusalem. Maysoon is the host of the YouTube Web series *Advice You Don't Want to Hear* and filmed her second season on location in Palestine. She is currently developing a comedy series for American television with Hazy Mills Productions called *If I Can Can*. It is a fictionalization of her life and features a character based on her father, whom Maysoon credits with teaching her how to walk. Due to her disability, doctors assumed she would be a wheelchair user. Her father believed otherwise and succeeded in teaching his daughter to walk by placing her feet on his feet. Maysoon graced the runway at New York Fashion Week and is proud to be an ambassador for Kara Ross's Unleashed,



"I got 99 problems... palsy is just one." Maysoon Zayid's talk at TED Women, December 2013.

a project to help young girls and women discover and achieve their potential.

Maysoon is the co-founder/co-executive producer of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival and The Muslim Funny Fest. She has appeared on the BBC, Al Jazeera, CBS, CNN, and the Oprah Winfrey Network. Maysoon had the number one TED Talk of 2014 and was named one of the BBC's 100 Women of 2015.

She is a lifelong disability advocate whose mission is to mainstream

physically disabled students into the global education system. Maysoon believes that the secret to her success is the fact that her parents and relatives always treated her as an equal and fought for her right to education. Her dream is to give Palestinian children a sliver of the hope that her mother and father gave to her. Maysoon has volunteered for over a decade working with refugee children who are disabled and wounded. She hopes to continue that much-needed work in the future. For more information, please visit www.maysoon.com.

