



## A Snapshot of a Palestinian Family

At thirteen, you know it all. You know what you want to do in life and can't wait to get there. Unlike us, older people, quick access to any piece of information comes naturally to you and shortcuts are a way of life. If it were up to you, you'd "shortcut" the remaining school years to get to where you want to go. Sleeping is your avowed archenemy, and institutions are simply not your thing. Your favorite questions are "Have you ever used this in your life?" And "Why do I have to do this?" Patience is definitely not one of your current characteristics or virtues. The most common realization of this is when your parents ask your help in navigating technology, which you're a whiz at. You tend to forget that we taught you how to hold a spoon, you ungrateful brat! One is compelled to add that you have a beautiful free spirit that is envied in a peculiar way by whoever is around you. The easy way out for your parents is to subjugate and institutionalize you – naturally crushing your personality by doing so.

At twenty-one, you still think you know it all, but rare occasions of doubt are witnessed. "Maybe you're right" is heard possibly twice a year. If one word could describe you, it would be: idealistic. Right and wrong are absolutes, and grey is not on your color spectrum. You want to fix and change the world, although your room should take precedence. However, as someone put it, if you insist on changing the world, do it before you get married and have kids, otherwise you'll hardly be able to change the TV channels! Your beautiful spirit is evident and gives hope to your parents who are getting slower. You keep forgetting that you're their pride and joy. You claim otherwise, but *Fast and Furious* is no doubt your favorite film; at least it describes you best. Of course, the end-of-the-world syndrome is a weekly recurring event, irrespective of the cataclysmic cause, such as dropping your foundation!

At fifty-two or fifty-five, you're often shocked when you're reminded of your age and something inside you vehemently rejects it. You're also shocked when you're addressed as Haj or *khalto* (aunt) and feel like smashing the face of whoever called you that. You feel young, but chronologically you're not, and a thousand indicators constantly remind you of the fact that you're over the hill. Taking cod-liver-oil pills, vitamin pills, and pills to lower your cholesterol (and if you happen to be a man, pills to regulate your prostate) has become a daily routine. And so has taking a 100 mg aspirin pill that dilutes your blood to prevent a heart attack (or for some, maybe to prepare them for a heart attack). You're past wondering whether you've made the right decisions in your life. It's too darn late for that! Your main fear is your realization that there's not much time left before you exit, and there's an awful lot left to do.

At eighty ... well ... it's best to leave that for a future column!

I may be wrong, but I have a feeling that this snapshot of a Palestinian family could just as well be a snapshot of a Moroccan family, or a Canadian family, or a Slovenian family, or even a British family...

**Sincerely,  
Sani P. Meo  
Publisher**

