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KURDISTAN CAREERS CONFERENCE



Erbil 28 - 29 Aug

Sulaimani 31 Aug - 01 Sept

Kurdistan Careers Conference: Hope for the Unemployed

Students Fighting Cancer with "There's Always Hope" Project

Mohammed Nayyef

From: Baghdad, Iraq

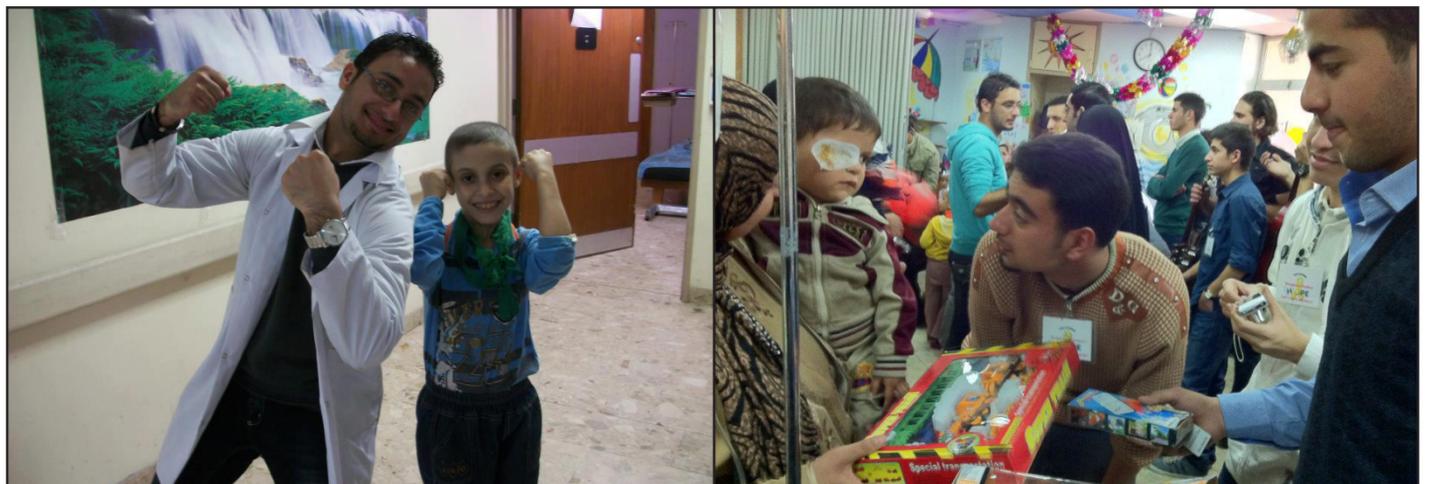
Cancer is a really tough disease to handle. It is like a nightmare that chases the patients and their family all the time, keeping them in perpetual worry. "Will the patient make it?" But what if the patient was only a little child? Children's biggest concern should be playing and enjoying time. But children with cancer are

while and help them have fun. Funds were kindly offered by the US embassy in Baghdad from one of their grants to state alumni promoting youth projects. The team was largely composed of medical students but there were also many students from other colleges and a musical band. All were eager to help in every possible. Lots of volunteers were offering assistance whenever needed, giving the team the momentum and motivation necessary to make the project successful.

The main purpose behind the project was to

seeing the smiles on the faces of the children as they were enjoying their time playing, dancing, and drawing with everyone.

By the end of the day, everyone had their share of fun. The children wrote short messages for American children fighting cancer which we sent to cancer centers in the US with Iraqi gifts as a cultural exchange. It was a special day we all will remember, but that was only our first event. Since then we started organizing similar events from now and then in the hospital to break the routine of hospital life that these kids are forced



Photos courtesy of "There's Always Hope."

only concerned with survival. Fortunately for them, there are hospitals to take care of their ailment and provide medication and chemotherapy. However, these children are still in need of playing with others and enjoying their time, like normal kids of their age. Being deprived of this need ultimately brings them depression, which will even affect their respond to therapy. From the belief that children fighting cancer deserve to live normal lives, the project "There's Always Hope" was brought to life. This project is made by MEPI and IYLEP alumni with other non-alumni participants to fight cancer alongside these children during their recovery process. "There's Always Hope" works to relief them from their pain even if just for a

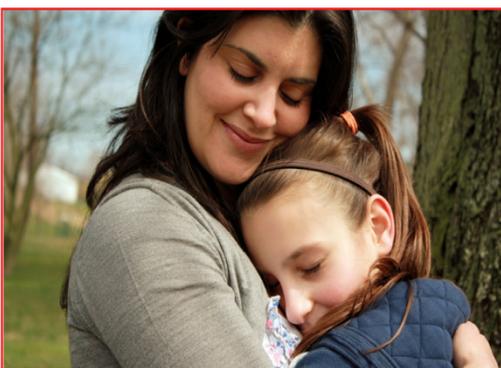
give moral support to those children who are in need of it. We planned a fun day with the kids at the hospital of private nursing in Baghdad. The tasks of the organizers were preparing the gifts and getting official permission from the hospital. The staff of the hospital was really helpful and cooperative. The schedule of the day not only included gift distributions but also video game time. The video game called "Re-Mission" was especially made for kids with cancer by Hopelab. The big day came after all preparations made. All the team members were handling their assignments decorating the hospital, installing computers, and making sure everything is just right. The big party started with music from our talented band and joy filled the air. It felt so good

to endure.

Currently, we are preparing to organize events during the summer break since now the team members are taking their final exams. Surely we plan to include more activities to help these children in any way possible. We love the fact that our project is quite simple and applicable but has an important effect on the kids and also helps the team members foster a sense of responsibility. We now are committed to the belief that the youth must participate in developing their communities.

We hope to expand the project to include more hospitals in Baghdad and even other cities around Iraq. For as long as there's hope, we can do it.

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The Epidemic of Faction



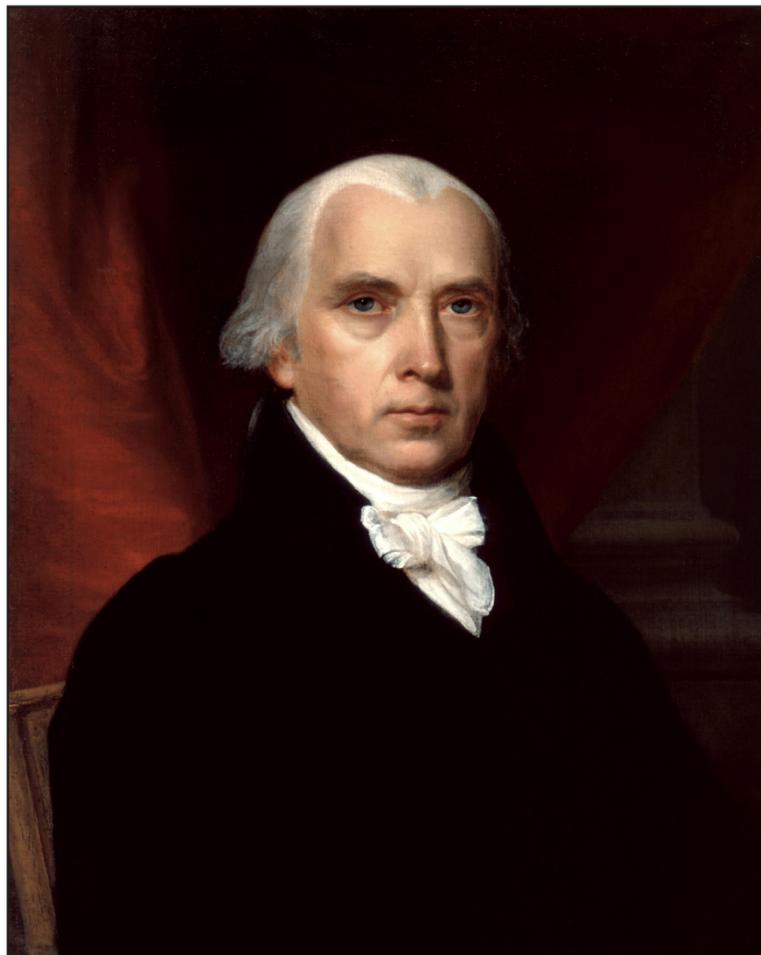
Bery Majeed

From: Sulaimany, Iraq

Faction and disunity are reoccurring themes in the history of mankind, from the very seeds of civilization to the most advanced nations of our modern day. It appears that the common good of all is lost in the lust for more power and personal authority. Private aims and interests dominate the ambitions of people in every nation. Why can't we all just get along? How do we solve the periodic epidemic of faction? Is unity and peace in fact possible to achieve? These are a few questions that both governments and their subjects continuously struggle with.

The renowned Greek philosopher Aristotle pointed out one of his works, The Politics, that for there to be faction within a city or nation is natural; it is a part of human nature. People have different interests, and those interests will always conflict. According to Aristotle faction cannot be prevent-

ed. Is it just a lost cause then? Will there always be civil strife and war? The solution to the problems of faction is, in my opinion, best addressed by James Madison, one of the founding fathers of America, in the Federalist Paper No.10. Like Aristotle, James Madison also believed that faction was a part of human nature. In Federalist Paper No.10, Madison states, "There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: The one, by removing its causes; the other by controlling its effects." In order to remove the causes of faction, liberty either has to be abolished or it has to be that all people have the same interests and passions. To take away liberty is more dangerous than faction itself. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire. To force people to hold the same interests and the same passions is impossible. What is appealing to one person is appalling to another and the same goes for different groups of people. Hence, the causes of faction can't be removed, and the only choice we are given is to control the effects of faction.



"James Madison"

James Madison proposes that since it is impossible for a government to force its people to hold the views and interests, it should create such a variety of interests that

makes it very difficult for a group of a certain interest to form a majority. Faction he defines as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the

whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, and or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Minority faction can be controlled with constitutional rules, but when there is a majority faction, even the constitution is in danger to the whims of the people. In order to control the effects of faction, there should be so many interests and passions within a community, that the chances of a majority forming are very slim. If you can't have everyone holding the same interests, then make sure that everyone has different interests!

The causes of faction itself cannot be prevented, but its effects can be controlled. The solution that James Madison presented in Federalist Paper No.10 is an effective answer to the problem of faction, and not only makes sense theoretically, but can be seen in the unity of the United States. Perhaps absolute peace cannot be achieved, but discord and disorder can be contained and controlled.

Finally, You can Read Books without Reading Them

Marwan Ahmed

From Baghdad, Iraq



“There are two motives for reading a book; one, that you enjoy it; the other, that you can boast about it.”

Bertrand Russell.

Have you noticed how most of your friends had included at least one of the following books (Lord Of The Rings, Twilight, or Harry Potter) among their list of favorite books on Facebook? While we know that most probably they haven't even owned a PDF version.

If you think this is an Iraqi/eastern nature to pretend knowing about books not being read, think again. It is a global trend, and it is becoming common. Actually, there are two books that were published over the past couple of years to help people talk about books that they haven't read. The book titles are How to talk about books you haven't read by Pierre bayard & Jeffrey Mehlman, and How

to really talk about books you haven't read by Henry Hitchings.

While some might have objection about the unethical side of pretending that a person have read a certain book when talking to people who “presumably” really did read that book. But others see it as a basic need either to avoid the embarrassment in social conversations or any awkward moments during job interviews; especially the later when your reactions toward certain books may shape your future.

This article is to help you to talk about the aforementioned books, and many other books as well, like you have read them as talking about books has little to do with reading. The two activities are completely separable. After all, how much do we really remember from books after finishing them? However, the following points should not be applied on Physics & Chemistry books that you have in college; although I wish I could help you with that.

1- Skimming books with



respecting their inherent depth and richness without getting lost in the details. To know the vintage and quality of a certain drink, one does not need to

drink the whole glass.

2- Be confident to look like you had a good understanding about that book. People who discuss books are usually not

%90, not even %50, sure of remembering from their reading experience.

3- Do not go against other's opinions concerning whether the book is good or bad. This way, you won't have to talk about more details and in many occasions, others will speak for you.

This is a reminder that the point aforementioned should not be applied on Physics & Chemistry books that you have in college; although I wish I could help you with that!!!

Again, this is not some article trying to affect your moral codes negatively. This is a piece that can be put in application in real life without causing harm to anyone and could be used positively; true. It has just been scientifically proved in to you. I wrote a convincing article, which hopefully was beneficial to readers, about books I haven't read and readers did not notice. Don't blame me for not reading those books in particular. This was the whole authors point: teaching us how to talk about books we haven't read; convincingly.

If Today was your Last Day, what would you have on your Bucket List?

Muthanna Assim

From Baghdad, Iraq



There was an article published in a British newspaper long time ago, spotlighted the biggest regrets of patients with hopeless health conditions waiting for their death at the Intensive Care Units of some hospitals. Their biggest regret in life was “I wish I did not work all the time” many of them wished that they would not be workaholics without enjoying many other aspects of life. Other patients wished they lived their lives for themselves. While some other wished they had spent more time with their families, and the list of the regrets goes on.

“Each day is an opportunity to travel back into tomorrow's past and change it” says Robert Brault, an American writer. I believe this is one of the most inspirational and wisest quotes that every human should keep in mind in order to avoid, as much as possible, being filled with remorse in the future. And here, the typical



question arises “What would I do if today was my last day?” What type of world would that be, if everybody start behaving based on their answer to that question? Most likely, we would not see many of bad attitudes and events that are currently dominating our global

society. There will be no more hatred, greed, wars, selfishness, deceit, or rudeness.

When you start behaving as if today, tomorrow or next month is your last day, you will need to create a bucket list for yourself and you will be updating that list periodically. In that

way, I guarantee, you will not be missing much of your life.

There are many important things you may want to consider in your bucket list, depending on your ideological/occupational background. For example, if you are civil engineer, you may want to build a

phenomenal bridge or building. If you are a carpenter, you may want to make a huge, astonishing library. If you are a religious person, you would probably ask for forgiveness for all the sins you might committed in your life and start correcting them if possible. If you are a doctor, you may want to start being more sympathetic with your patients and all the people around you, because that is much more important than writing flu prescriptions, for example.

Learn new languages, travel the world, learn ice skating, pursue higher studies, make a new family, have a new baby, establish a new firm, call all the friends that you have not been in contact with in years, apologize to those who were disappointed by you. There are thousands of ideas that can be added to a bucket list. Just decide which are the ones that will make you feel satisfied after you make a good use of the life you were given. Watch “The Bucket List” movie, starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman; it will open your mind for a new way of thinking.

Kurdistan Careers Conference: Hope for the Unemployed



they are both very appropriate venues for accommodating this conference.

This conference will have a positive role in encouraging the establishment of legitimate recruitment organizations. Before the announcement of this conference, it was difficult for unemployed persons to find jobs without the support of family or friend connections. This conference will define a roadmap for any or all persons who may otherwise not know where to turn for employment. This will be implemented via the collection of CV's by companies working in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to ensure a fair recruitment process.

Through this conference, not only will Kurdish citizen be able to unite in seeking suitable jobs but they will be able to create beneficial networks by finding people who share the same interests as them. This will have an overall positive effect in constructing robust economic sectors of work in Kurdistan.

Furthermore, it is vital for participants to realize that this conference

Though the weather may be hot, Kurdistan will undergo very productive programs during the summer of 2012. The summer heat is not going to prevent development seekers from prevailing in volunteering, bringing people together in conferences, and following up on new ideas. Among the many different activates in 2012, the Kurdistan Career Conference is by far the most popular.

The conference will be held in two different locations during the days of August 28 to September 1. The American University of Iraq-Sulaimani will hold the conference on August 31 to September 1, 2012 in Sulaimani. The Information Technology Academy (ITA) will hold the conference on August 28-29, 2012 in Erbil. It is worth noting that these two institutions have had a major role in organizing student activities during the last few years. Therefore,



is urging more of Kurdistan's citizens to focus on a capitalistic worldview in comparison to the socialistic work ethic that is currently fostered by the Kurdistan Regional Government. In other means, this conference is promoting more citizens to

become employed in the private sector. The KCC also nurtures more entrepreneurship in Kurdish culture through their programs. Too many of the Kurdish youth today are putting all their education and effort to waste by working in the public sec-

tor. Working for the government has become the norm in Kurdistan for all university undergraduates and in effect has made most people lazy and unproductive towards Kurdistan. The more the government gets involved in the affairs of the normal Kurdish citizen, the less command the citizen will have over their own lives. The Kurdish population has to begin depending less on the government and more on the private sector in terms of employment.

The Kurdistan Career Conference is also a good opportunity for companies to employ more local Kurdish people. Many private organizations today fill the positions they need with expert expats at a time when they could hire locals. Locals may need training but these locals will create a culture of Kurdish professionalism that will last longer than a temporary class of foreign pundits.

I encourage all students, graduates and professionals to attend the conference. Space is limited and registration is online. If you want to make the best of your abilities, become a participant of this conference.

"Let's Talk About Sex, Baby"

A Taboo Subject but One Which Could Save Lives

Tara Fatehi

From Adelaide, Australia

In my previous article on Awat about the dangers of a potential HIV epidemic in South Kurdistan I spoke about the use of prevention, of such diseases, as a first line treatment. When tackling the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) prevention has been shown to be the most effective form of treatment. This is due to the fact that most STDs are not yet curable but only have treatable measures, so once a patient is infected they can only be given measures to help them live a normal life with the disease but have the potential to pass it on to anyone else which they become physically involved with.

So how do you prevent the inevitable and potentially fatal? Education. If a population is educated about the dangers of a certain topic they will be more inclined to avoid the dangers by taking measures which are available to stop them coming into contact with such events. Sex education is taught in most western countries and used as a tool to empower people, especially teenagers, with the knowledge of the dangers associated with sex and how to prevent them. Many will argue that sexual acts and STDs are also more common in the west

compared to that of Middle Eastern countries; however, nowhere in the Middle East is there direct information about the percentage of population infected with STDs, in which I could share in this article. It is such a taboo subject anything related to it is completely ignored in a bid to avoid the discussion of sex.

Although the system of sex education in the west has its flaws, it allows for discussion of such sensitive topics and helps to raise awareness of certain diseases, like STDs. In most of the Middle East not just in Kurdistan Sex education is a very taboo subject, in most instances an almost forbidden topic of discussion between married couples, parents and their children, and even with health professionals trained in the area. Many believe religion has a hand to play in this type of mentality, others believe it is more of a cultural influence. Regardless of the reasons behind the taboo nature of providing or speaking about Sex education, it is a vital step towards raising awareness amongst society about the potential dangers of STDs. This will also lead to more awareness of symptoms associated with STDs, so that those infected are able to identify them before it is too late and seek medical help. Most STDs can lead to other health problems and be potentially fatal if left untreated.

Doctors working in Kurdistan have told stories of young women being hospitalised after the sheer terror of their "first night" when they get married. For generations females and males are kept in the dark about the education of sex and are expected to just figure it out once they are married and most of what is known, especially those in the elder generation, is pure mythology. However, with



the technology and internet sources available these days society is looking to places like the World Wide Web for information. The internet doesn't have a filter and most information obtained through these channels may cause more harm than good.

Trifa Bajalani, a Kurdish-American, currently in South Kurdistan on vacation believes that from her observations the fear of sex becoming a norm in society, especially among youth, is

what drives the mentality of its forbidden nature. She also says that sex (before marriage) does already exist, even among the youth but is done behind closed doors. The fact that sex education is such a "hush hush" topic in these societies even those educated about the topic enough to know a problem when they see one, cannot seek medical help due to the fear of social and mental backlash of speaking about such topics. This is why it is so important to publicise the education of the dangers associated with sex. Every individual should, at the very least, have the option of sex education available to them and they should be readily available to the general public. The introduction of sex education may bring about changes in the mentality towards these topics as well and ultimately could have the potential to save many lives.

More worrying than anything is that this type of mentality and lack of education towards sex creates a culture of honor killings, genital mutilation, and rape. The Doaa Network Against Violence reported an alarming figure of more than 12,000 women who had died in honor-based killings between 1991 and 2007 in South Kurdistan. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) dismissed this figure on the grounds that the number had decreased in recent years, but was un-

able to provide any statistics. It was only in 2008, four years ago, that the KRG passed a law to officially recognise honor-killings as murder. In 2010 the German NGO Wadi released a report, based on interviews with 1,700 women, which revealed that a staggering 72.7 percent of women in the region's two biggest provinces of Erbil and Sulaimani were victims of female genital mutilation, with the rate rising to almost 100 percent in some areas. Although I was unable to find statistics of rape, an article published in The Guardian in 2007 about the suicide of young women revealed that "Rape is committed habitually" throughout Iraq, including South Kurdistan. The article highlights that victims of rape then turn to suicide because of the fear of people finding out and the hopelessness they feel when they are unable to speak to anyone about such problems. This all comes back to the mentality and taboo nature of sex.

Like any controversial topic it will take time and patience for it to be introduced and integrated among society and then accepted by the majority. However sex education should be a definite point of discussion when changes to the educational system in Kurdistan are being made, Maybe Kurdistan can be the leading example for the rest of the Middle East.

Iraqi Songs: a Phenomenon that Desperately Needs a Change



Amir Muhsin

From Sulaimany, Iraq

Iraq was one of the best countries in music, with a group of great artists who sang songs that left a mark in the history of Middle Eastern music. Nathim Al-Ghazaly, Elham Al-Madfaay, Kathim Al-Sahr, and many other artist who are well known in the Middle East and even in other parts of the world.

Alas, most Iraqi songs are becoming cheap. They describe women as sex tools, as less human, and imply that men have the higher authority. Everyone can become a singer as long as they have a nice voice – not necessarily a good one – and can bring girls who can dance – not necessarily good dancers

to these songs, enjoying the lyrics and the video clips that are filled with girls who are only there to show off their bodies and appearances even when they are not beautiful. They are considered as dancers even when they do everything but dancing. This is in my opinion something we should stop at and analyze!

Since when did dirty language, porn-like clips, and undermining human beings become the way to express someone's feelings?

Singers like Hussam Al-Rassam and Hassan Al-Rassam who are the idols of many other performers that use the same language are affecting the reputation of the Iraqi art and diminishing its values.

This phenomenon has to stop. Art is one of the most important sides of a country. It is a way to represent your country in front of the entire world. Is that how we want Iraq to



A scene from an Iraqi song clip

ing – in the video clip or on stage.

Lines like "I'll break your nose" ("aksh khashmch") and "I will make her beg" ("Ella akhaleha ttwasal") are the most popular terms to use in those songs.

It is not only sad that it is damaging the Iraqi culture and civilization, but the fact that a lot of Iraqi youth regardless of their nationalities, age, and gender are listening

be represented? Do we want to be called the country with the insulting songs? I am sure most of you would answer with "No." So how about trying to put an end to these songs? Stop buying these albums. Try to show the real face of Iraqi art and artists. Kathim Al-Sahr, Haitham Yousif, Majid Almohandis, and some other singers who present a good art to their audience should be encouraged.

10 Point You Should Know Before You Go to an Interview

Yara Kawa

From Beirut, Lebanon

Are you wondering about what is in your interviewer's mind? Are you applying for a job but scared of an interview? Here are 10 points that might be helpful in giving you a clearer idea about what to do during an interview.

1. Did you show up early? Many interviewers are annoyed when candidates show up more than five or ten minutes early, since they may feel obligated to interrupt what they are doing and go out to greet the person.

2. What are you wearing? In most industries, a professional appearance still matters. You don't need to wear expensive clothes, but showing up in a casual outfit or clothes that do not fit properly, having unkempt hair, or inappropriately flashy makeup can harm your chances.

3. Do not try to sell us. It is a turn-off when a candidate seems overly focused on closing the deal, rather than on figuring out if the job is the right fit. No hiring manager wants to think she is being aggressively sold; we want the best person for the job, not the pushiest spiel.

4. Little things count. Hiring managers are watching everything, including things like how quickly you respond to requests for writing samples and references, whether your email confirming the time of the interview is sloppily written, and how you treat the receptionist.

5. Do not talk badly about a former employer. The interviewer might listen to you trash talking about people whom you worked for but they will be wondering if you will do that to them too. What is more, they are wondering about the other side of the story – whether you are hard to get along with,

or a troublemaker, or impossible to please.

6. Are you talking a lot? Your answers to your interviewer's questions should be direct and to-the-point. Rambling and unnecessary tangents raise doubts about your ability to organize your thoughts and convey needed information quickly.

7. Do your skills fit the position? You might have all the qualifications an employer is looking for, but still not get hired because your working style would clash with the people with whom you would be working. Remember, it is not just a question of whether you have the skills to do the job; it is also a question of fit for this particular position, with this particular boss, in this particular culture, and in this particular company.

8. We want you to talk about salary first for the exact reason you fear. Salary conversations are nerve-wracking for job seekers because they know that they risk low-balling themselves by naming a number first. And that is exactly why interviewers push candidates to throw out a number first. In an ideal world, employers would simply let candidates know the range they intend to pay, but in reality, plenty take advantage of the power disparity by making candidates talk about money first.

9. We are going to ask other people what they think of you. We are going to ask anyone who came in contact with you for their impressions – from the receptionist to the guy who you met for two minutes in the hallway.

10. We like thank-you notes, but not for the reason you think. Post-interview thank-you notes are not just about thanking the interviewer for her time; the ones that are done well build on the conversation and reiterate your enthusiasm for the job.

Mothers and Daughters: A Kurdish Perspective

Ana Omer

From Toronto, Canada

On most mornings, I bring my daughter back to our bed so she can give Daddy a wakeup kiss and get him in the shower. When my husband opens his eyes and looks at our daughter Sara, he says, "Sweetheart, Where did you come from?" because my daughter does not look much like her dad or me. She is much better looking than either one of us. Perhaps, I sometimes think, she is a changeling.

I then take her back to her room to change her sodden all-night diaper and choose what she will wear that day. Sara has so many enchanting things to wear that it is a little stressful trying to keep them all in rotation. I never

thought that I would be this mom, risking debtor's prison to feed my Petit Bateau habit. I never thought that I would put more consideration than was healthy into what my little girl should be wearing to her "Free to Be Under Three" class on a Thursday morning, biting my lip as I considered whether her teacher there had seen Sara in a particular frock before.

But there I stand. "What about this one?" I say, pulling out a ruffly dress utterly unsuitable for a day Sara will spend mostly hanging around the house. Sara clasps her fat little hands together and inhales sharply. "Uh dess, uh PEH-EE," she breathes. She stays patient and still while I dress her. "Yes, Sara," I say, stepping back and taking in that day's mas-



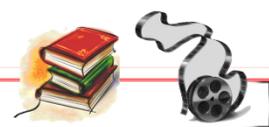
terpiece. "It is pretty." Then she makes her second grand appearance of the day before her father.

There is no question who has

become in Mazin's heart, the fairest of them all. It has been a long time since he has reacted so enthusiastically to one of my en-

sembles. Of course, that may be because the attention that I pay to Sara's beauty and wardrobe has come at the expense of my own.

When I walk down the street pushing Sara's stroller, and Sara walks beside me pushing her doll baby in her stroller, the construction workers no longer catcall at me like they did ten years ago. But every passerby gives Sara a "She's so cute!" or at least the "awww" pushed-out lower lip, and I scoop these compliments up eagerly. If I receive a compliment myself, I want to brush it off: "Really? I look like I lost weight? Uh, hardly." But hearing that my daughter is pretty is lovely and uncomplicated. I don't have to roll my eyes when someone says Sara is beautiful. I just say "thank you," and I mean it.



"The Avengers" Movie Review

Sanarya Firya

From Moss, Norway

Here it is, the movie that became the third highest-grossing film of all time: "The Avengers." If you like action, suspense, comedy, and superheroes, then this is definitely the movie for you! Based on the Marvel Comics superhero team of the same name, "The Avengers," produced by Marvel Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures, is the sixth installment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Although there are other movies that lead up to this one in this "shared universe," such as the movies "Iron Man" 1 & 2, "The Incredible Hulk," and "Thor," it is not at all necessary to watch these to understand or enjoy the movie on its own. With a fantastic script, a great plot, and characters that still manage to be human despite their superpowers, this is a movie that is sure not to disappoint. When Thor's brother, Loki, finds an

alien race known as the Chitauri who promise him an army to subjugate the earth in exchange for the legendary energy source known as the Tesseract, he travels to earth to steal the artifact and pursue his purpose. The director of the peacekeeping organization S.H.I.E.L.D., Nick Fury, tries to put together a team of especially skilled people in an attempt to stop Loki. For this purpose he recruits Captain America, Iron Man, The Hulk, and Thor to activate the "Avengers Initiative," and counts on them to defend humanity against the oncoming invasion. But all is not as easy as it may seem, as the team find difficulties in working together because of differing opinions, ideals, and goals. And so we follow them through hurdles and hardships as they try to find a way to work together and save Earth.

The movie is well-written, and so are the characters. With a well-written script and skilled actors, the movie is an absolute delight to watch. The charac-

ters are many and varied, and although the events and characters are of the supernatural kind, the characters feel so real and human that it is easy to con-

nect with them. From watching them solo or interacting with each other, they never fall out of character and give a splendid performance. Although the main characters, as is natural, are given more development than side characters, every character is unique and a delight to watch. Every scene is fantastically tailored, from intense fight scenes to comedic ordeals, so you'll never feel bored. Overall the movie is very well made.

This movie is definitely recommended to anyone, young or old, who loves superheroes and a good, exciting story. Some scenes may seem scary to young children, however, and so it is recommended that they be accompanied by an adult when watching it. On the whole, this movie promises to make you laugh, have your heart beating fast in excitement, and make you yell at the screen for the good guys to win. So what are you waiting for? Go watch the movie! You won't be disappointed.



Painting Stories

Rawa Ahmed Raza

From Sulaimany, Iraq

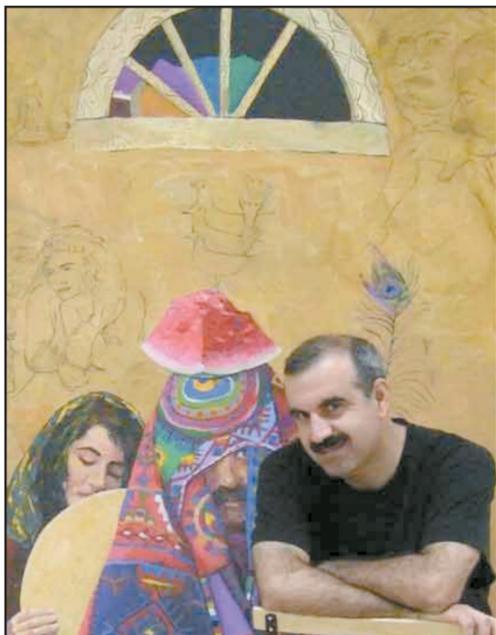
If you have ever been to an exhibition by a Kurdish artist, you have most probably noticed the effects of the brutal dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein on the thinking and the personal perception of the artist reflected in his work. This, however, is not the case if you go to an exhibition by Rostam Aghala.

His colorful paintings that focus mostly on the romantic relationship between men and women give the audience a chance to explore topics rarely handled in a society that views women, love, and sex as taboo. Rostam Aghala's canvases give the audience a rare and colorful insight into aesthetics and romanticism in Kurdish culture.

Rostam Aghala was born in 1969 in the Kurdish town of Koya. He was not particularly interested in painting before the age of fifteen. Rostam fell in love with a girl, Nasrin, while still in his teens, who inspired him to pick up painting. In order to impress Nasrin, Aghala copied a painting by a western artist and gave it to her. "She was the reason I became a painter," Rostam says. Rostam Aghala graduated from the Fine Arts Institute of Sulaimany in 1989, and has been the manager of Zamwa Gallery for the past 12 years.

Aghala's works feature doves, donkeys, traditionally woven Kurdish saddles, and women wearing traditional Kurdish clothing. One of his paintings, named The Shepherd, or Shuan in Kurdish, portrays a beautiful young Kurdish woman dressed in the traditional dress of Kurdish shepherds who appears sad; two big tear drops are on

her mantle, two birds are mating on her shoulders, and a butterfly hovers above her. In recollection of the story behind this painting, Rostam said, "I once went to the village of Tak Tak, near Koy Sinjak and there I met a very pretty woman shepherd. She could not bear children, so her husband made her a shepherd. All the time, while watching her sheep, she dreamt of having babies. The butterfly symbolizes her dreams, and the birds are upside down because they cannot make love." Aghala goes on to say, "her estranged husband married a second wife, who was also unable to bear children. After undergoing tests at the hospital, it was discovered that it was he who was sterile." There is always a story behind Aghala's works, and it is the journey of discovering and unveiling those stories that makes his works unique and exuberant experiences that transcend artistry; they are in more than one sense living testimonies.



Doctor Hur Jun Arrives in Kurdistan

Rawa Ahmed Raza

From Sulaimany, Iraq

When a Kurdish broadcasting channel decided to translate a Korean drama named Dong Yi into Kurdish, a wide range obsession with Korean dramas was triggered in the Kurdistan Region.

The heroine, Dong Yi, is a water maid who wins the favor of king Sukjog of the Joseon dynasty and soon becomes his concubine and bears him a son who later becomes king Yeongjo. The hardships Dong Yi faces throughout the series gave her a place in many people's hearts; small businesses, shops, and even falafel stands in Kurdistan were named after her. When it was aired, Dong Yi brought many families together and became the center of discussion for many of its regular viewers. Following Dong Yi's success, the channel that aired it decided to do the same with other Korean dramas, including Hur Jun. This drama was set around the period as that of Dong Yi's, and its unique humor and creative costumes delighted many. In fact Hur Jun was such a hit that Iraq's first lady, Hero Ahmed, invited South Korean actor Jun Kuang Ryul, who played the role of Dr. Hur to visit the country. As soon as he arrived, the media announced the pleasant surprise. The channel that aired the show also announced that on Thursday, June 14th, Dr. Hur will hold a press conference to talk about his visit to Sulaimany, Kurdistan Region's second largest city, and his future plans.

Despite frequent criticism that today's Kurdish media focuses too many resources on foreign drama and not nearly enough on local ones, soap operas like Hur Jun promise to have a firm foot in the hearts of the Kurdish audience for years to come.





VIEW FROM THE ARMCHAIR – ENGLAND'S EURO 2012 PATH

Ryan Delaney

From Leeds, UK

The European Championship is upon us. For some fans who dared to dream the dream is still alive, for others the dream is gone (well at least until next time!).

The build-up to the Euro 2012 campaign has been second to none; anticipation & excitement, and the all-important "WHAT IF?"

Nations were bursting with pride; coming together as one to get behind their team. What stands out more than the painted faces of the singing fans or the clash of colour as flags mix is that fans from every country have come together as one to embrace it.

So the foundations are set. The nations' supporters have come out in their numbers to get behind their country for this magnificent event, now all we need is quality football. And we haven't been disappointed! Ukraine and co-hosts Poland were elected to host the tournament, giving them the "apparent" advantage of what you could call Home Fixtures. Baring this is in mind Poland kicked things

off against Greece, favorites Poland had been expected to clinch the 3 points, but it wasn't to be. This was a heated old school football match seeing TWO red cards! The match ended 1-1. It was already an exciting start.

Before the England campaign at Euro 2012, it was fair to say everyone, including the England players, played down their chances of glory! This in mind, England took on the might of France, favourites to finish top of Group D. But this did not faze the thousands of England fans that made their journey to the Donetsk Stadium, nor did it seem to faze the England starting 11 who got off to a flyer. England piled the pressure on the French team and took a well-earned lead through defender Lescott's header. However, England couldn't wrap up the game and lost control, handing Man City and French star Samir Nasri an impressive equaliser. With no real flash of a winner later on, the game ended with both teams sharing a point.

Tournament hosts Ukraine sat at the top of Group D after snatching a 2-1 win against strong opponents Sweden, leaving England and France on 1 point

each and Sweden at the bottom with no points. Ukraine couldn't snatch another 3 points against what some may say a more worthy opponent as France took a 2-0 victory, going top. It was Sweden's turn to take on Roy Hodgson's England; they needed 3 points for any real chance to qualify for the quarter final. Also, England needed 3 points to show France and all tournament participants that they are not here just to make up the numbers, but that they are contenders. Full time comes and a thrilling match finished 3-2 to England.

With the group stages coming to an end, England lined up to face Ukraine, who by no means would crash out of this tournament without a fight. Ukraine needed a victory to see them through to the quarter finals, while England just needed to pluck a point from the highly anticipated game. France played underachievers Sweden in what was seen to be the rest of Group D as 3 points in the bag for them; Sweden couldn't achieve anything from a win so why even bother? Meaning France would top Group D and play Italy, avoiding the might of the much feared World Champions, Spain. But

Sweden did not like that script and astonishingly beat the French 2-0! Things don't get any better from England's perspective; ONE point against Ukraine would mean they top Group D and avoid the untouchables of Spain (well at least for now). If there was anyone to pull an England side through to the next phase of a tournament it would surely be English phenomenon Wayne Rooney, and so it proved to be.

After a truly unruly ride seeing Ukraine playing a far more aggressive form of attacking football, England for the first time were on the back foot. England though did manage to hold it together and claimed another victory to their Euro 2012 campaign by beating Ukraine 1-0 thanks to Rooney's header. England is now through to the knock out stages – the dream is well and truly alive.

Now this is where the real excitement starts – the knock out stages of Euro 2012. Whatever the outcome, this will go down in history as a brilliant tournament, and I for one will be remembering it for a long time to come.



Touch Football in Suly

Berzy B. Omer

From Sulaimany, Iraq



Everyone is ready? Hut! Move forward... touch down! That is how you roll in the game of Touch Football. Several weeks ago, the American University of Iraq – Sulaimani hit the pitch of Chia in a match of students versus teachers. The game was set to raise funds for Hiwa hospital, but unfortunately no funds were raised. However, the game yet turned out to be full of actions and sweat! Unlike what is regularly seen in the movies, this game was outside of violence. The main point of the game was

simple: don't let the other team reach your end zone with the ball, and in return attack your opponent with the same strategy, moving to the far end of the field with the ball.

Quite similar to American football, the game starts with a throw, and the other team tries to catch it as far as they could from the end zone. In addition to that, they form a line (facing the other team) and try to organize a plan for breaking through the other team and touch down. However, the player who holds the ball has seven Mississippis to count for passing the ball until attacked by his opponent. Once the ball is in the hand of another player, he cannot pass it forward,

otherwise it will count as a foul; he can only pass it to the back. If he is touched by both hands from his rivals, he needs to stop, and the game starts again from that point.

When one of the teams has the ball in their position, they only have seven attempts to make it through and score. If they fail, the ball goes to the other team, and they start to create their own chances.

Touch football is basically American football, but only several rules have been changed due to the situation. It is a popular game in the Unites States, but unheard of in Kurdistan. Do you want to bring it to life in Kurdistan? Shall I say "hut"? Hut!



VIVA Victory: What does it mean for Kurdistan?

Meriwan Zana

From Sulaimany, Iraq



At the beginning of June, Iraqi Kurdistan (or South Kurdistan) won the Viva World Cup for the first time, to the delight of the region's Kurds. What's more, the final took place in Erbil, making for the perfect celebration. The Kurds triumphed over North Cyprus, who also impressed throughout the competition. Could this victory mark a new era for Kurdish football, or is it of no significance?

It is fair to say that of all the aspiring nations seen in the tournament, Kurdistan may be the worthiest to compete at a higher level. However, the calibre of the teams at the Viva cup was simply not high enough to trouble Kurdistan. In that case, it is required that Kurdistan should play a friendly against an international team to test their ability. This is possible, given that both teams' associations approve of it. However, to register with FIFA and thus compete internationally is rather difficult. This is mostly due to Kurdistan not being an independent state,

as only official countries are affiliated with FIFA. The Viva cup victory, however, does strengthen Kurdistan's case for more involvement in international football and such a feat must not be neglected by FIFA.

One hindrance to Kurdish football is the lack of public and private investment in footballing facilities, such as youth academies and quality football fields. It is rather unfortunate that politics is involved in football, as it is one of the factors that are keeping Kurdistan from joining FIFA. However, this must not deter Kurdistan from investing huge sums in football, especially the youth. The day may come when we see the Kurdistan national team (that's right, "national"!) compete against the superpowers of Asia and even the world, and nobody wants to see them become hopeless minnows without a clear goal, as many national teams have turned out like that. All the successful teams such as Spain, Brazil, Germany, Italy, and Argentina started from scratch before achieving greatness, and Kurdistan can only do the same.

Awat Photo Gallery By Azheen I. Fuad "A Day for Nature"

