

YEMENIETTES

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While most people associate Yemen with news headlines about Al-Qaeda terrorism, drone strikes and massive youth unemployment, we travelled to the poorest Arab country to see what positive stories we could find. Our latest award-winning film, *Yemeniettes*, is the result.

Wafaa, Maha and Reem hope to build the first Yemeni factory to manufacture solar panels and alleviate frequent power outages. Their enterprising spirit lands them in a national entrepreneurship competition. But their victory is soon overshadowed by news of a rocket hitting Reem's home, a vivid reminder of the toll of instability and violent extremism on Yemeni families.

Undeterred, the girls travel to Qatar to compete against students from twelve other countries in the hopes of winning the title 'Best Arab Company of the Year.' The girls are the pride and joy of Yemen upon their return, but their dreams are soon endangered. Will they persevere or have they hit another glass ceiling?
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Wafaa in Sana'a, Yemen.



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

As Layalina Productions reaches its 12th year, I am delighted to assume the role of Layalina's Chairmanship. Most particularly, I am grateful to our friend and Layalina donor Richard Bodman for his extraordinary dedication and service and to former Layalina Board member Ambassador Paul Russo, both of whom stepped up last year at the death of Layalina's founder, Richard Fairbanks. Their selflessness in support of the Layalina legacy was an amazing gift. I now look forward to scaling up Layalina's institutional legacy by harnessing the power of film in the MENA Region. To that end, I have appointed Layalina co-founder and Executive Producer Leon Shahabian to serve as President to work with me on this new stage of development.

I am excited to announce the release of Leon's documentary, *Yemeniettes*, which showcases the aspirations of young Arab women to create their own opportunities amid systemic political and economic dysfunction. We are, indeed, gratified by the positive reception that *Yemeniettes* is receiving from fellow filmmakers on the festival circuit.

However, the magnitude of the current problems in the Middle East calls for more concerted action. In mounting our new initiatives the Board will build on Layalina's existing legacy as the preeminent documentary filmmaker within the MENA Region, whose work builds hope and inspires positive change. I personally hope that you will consider a tax-deductible donation to support these efforts.

With kind regards,



Shannon Fairbanks
Chairman of the Board



(Above) Production still from *Yemeniettes* in Sana'a, Yemen.

YEMENIETTES

[Continued from p. 1] Throughout the film, our cast's mothers, whose own education was cut short by early marriages, are proud to see their daughters walk a different path, while their fathers want them to become self-reliant. Through these families, we put a familiar, relatable face onto the societal benefits of women's empowerment.

Ultimately, *Yemeniettes* is about creating economic opportunity in a society that has conditioned its youth to avoid risk. This production comes at a critical time for Yemen. According to the International Labor Organization, Yemen's youth unemployment rate is over 50 percent. In 2013, the World Economic Forum ranked the country last out of 136 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report on economic, political, health and educational gender disparities.

As Richard Stengel, the newly confirmed Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, mentioned during his confirmation hearing, countering violent extremism, encouraging education for young women and promoting entrepreneurship are public diplomacy priorities vital to our national interest. *Yemeniettes* presents young people with a compelling alternative narrative to violent extremism and despair.



(Above) Members of Creative Generation in the traditional dress of Yemen at the entrepreneurship competition in Doha, Qatar.

Our film poses the question: "What if three girls could inspire an entire country to dream again?" With the film's upcoming broadcast, we will soon find out.

Yemeniettes is a Layalina production. It is created, written and executive produced by Leon Shahabian and directed and edited by Shawn Thompson.

SUPPORT LAYALINA

Layalina Productions Inc. is a tax-exempt organization under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To donate by credit card, visit www.Layalina.tv and click on the donate button. You may also donate by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by calling us at (202) 776-7765. To donate by mail, please send your check or money order to:



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FILM FESTIVALS & AWARDS

We are delighted to announce that *Yemeniettes* is making waves on the festival circuit. The film swept the Silicon Valley Film Festival, winning Best Feature Documentary, Best Innovation and Entrepreneurship and Best Vision of the Future.

Yemeniettes was named Official Selection to the Thin Line Festival in Texas in February as well as Official Selection to the upcoming 38th Cleveland International Film Festival in March and to the 6th Millennium International Documentary Film Festival of Brussels, Belgium in April.

(Below) Skyline at sunrise in Sana'a, Yemen.





(Above) Reem with her mother Wadeeda in traditional Yemeni dress.
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IMPACT EVALUATION

Like all of our shows, *Yemeniettes* uses the proven Sabido methodology to shift attitudes on sensitive issues through a compelling, character-driven story. We are excited to announce that we have partnered with a third-party vendor to evaluate the film's impact in Yemen.

We are very keen to measure changes in attitudes toward entrepreneurship and parents' willingness to allow their daughters to stay in school and to subsequently join the workforce. We look forward to reporting to you on the evaluation's findings.

(Below) Students at Al Sayida Zaynab High School in Sana'a, Yemen.



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