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NEWS

For Immediate Release

Ouachita professor Dr. Raouf Halaby presents paper at Olympia Arab Festival in Washington

By McKenzie Cranford

October 21, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University professor Dr. Raouf Halaby recently presented a paper at the Olympia Arab Festival, an event co-sponsored by the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice. The conference was held Oct. 4 in Olympia, Wash., in conjunction with the city's Fall Arts Walk.

"This festival is an opportunity to celebrate, learn and experience wonderful aspects of Arab culture," said Washington Gov. Jay Inslee as he greeted the approximately 1,000 people in attendance. "I am delighted to know that our Arab American community members are taking part in the festivities honoring their rich heritage."

Halaby, professor of visual arts and English at Ouachita, was invited to present during the "Art and Storytelling as Arab Cultural Expressions" session of the conference along with Evergreen State University art professor Amjad Faur. Halaby presented from his paper "As Tata Used to Say: Kan Ya Maka'an, Fi Adeem al Zaman" (As Grandmother Used to Say: In a Certain Place, a Long, Long Time Ago). Internationally recognized scholar Dr. Therese Saliba, professor of comparative literature and women's studies at Evergreen State University, moderated the session.

"I drew on my cultural heritage, the ancient Arab tradition and skill of utilizing storytelling to delight and to instruct," Halaby explained. "I specifically drew on a childhood heroine of mine, a storyteller par excellence. Tata Maria, my paternal grandmother's sister, compressed into a Scheherazade, Boccaccio, Chaucer and an O. Henry, spent hours narrating stories that stretched my imagination and no doubt set me on a path that affected my future avocation."

In addition to six panels covering a range of topics, the conference featured art, book and calligraphy exhibits, including fiber art, glass, hammered brass, crafts and traditional embroidered costumes from across the Arab world. The celebration also featured Arab music, dance and food.

"To celebrate the cultural traditions which helped shape my character was a most rewarding experience," Halaby added. "Even though Olympia is thousands of miles away from my native Jerusalem, the experience was a cultural immersion, a going back to my roots experience."

To read Halaby's full paper, visit <http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/10/10/in-a-certain-place-a-long-long-time-ago/print>. For more information, contact Dr. Raouf Halaby at halabyr@obu.edu or (870) 245-5564.

PHOTO OF HALABY AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

AT <http://www.obu.edu/news/2014/10/21/ouachita-professor-dr-raouf-halaby-presents-paper-olympia-arab-festival>.