

SHADYA

A FILM BY DANNY HAKIM, UDI KALINSKY AND ROY WESTLER



Shadya Zoabi, a charismatic 17-year-old karate world champion, strives to succeed on her own terms within her traditional Muslim village in northern Israel. Despite her father's support, she faces the challenge of balancing her dreams with her religious commitments and other's expectations. **SHADYA** takes an intimate look at the evolution of a young Israeli-Arab woman with feminist ideas in a male-dominated culture.



FROM THE FILMMAKERS

As filmmakers, we had an important opportunity to create a film with a strong statement—that personal freedom is something special and is worth fighting for. SHADYA captures the struggle of a 17-year-old girl caught between ambition and tradition as she grapples with her identity as both an Israeli Arab and a Muslim female. This film was a journey that brought us inside the lives of a traditional Muslim family and changed our views of what it means to be a young woman in today's Israel.

The story of SHADYA portrays the universal conflict faced by Muslim girls and women as well as many young people in other cultures: the conflict between the inner yearning to be independent and to follow one's dreams and the expectations of family and society at large to adhere to cultural traditions. We believe that this film shows that ambition and hard work can be used as tools to fight culturally ingrained perceptions and ignorance. Also through this film we show that many Israelis do accept Arab Muslims in our society.

As Israeli citizens, we live each day with a diverse array of ethnic populations. The Israeli Arabs are one of these populations.

Every human being deserves a normal life regardless of origin, religion or color. This belief is the underlying theme in the story of SHADYA, the story of a spirited Israeli Arab girl who challenges the traditional Muslim lifestyle planned for her, by fighting to become a world karate champion.

We are grateful that Shadya and her father were willing to make the film, thereby making a statement to their peers, and we feel privileged to have been able to witness Shadya's transformation into a responsible young woman.

Shadya now lives in the village of Daburia, north of Galilee. It's an area that has been deeply affected by recent missile attacks. She has returned to karate, as a teacher, and will be working for Danny in the Budo for Peace Association (BFP), a nonprofit aimed at breaking down barriers to peace by bringing together youth from areas in conflict to learn and practice martial arts. We believe that if Shadya continues training and gets back to form, she can be the world champion once again.

DANNY HAKIM
ROY WESTLER
UDI KALINSKY

THE FILM

SHADYA is the coming-of-age story of a spirited 17-year-old girl, with more than its share of twists and turns. As she strives to establish an independent identity, Shadya Zouabi must balance the demands of her heritage as a Muslim female with her success as a world karate champion and she must reconcile her identity as a Palestinian who, as an Israeli citizen, represents Israel in international competitions.

Shadya's unconventional pursuit of karate is made possible by strong support from her father, but is opposed by her more conservative brothers and also, eventually, her husband. As she tries to balance her commitment to community and family with her desire to win, we see an unpredictable teenager, alternately defiant and acquiescent. Like many teenagers, Shadya wants to belong but also wants to be different. She is at once detached and emotional. So viewers are not completely surprised when at the peak of her karate career Shadya marries her fiancé and takes on the traditional duties of a wife—duties that don't include training or competition.

This hour-long documentary, which follows Shadya for more than two years, provides a portrait of a strong young woman struggling to come to terms with life in a male-dominated culture. It also provides viewers with a rare glimpse into the complex life of an Israeli Arab family.

Selected People Featured in SHADYA

Shadya Zouabi - karate champion from Tamra, Galilee; an -Israeli Arab citizen competing for the Israeli team
Wael Zouabi - Shadya's sister
Mazen Zouabi - Shadya's father
Shadi Zouabi - Shadya's eldest brother
Morad - Shadya's fiancé (and eventual husband)
Danny Hakim - coach of the Israeli National Shotokan Karate Team

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Israeli Arabs

When the state of Israel was founded in 1948, some Palestinians were forced to leave, others fled, and still others stayed. This latter group was granted citizenship, and they are now referred to as "Israeli Arabs." They constitute 15 percent to 20 percent of Israel's population. Of the 1.3 million Israeli Arabs, approximately 80 percent are Muslim. Others are Christian or Druze. Many Israeli Arab families have Palestinian relatives living in the disputed territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli Arabs have the right to vote and have elected representatives in Israel's parliament. However, they also experience significant discrimination. Some of the discrimination is institutional, a result of the fact that Israel is legally defined as a Jewish state; some of it results from ethnic and religious tensions between Israel's Arab Muslims and Jewish citizens.

Women in Islam

Like all religious peoples, Muslims are not monolithic in their beliefs or practices. There are widely varying interpretations of Islam's teachings about women's responsibilities. For detailed information, see the Resource Section on the last page of this guide.

THINKING MORE DEEPLY

General

- If you could ask Shadya a question, what would you ask and why? What might you ask her father, mother, coach, husband, siblings and teammates?
- Compare the way you felt watching the beginning of the film, when Shadya was training on the beach and asserting her independence, with the way you felt watching the final scene of the film, seeing Shadya married and pregnant.

Nationalism and Identity

- Shadya asks one of her teammates for a response to wrapping herself in a Palestinian flag at an international competition. If you were one of Shadya's teammates, what might you have said to her?
- Members of the Palestinian team chide Shadya for competing for Israel. What do you think of their reaction toward Shadya? Was her decision to compete for Israel a betrayal of her people? Why or why not?
- The Israeli coach proposes that his athletes and the Palestinian team train together. The Palestinian coach refuses, saying that to do so would give the false impression "that we're living together and everything is good in Palestine." Do you find his argument convincing? Why or why not?
- Shadya says, "I think I'm in the middle: Palestinian, Israeli-who am I? Israel is my country. Palestinians are Arabs. I'm also an Arab, so where does that put me?" How would you answer her? Do you have conflicting identities? What role do your ethnic, religious and national identities play in who you are and how you lead your life?
- We see Israeli shopkeepers refusing to serve Mazen. What do you think they see and feel when they look at Mazen? If you had been a customer in the shop and witnessed this exchange, what would you have done?

Islam and Traditional Family Values

- Mazen believes that his support of his daughters' participation in karate will "bring them success in life, not bad things." His sons believe that their father is doing their sisters a disservice. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of each of their positions?
- Shadi, Shadya's older brother, says, "In our customs, the man doesn't permit the woman to work." In your view, what roles do women play in society? In the family? What has influenced your views? If others in your community held views similar to yours, how might it affect girls like Shadya? What might a community lose when it rigidly enforces traditional gender roles? What might it gain?
- Shadya's father, Mazen, says, "People have reached the moon. You think there's a difference between Muslims, Christians and Jews? We're all the same." His sons disagree. If you were part of the conversation, what would you have said to Mazen?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions for individuals and for groups. If you need help getting started, you might begin your list with these suggestions:

- Look for ways to support mentoring programs, empowerment programs and athletic opportunities for girls and young women in your community.
- Start a study group to examine the teachings of Islam and other religions regarding women, nationalism and/or family.
- Host a panel discussion examining the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian governments. Feature the perspective of an Arab who is an Israeli citizen.
- Use a screening of SHADYA to encourage conversation between parents and teens about issues raised in the film.

For additional outreach ideas, visit itvs.org, the website of Independent Television Service (ITVS). For local information, check the website of your PBS station.

Before you leave this event, commit yourself to pursuing one action item from your discussion group's brainstorm list.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ACTION

To Start

www.budoforpeace.org - Budo for Peace (BFP) brings together young people from conflict areas to learn and practice traditional Japanese budo (martial arts) in order to learn its values and apply them toward breaking down fear and building trust between peoples.

Israeli Arabs

<http://www.caabu.org/pdf/Israeli-Arabs-final.pdf> This is a good two-page fact sheet on Israeli Arabs from the Council for Arab-British Understanding.

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/nations/citizen/2003/0108israeliarab.htm> This brief essay on Israeli Arab life and identity is by Asmi Bishara, who is an Israeli Arab and a member of Israel's parliament.

Women in Islam

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/Islamwomen.html> Dr. Alan Godlas, University of Georgia, has created an excellent website on Islam. This link is to the section of the website that focuses on women and feminism.

<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/issues/part/article.html?record=863> The Women's Sports Foundation offers this perspective on Muslim women's participation in athletic competition.

Additional Resources

<http://www.adl.org> The Anti-Defamation League fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry in the United States and abroad and serves as a public resource for government, media, law enforcement and the public. All of its activities are aimed at countering and reducing hatred.

<http://www.adc.org> Since 1980, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has been the leading Arab American voice on foreign policy issues, especially by defending the rights of the Palestinian people and opposing the sanctions against Iraqi civilians.

SHADYA WILL AIR NATIONALLY ON THE EMMY AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS* ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2007 AT 10:00 PM. CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS.

SHADYA was produced by Danny Hakim, Udi Kalinsky and Roy Wrestler. The Emmy Award-winning series *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, (CPB) with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the Independent Television Service. ITVS Community works to leverage the unique and timely content of the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens* to build stronger connections among leading organizations, local communities and public television stations around key social issues through the creation of opportunities for civic engagement and positive social change. To find out more about ITVS COMMUNITY, visit www.itvs.org/outreach.

