

Letters to the Editor

March 16, 2007

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the presence of *Al-Raida* in my life. I came across this invaluable publication many years back when I was still in undergraduate university and I've been a loyal and eager reader since then. I can not tell you how proud I was when I found *Al-Raida* on the shelves of my university library in the United States and how helpful these issues and the diverse themes they covered — were to me as a student and a woman interested in women's studies, especially Arab women. I have benefited tremendously in my academic projects and in educating myself in general about Arab women from the myriad of articles, research, reviews, rigorous scholarship and the many other interesting material available on the pages of your publication.

Al-Raida indeed deserves its name because it is a pioneering and unique source of much needed information about Arab women and Arab societies. How many publications exist in the Arab world or elsewhere that focus on Arab women or that address Arab societies from the prism of their women. As you well know, Arab women, perhaps like women everywhere in the world, are often marginalized, silenced and misrepresented to the point of rendering them almost invisible. *Al-Raida*, for decades now, has courageously and diligently broken this sound barrier shrouding Arab women's lives. It has done so by covering a wide range of subjects from the mundane to the daring helping us in the process to understand our societies better, which is the first step towards change.

As an Arab woman living in the United States, I can not emphasize often enough and strongly enough how important it is to have Arabs and especially Arab women write about, talk about and represent Arab women with their own words at a time when certain elements in the "west" insist on representing us or rather misrepresenting us from a culturally imperialist point of view.

I think *Al-Raida* has done a fair job over the years presenting the diversity of "arab women" in terms of geography, class, religion, culture and so on. I would like to see perhaps more on class/poverty as a category of analysis in writing and doing research about Arab women and on sexuality and sexual orientation. I would like to see as well more focus on women from ethnic minorities living in the Arab world perhaps leading us to very interesting discussions on democracy, on how to make our societies more inclusive and on what it means to be "arab," an open, flexible and ambiguous-in a positive way-category as I define it, timely discussions that are often monopolized by men.

As an Arab American, I would love see some issues of *Al-Raida* focus on Arab women in the diaspora, the challenges they face, their histories of struggle, their contributions and so on. Personally, I could never have enough on literature, art, theater, films and culture in general, especially by and about Arab women, perhaps incorporating the creative contributions of Arab women in the diaspora into this narrative.

And my final wish is to keep *Al-Raida* a "feminist" journal. What I mean by that, is don't be afraid of being political, controversial, polemical, radical and rebellious. The ultimate purpose of the work you do is to make waves, create change and make our societies less sexist.

I apologize for being long-winded but I am passionate about women's issues, feminism and arab culture and therefore I am passionate about *Al-Raida* and I feel personally affected by the work you do.

respectfully,
Nadine Saliba