BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER
SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES AND BREAKING BARRIERS:

THE ROLE OF ARTS AND CULTURE

IN THE U.S.-MUSLIM WORLD RELATIONSHIP

Doha, Qatar

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Moderator:
HADY AMR
Director, Brookings Doha Center and Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution

Featured Speakers:
AMBASSADOR CYNTHIA P. SCHNEIDER
Senior Nonresident Fellow and Director, Arts and Culture Initiative, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution
Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy, Georgetown University

STEPHEN R. GRAND
Director, Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World and Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution

PELIN TURGUT
Correspondent, *Time Magazine*
Co-Founder, The !f Istanbul International Independent Film Festival

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. AMR: Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Thank you for coming. *As salaam alaykum*.

My name is Hady Amr, Director of the Brookings Doha Center which is a project of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings.

Before we get started, I'm going to remind myself to turn off my cell phone or at least silence your cell phones and BlackBerrys and everything else, so we can have an uninterrupted event. The event will last for between 75 and about 90 minutes. There's media here, so this is an on the record event.

I'm especially delighted to welcome two of my colleagues from the Brookings Institution back in Washington, D.C, and also a new friend.

Ambassador Cynthia Schneider is a Distinguished Professor of Diplomacy at Georgetown and also a Senior Nonresident Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy. I think Cynthia and I go back five or six years, and we

met through Brookings before I even joined. And so, suffice it to say, Cynthia is one of the reasons I actually joined Brookings, because of our friendship.

Next to Cynthia is Dr. Stephen Grand, Director of the Saban Center's Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Muslim World. Steve is also a friend, a close colleague, and we joined Brookings more or less the same week or a few weeks. Steve beat me by a few weeks. So we've been in this together, and Steve has been an instrument part of helping create this center.

To Steve's left, we have Pelin Turgut, a new friend who I just met through the good introduction of Cynthia. She served as a correspondent for Time Magazine and the Co-Founder, it's the !f Initiative, right? I got that right?

MS. TURGUT: The !f Istanbul Film Festival.

MR. AMR: The !f Istanbul, right, International Independent Film Festival.

And so, we're grateful that they all got the chance to spend the time with us.

Our event tonight is entitled Challenging Stereotypes and Breaking Barriers: The Role of Arts and Culture in the U.S-Muslim World Relationship. It's a particularly apt title for this panel to address because Cynthia Schneider is the Director or the Head of the Saban Center's Arts and Culture Initiative that is part and parcel of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World directed by Stephen Grand. As you all know, I'm sure you've come across in the newspapers, going back five or six years now, Brookings has been co-hosting, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S.-Islamic World Forum which is directed by my colleague, Steve Grand.

On top of that all, Cynthia, together with some colleagues and others and Steve's guidance, has just put out an analysis paper called *Mightier Than the Sword*, and we have copies here on the right. I'd urge you all to get a copy. I found it to be a great read, and in addition to that I also found it to be an inspiration for a paper that I'm working on.

So, Cynthia, you'll see some of those ideas

replicated yet again.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Imitation is the sincerest form.

MR. AMR: Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, as Cynthia says.

Just a reminder, like Brookings Washington, Brookings Doha is open to a broad range of views, and so we encourage debate, discussion, questions. We're here to bring together government, media, civil society, academia, journalists to discuss pressing policy issues.

I think you have the bios of all of our panelists on your chairs. To save time and leave more time for discussion, I'm going to refrain from reading their bios this time around and just pass the microphone actually to Stephen Grand, first, who will give a bit of context, then to Cynthia Schneider and then Ms. Turgut and then for questions and answers.

I'm going to ask my panelists to try, if they can, to keep their remarks to 9 minutes and 59 seconds so that we can leave as much time as we can

for questions and answers.

So, Dr. Grand.

DR. GRAND: Thanks, Hady. It's a real pleasure to be here, in particular, because both Hady and I were there nearly at the creation when Brookings was first discussing plans for this center. So it's truly a pleasure to be here with Hady and do an event here in the center and see it functional.

The Arts and Culture Initiative, which we're going to talk about tonight, began as an experiment. Arts and culture, as you know, has the power to transform how we see and how we understand others, to break down stereotypes and to make possible cross-cultural relations across societies. Brookings' own venture in arts and culture, this Arts and Culture Initiative, began as a bit of an experiment at the 2006 U.S.-Islamic World Forum that we do here in Doha. It was decided that we're going to bring together artists and leaders of culture institutions and have them as part of the discussions just to see what happened.

My colleague, Ambassador Cynthia Schneider, who combines both a background as an art historian and experience as a diplomat, an American diplomat, representing us in the Netherlands, seemed to be the perfect person to help pull that together, and so Cynthia was asked to help bring together a very diverse group of musicians, artists, film directors that included the Pakistani rock star, Salman Ahmed, the Yemeni film director, Bader Ben Hirsi, actress Jane Alexander and novelist Amy Tan, among others.

Those discussions that took place at the 2006 U.S.-Islamic World Forum were in fact so fruitful and so interesting that it was decided to make this an ongoing activity within the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at Brookings and to really try to build an initiative that would seek to use the power of arts and culture as a tool to help bridge the divide between the United States and the Muslim World.

And so, under Cynthia's guidance over the past two years, we've conducted a range of discussions among arts and culture leaders here in Doha, in Cairo,

in Washington, in L.A. and in New York City and from those discussions have come a rich array of outcomes, a number of connections, really exciting connections among artists and cultural leaders in the United States and in the Muslim World, that range from film collaborations to very specific projects among musicians aimed to bridge the divide between the U.S. and Muslim World and on and on.

But a really exciting array of connections and projects have emerged from this, one of which I wanted to mention here because it's the initiative that's probably the furthest along at this point, and that's something that we call MOST, Muslims on Screen and Television, a cultural resource center which will be unveiled in December in L.A., in Hollywood, and which is really intended to be a resource center for script writers in L.A. who want to do, say, a television show and incorporate themes related to Islam or a Muslim character into the screen plays that they're writing and may just need a little assistance.

If they want to know, for example, what a

Turkish family would eat for breakfast and what they might talk about over the breakfast table, they can call this resource center. The coordinator who will answer the phone or someone, whatever staff, who will answer the phone will put them in touch with an expert who can help them with that. It's really designed to encourage the Hollywood creative community to incorporate more Muslims and more Islamic themes into the work that they do to be positive ones as a way of encouraging more accurate, diverse and fair representations of Muslims in screen and television.

As Hady said, one of the other products of the work that Cynthia has been doing has been this white paper that she will talk about today and that's been the result of a series of meetings that we've held in various parts of the world between artists and cultural leaders, and it's also been a result of series of interviews that she and her colleagues, in putting together this paper, did, asking a range of questions about the state of arts and culture, cultural interactions across the divide, both in the

United States and the Muslim World.

And with that, let me turn it over to my colleague, Cynthia.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Thank you, Stephen… and thanks so much, Hady. It is great to be here and wonderful to be here with my new friend, Pelin, who was also with me in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

I'm going to begin, as I really like to begin just about anything, with a quote from Thomas Jefferson:

"You see, I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts, but it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed as its object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputations, to reconcile to them the respect of the world and procure them its praise."

This, he wrote to James Madison from Paris on September 20th, 1785, and I think Jefferson there sums up pretty much what anyone would like to accomplish today through cultural interactions: increasing the reputation of your country, reconciling

to them the respect of the world, getting along with the world better.

And, I think that Jefferson is a particularly apt person to begin the evening with because he shared with the Prophet Muhammad a belief that the pen is mightier than the sword. They expressed it differently. The Prophet, as you probably know, in a hadith expressed the idea that the ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr whereas Thomas Jefferson urged his fellow patriot, Thomas Paine, to “do with the pen what had been done before with the sword.”

But they both shared this belief that what is written, what comes out of the mind and communicate through writing, is more valuable than what is done militarily with the sword.

Today, as the divide -- and I’m sorry to say, but I think it’s true –- as the divide between the United States and the Muslim World presents one of our greatest foreign policy challenges, others are coming to this perspective as well about the pen being

mightier than the sword. Among them, Secretary Gates gave a landmark speech at the University of Kansas where he recognized the limitations of military power and emphasized the importance of enhancing diplomacy and engagement with other cultures. We're waiting to see if he's going to write a check for the Pentagon budget to back that up, but just the statement was important

So, within this context of nonmilitary means of engaging, arts and culture has a truly untapped potential and a very important potential within the U.S.-Muslim World relationship and it's the goal of the Arts and Culture Initiative that I'm privileged to lead at Brookings to leverage that potential. There are a couple of core beliefs behind this.

One is the power of creative expression which affects our emotions and it moves us emotionally when we see a movie or read a book or listen to a piece of music, the power of that to shape opinions and shape and reveal identities. That's what makes it so important.

Another is the value of the intersection of arts and policy, and we found that through the years at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum that Steve discussed. I found it to be a kind of symbiotic relationship that policy leaders enjoy interacting with cultural leaders and vice versa.

And, we have found that it leads a profound impact. One example I might bring up is our interaction with, engagement with creators and writers on the television program *24*, which some of you might have heard of.

You might not think of that as the most likely thing that I would present to you as a positive example, but last year we had Howard Gordon, the Executive Producer of *24*, with us in Doha, and Howard had already -- I can't take full credit for this. Howard had already been rethinking the formula in *24*, which you're familiar there, as elsewhere, Muslims have tended to be the bad guy du jour, replacing the Russians as it used to be. Howard had begun to rethink this and think of a new way of doing it and

recognized the negative fallout from those programs.

And so, Pelin and I were together in Abu Dhabi where we presented a panel together with the Middle East International Film Festival on this whole issue of challenging stereotypes through film. There was unveiled, probably for the first time in this part of the world, a clip from the new *24* season which will feature both Muslims and terrorists, but they are not the same thing. The terrorists are not Muslims. The Muslims are helping to uncover them.

As this relationship with *24* goes on, we will unveil the prequel to that new series in Washington on November 20th at a Brookings Institution event at the Newseum.

The power of creative expression, I think, was put very well by one of our former participants, actress Heather Raffo, who said even if you know the facts of the play, music, movie, book, whatever it is, it takes you on an emotional journey.

Before I talk a little bit more about the journey, let me just briefly present the facts as we

know them. You probably know the largest survey ever taken of Muslim population has been done by the Gallup organization, done over the last seven years, captured in a book by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, John Esposito, another Georgetown colleague.

What this showed that's important for us tonight is that when asked what is the biggest reason for the divide between the U.S. and the Muslim World, Muslim populations all over the world said the lack of respect and understanding for Muslims and Islam.

Unfortunately, that feeling was confirmed by the questions presented to Americans when they were asked what do you respect most about Muslims and Islam. The majority answers were nothing or I don't know.

I want to emphasize that kind of vacuum of information because, unfortunately, in American education, at least until you get to college, people learn practically nothing about the rest of the world, and this region of the world is no exception. It's not singled out. We don't learn anything about

anywhere in the world. So, unfortunately, negative images from popular culture fill that vacuum, and that's why we feel it's so important to work with the creators of that popular culture and try to make it possible within their own contexts to change that paradigm.

Now, there's also a good side to that. When these same populations, when they were asked, Muslim populations described the United States, referring to policy, as ruthless. But they described Americans as friendly, and many of them didn't actually know an American. When they were asked why, they said, *Friends,* not meaning friends they had, but the program. So that just shows that it is possible to move in a positive direction with culture just as well.

Now let me mention a couple of ways in which culture works and in which I think it's important in this relationship. First of all, artists in any society, artists are the ones who kind of push the boundary of freedom of expression. They're the ones

who look at the society around them, reflect on it, often criticize it. In my paper, I call them canaries in the coal mine of free expression.

So, if a goal is to increase freedom of expression in the world, to enhance civil society, artists are the people who are on the front lines, and creative thinking promotes the kind of independent of thought that is necessary for a healthy civil society. So we should be supporting artists and supporting engagement with artists and media figures and intellectuals and scholars -- something, sadly, that has not happened very much in the last 10 years or so from the United States.

You can never underestimate the importance of person to person contact. One of the people I interviewed said, once there's contact, things change. That is also an area of engagement with the world that has diminished in the last 10 years, sometimes in response to security needs, and I think that's something that we need to reexamine and not look at it through the prism of the post-9/11 bridge-building but

instead through collaboration, actually working together towards a finished product.

We have in America a largely commercial culture, and I'm happy to talk about that in more length in the question and answer period, but that has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is it's a skill that can be valuable, and we should be transferring more to other parts of the world. We have one place where lots of people make a living through their cultural products.

You have in this part of the world many talented artists and singers and filmmakers. But, as one of the participants in one of our seminars said, making art in the Arab World is not a problem. It's the management and marketing that is a problem.

That's a skill that we could help transfer that would require new, innovative public-private partnerships. Warner Brothers is not the State Department. But we could develop public-private partnerships to transfer that skill, and it would reach targets of opportunity such as, for example,

hip-hop music which is very popular in this part of the world and has taken on its own identity but references back American hip-hop music -- not so much the materialistic hip-hop of today but the earlier political type as exemplified by one of our participants, Ali Shaheed Muhammad, one of the members of a Tribe Called Quest.

He said, people identify with a struggle. It doesn't really matter where you come from. We all have the same story, and hip-hop music has tapped into that commonality.

Well, new media, hip-hop, this is important but so is the past and so is the cultural tradition. I don't really need to emphasize that here where you're about to open this fantastic new museum of Islamic arts. I'm so glad to see the Director, Roger Mandle, here. I think that will be really a landmark event in this region. It's so important to celebrate your own past.

As one of the posters or one of the labels in an exhibition that was recently at the national

Gallery in Washington, the Treasures of Afghanistan, stated so eloquently from one of their curators: A Nation Stays Alive When Its Culture Stays Alive. This is something I think we missed in the invasion of Baghdad when we neglected entirely to protect the museum there in contrast to what we had done in World War II. So that made it possible for the looting to occur.

Symbolism is important. Through that neglect, I'm afraid the message we sent -- and it was maybe just a weensy bit compounded by Secretary Rumsfeld saying, oh, they have so many pots -- really communicated the wrong message. Then you turn around and expect people to rebuild society out of nothing.

The heritage, the cultural heritage is a beginning point for the rebuilding of society, and I would suggest that more of an integration of culture and policy in international relations would prevent that kind of mistake.

So let me conclude by saying that what I think we should, what we need to do to really succeed

and leverage the potential of arts and culture is:

Number one, take our own culture as seriously as the rest of the world does.

Number two, integrate knowledge from and about arts and culture into policy.

Three, increase funding. I don't need to tell you that is critical. But not only that, develop new kinds of public—private partnerships to leverage the knowledge and expertise of the private sector in this area.

Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ambassador Schneider.

(Applause)

MR. AMR: Ms. Turgut, again, a correspondent for Time Magazine and co-founder of the !f Istanbul International Independent Film Festival, please.

MS. TURGUT: Thank you. Thank you very much for having me and thank you very much to the Brookings Institution.

This is really a very valuable document. It's very comprehensive. It covers, I think, the

entire region and has a lot of diverse examples.

Yesterday's panel was much more oriented towards filmmaking professionals, and so we talked a lot about content and content creation. I think today I'm actually a little bit more comfortable because I think as cultural practitioners it's really where we can begin to discuss policy issues, and that's where this document is actually incredibly handy.

It's very rare that as a journalist and as a film festival organizer, the two kind of coincide, but they did quite recently on a story I did with regard to Turkish-Greek relations, historically antagonistic. In 1999, there was a massive earthquake in Turkey, subsequently a very large earthquake in Greece, and this unleashed a sort of spirit of good will between the two countries and a demand for better ties that politicians looked at and initiated what they called low-level diplomacy. This is trust-building and confidence-building measures in the areas of education, culture and tourism.

In a way, this is a little bit like a bone

that they threw at the situation because talks had foundered many times in terms of bilateral relations. Over the last decade, what we've seen in fact is a number of very heartening developments. There are now, for instance, two Greek study departments at universities in Istanbul and one in Athens. A pilot program to revise textbooks for primary school children has already shown over just five years how much conceptions of the other and stereotypes of the other can change in primary school age children.

Most importantly, we've finally come to a point where it's being tested politically, and this is in Cypress where it has been divided since 1974. For the first time, we actually have a climate of change and talks to end the division moving forward slowly, more than they have done in any time since 1974, I would say, which is also incredibly heartening because what this suggests, to me at least, is that an environment of cultural and an environment of trust. It's not easy to build this up, and it doesn't happen overnight. It has taken a long time, but it does

happen. Finally, at a very serious, if you will, political level we're reaping the fruits of those cultural contacts.

I'm basically focusing in on a few points that I think Cynthia's document really highlights, that I think are important, and the first is obviously cultural as a diplomatic tool. That's why the term, low-level, is always slightly funny to me because it's not. It's actually hugely significant and important.

The other important point that Cynthia makes is this is between the U.S. and Europe. Again, as a festival organizer, obviously, I deal a lot with European cultural funders like the British Council, the Goethe Institute, the European Cultural Foundation. They, obviously, have a much more, a much clearer official policy. It's very difficult to say that the U.S. has a counterpart in that, and they haven't needed to because the U.S. cultural product has essentially sold itself. I mean Hollywood has sold itself.

The only thing that I think is changing is

that at the moment, and I can give you the example of Turkey, the appetite for that commercial cultural product is actually falling. It's being replaced increasingly in Turkey, and I think in other places too with local content. So, in Turkey, the percentage of Turkish language films made up about 13 percent of the box office in 2002. This year, it will be over 50, and that's a very short amount of time.

So, locally, what's happening is that in the Turkish case the film industry has developed to a point where they can now develop and create products that essentially look like Hollywood productions in terms of quality and production value. That's changing the cultural landscape.

One example that we discussed yesterday was in fact a blockbuster film in 2006 which was called *Valley of the Wolves*. It was a big phenomenon not just in Turkey but in Europe as well, a Turkish language blockbuster that took place in North Iraq. Well, most of the crew, the actors and the production crew, were in fact Hollywood.

But the production itself was a story wherein a group of Turkish operatives in North Iraq, humiliated by the U.S. troops, then go to seek revenge. It was called the Turkish Rambo because there is in fact a Turkish Rambo-like character who goes to North Iraq and who leads this campaign. The American characters in this film, they are the bad guys and they have absolutely any stereotypical bad guy qualities multiplied.

So it was an ironic situation and actually a paradox wherein all of the Hollywood technology was used to create this excellent looking product which was actually based entirely on an anti-American stereotype, and it did extremely well. It grossed about 30 million at the box office and became a huge diplomatic point of contention in the end because Turkey is, of course, historically a NATO ally and enjoys a close relationship with Washington. I think that there is that backdrop to consider.

I know that here in the Middle East, and I hadn’t actually realized before I came to Abu Dhabi,

but *Noor*, the Turkish sitcom, has done incredibly well. I think that's another example of how what is essentially a soap opera format, when it's produced in a cultural context that's a lot more familiar, but that still looks as a production on a par with an American sitcom. The appetite for it is that much larger, and I think that partly explains why *Noor* has been so popular here. Ironically, it only lasted two seasons in Turkey which is why we didn't realize so much later how big it had become here.

Then, of course, the challenges, very briefly: I think one is content distribution. There is a lot more content that needs to come out of this region, but there is the challenge of how to get it distributed in the West and to other audiences.

Two is the challenge of building bottom-up collaborations. When you think of culture as a diplomatic tool, it's very easy to then seize on that. In fact, the way to really effectively use it is to allow the artists to do what they do and to be facilitator instead of a sort of top-down, heavy-

handed perhaps approach. Yes, private sector mentoring, training, co-productions, all of this are ways to build bottom-up collaboration that are actually incredibly fruitful over time.

So I hope we have a good discussion. I know that we're all sort of question and answer people really.

Hady, I turn it over to you. Am I within my nine minutes?

MR. AMR: You are well within. You were only eight minutes. So you can go for another minute.

MS. TURGUT: Thank you. I think let's open the floor.

MR. AMR: Okay. Before we go to the question and answer period, I would just like to ask you all to keep your questions to questions and under two minutes and to just state your name and your affiliation when asking. So I'll do my best to get you all in the order that you've asked the questions.

Please, questions. Sir, why don't you go ahead? Wait for the microphone also.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. This is Astral Galelle, Assistant (inaudible).

I have a comment on one question, please. In the study about the image of the U.S. (inaudible) 2001 to 2004, the image of the U.S. is correct when you are talking about culture, art, museums, even the American people. But when it's correlated or when you are talking about (inaudible). So I think that the foreign policy would be a very critical barrier for any sort of cooperative relationship between the U.S. and the Arabs and Muslims.

So I think you have to restart or to rethink about the immediate diplomacy because after launching (inaudible) still we have many issues about the U.S. (inaudible) situation. What do you think about how we can make a sort of balance between these two issues?

Thank you.

MR. AMR: Whoever would like to pick up on it, go ahead.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Thank you. Thank you for that question.

Now earlier today, I gave a talk on public diplomacy, American public diplomacy in the next administration, a slightly broader topic, but I think two very key points, and then I can talk to some of the specifics.

The most important thing for the next president to do is to realign America's foreign policy with America's values and principles. It will be very difficult to restore our reputation standing in the world without that happening.

And the number two important thing is that cultural interactions, as important as they are, they never replace or compensate for bad policies, and they should never be used to try to sell policies, good or bad.

Instead, what they can do is in the context of a relationship that is strained on the policy front -- take, for example, the U.S.-North Korea relationship or the U.S. relationship with Iran. What could happen, it's not particularly happening, but what could happen is that cultural interactions

provide a space, a kind of safe haven, a neutral zone where you can continue some sort of people to people interaction, increase understanding, knowledge-building that is apart from the policy. We have stopped doing that which is unfortunate. You know we did it all during the Cold War, and I think there's every reason to do it again.

One small effort and important was the groundbreaking concert given by the New York Philharmonic in North Korea, and it was very well executed. It wasn't the U.S. government -– very well executed. They played a Korean song which had a tremendous impact on both sides.

The former Defense Secretary, William Perry, was there, and he said, to go to war with someone, you have to demonize them first, and you can't demonize someone that you've enjoyed a concert with.

So that's, I think, the critical thing culture does. It humanizes. In the words of Nigerian novelist, Wole Soyinka, it humanizes what politics demonizes.

You mentioned Al-Hurra and Radio Sawa. I think both of those efforts -- I'm sorry if I'm offending someone -- represent perhaps not the most constructive approach. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars to set up Al-Hurra which is an American TV station. So, of course, nobody watches it. I mean I know people watch it, and I know it serves a useful purpose. But if you look at return for amount of money spent, it's not so fabulous.

And, in contrast, you have something like what Layalina Productions has done for about a million dollars to produce the series *On the Road in America*. Maybe someone can say what it is in Arabic.

Do you know the one I mean? Say it in the microphone.

QUESTIONER: *Ala al Tariq fi Amrika*.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Okay, *Ala al Tariq fi Amrika*. It has a huge audience and was made for a fraction of the cost, a reality show of three young people from the Muslim world traveling around America,

showing realistically what they encounter. Some things they like; some things they don't. It shows all good and bad. It's tremendously popular.

You have a situation here, as I understand it, in the Middle East with all of these new cable channels. It's a little bit like what the internet was in the 1990s in America. President Clinton used to always say every classroom should have a computer.

I used to whisper to the person next to me: He hasn't been on the internet because in those days there was nothing on the internet but shopping and porn. Now, every classroom should.

But maybe the satellite situation here is a little bit like the internet was in the 1990s in America. That is it has a lot of space for new content. I think it's very unfortunate that we didn't instead spend that money commissioning content, and you could commission content from all sorts of different kinds of people and show a much wider range of things about America, about different parts of the world.

MR. AMR: Thanks, Cynthia.

Questions? What happened to our audience? There's always like 20 hands up.

Go ahead. A microphone will come to you.

QUESTIONER: Hi. I'm Dr. Rachel Awad from the Supreme Education Council.

I wanted to first thank you all. They were very insightful and eye-opening presentations.

I'm particularly interested in the project that Dr. Grand mentioned at the beginning about providing information to script writers and producers in Hollywood. I can't stress how important I think that is because, as Ambassador Schneider mentioned, most Americans grow up without any exposure to cultures outside the U.S., and so Hollywood is where we get our perceptions.

With the history of very negative images of Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East, will the center that you talked about be doing any work when these kind of negative images come out to sort of inform?

I mean not to just to wait for the questions

to come in but to reach to out to producers and script writers and say there was something harmful in what you were doing. I know that's a very difficult thing to do, but I was wondering if the center was going to have any kind of outreach in that direction.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Actually, we have outreach before that point. The whole point is to try to encourage people to move in a different direction, and the way we reach people is we have periodic conferences, seminars, meetings where we bring in speakers. We bring in policy speakers. Sometimes we bring in writers.

And so, we engage people and just raise this concept that there is a problem and in fact the U.S.-Muslim World relations have been getting worse and worse and worse since 9/11, not better, and emphasize that they as creators of content that is seen all over the world, not just in America but all over the world, have an important role to play in this.

But, at the same time, I think what's important, as Pelin stressed, is we can't come in and

say: This is our policy. Please execute it.

America has a commercial cultural industry. These people are on tight timelines, tight budgets. They have to make money on their series. So we're trying to meet them on their terrain and say if you will be willing to consider having the incidental character.

We're not suggesting a hundred soap operas about Muslims but rather the incidental character as has happened in America with African Americans, with gays and lesbians. This has happened with other groups before. Introduce them in normal roles, but to do that, as Steve said, you need a basic amount of information which we're willing to provide efficiently and accessibly to them.

MR. AMR: Steve, go ahead.

DR. GRAND: If I could just add one thing, having watched Cynthia and her colleagues maneuver the slippery terrain of Hollywood, I think this approach is a much more effective one than trying to bang it over people's that you have to do this, you have to do

this. What she and her colleagues have really done is just offered up interesting stories, interesting perspectives from folks in the Muslim World and said, there's this rich terrain out there that you could be incorporating into what you do.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: And I think the really good news is there's a tremendous amount of interest on the other end, really a tremendous amount of interest and receptivity.

MR. AMR: I'd like to ask a question actually as of the American persons on the panel initially. I mean we have a sort of big presidential election coming up, two weeks from tomorrow I believe, if I got the calendar right. But also, given the budget constraints that the U.S. is facing, on the one hand, what role do you see the next president having in engaging with these issues of arts and culture in the next administration?

Do you expect a change in either presidential administration and how do you think these issues will be embraced?

AMB. SCHNEIDER: I'll go. I have no insight as to how it will be engaged, so I'll say some things that I hope might happen.

I think there's a lot of focus on public diplomacy. That is a real catch word. Everybody is focusing on that.

I hope in a way that all of the time and energy and money won't be spent figuring out where it belongs because that could just suck all the air out of the room, and then there's nothing left to actually do anything. However, there's no question that there's going to be a real shortage of money, and that's why it is absolutely essential to come up with, to develop much stronger public-private partnerships.

This involves more than simply convening TV and film studio heads and saying: You are important. Please go out and help us.

I think it involves really some careful thought, and I would like to see engaging the private sector in some of our outreach development efforts, helping to share our ability to create successful

cultural content as part of the way we engage on a development level with other countries.

I think also you have to be realistic about the way commercial culture impacts people throughout the world. The distribution system is, again, commercially driven. You're not going to get people to, all of a sudden, start distributing different content because that would be effective for America's image, but you could use some of the meager funds that exist to leverage more effectively and deploy more effectively the commercial content that we have.

When I was Ambassador, we spent a lot of time and effort figuring out where to place our most effective, our largest exports. Those were aerospace products. Now our largest export or one of them is our commercial products, and there's absolutely no strategy around their distribution whatsoever.

The good news is we have the products already, and I think with a relatively small amount of money, and I mean going towards the distributors and some thought behind it. It wouldn't be the same thing

everywhere. In this region maybe, where family is so important, maybe we need some more family kinds of programs and films. In another region, it might be something else.

We have films. I think you could enlist the studio heads to say we want you to give us free copies of all of these films, and you can start setting up screening in embassies. But you have to have real engagement too, and I think that will require a new kind of public-private partnership.

But, finally, something that costs nothing and would make a big difference is to incorporate creative expression, arts and culture more directly into foreign policy and to bring in artists, intellectuals, cultural leaders on both sides into policy discussions. I think you'll find you are more rooted in societies and understand more the different cultures if you do that.

MR. AMR: Thank you.

Sir, and then back there second.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Roger

Mandle. I'm Executive Director of Qatar Museum's Authority.

You've spoken, I think, very eloquently about what the U.S. could do to reach out and the difficulties that may come from not having enough resources to make impact and partnerships within the U.S. between public and private. But what about the partnerships, government to government?

What about the relationships that begin fundamentally with cultural agreements across two political lines, two countries' lines, and then how that can generate more energy and more collaboration and more willingness on both sides to give and accept the cultural outreach that you've been speaking about?

MR. AMR: Thank you.

Pelin, I don't know if you want to get in on that.

MS. TURGUT: I'd like to hear what Stephen and Cynthia have to say.

DR. GRAND: If you think about the Aus Politik that Europe conducted in the seventies, that

was initiated by governments but then it sort of snowballed from there. So I think that's very important.

The government has a role to play not only in potentially funding some of these things, but also the symbolic value of governments getting up and sort of being out front on these kinds of issues is very important too.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: One real challenge about that for America, though, is that we have traditionally, more than many countries, really separated cultural from government. Foreign policy, the real hard stuff, and the soft stuff is off here on the side as Pelin suggested.

So one problem is who would do that. We have no Ministry of Culture. Would the State Department do it? I don't know. It wouldn't be appropriate for the NEA. There's a question of who is picking up the phone for that.

I have a friend, Bill Ivey, who was the chair for the National Endowment for the Arts in the

second Clinton term, and he has just written a book arguing strenuously that we can't really do anything significant in the cultural field unless we have a Ministry of Culture.

I have to say I am sort of divided on that. He may well be right, but on the other hand I don't know. Having tried to do culture in the State Department, I can see the downside of that which is that maybe the whole ministry would then be Goethized. So I don't know. I mean maybe it would be good, maybe not, but it's certainly an idea out there.

Maybe we can learn from Turkey's example. How does Turkey do state to state cultural relations?

MS. TURGUT: Turkey is, interestingly, very much like America in the sense that the culture -- we have, obviously, a Culture and Tourism Ministry, one way of getting by that not wanting to put culture by itself, I guess. But I think that we are very much like the States in the sense that we don't really have much public funding for the arts, and that's very different from Europe.

In a way, though, I have found that it is actually a strength to not have because in Europe to be that reliant on state institutions and on public funding creates an entirely different kind of artistic model whereas I think that the idea of having to be self-sustainable, in my experience, actually encourages a greater independence of spirit in a way.

Europeans now, because they are facing these big budget cuts, in fact, have been coming through, looking at our models of corporate sponsorship and private sector partnerships to try and understand how that work because, in a way, for them the good old days are kind of past. It's an interesting dilemma.

MR. AMR: Thank you.

There was a hand up back here, at least one, but I saw one over here earlier on. Yes.

QUESTIONER: I have a question, Cynthia, about the film I saw.

MR. AMR: Your name?

QUESTIONER: Joann Brand. I'm a professor at Georgetown University, and I have a question about

some of the products that are going to the U.S. that might be helping change attitudes. It relates back to an earlier question, and I was thinking particularly of *Aliens in America* which started as a series and really is for a high school sort of audience and also I had seen *The Band's Visit* which is a fantastic film.

I was wondering whether you have assessed the success of some of these endeavors, how they're being accepted in the U.S. and if they're making a change at this point.

MR. AMR: Thank you.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Well, *Aliens in America*, we actually did a program on at Brookings right before it started. This was a sitcom which, sadly, did not last beyond one season. It was on the CW channel which some people say is the reason. I can't explain because I don't know enough about TV channels.

But it was a wonderful, funny show about a young Pakistani guy who goes on an exchange program to the mid, mid, mid, deep, deep, deep Middle West in America. The family is expecting a sort of Nordic

athlete and instead off the plane comes this Pakistani guy looking like a Pakistani guy, and they just have a total heart attack and want to send him back and all these things. Everybody, of course, is always thinking he's a terrorist, but it's done in a very funny way. So it's too bad it didn't last.

A different kind of model which has worked is *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, and we hosted the creator of that program at Brookings a couple weeks ago, Zarqa Nawaz. That plays in Canada. You just say the title, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, makes everybody laugh.

What she has done is taken some real types, extreme types of Muslims and shown what their life is like. It is based on an actual thing that happened to a young man who went out as an Imam to a very, very rural mosque in Canada and tried to build up that community. There are sort of archetypes, and in a way some of the most stubborn archetypes, she has said, have turned out to be the most endearing characters.

That program is now going into its third

season. It's been hugely successful. It started as supported by the government, supported by the CBC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It is just off the charts in its popularity.

Interestingly, FOX in America has engaged Zarqa in conversation about possibly adapting the idea for an American series with one stipulation: no religion, not that they can't be Muslims, but it can't be about a mosque, can't be about someone who is an Imam. It has to be another kind of sitcom with Muslims. So maybe it will turn up in America.

MR. AMR: Anything anyone else wants to add?

MS. TURGUT: I was at a Toronto film festival about a month ago and the situation, I have to say it wasn't looking great. Foreign language films aren't doing particularly well in the States at the moment, and there was a lot of gloom and doom about that. I think *The Band's Visit* actually did pretty well.

But I do think that one of the big challenges, and this is something that we spoke about

yesterday, is there was a Yemeni filmmaker, Bader Ben Hirsi. He made a wonderful film a few years back called *A New Day in Old Sana'a*, and it was a very fairytale-like film, the first film actually shot in Yemen. It really is a lovely little film. It really is a sort of fairytale.

When it came time for distributing it in the West, it didn't fit any of the molds. There wasn't violence against women. There wasn't terrorism. There wasn't a political backdrop. This lovely little film, very much like *The Band's Visit* actually in scope and feel, couldn't find an audience for itself because it didn't fit any of those molds.

So that is definitely, I think, one of the key challenges is getting the content to the audiences, and it's definitely worth thinking about that. Again, because of the lack of a public sector role, because the U.S. government doesn't have a policy on that, it's very difficult.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: And maybe one more note, kind of gloomy note about *The Band's Visit*, which if

you haven't seen is a wonderful film that is a collaboration between an Arab and an Israeli producer, director and cast, a total joint production. I'm sorry to report that it was not shown in the Arab World or in Israel. Both Abu Dhabi and the Cairo film festivals and festivals in Jerusalem would not show it.

MR. AMR: I think there was --

QUESTIONER: The language?

AMB. SCHNEIDER: The language of *The Band's Visit* is really music.

MS. TURGUT: It is really music. That's true.

MR. AMR: I think there was a question over here in the back.

QUESTIONER: I'm at a junior at Georgetown University. My name is Hady Dorishi.

My comment and question is that I think a more fundamental issue which we face when looking at our cultural outreach is that either we, ourselves, find that we haven't done ourselves justice to some

degree because we don't understand our own culture and who we are. It's kind of difficult to explain to someone else when we don't understand ourselves.

MR. AMR: We being the Arab World?

QUESTIONER: I'm personally Iranian. It's kind of ironic, for example, that the Islamic Museum of Arts, the initiative was taken by a non-Muslim. Do you know what I mean? So how do you think we can go about overcoming this and on what level?

MR. AMR: So the question I think, if I can restate it, is how can the Muslim World overcome its lack of understanding and attention to the importance of the arts?

QUESTIONER: And apathy as well.

MR. AMR: And apathy vis-à-vis?

QUESTIONER: Vis-à-vis just understanding our own culture and our own identity.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: I do want to clarify one point on that. Roger Mandle has been hired as the Executive Director of the Museum, but the idea was not originally his. The idea, I believe, began with the

Royal Family here. Is that not correct? I believe it was Sheikha Mozah's, and it is very important.

And, you're right. It is a rarity, in fact. I don't think is true of Iran. You correct me if I'm wrong, but my sense of the people I know is there is a great sense of their own history and background.

But it is an irony, and then it has struck me it is somewhat of an irony in that we are criticized for not understanding and respecting enough Muslims and the larger Islamic culture when that culture and history is not as studied, celebrated as much as it might be in many countries.

I think that's changing. I think this museum is a very important step. It is certainly changing in light of the substantial cultural investments in Dubai and Abu Dhabi which are very focused on actually aspects of the local culture that then are being understood on a sort of global scale.

An example is the Museum of the March of Man in Abu Dhabi which is a larger anthropological museum that takes Berbers as its starting off point but is

going to include examination of all wandering nomadic people all over the world. There's a museum of Mohammad that's going to be opening in Dubai. There are museums of music, institutes of music in both places. So, interestingly, I think this is changing very dramatically.

Something I just noticed recently, we were in Kuala Lumpur last week for the U.S.-Islamic World Regional Forum. Of course, here, I know we're in the Arab World. But the minute you get outside it, you are reminded again and again of something that Americans are not too aware of, that the vast majority of Muslims in the world live outside the Arab World.

And, interestingly, people in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have told me that their vision of the role of culture is they make these investments as something that will unify these very diverse societies -- societies where the representation of the Emirates is quite small. There's a hugely diverse global population, and they see these new cultural initiatives as a platform for unifying the

populations.

In Malaysia, the ministry is called the Ministry of Unity, Culture and Heritage.

MR. AMR: Pelin, do you want to follow up on that?

MS. TURGUT: It's such a loaded and difficult question, but I do think there is also something to be said for the individual effort, particularly if we're talking about the arts and about creativity. In the case of Iran, I mean Iranian film obviously is incredibly rich as a tradition. In Abu Dhabi and Dubai, I was very impressed by the level of cultural investment and interest that's going on. But I think also there is really something to be said for you as an individual.

Yesterday, on the panel, we had a script writer called Kamron Pashur. Really, his main point was that it was very difficult for him to crack Hollywood. He thought about backing down many, many times. But eventually he did and he is able now to contribute incredible story lines to an American

series, a drama series, and he is also working on his first feature film. I think the point is that especially where the arts are concerned there is much to be said for the power of individual effort.

MR. AMR: There's a question here, here and then back there.

QUESTIONER: John Geldart, VCU Qatar, Virginia Commonwealth University.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Can you speak up a little bit? We can't hear you.

QUESTIONER: John Geldart, VCU Qatar.

When Pelin introduced her topic, you raised a very interesting about a natural catastrophe that drew two countries together at a political level. I'd like just to ask the panel, what other ways do you think common ground can be established between cultures?

AMB. SCHNEIDER: There are hundreds and hundreds of ways.

QUESTIONER: Then what initiatives or strategies do you see that can specifically address

this challenge?

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Well, one, I can tell you some things that are taking place. I'm afraid I can't tell you a huge number from America, but we have here a representative from a wonderful organization in Washington called Search for Common Ground which is an NGO.

Elena, you can wave.

If you want to find out more, Elena and Search for Common Ground have been working for many years in the area of using media and everything from books, stories, radio programs, films, TV, joint production TV series to achieve reconciliation, to stave off conflict in conflict-prone zones or simply to increase understanding.

One program they're coming out with the coming year, a joint production with an Egyptian media owner, is called the Bridge and it is an exchange program where apparently an American cowboy from Alabama, which I must say I didn't know existed but there he is, goes to Egypt and lives with a camel

driver in Egypt. An American radio station host goes from Atlanta, Georgia to live with her counterpart who is also a radio station announcer in Cairo. Then the Egyptians come back to America.

Of course, it's very funny, predictably hilarious, also revealing, revealing on both sides. When you see the interaction, of course, you find the commonalities. You also find the differences which are equally important to bring out. That's one concrete initiative.

Also, coming out of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in both cases, there are major translation initiatives which is an area that the United States has really neglected, I think. It doesn't happen commercially. We have an appallingly low percentage of books translated into English. These efforts are to translate works from other languages, not just English, into Arabic. I think that is an area where you find incredible common ground.

We saw this at Georgetown in 2006 when Amy Tan, as Steve mentioned, came to the forum and she

gave a talk at Georgetown. She was introduced by two of our students, one a Palestinian, one from Qatar. These two young women both had read in English -- they both were fluent in English -- the *Joy Luck Club*. If any of you are familiar with this book, it's the story of Amy basically based on Amy's growing up as a Chinese American in a very traditional family situation, trying to fit into America.

And, both of these girls spoke so movingly of what that book had meant to them. The Palestinian girl had never actually been to Palestine but felt a very, very strong sense of Palestinian identity. The Qatari girl had grown up in London until she was about 13, leading a completely western lifestyle, and then moved back here and had to adapt to a different, more traditional kind of lifestyle. Both of them said how reading that book had helped them cope with these conflicting multiple identities they were leading.

There is so much out there that we could take advantage of, and I'm sorry to say that there is no complementary American initiative. There are some

very good NGOs. One is called Words Without Borders. But there's no major effort at translation coming out of our country that I'm aware of.

MR. AMR: Would anyone else like to follow up?

MS. TURGUT: I think the Turkey-Greek example of initial good will, purely, it was this strange catastrophe that unleashed it. But actually, what anchored it were all of these hundreds of little, very small initiatives.

The ships that go to the port town on the Aegean where the Greeks land, in that port town now, the mayor is restoring all of the Greek orthodox churches and monuments in the town. So it works really on a very -– or like the primary school textbooks or the universities with the Greek Studies Department. It's very micro level, but I do think of them as anchors that accumulate to create change.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Actually, I want to mention a really excellent program that the State Department has that is the Ambassadors Fund Program. This

program works particularly in developing countries where the Ambassador can apply for and receive funds to do a joint project of some sort in his or her country. So you have to have a partner from the country.

Many of these are restoration projects. Some of them are preserving archival equipment. Some of them are joint productions. That has been an incredibly effective program, and it's really relative small sums of money, and it has done a lot of good.

MR. AMR: Thank you.

Okay, there was a question here, and then there was a question there.

QUESTIONER: Hannah Kumar from Qatar University.

I'm wondering, listening to you, that Hollywood pays attention to nothing so much as the dollar, right, and where people spend their money and particularly now in this era of downloading movies online.

So I'm wondering in your work if you've been

able to mobilize people to support those ventures that you're suggesting that you already sort of have been helping with writers to get people to watch certain programs and get the Nielsen ratings up or get them into the box office to spend their dollars. Lately, it seems that things are happening more organically. Like *Little Miss Sunshine*, there's a movie that doesn't do violence to women or any of those other things that you mentioned and did tremendously well.

And, what role do you think you play in sort of helping to shape what Hollywood is showing and what primetime TV is showing?

I'll just give you one last example. *Friends*, for the longest time, irked me to no end because here was a show, ostensibly about New York, with only white people. Then everyone always says, oh, but Ross had that one black girlfriend, right, as though that one black girlfriend who was on for maybe six episodes represents the diversity of New York.

Now you have *Ugly Betty*, right, which is a telenovella taken from Latin America that's won kind

of Emmys, and people like Gene Simmons are going on and doing cameos.

So do you think that implicates a change in what people are open to doing? How do you think, since we are such a commercially-driven pop culture, how do you think that the consumer can influence and further support your efforts?

AMB. SCHNEIDER: By choice, the consumer can. But I must say we haven't really. The consumer is the whole country, so we haven't gotten there yet. I mean it's more efficient over the long term to look at the producers rather than the consumers of the products.

But *Ugly Betty*, like the example you raised, is something that just shows the kind of seismic shift that can take place. I'm not aware. I don't think it has particularly resulted from –- it was a good story. It's always a good story, and that's what one of the things we try to do is to bring in Muslim American writers before these groups and try to give them good stories. Then, eventually, you hope it gets taken up.

You mentioned also new media and youth and internet content. I am perpetually kind of frustrated with not being able so far yet to connect the dots because even if everybody doesn't have a computer in the Middle East, so many people have internet access.

And, there's now the possibility to produce your own films or music online. We had a young woman from Holland, a Moroccan Dutch woman, Rajiah Mulhadi , two years ago, who has no agent. She supports herself entirely in Amsterdam by producing her own music, and she releases it online through her web site. So this is possible.

The missing link, as far as I can tell, in this part of the world is that the people aren't so much accustomed to, well, there's the copyright issue online. Then there's also people aren't used to buying things with credit cards online. You have to figure out some kind of system of payment. So that's a big challenge.

The production is there. We still have to figure out how to monetize it. We have some really

savvy internet people who have come to our things. So I hope if we put them on this we'll be able to figure something out, but it unfortunately goes beyond simply the production online which is pretty possible.

MR. AMR: Would any of the other panelists like to speak to that?

DR. GRAND: It's worth mentioning we were present at the creation and the very launching of *Aliens in America* which we talked about before. There was a real buzz within the Muslim American community about this new sitcom that actually had a positive portrayal of a Muslim in it. I think a number of people tuned in from the Muslim American community, and there may be lessons there.

Muslim Americans are a very successful, prosperous part of America, and they have a lot of economic power that they can bring to a film or a television show that has positive messages.

MS. TURGUT: Just in terms of the whole Web 2.0 culture, I think it's very exciting. I think we're basically in the middle of a shift between two

paradigms, and that's the reason why what you're talking about. We don't yet see how the consumer is actually going to be all important, but I feel it is coming.

I mean one example is when I recently met a big Brazilian art house cinema chain, and art house cinemas were all but dying as they are in many parts of the world. In Brazil, what they did is they introduced a model whereby they offer their viewers. They have a huge, basically, community and they offer choices. They offer them like five movies, art house films. They all belong a community, and they say, which one do you want to come and see?

It's called Movies on Demand. Essentially, they've revised these art house cinemas entirely to be internet-based consumer-driven, and it's direct to the consumer. There's no middle person there who is deciding what they can or can't see

I think that was just a small example, and I think we are going to see a lot more of that. It's just sort of early days, and the big studios are

obviously very, very slow.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: And another example is *Hometown Baghdad* which was a webisodic series of films from Baghdad by Iraqi young people showing what life was like in Baghdad. It premiered a year and a half ago, story art of about 35 or so 2-minute webisodic episodes released over a period of a couple of months.

It made that leap from the internet into the main news stream. It was picked up by CNN, NBC, Nightline. It was on all the covers of all the newspapers, and it was also interactive, so you could contact the camera people.

So that may be a model. I encourage you just to Google it, *Hometown Baghdad*. They are going to now come out with *Hometown Tehran* and *Hometown Jerusalem* done by a company called Chat the Planet in New York. That's a whole different kind of model.

MR. AMR: I'd like to get one final round of question. Who has a question left? Put up your hand. One, and wasn't there another back here? Two, three. So let's take three questions, and then I'll allow the

panel to answer all of them before we conclude.

Remind us of your name and affiliation.

QUESTIONER: Mara Amanthia, Qatar University.

I teach interculture communications through film. I have experience teaching Arabic culture through film in the U.S., and here in Qatar I'm kind of teaching more on U.S. culture in Qatar.

I have a difficulty that maybe your insight can help me with. Whenever I was showing Arabic films in the classes in the U.S., I always felt that whatever I liked, the top films that I chose, for instance, were never appealing to the students as much as I thought they would be perhaps because watching the film I knew its artistic merits or its cultural content. So I was picking films that might not be commercially very viable. Then the reception on the students' part, I had to even go through that kind of literacy and style of aesthetics.

Here, I feel the opposite. Whenever I want to watch a film that maybe reflects some cultural

content, I am always finding just purely commercial options to show to my Qatari students.

So if you can comment on this lack of maybe reciprocity in terms of what is expected from a foreign culture, that a foreign film has to have some cultural content whereas the commercial American film is typical.

And, where can I find something that can appeal commercially? Do you have recommendations for films, for instance on either side that communicate, that can speak to American audiences? This is especially to Pelin who is familiar with some of the international film festivals, if you can recommend some material.

MS. TURGUT: You raise a really interesting question.

MR. AMR: Let's just take all three of the questions, and then we'll answer them together.

QUESTIONER: Good evening. Denny Barbett, Qatar Foundation.

With the exception of Cynthia's comment

about the New York Philharmonic in Korea, we've really talked more about popular culture. I struggle because my own bias in cultural sorts of things is to look at particularly music and classical music and symbolization of the human experience that is so often reflected there. It seems like popular media is more about what's on the surface.

What I'm concerned about is how do we cultivate the deeper interest for the cultural arts that have been so important to civilization over time, and I haven't heard you talk much about that tonight.

MR. AMR: And there was a third question.

QUESTIONER: Hi. Thank you for your insight. Annette Buzarku at Georgetown University.

My question is kind of contrary actually to Dr. Roberts. I'm a consumer of like underground hip-hop, for instance, for looking for the consciousness and the awareness, right, but something that I find to be curious is the globalization of MTV and the phenomenon that it has in achieving consumers both here in the Muslim World and in the U.S.

So I was just wondering, specifically when looking at the youth cohort, if you've tapped into the MTV phenomenon, being that pop culture does permeate so much students' time in a day. I mean I work at the university, and I see how they chill with it in the lounge and stuff. So if you've contacted them and if there are any ideas with that.

MR. AMR: I thank all three of you for those questions, and I'll turn to the panel, maybe each in turn to address the questions that they see fit and also offer any concluding comments before we wrap up, in any order of choosing.

MS. TURGUT: Okay, I'll go with the first question then just quickly because I think it raises --

MR. AMR: (Inaudible.)

MS. TURGUT: Okay.

MR. AMR: If you want.

MS. TURGUT: You raise, I think, a very good question which is really an aesthetic question also, and I find it even in myself. I think the thing is

that TV content and Hollywood content, basically I call it making your eye lazy because it's a specific kind of editing. It has jump cuts. It's a specific kind of story line. All of those things combined, combine to create a certain aesthetic sensibility.

When you then go in to see another kind of film, and this is true even if you're watching an art house American film versus a Hollywood American film. You go and see another kind of film and in the beginning -- I'm sure you had this experience -- you think that oh, my God, this is so slow. There is that moment of how am I going to sit through this, kind of. I have this too, which I really think that. Then you settle into it.

It really is an education, and it's reeducating your eye in a way because it's sort of a jump cut. The fast pace style is very easy to watch. It's easy on the eye, and it's easy on the brain, and it keeps it constantly active and hyperactive.

Actually, whereas what you want is to be able to absorb it and to relax and to allow that story

to unfold. It's a different kind of pace.

I honestly think I don't have any easy advice for you. I just think it really is a question of understanding how those films work, how they stimulate your brain and your eye, and then understanding what you can do to train it in a different way. So the question, I think it's not a content question so much as it is a style question.

I could give you the example of Asian films, for example. Asian films, they're always shot sort of at a distance. Right? There is never one hero that you can identify with. They don't do close-ups very often. For that reason, for instance, American audiences have a very hard time watching Japanese and Chinese films because they say: I don't have anyone to identify with. Who do I root for? It's that question.

To be fair, because American content is so widespread, it's an issue that we all have to deal with. So I mean all I can suggest is that you encourage people to stay open and to recognize how

your eye is actually conditioned.

MR. AMR: Steve? Cynthia?

DR. GRAND: Just briefly on the question of whether you use commercial culture or more classical music, the arts and others to engage, if the aim is really to find ways of helping citizens from different cultures understand one another and undermining stereotypes, I think you want to use whatever medium, as many mediums as you can and particularly ones that are going to engage your target audiences.

I, through this project, have come to learn a lot about hip-hop because if you're trying to reach youth, it's the tool you have to use. Hopefully, you can use others as well, but it's certainly one you have to look at.

AMB. SCHNEIDER: Yes, I'll just follow up on what Steve said. I think I don't look at this as what do I, Cynthia Schneider, think the world should know. It's not meant to be that. It's mean to be responsive, and you're looking for ways that you can connect.

We're looking at a region with anywhere from 50 to 70 percent youthful populations. That's what drives this, not a kind of curriculum of what is great culture that everybody should know. I think that's a different kind of agenda.

The film thing is so funny, the different aesthetics of film. I think that comes back to the market-driven cultures. The European films are big. They don't have to have any consciousness of audience because they get the money from the government. So they can do whatever they want.

I've lived a lot in Europe, and I notice how American films often don't have the complexity and subtlety of films you find elsewhere. Americans seem to be very uncomfortable with mixed genres like a comedy that also has a serious message or a serious film that also has a funny part. We like to segment it.

But having said that, there are of course exceptions. You look at any of the festival content like the Sundance Festival or something like that.

You can, of course, find films.

Then there's the surprise films like, for example, *The Visitor*, which a friend of mine produced and kept saying: I have this little film coming out. I have this little film coming out.

And it was little in budget compared to most films, but it tells a human story of immigration. I just learned from Pelin tonight. I didn't know this. The writer/director, Tom McCarthy, was inspired to do that by traveling and spending time in the region, in Lebanon and Syria. Suddenly, this issue became to human to him, and he translated that into a script.

So there examples, but unfortunately they are kind of fewer and far between.

I guess we did connect with MTV. We have one of our members, Gidi Nyago , who was the news person on MTV. Then, unfortunately, he left MTV. So you remind me, we need to pick that up again, but we did make connections with MTV.

MR. AMR: I'd like to thank you all for being with us, and I hope you'll join me in thanking

Dr. Stephen Grand, Ambassador Cynthia Schneider, Pelin Turgut and the staff of the Brookings Doha Center – Alex Raphel, Kais Sharif and Hiba Zeino -- for creating a wonderful event for us here tonight.

Finally, I'd just like to invite you to join us in some refreshments.

So, thank you very much.

(Applause)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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