

**The Center for Arabic Culture**  
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There are approximately 200,000 Arab-Americans in the Greater Boston area, many of them accomplished professionals. There are also upward of 60 institutions of higher learning, some are the best in the world, and numerous top cultural establishments covering all forms of art, literature, music, dance, theater, and cinema. Yet the city lacked a place where Arabic language, culture, art, history, and Arab-American experience can be nurtured and celebrated. This is why I called a meeting at MIT of a group of likeminded Boston-based Arab-Americans on October 16, 2005 to discuss the establishment of a center for Arabic culture. After a series of meetings over a year, CAC was announced, then incorporated and registered as a non-profit charitable organization.

We started with CAC's school of Arabic language. We recruited excellent teachers and designed a curriculum that enables the students to experience the beauty, flexibility, and heritage of Arabic. Fundraising followed to sponsor a website, lectures, exhibitions, concerts, and other cultural activities, and to find a place in Boston for the center's activities. This finally happened in 2009, at which time I left the CAC board in very capable hands.

From the beginning, we wanted CAC to promote Arabic culture in all its variety in open and humanistic ways. To us, culture represents a people and creates bridges of communication. All of us must have felt that human harmony recognized a shared feeling in a concert, play, or show, even if the style or medium were unfamiliar to us. Yet every culture has its characteristics. We see our Arabic culture in our facial expressions, hand movements, and in our *Dabkeh*, *samah*, and *baladi* dance. We hear it in the deep guttural sounds that characterize our language, especially that unique unaspirated consonant, which gave Arabic its proud epithet, *lughat al-dhad*. We discern it in our beautifully sinuous or elegantly geometric calligraphy and architecture, our powerfully expressive and cadenced poetry, and our modal and melodious music and singing. And we taste it in our dishes, dips, and strong coffee spiced up with cardamom.

We believe in our Arabic culture, yet we think no one holds the key to it. To us, it is a beautiful gift to be universally shared. We thus thought that the center could only thrive when the community sees it as its own and uses it as such. We intended to facilitate that process, to make the bounty of our culture available to all, and to challenge negative stereotypes of Arabs while we set out to help re-mapping the meaning of Arabic culture today. I am hopeful that with its growing success, CAC is consolidating its role as a recognized home for Arabic culture and the first choice for cultural activities of the Arab-American community in Massachusetts.