

*Divided Families Between the United States and Iran:  
Challenges and Promises*

**PROCEEDINGS**



**Report of a Conference Sponsored by  
DĀNESH Institute**

**November 11, 2011**

## DĀNESH Institute, Inc.

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### Purpose:

Established in 1994, the DĀNESH Institute is a nonpolitical, not-for-profit, independent, educational organization. As such, DĀNESH has a 501(c)(3) status. Its primary purpose is to sponsor and support scholarly studies and projects related to communities of Iranian heritage abroad, particularly in the United States.

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## PREFACE

Following the 1979 Iranian revolution, a large number of Iranian refugees and immigrants left Iran for the United States. Among these newcomers, there were many whose parents and some other family members remained in Iran. Since then, members of these divided families have attempted to maintain their relationships by such means as correspondence, phone calls, emails, and back and forth travels. However, the distance, passage of time, and different life experiences have given rise to many issues affecting the relationships. The overall purpose of this conference was to examine issues related to divided families of Iranians in the United States and to develop strategies for dealing with them.

The conference was held in Indianapolis on November 11, 2011. It was co-sponsored by the *Indiana Council on World Affairs*, *Indiana University Center for the Study of the Middle East*, *Indiana University School of Social Work*, and *Society for Promotion of Persian Culture*. We would like to take this opportunity to express our special gratitude to the School's Dean, Dr. Michael Patchner, and his staff for their indispensable support and cooperation. Dr. Patchner's eloquent welcome began the conference with much needed inspiration.

Articles in the Proceedings are based on the presentations at the conference. However, the first two articles are summaries of the presentations and are preceded by the abstracts written originally for the conference brochure.

No conference such as ours can possibly succeed without a dedicated and knowledgeable planning committee. This conference was no exception. Members of its planning committee included Sara Allaei, Irene Queiro-Tajalli, Sholeh Shahrokhi, and John Walbridge. I also had the pleasure of serving on the committee as its ad hoc member.

Cyrus S. Behroozi  
Editor

## ***Conflicted Iranian Families in Exile: Iran-United States Political Tensions and the Challenges for Maintaining Family Relations among First Generation Iranian Immigrants***

**By Mohsen Mobasher**

### **ABSTRACT**

This presentation focused on the impact of a series of political events in Iran and the United States since the Iranian Revolution in 1978 on Iranian families in exile. The first part of the presentation described the composition and structure of the Iranian immigrant family and illuminates the link between the demographic changes in Iranian communities across the U.S. and reconstruction of Iranian family in exile in the last thirty years. The second part provided research findings from a five-year study on Iranian immigrants in Texas with emphasis on some of the major challenges, including maintaining relations with families in Iran, experienced by Iranian immigrants. The presentation concluded with explaining the relationship between these challenges and Iran-U.S. political tensions, and some novel coping mechanisms adopted by Iranian immigrants.

### **SUMMARY**

***Iranian Immigration Trends to the United States.*** Immigration of Iranians to the U.S. has a relatively short history, and Iranians are among the most recent new immigrant groups in this country. The available published reports indicate that the number of Iranian immigration to the U.S. before 1950 was negligible. Between 1921 and 1950, a total of 1,816 Iranians immigrated to the U.S. This number was increased to 13,727 between 1951 and 1970. However, between 1971 and 1980, the number of Iranian immigrants who were admitted to the U.S. rose steadily to 4,513 per year, and reached 10,410 in 1980. During the fiscal years 1981-1990, the average annual number of Iranian immigrants doubled in size and reached a peak of 12,624 per year. Between 1991 and 2000, a total of 68,556 Iranians immigrated to the U.S. The Iranian migration trends fits into three chronological phases: the pre-revolutionary period (1950-1977), the revolutionary period (1978), and the post-revolutionary period (1979-present).

Between the years of 1950 and 1977, a total of 34,855 Iranian immigrants are known to have entered the U.S. This number climbed sharply to 6,000 in the 1960s, and to 39,583 in 1970-77. However, after their arrival, a sizable proportion of Iranian non-immigrants changed their status and obtained their permanent residency or “green cards” through kinship ties, marriage with a U.S. citizen, or occupational preferences. Most Iranians who immigrated to the U.S. during the pre-revolutionary period consisted mostly of engineers, doctors, and dentists from affluent families in large cities who entered the U.S. between 1950 and 1970. Others were students and professionals from more diverse social class backgrounds who left Iran between 1970 and 1978 mainly for educational, professional, and economic opportunities as well as opportunities for their children, and for political opposition against the Shah’s government. Various factors in Iran contributed to the migration of Iranians during this period. The most important factor was perhaps Iran’s lack of higher educational institutions for training.

Between the beginning of the revolutionary upheaval and the fall of monarchy, a large number of Iranians from a range of socio-economic backgrounds left the country for various political, social, and religious reasons. During this period, over 190,000 non-immigrant visas were issued for Iranian students and tourists. Of this number, during the first few years following the Iranian revolution, there was a drastic downward trend in the number of Iranian immigrants and non-immigrants to the U.S. The significant reductions in the volume of migration from Iran shortly after the revolution were mainly related to the tightening of controls on leaving the country by the new Islamic regime, the hostage crisis and shut down of the U.S. embassy in Iran by supporters of the new revolutionary government in 1980, the subsequent difficulty in obtaining a U.S. visa, and cancellation of all visas issued to Iranians as announced by President Carter. The most distinctive feature of the post-revolutionary migration trends of Iranians to the U.S. has been a sharp increase in the number of Iranians who were granted refugee or asylum status. Between June 1983 and September 1986, Iranians in the U.S. had the highest number (10,728) of asylum cases approved. Overall, compared to the pre-revolutionary and the revolutionary periods, the post-revolutionary emigration of Iranians is more complex and diverse in terms of socio-cultural background, religious affiliation, and political orientation. Furthermore, since the revolution, a large number of religious minorities left Iran. In terms of professional training, the post-revolutionary Iranian Immigrant group is composed of many high level experts and specialists in various scientific and technical areas, industrialists or manufacturers, entrepreneurs, writers, painters, filmmakers, journalists, and self-employed professionals.

It is hard to give an accurate and reliable figure regarding the size and distribution of the Iranian ethnic group in the U.S. The 2010 U.S. Census estimates the total number of persons with an Iranian ancestry at about 463,552. The actual number of Iranians in the U.S. is believed to be larger than the figure revealed by the census. Geographically, Iranians in the U.S. are concentrated in a few states and metropolitan areas. As was the case in the 2000 Census report, over 50 percent of Iranians reside in California. After California, other large concentrations of Iranians are in New York, Washington D.C.-Maryland-Virginia combined, and Texas.

***Iranian Family in Exile.*** Family has always been the most significant unit of Iranian culture and the most important institution in Iranian society. The individual's entire life is dominated and shaped extensively by the family, particularly family obligations, relationships, and responsibilities. This sense of attachment and belonging is so deep and strong that, despite membership in their own family of procreation, many Iranian adults, particularly women and political exiles, who have lived abroad for many years still complain about homesickness and separation from their family of orientation. The migration of Iranians to the U.S. has created some tension in many Iranian families. The sources of this tension are many. Some are related to such immigration factors as cultural collision, loneliness, loss of the emotional support of kin, marginality, legal status, financial instability, job insecurity, and downward mobility. In addition to these factors, the political tensions between Iran and the U.S., as well as the social, economic and political forces in Iran since the revolution, have had a significant impact on Iranian families in exile. For example, immigration restrictions since the hostage crisis in 1979 affected immigration of family members to the U.S. and family reunification for thousands of Iranians. On the other hand, the sudden departure of many Iranian individuals and families during and after the revolution as well as the Iran-Iraq war ruptured family structure and interrupted family relations for Iranian immigrants in exile.

Overall, the social and political forces in Iran and the U.S. created strong barriers to marriage and the formation of new family households for many single Iranians in exile and extended the physical separation of many more young Iranians from family members in Iran. After the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the Iranian family in exile entered a new phase. These forces together, removed all the migration barriers for Iranian men, facilitated temporary visits for Iranians with their family members in Iran, increased marriage between single Iranians in the U.S. and Iran, and accelerated immigration of older Iranians for the purpose of reunification with their children.

## ***Effects of the Islamic Revolution on Family Relations in Iran and the United States\****

**By Homa Mahmoudi**

### **ABSTRACT**

As a result of the Islamic revolution in the late 1970s, a large number of Iranians over the past thirty years have immigrated to the United States. At first, they considered their stay as temporary; however, with the passage of time, this perception has changed significantly. These immigrants in some ways did not represent a cross section of the Iranian population. Furthermore, after thirty years, the degree of their acculturation and assimilation as well as their emotional and cultural attachment to Iran vary significantly. In order to answer some of the questions about these groups, a questionnaire was designed and administered to such Iranians residing in the United States. Responses were analyzed and discussed generally and in terms of different religious identification.

### **SUMMARY**

Since the Islamic revolution, in my private practice in California, I have become aware of multiple adjustment problems of many Iranian immigrants and refugees in the U.S. Chief among these problems have been alienation, English language difficulty, career change, unemployment, women's issues, and child and spousal abuse. However, it seems that, at least in the Los Angeles area, many of these new immigrants have made some adjustment by such means as modifying their dependence on Iran, connecting with the local Iranian community, and participating in Iranian cultural activities. At the same time, there are also those for whom the adjustment has been difficult. To understand their adjustment, particularly their difficulties, I developed and administered an immigration questionnaire.

The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the degree of connection between Iranians in the U.S. and Iranians in Iran, particularly the respondents' families and friends in that country. It was important to select respondents from across the U.S. and not only from my home city, i.e., Los Angeles. The reason was that the Los Angeles area has its own unique version of

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\*With the author's consent, the submitted version of this article has been significantly condensed.

Iranian culture. The 431 respondents included 312 women and 119 men living in Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Iowa City, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City. Of the respondents, 89% were married and were born in various Iranian cities, but 71% were from Tehran. Furthermore, although 38% indicated that they had parents and siblings in Iran, only 19% reported that they had traveled to that country since 2008. It is important to note that these respondents were not randomly selected.

## FINDINGS

Generally, the respondents indicated that the recent U.S.-Iran relationship had significantly affected how they related to Iran and how connected they felt to their families there. Many also indicated their caution about their contacts with their families in Iran because of security issues and concern about the welfare of their families. Specifically, the responses were primarily analyzed in terms of religious affiliations and gender. The respondents' religions were given as Muslims (287), Baha'is (73), Jews (57), and Christians (22). There were also Armenians (6), Zoroastrians (5), Assyrians (3), and those with no religious affiliation (61). However, of these, only the first four groups were selected for analysis. In addition, the responses were analyzed in terms of gender.

### Religion:

**Muslims.** Of the 287 Muslims, 64 reported that they were not able to return to Iran because of political reasons. Most of those, representing the upper class, expressed feelings of anger and frustration because they were forced out of their home. They call themselves "News Junkies" and still dream of going back to their homeland before they die. The 22% of Muslim respondents who had no political restriction reported that they traveled at least once a year to Iran. They indicated that they had friends and family in Iran, and some were in the process of trying to reclaim their properties. They reported that they enjoyed seeing their families, felt less lonely in Iran, and were socially more active there.

**Baha'is.** Baha'is still represented the largest religious minority in Iran and over 300,000 Baha'is still remained in that country. There, they had been highly persecuted; their youth were denied entrance to higher education institutions and even some high schools; many had been executed or imprisoned, and their belongings were confiscated; and some were denied employment and permission to do business. The Baha'i respondents had followed the news about their fellow Baha'is in Iran. They had been active in campaigns for requesting help from the United Nations and from politicians and Human Rights groups regarding the condition of the Baha'is in Iran. The situation of Baha'is for the past 30 years had deteriorated in Iran because of the government's systematic efforts to eliminate them and their religious activities there. Outside of Iran, Baha'is had regular and organized meetings, conferences, and gatherings. They were eager to hear news releases that informed them about the fate of Baha'is in Iran. They were in contact with their families and friends in Iran through electronic media, various websites, Facebook, and other social networks.

**Jews.** The respondents who identified themselves as Jewish indicated that they had very few relatives still living in Iran. Four individuals reported that they went to Iran to see their families. Eleven reported that they traveled to Iran for business or to reclaim their property from the government. In addition, these respondents considered their move to the U.S. as a great opportunity for members of their community. They also indicated that they were proud to be



members of the Iranian Jewish community. At times, they missed their life in Iran, but now they saw the move positively. Furthermore, they were proud to be a part of a community that had become financially vibrant and had excelled in educational and financial achievements. The Jewish women, particularly, had taken advantage of opportunities in the U.S. to develop their potential in academic, business, and the social arenas. While proud of their Iranian heritage, they were aware of their suffering and persecution throughout their history in Iran.

**Christians.** For centuries, Armenians and Assyrians were residing in Iran. However, following the revolution, very few of them had remained in Iran. They had established their community in the U.S. and had joined other Armenians or Assyrians in their churches. A fairly large number of other Iranians had married Christians, and some living in the U.S. southern states and small towns had converted to Christianity. This conversion started mostly with the U.S. hostage crisis and with the various attacks and pressures on the Iranians in the U.S. Furthermore, many families had decided to convert to Christianity and to Anglicize their names and their children's names to gain more acceptance, and for their children to blend in more easily. Others became Christian because they viewed Christianity as a western religion. They indicated that, as Christians, they needed to have a new social reference group. Some also had converted to obtain permanent residency.

### **Gender:**

**Women.** The women respondents reported more involvement with Iran than men. This could be because these women were more family oriented, had more free time, and were more socially concerned. They had taken an active role in the one million signature campaign and were most interested in human rights and women's rights activities in Iran. They had written letters to the UN; had appealed to human rights organizations; and had provided financial and moral support for their families in Iran, particularly for their siblings. On the question of whether their migration had been sound, their responses were very much age related. However, 92% of them indicated that their move had been positive for such reasons as freedom, education, financial independence, better laws, and a better life for their next generation.

**Men.** As a group, the men had less contact with Iran and with their families. There was a group of 27 men from the total of 119 male respondents who had the least contacts with Iran. These respondents reported that they currently resided in smaller cities and were married to non-Iranian women. Many were highly educated and in such professions as medical or engineering. All were educated in the U.S., and reported that they were financially comfortable. Many responded "none" to the question about religion and indicated that most of their social activities and friends were non-Iranian. Of the total respondents, 22% indicated that they had traveled once to Iran in the past five years, and seven were involved in business with Iran. Many indicated that they traveled to Iran to see their families and to take care of their business. Most of the men indicated that only "sometimes" or "occasionally" they followed the news of Iran on television or Internet. However, 32% of them reported that they were well-informed about events in Iran and were very concerned about the current situation there. They also indicated a variety of reasons for not traveling to Iran such as the dress code, fear of not being allowed to leave, and concern about unrest while being there.

## ***Caught Between Two Worlds: Video Review***

**By Nahid Shahnava**

### **THE VIDEO**

*Caught Between Two Worlds* documentary video screened, was directed by Persheng Sadegh-Vaziri and Simin Farkhondeh. It examines the complexities of lives of Iranian immigrants and exiles, estimated between 600,000 to 1,000,000, in the United States. Most Iranians moved to the U.S. after the 1978-1979 Islamic Revolution In search of religious and political freedom. By weaving together excerpts from the lives of people living in several large cities in the U.S., this documentary illuminates the constant negotiations immigrants and exiles must make in forging their cultural identities.

The video clearly displays diversity among Iranians living in the U.S. Many are business men and women having their own businesses, many are physicians, lawyers, engineers, university professors, and members of other professions. In fact, most Iranians living in the U.S. are highly educated. One out of four has an advanced degree such as master's, Ph.D., J.D, and M.D. This is by far higher than the national average in the U.S. Many Iranians, due to their educational achievements, are successful in their chosen occupations and are seemingly well assimilated in their communities. Exile, by definition, represents *Loss*, loss of family, loss of history, and loss of familiarity. At the same time, it provides opportunities for *Gain*, which has been taken advantage of by Iranians.

In spite of all financial, social, and occupational achievements, Iranians enjoy in the U.S., something is missing from their lives, perhaps the true sense of belonging. Such feeling has negatively affected their emotional well-being and development of meaningful relationships, which are essential ingredients for an emotionally healthy life. Those interviewed in this video, expressed this feeling in one way or another. As an immigrant group, Iranians do not seem to be well-anchored in American culture and fully assimilated in spite of seemingly successful lives. This feeling is more pronounced among those who moved to the U.S. after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Prior to 1979, Americans had a much more positive perception of Iranians, who were often called Persians. The hostage crises of 1979 changed this image. Now, generally, Iranians could be called terrorists, uncivilized, and unwelcome. These unjust labels have deeply affected Iranians who did not have anything to do with the revolution. In fact, many left the country because they did not want to be associated with the new regime. The event of September 11, 2001 strengthened the negative image of Muslims in the minds of Americans causing more isolation among Muslim immigrants and, by extension, Iranians.

Iranians, although not concentrated in one area, have created their own communities. They have established cultural societies, Farsi classes for children, and the celebration of the Persian New Year and other festive occasions. They also continue to enjoy Persian music and food. Today, there are many Persian television and radio stations, most of which broadcast their programs from the Southern California area, which has the largest concentration of Iranians in the U.S. There are now centers for older Iranians in large cities helping them feel less isolated. Many Persian restaurants, nightclubs, bookstores, and services help Iranians feel at home.

Iranians are very proud of their cultural and historical heritage, and they take advantage of every opportunity to display such sentiment. In the annual Persian parade to celebrate the Persian New Year in New York, hundreds of Iranians from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds display

their pride in their cultural heritage. The beautiful natural sceneries in the U.S. remind them of such Iranian views as the Caspian Sea and Alboroz Mountains. The beauty of a land called “Iran” lives in their memories, and nothing compares with it. This sentiment speaks to a deep sense of nationalism and ethnocentrism. However, generally speaking, Iranians are apolitical, and as such, they do not often perform their civic duties as Iranian-Americans nor become involved in political activities arranged by Iranian activists. This is perhaps rooted in their deep pessimism and skepticism brought with them from Iran.

In spite of longing for their motherland, most Iranians living in the U.S. are grateful for the opportunity the host country has offered them. Due to profound changes in Iran in the last thirty years, they do not seem to enjoy the feeling of belonging when they travel to Iran. While, seemingly, they enjoy visiting with friends and family, they often return to the U.S. after only a short visit. As several interviewees mentioned in the video, they feel like second class citizens in both countries. This is the true meaning of *Caught Between Two Worlds* for most Iranians. Such feelings seem to be more pronounced among those who left Iran after 1979 and less among those who immigrated to the U.S. prior to the Islamic revolution in Iran. Learning a new language, establishing a new life, and getting used to unfamiliar surroundings, have presented a challenge for thousands of Iranians who moved to the U.S. after the revolution. Children of these immigrants are also caught between two worlds. While the English language is not an issue for them, they do not understand why they have to follow their parents’ traditional rules, which are quite different from the rules their American friends have to follow.

The video ends with the following poem:

*We are flowers of that pot,  
Trees of that land, our hearts are where the roots are,  
Truly, what have we come for?  
Awareness, dew, light  
Bearing rain, for becoming sun, shining  
For mending our ruin  
Truly what have we come for?*

## **DISCUSSION**

A stimulating discussion followed viewing of the video among the conference participants. While they expressed the same general sentiments, individual differences were noted. Many Iranians were not conflicted and were quite happy living in the U.S.. This may be related to their backgrounds and their success in this country. There was a lengthy discussion about the impact of political issues on their lives. For example, the hostage crisis of 1979 and events of September 11, 2001 profoundly impacted the lives of Iranians in the U.S.

Another issue that was discussed in length was whether Iranian families are successful in transferring their cultural values to the members of the new generation who were born here, and except for their last names, do not identify with Iran. To what degree should we advocate the Persian culture while there is not much interest among the second generation? In response, there was an agreement that parents and grandparents must encourage the new generation to learn Farsi, read Iranian history, enjoy Persian food and music, and celebrate festive occasions, but allow them to live their own un-conflicted lives in the U.S. as Americans. Is it possible, instead of “*Either/Or*”, to embrace and celebrate *Both* Iranian and American cultures?

## ***Geographically Split Families: Panel Discussion***

**By Reza Varjavand\***

For my presentation, I had the opportunity to listen to the members of the panel. I had also interviewed a couple of families that can be characterized as geographically split. Some of the members of these families are here in the U.S. or in Canada, and the other members are in Iran. I learned from my research that these families have made calculated decisions to leave Iran and reside in another country in anticipation of better living conditions. My inquiry into this important topic gave me a compelling reason to appreciate my life in this country. Those of us who came here before the 1970s were not faced with as many institutional challenges as those who came later, especially after the revolution. For most of them, things were much better then; they had more respect and collegial courtesy, and enjoyed lower costs of education. Back then, Iran was associated with great civilization, rich culture, friendly government, and enormous wealth. It is now associated with intolerance, backwardness, phobia, tighter scrutiny, and bigotry. Public mentality has changed accordingly. I classified the information gathered into three categories:

### **1. Reasons Why Iranian Families Split:**

- A Husband and wife obtain a green card through a family member or a close eligible relative. However, because their children who are 21 years of age and older are not eligible to apply for a green card, these children are forced to stay in Iran while their parents and other siblings move to the host country after obtaining a green card causing family to split.
- If an American citizen marries an Iranian, he or she has to wait a particular number of years, depending on the circumstances, to apply for a green card for the non-American spouse. During this time, the family remains geographically divided.
- To keep their residency status active, and while their older children are in Iran, parents, who obtained green card through relatives, have to travel there once or twice a year, creating dual-country families. They often stay for a few weeks or even months, in the U.S. while the rest of the family is in Iran.
- All members of a family usually migrate to Canada in search of better life amenities. After a while, one parent or more family members decide to return to Iran because they are unhappy with their new life in another country.
- A husband and wife both come to the U.S. for a visit or as students, and then they decide to apply for a change of status; however, they follow different paths to residency. One spouse may be deported because his or her application for a change of status is denied, while the other spouse's application is approved. This happened to a Polish family in Chicago.
- Mom or dad, or both, came to the U.S. years ago as students, and their children were born in the U.S. After living many years in Iran, the children are now adults and decide to return to the U.S. Some of them may even force their parents to accompany them.

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\*In addition to Dr. Varjavand, members of the panel included Kamran Baygani, Parvin Holmes, and Nahid Shahnavaaz.

## 2. Troubling Consequences:

- Loss of properties and personal possessions that were left behind in Iran and are often confiscated by the government. This is an especially costly consequence for those who cannot return to Iran. Even if they can return and reclaim their assets, the cost of doing so is enormous.
- Increased living expenses as a result of traveling back and forth, communication expenses, financial loss due to selling businesses and other properties under unfavorable conditions.
- Legal expenses incurred as a result of needing to obtain visas and resolve immigration matters, especially the requirement of having to go to a third country one or two times for an interview and costly paperwork.
- Psychological costs of work-related stress such as being forced to engage in an undesirable job with an inadequate salary, and especially relational stress that results from playing the blame game regarding who's at fault for breaking up the family. This is especially heavy on those who used to work for the government in a high ranking position.
- Mental stress, especially for older people who do not want to see their old-fashioned values being undermined by a value system they do not approve.
- Grief associated with loss of loved ones back home and not having a chance to see them to share their sorrow.
- Indecision and lack of stability leading to costly consequences such as not having health insurance and a pension as well as confusion and homesickness, especially for the children.
- Difficulties associated with being newcomers such as the inability to understand or assimilate into the popular culture of the host country. In the U.S., many immigrants have to accept a lower standard of living and settle for low-paying jobs. They do not know what is going on, are at odds with one another, obsessed with their past, and utterly disappointed with their present.
- Often, some members of the family cannot return to Iran because they are legally restricted, creating additional problems due to not being able to see friends and relatives. Some arrange a rendezvous in a third country, such as Turkey, for a family reunion at high cost.
- Entering into ill-advised business transactions, either because of bad advice from friends, or being scammed by those seeking to rip them off by signing them into deals they do not quite understand, such as buying a house or a car with unfavorable terms and conditions. In many cases, families unable to honor their financial obligations have lost their homes or other assets.
- The experience of culture shock or the inability to cope with unexpected problems that surface in the host country, especially discriminatory treatment.

### 3. Coping Mechanisms:

- Think positively and act one step at a time. When you have so many immigration related problems, even small progress is significant.
- Connect with other Iranians, find friends, especially with those who can help morally, financially, and otherwise.
- Keep busy by going to work or school, especially vocational schools.
- Turn to humanitarian organizations for assistance and/or rely on spiritual religious rituals for peace and strength.

#### A Sample Situation:

In one case, the children came to Canada to study, and their parents decided to join them in anticipation of obtaining the amenities of a better life. Unable to find a professional job they envisioned, they bought a fast food restaurant using all their life savings to pay the franchise fees and other expenses.

After a while, the thrill of a new life wore off, things did not go as expected, and the parents started arguing about what to do. When things are not good, we search for villains to blame for our problems. It started with the blame game, and then advanced to conflict and confrontation between the husband and wife concerning whether to stay or return to Iran. Things were especially hard for the husband because he had a much better job, not to mention social status, in Iran. He was not happy doing what he was doing in his new country, which in this case, was running a restaurant. He was also unhappy about leaving friends behind. He finally decided to return to Iran leaving his wife and children in Canada.

While working in Iran, the husband had to send money to Canada to support his family. Eventually, he got tired of struggling to make enough money to support two households, and his wife still did not want to return to Iran. Things started to get very sour and finally ended in divorce, and geographical separation led to emotional separation and disintegration of the family.

Now, the wife lives in a condo they purchased while the husband was in Canada. However, she is unable to pay the mortgage, and the condo is up for sale. The son goes to school, and the daughter is confused and torn. She does not know whose side she is on. She is inclined to side with her dad but does not want to return to Iran. It is understandable that the wife would prefer to stay abroad given the harsh living conditions for women in Iran, their lack of social status, and the imposition of harsh restrictions on them. What is the solution?

**APPENDIX: PRESENTERS AND CHAIRS**

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