

I Heart Hamas: And Other Things I'm Afraid to Tell You

A Tragicomic Solo Show
Written and Performed by Jennifer Jajeh



A Letter from the Creator

"I Heart Hamas: And Other Things I'm Afraid to Tell You" is a tragicomic one woman theatre show about my experiences growing up as a Palestinian American in San Francisco, and my decision to move to Ramallah in 2000-2001.

Through humor and the introduction of additional characters, I take the viewer on a surreal journey to auditions; the Ramallah convention circa 1986; on dates with Jewish boys; and then to Palestine as I navigate the complex web of identities, assumptions and stereotypes about Palestinians in an increasing polarized world of East vs. West. "I Heart Hamas" uses slides, music, storytelling, pop culture and live theatre to examine Palestinian identity in a fresh, funny, and contemporary way. It also presents a realistic view of my experiences living in Ramallah under Occupation.

I created the show because I wanted to let people know what it was like being a Palestinian American in today's world: the biases I deal with, the ridiculous and often humorous situations that result from carrying such a loaded identity, the feeling of being trapped between two worlds, and the arresting reality of what's happening on the ground in Palestine.

The show, recognized by NYTheatre.com as "a fascinating look into a world we don't often see or hear about," made its world premiere in August 2008 as a part of New York's International Fringe Festival. Following strong media praise and audience reception, "*I Heart Hamas*" was co-produced by Off-Market Theatres in San Francisco where it ran for 12 weeks in Fall 2009. The show continued onto Bedlam Theatre in Minneapolis, Chicago's Prop Theatre, and La Pena Cultural Center Berkeley in Spring 2010. *ZYZZYVA*, the journal of West Coast writers and artists, published excerpts from the show in its Spring 2010 issue.



fans outside of the New York show, August 2008

The Show

With the current ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the threat of global terrorism, and the never-ending negotiations and hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians, it's hard not to feel overwhelmed by all of the bad international news. That's exactly how Jennifer Jajeh feels. And to make matters worse, Jennifer is Palestinian. Well, Palestinian American. Or more precisely: a single, Christian, first generation, Palestinian American woman who chooses to return to her parents' hometown of Ramallah at the start of the Second Intifada.

Join her on American and Palestinian soil on auditions, bad dates, and across military checkpoints as she navigates the thorny terrain around Palestinian identity. Weaving together humor, slides, pop culture references and live theatre, Jajeh explores how she becomes Palestinian-ized, then politicized and eventually radicalized in a fresh, often funny, searingly honest way.



Photo from the San Francisco Performance September 2009

The Reviews are in...

Chicago Tribune

“Jennifer Jajeh has an interesting story to tell. Sometimes-humorous, sometimes-disturbing... her discoveries of what life in Ramallah is like for

Palestinians may be revelatory for most Americans.”

Kerry Reid, May 6, 2010

“There is a certain sincerity that I do not often see in solo performances. Wonderful... This is a good show to see. You may not

walk away with all the answers, but Ms. Jajeh’s journey will make you have

some new questions of your own and make you examine your views.” Jake

Lindquist, May 8, 2010



SFBG
SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN ONLINE

“Jajeh is out to upset some staid opinions, stereotypes and confusions that carry increasingly significant moral and political consequences for us all.”

Robert Avila November 18, 2009

“Working with W. Kamau Bell, Jajeh has created a fresh, irreverant, and heartfelt take on trans-national identity politics and representations of the Middle East.” Flavorpill, September 2009



nytheatre.com

“Jajeh is a charming narrator...(the play) provides a fascinating look into a world we don’t often see or hear about. Jajeh inspires the audience... Kudos to

Jajeh and her production team for bringing this important conversation.”

Gyda Arber, August 8, 2008

“BOTTOM LINE: charming, intriguing, brave...(I Heart Hamas) is a brutally honest one-woman show exploring what it means to be a woman who is American, Palestinian and Christian. A heart-wrenching and eye-opening perspective on what it means to be a Palestinian living in Palestine. (Jajeh shows) candid bravery and vulnerability as she reveals her feelings about violence, Israelis, and war...not (a story) we often get to hear so I recommend getting to see it.”

Natasha Yannacañedo, August 12, 2008



In the Media



Jennifer Jajeh discusses the show with host Shirin Sadeghi on the NPR Podcast. May 2011

<http://newamericamedia.org/2011/05/nam-radio-zero-tolerance-university-medalist-arab-american-women-i-heart-hamas.php>

EAST BAY EXPRESS

Great Feature Article by Rachel Swan. May 2010

<http://www.eastbayexpress.com/ebx/kiss-me-im-palestinian/Content?oid=1768766>



Interview by Dwight Hobbes. February 2010

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2010/02/12/theater-jennifer-jajeh-i-heart-hamas-and-other-things-im-afraid-tell-you>

San Francisco Chronicle

Full Page Feature Article. September 2009

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/16/NSEH19JL54.DTL>



Nox Magazine does 2 page spread about the show. July 2008

<http://ihearthamas.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/iheart.pdf>

For additional links to print, video, radio coverage go to www.ihearthamas.com

Bios



Jennifer Jajeh (Writer, Performer) is a Los Angeles based actor and writer. She has appeared in over three dozen film, television, commercial and theatre productions over the past 5 years. She received her actor's training at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Conservatory in NYC and the American Conservatory Theatre in SF. *"I Heart Hamas: And Other Things I'm Afraid to Tell You"*, her first solo show, opened to acclaim in NYC and SF is currently in its third year of touring the US.

In addition to her work as an actor, she has produced and directed a number of award winning independent film and video projects. Her two short films, *"In My Own Skin"* and *"Fruition"*, have screened on PBS, at MOMA and Anthology Film Archives in New York, as well as in national and international film festivals, museums, art galleries and universities. She traveled the country as a guest lecturer using her filmwork to discuss the Arab American experience in post 9-11 NYC. Her work has been profiled on the KRON 4 Morning News, WBAI NYC, Link TV, KTEH's Video I, the Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, NOX Magazine Jordan, and Watani Saudi TV to name a few. Named one of Fen Magazine's Artists to Watch in 2011, she is currently at work on her internet talk show *"In Bed with Jen Jajeh"*.

W. Kamau Bell (Director) is a director, stand up comedian and solo performer. His television appearances include Comedy Central, Comics Unleashed, KQED's Spark, ABC's View From The Bay, and Filter on G4. *"The W. Kamau Bell Curve: Ending Racism in About an Hour"*, his critically acclaimed solo show, enjoyed extended runs in San Francisco before heading to the 2009 New York International Fringe Festival, the Comedy Central theater in Hollywood, and terraNova Collective's 7th Annual SoloNova Festival.

He has appeared at the prestigious Just For Laughs Festival in Montreal, was featured in the book *"What Would Bill Hicks Say?"*, and was honored as San Francisco's Best Comedian by the Weekly, the San Francisco Bay Guardian and 7x7 Magazine. Kamau appeared regularly on radio station Live 105 and online at Roof Top Comedy as half of the rant and rave team, "Siskel and Negro" and has also released two stand-up comedy CD's. As a solo show director he has helmed *"don't make me look too psychotic"*, *"F**king Handicapped Guy"*, *"Miss-Matches.com"*, and *"Love, Humiliation, Karaoke"*. He founded and directs SF's Solo Performance Workshop, an incubator for new solo talent.

Additional Credits

Writer.....Jennifer Jajeh
Director.....W. Kamau Bell
Sound & Lighting Design.....David Hines
Assistant Lighting Design.....Clint Winder

Upcoming Performances

Hollywood Fringe Festival

June 9-25, 2011
Theatre Asylum Lab
6320 Sanra Monica Blvd.
Hollywood, CA 90038

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