



WHAT'S IN THIS EDITION

Marhaba!

The Yale Arab Alumni Association (YAAA) is back in action, and we are thrilled to be in your inboxes today with the first newsletter of 2023. We are saying goodbye to our former President, Kyle, and long-serving board member, Nafez. We are excited to introduce you to our newly elected board and share our top priorities for the upcoming calendar year:

- Meet and greet for our Kuwait-based alumni (June 21st)
- Meet and greet for our Beirut-based alumni (July 22nd)
- Meet and greet for our Cairo-based alumni (August, details TBA)
- [NEW] Mentoring event for newly admitted Arab students to Yale College - locations based on countries of admitted students (August)
- Annual Arabs Applying to Yale online admissions workshop (September)
- Careers in the MENA region online speaker series (October)

Please reach out to us if you want to get more involved with YAAA or organize something in your city - we look forward to hearing from you!

Contact us at: board@yalearabalumni.org

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS



Vanessa Marsot '91

Vanessa majored in women's studies and literature at Yale. Since receiving her degree in 1991, she has worked as a licensed psychotherapist, yoga and aerial arts instructor and entrepreneur. She runs a vegan health facility and is currently working with Environmental Quality International (EQI) to convert various hotels in Siwa, Egypt, to a vegan lifestyle. In addition to her current job, Vanessa has worked as a model, an actor, and an English teacher in Paris. She has managed mental health facilities and performed personal training. Vanessa's Egyptian mother taught Egyptian history at a university, and Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed was her great uncle.

Additionally, Vanessa is working with Mounir Neamatalla to renovate his hotels in Siwa. Many people showed interest and discussed vegan food at the Yale Day of Service event thanks to Vanessa's fundamental commitment to making healthy food accessible. If you are interested in joining a wellness or yoga retreat in Siwa, Vanessa will be happy to arrange it.

Next up on the YAAA calendar:



MEET US FOR DINNER IN KUWAIT CITY

WEDNESDAY JUNE 21ST
7:30PM



GIULIA RESTAURANT

A QUICK REFRESHER ABOUT YAAA



About Us:

The Yale Arab Alumni Association was founded in 2007 in Beirut, Lebanon, by a group of Yale alumni dedicated to strengthening ties between Yale University and the Arab World. The Association is the sole independent, shared interest group serving Yale alumni living and working in the region. Alumni with a professional, academic, or personal interest in the Arab world are invited to our community.



Our Mission:

To provide opportunities for alumni to band together in light of their shared experience of living and working in the Arab world. We are equally committed to upholding Yale's values of public service by promoting alumni engagement and outreach to local communities in the Arab world.





Malak



Omar



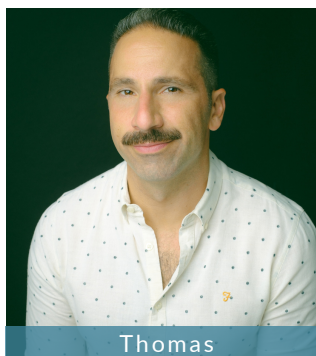
Shady

MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

*We are thrilled to announce
our new board for 2023-2024*



Naser



Thomas



Salma



Mohammad

Malak Nasr, YC'19 (Davenport)

President

Malak graduated from Yale College in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology. Following graduation, she was awarded the Cohen Public Service and Gordon Grand fellowships to support her work as Program Director at Havenly Treats, a New Haven-based non-profit offering job training for refugee women.

Malak co-directed the first-ever Arab conference at Yale in 2018 that included speaker events and panels on Middle East current affairs, politics, culture, and history. Malak is vocal as a patient advocate for the Type 1 Diabetes community and received the DeDoc Voices scholarship to attend the 2022 Advanced Technologies and Treatments for Diabetes (ATTD) Conference. Malak is pursuing an MPhil in Population Health Sciences at the University of Cambridge.

Omar Christidis, YC'04 (Morse), SOM'07

Vice President

Omar Christidis is an entrepreneur, innovation evangelist, and ecosystem builder who is driven by a passion to advance the digital industry in MENA.

Omar brings expert knowledge in digital disruption, emerging business models, corporate innovation strategies, and government policies to foster entrepreneurship.

Omar's company, Arabnet, has organized over 30 tech conferences featuring more than 2,000 global experts, supported over 650 startups, and issued over a dozen original research reports. Omar is an Advisory Board member of the Strategic Foresights Program at the Middle East Institute (Washington DC), a Faculty Member and Moderator at the Aspen Institute, UK, a Board Member of the Lebanese Exhibitions & Conferences Association (LECA), and a Founding Board Member of the Yale Arab Alumni Association.

Shady M. Qubaty, YC'20 (Morse)

Treasurer

As their first undergraduate from Yemen, Shady graduated from Yale College in 2020 double majoring in economics and Near Eastern studies. He was president of his college council, the Arab Students Association, and the MENA Association, which he founded to lead the campaign to establish a fifth cultural center. Receiving Yale's 2020 Henry Fellowship, he completed a master's degree in development studies at the University of Cambridge.

Shady was an Innovation and Strategy Associate of the Dubai Business Associates scheme and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. He currently works with DP World Europe as a Transformation and Strategy Manager. He is also the Founder and CEO of Yemen's leading international NGO, Adalah, the official secretariat to the UK Parliament, and serves as the VP of the Economic Forum for Sustainable Development.



MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS (CONT.)

Naser Al Sayer, SOM'19

Director of Activities

Naser graduated from the School of Management in 2019, and currently holds the position of Chairperson at AlSayer Franchising which operates over 70 branches in Kuwait, he is also a Senior Investment Analyst at Al Dhow Holding.

He also focuses on screening technology and fund investments in addition, to direct investment Naser is passionate about Economic Development and has served as Vice Curator for the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers at the Kuwait City Hub for two years. He currently serves on the Board of the Kuwait Business Council in the United Arab Emirates connecting Kuwait businesses to the UAE. Naser has over 7 years of work experience in Finance and Strategy. Previously Naser was part of the National Bank of Kuwait's Domestic Corporate Banking Group as a Relationship Officer primarily working on lending and managing client's credit needs.

Thomas Dolan, YC'05 (Morse)

Director of University Relations

Thomas Simsarian Dolan graduated from Yale College in 2005. He is currently an ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Fellow in Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University. After receiving his Ph.D. in American Studies from George Washington University, he spent last year teaching as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar in History at the American University in Cairo (AUC).

Thomas has served as a visiting researcher at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, published in Mashriq & Mahjar, Huffington Post, Egypt Migrations, Muftah, Arab America, The Armenian Weekly, and HowlRound, and currently serves as Co-Coordinator of the SWANA Section of the Association for Asian American Studies and member of SAG-AFTRA's first National MENA Committee.

Salma Shaheen, YC'22 (Silliman)

Director of Membership and Volunteers

Salma graduated from Yale College in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Economics. At Yale, she received several fellowships to conduct research at the intersection of labor economics, spatial economics, and migration in Palestine. She worked as an Economics RA for Professor Rohini Pande and the Yale Economics Growth Centre. Born and raised in Hebron, Salma founded Yalies4Palestine to advocate for Palestinians' rights under the Israeli occupation. She served on Yale's Advisory Committee on Accessibility Resources, for which she was awarded Silliman's Diversity and Inclusion Award. Salma also serves on the board committee for the United World Colleges national committee in Palestine.

Currently, she is pursuing an MSc in Economics for Development at the University of Oxford after receiving Yale's 2022 Henry Fellowship. In her research, Salma focuses on gender differentials in the labor market in the MENA region.

Mohammad Salem, YC'24 (Davenport)

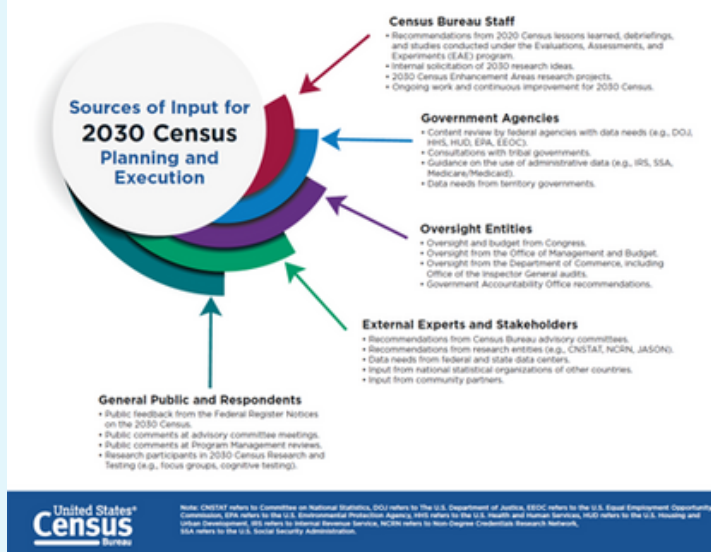
Senior Student Liaison

Mohammad Salem is a rising senior originally from Rockford, IL. He is studying Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology with a certificate in global health studies. Mohammad served as the previous president of the Arab Students Association as well as the Vice President of the Yale international relations association.

Mohammad is very passionate about global health, having previously worked on a research project with the Yale school of public health investigating the link between substance use amongst forced migrants in Amman, Jordan. Mohammad also works as an undergraduate researcher at the Yale Stem Center researching neutrophils in the Lu Lab.

NEWS FROM CAMPUS: ADDING MENA TO THE CENSUS

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African



At the end of January, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the Biden White House proposed new reporting categories for a combined ethnic and racial identity question on the 2030 Census. For the first time, it would include a Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) category.

Aiming to disaggregate peoples originating from Morocco to Iran from the “White” category, this development builds on decades of community organizing, as well as earlier changes proposed by the Obama administration but eliminated by Trump’s. That said, the definition of the MENA region, its indigenous and transnational groups, and the language of Census questions remains contested. As such, the OMB solicited public comment on proposed language from February through April, held three town halls, and will engage in an ongoing conversation with community, policy, and lobbying groups moving forward.

Many Arab, Armenian, and Iranian groups have welcomed this change as a way to disaggregate our communities from the White category and better reflect experiences of discrimination in immigration/naturalization, housing, healthcare, and popular media. The creation of a MENA category might also serve as a stopgap for the shift in Federal Title VI funding away from half a dozen Middle East Studies programs. In addition, this federal reporting would augment developments in Asian American, Ethnic, American, and Middle East Studies centering MENA/SWANA diasporas and race.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

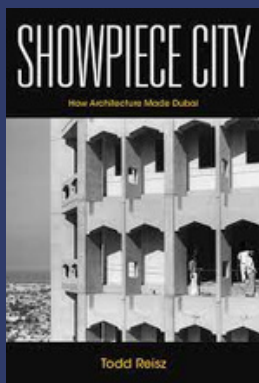
Dima Srouji '16

Dima had a memorable time at Yale when she was studying architecture and attending her classes in the art department. In 2016, she received her degree from the Yale School of Architecture. She has since been employed in the fields of architecture and art. Dima was born, raised, and has familial ties to the Middle East on both sides. She continues to work there on occasion for particular projects.

Dima was the Victoria & Albert Museum's 2022–2023 Jameel Fellow. She currently oversees the MA City Design studios at the Royal College of Art in London. The Corning Museum of Glass and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam have lately added some of her creations to their permanent collections. Dima will be delighted if you would like to discuss anything related to visual arts, city design, and architecture!



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONTH



Our recommended reading is a recent release by [Todd Reisz](#), Yale '03, **Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai**. In this fascinating history, Reisz explains how Harris and other hired professionals planned Dubai's transition in the 1970s. Todd Reisz uncovers the perseverance that was used to sell Dubai as a successful business strategy by drawing on exclusive interviews, private archives, and old photos. Reisz highlights the city's first hospital, national bank, and skyscraper, among other early architectural accomplishments.



Our recommended viewing for the month is the first Saudi content on Netflix, the award-winning six-short film collection **"Six Windows in the Desert,"** produced by [Telfaz11](#).

The films depict Saudi stories that will give the viewers an experience of Saudi culture, humor and art. Telfaz11 started as a Youtube / multichannel network in 2011, and they now have 3.4 million subscribers. Their award-winning content led Netflix and Telfaz11 to partner in 2020 and reach a global audience. Key investors in Telfaz include VentureSouq, a VC firm with two Yale alumni partners, Tammer Qaddumi '06 and Sonia Weymuller '05. Netflix has partnered again with Telfaz11, to direct and produce 8 short films that will reach Arab and global audiences.

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU TO THE DEPARTING BOARD

YAAA would like to take this opportunity to highlight and thank two outgoing board members: our former President, Kyle, and our former Treasurer, Nafez. We are immensely grateful for your work in sustaining YAAA for the past few years and for continuing to push the organization forward.

Kyle McEneaney YC'02 (Morse)

Kyle McEneaney is a Fellow leading global growth initiatives for Schmidt Futures and the programs it supports. He founded Bellamy Partners, an investment and advisory firm that works with hedge funds, family offices, and corporate clients on bespoke investment and corporate development mandates in MENA, East Africa, and Southeast Asia.



Kyle holds a BA from Yale University and an MA from Harvard University. Kyle joined YAAA in 2007 and became a board member when he moved to Dubai in 2013 and took over as President in 2016. Under Kyle's leadership, YAAA became an invaluable interface for facilitating interaction and dialogue between the university and the MENA region. We are so proud of the community that has been built, and we are excited for our new leadership to take things to the next level.



Nafez Al Dakkak YC'11 (Calhoun/Grace Hopper)

Nafez is the CEO of the Queen Rania Foundation's London office, where he oversees the foundation's strategic partnerships and talent development. He also leads the foundation's engagement with the education entrepreneurship sectors across MENA and globally.

Prior to this role, Nafez founded Edraak.org, the largest Arabic online education portal that reaches over 5 million learners across the MENA region. Nafez joined YAAA in 2019 and has been instrumental in growing and connecting our network of alumni. When he was at Yale, he was president of the Arab Students Association (ASA); he set up Tadreeb, an internship program for Yalies looking to get experience in the MENA region; he co-directed entrepreneurship at the Middle East Conference; and he secured the first room for the ASA on campus. Thank you Nafez for all your service to the Arab Yalie community!



WHAT WE WERE UP TO LAST MONTH

Every year, the Yale Alumni Association (YAA) leads the Day of Service, with activities in New Haven and around the world. Here at YAAA, we have been organizing events in the MENA region for the last few years and we are excited to keep this tradition going. If you would like to lead a Day of Service event in your area, please get in touch!

EGYPT

Vanessa Marsot ('91) and her friends led a Day of Service event on May 14th at Umm Kulthum Park in Cairo. The aim was to raise awareness about the environmental and health advantages of vegan and plant-based diets. The event was in collaboration with the "Vegan in Our House" restaurant which helped to offer samples to pedestrians and discuss the benefits of a vegan diet. The Day of Service concluded with a delicious vegan potluck in the park.



KUWAIT

On May 15th Yale's alumni from the School of Architecture and Management with friends worked together to clean Messilah Public Beach, a well-known beach in Kuwait. Friends worked together to comb the beach for litter and sort it for recycling. Five large bags of waste including plastics, metals, compost materials, and non-recyclables were collected. It was a joyful experience and the day ended with friends networking while enjoying chilled fresh juices.



Ismail El Hailouch '20

Ismail graduated from Yale in 2020 with a double major in NELC and Economics. He also did research in psychology and produced three publications. Ismail is currently working in AI at Turing, a unicorn startup based in Palo Alto. He formerly worked at Boston Consulting Group (BCG), where he provided advice to six Fortune 500 customers across a range of industries.

Ismail has a great sense of loyalty to his native Morocco where he was born and raised. He has lived abroad for the past seven years, but still feels a connection to his country and wants to apply his global experiences in a career back home. Ismail is a member of OPUS, a prestigious professional network for aspiring business leaders situated in London. Additionally, he belongs to the Chief of Staff Association.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS



EVENTS HAPPENING LATER THIS SUMMER

YAAA IS EXCITED TO INVITE YOU
TO AN ALUMNI MEET-UP

MARK YOUR
CALENDARS

AUGUST 2023

**VALIES IN CAIRO, COME
BACK FROM SAHEL!**



● LOCATION, DATE AND TIME TBA ●

YAAA IS EXCITED TO INVITE YOU
TO AN ALUMNI MEET-UP

MARK YOUR
CALENDARS

SUNDAY JULY 22ND

**VALIES IN BEIRUT, WE
MISS YOU!**



● LOCATION AND TIME TBA ●

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