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### Why I Fell in Love with Ramy and You Will Too?

Essraa Nawar

Chapman University, [nawar@chapman.edu](mailto:nawar@chapman.edu)

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## Why I Fell in Love with Ramy and You Will Too?

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# Why I fell in love with Ramy and you will too?



Essraa Nawar

Development Librarian and Chair of Arts, Exhibits and and Events committee at Chapman University and TEDx speaker

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If you have not watched [Ramy](#) on Hulu, you are definitely missing a brilliant show. I have been following this show since the release of its first episode in April of 2019. While I can not claim that I am a media critic nor that I have any expertise when it comes to Hollywood and/or the show business in general. I must say that I was so intrigued by this show that I decided to write about it and interview a few people along the way that also enjoyed the show.

## 1. The show is changing the Narrative

In 2014, I started a social media campaign titled [#changethenarrative](#), since then I (and many others across the world) have been trying to write/share stories and pictures about myself or other Muslim Americans or Muslims in general that are doing things outside of the typical media representation. Day to day activities, families, travel and sometimes even food or adventures, the idea has always been to showcase Muslims from different walks of life and stories of people that are not represented or misrepresented. Just like [Michael Singh](#) highlights in his documentary [Valentino's Ghost](#) how "Hollywood and mainstream corporate media portrayals of Arabs and Muslims transitioned through the years from the Arab as Romantic Hero to the Arab today as the embodiment of evil."

The show is doing just that,

### **Changing the Narrative!**

[Wajahat Ali](#) explains in his [New York Times article](#), how "Ramy refuses to be the perfect ambassador for Muslims. It's refreshing."

The show is NOT representing all Muslims or Egyptian Americans. It focuses on the story of just **one** person and **one** family.

[Adel Kamal](#) who is one of the co-writers of the show said in an interview to the [Muslim Public Affairs Council](#) "Growing up, I didn't see my reality reflected on screen. I became a screenwriter because stories invite others into new worlds, ones that are often overlooked or unfairly criticized by those who have never seen them. My goal is to introduce characters and story-lines

from these worlds to new audiences, to elicit emotional responses from joy to frustration, ecstasy to even devastation."

**Bravo** to Adel and everyone involved in this show for telling this story.

We need more stories like these!

## **2. The Show is relatable to everyone NOT just Muslims (which is really the goal)**

[Shawn Wehan](#), a personal friend and the Co-Founder/CEO at Givsum, is a White man who grew up catholic and is fond of the show since its inception last year. Shawn tells me that he relates to the show so much despite of how different many may think Ramy is compared to Shawns' background. Throughout the show, Ramy struggles with his faith and with following all the rules. This reminds Shawn with the "Catholic Guilt". Just like eating meat on Friday or skipping Church on Sunday. Ramy struggled, so did Shawn and many people across the world who grow up in any form of a religious household.

The struggle is real!

[Laura E. Adkins](#) writes for the [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#) and says that 'Ramy' is a perfect lens into the challenges of modern religious life. Just like how Ramy was torn between his identity and faith, Etsy (Shira Haas) struggled in Netflix's "[Unorthodox](#)" to find the balance between her Hasidic Community and her freedom.

*Same Struggle, different stories.*

## **3. It is a Comedy Show**

[Shawn Wehan](#) tells me how hard he laughs during the show and I did too. According to Shawn, it is important that the comedy and sarcasm is coming from members of the community itself not members of another community so it is not offensive.

As Shawn highlights "Members of each community have the authority to make fun of themselves" and that is why we do not see the comedy and jokes as offensive if they came from someone else. That is why the show became a critically acclaimed Muslim-American comedy and continues to grab attention nation and worldwide.

## **4. Breaking Taboos**

I have to admit that I love controversy and equally breaking taboos. I grow, I learn and I am open to change my mind when I am convinced. The show is not attempting to change your opinion about some of the most pressing issues in our life time (LGBT, borders, minorities, immigration, racism, identity crisis, people with disabilities, dual identities and so much more) but it is at least attempting to get us intrigued and open to discussing things that are way beyond our comfort zones.



## 5. The organic discussion of Assimilation

As an immigrant and a recent naturalized United States Citizen myself, I struggled with the concept of assimilation through the years. What it means, how to do it, who is going to help you assimilate and much more. Just like when I wrote a few years ago about the American Dream and Society in my article "[What I learned when I moved to America](#)" I want to start talking about "What I learned about assimilation?"

Maysa (Ramy's mom starred by [Hiam Abbas](#)) struggled with assimilation. Suddenly after 30+ years, she discovers she lives in America. She realizes the importance of becoming a citizen, suddenly educates herself on the constitution, other minority communities and how to be respectful to them, American vocabulary and more. Maysa stayed put for years. She ONLY maintained her Egyptian identity rather than exploring what America has to offer to her.

### Is it Maysa's Fault or America's fault?

Many immigrants think that they will land in the airport with Uncle Sam waiting for them ready to assimilate them. What does assimilation actually mean?

In my 2015 [Tedx](#) talk, I talk about finding the right balance between assimilation and identity. What if my story was like Maysa's and like many immigrants that come to this country with no opportunities to get accustomed to this new environment. *Alaa Al Aswani* talks about this exact concept in his bestselling Novel [Chicago](#). He offers an illuminating portrait of Egyptians in America and how some of them come to this country and either completely become Americanized or remain the same without changing one single thing through the years just like Maysa.

## 6. The making of the show is professional

Not only is Ramy a Hulu Original comedy series, the show's main character is starred by [Ramy Youssef](#) who eventually earned a [Golden Globe® Award](#) for his critically-acclaimed performance in season one. Alongside Youssef, season two stars [two-time Academy Award® and Golden Globe® Award-winner Mahershala Ali](#). The casting director did a magnificent job casting Mo Amer, Hiam Abbass, Egyptian actor Amr Waked, May Calamawy, Dave Merheje, Laith Nakli and Steve Way. Additionally, the attention to details is superb, the use of the Egyptian Arabic, the mosque visits, the trip to Egypt, even the use of the cuss words was organic and so true! As an Egyptian American, I saw myself and my own family (her and in Egypt) in many scenes and it was just unbelievable and hilarious!

## 7. The distinction between Religion and Culture

I have a dream that one day I will be teaching a course titled: "*Cultural and Religious intelligence for leaders*", a course focusing on making the distinction between religion and cultural and how both are intermingled yet are so separate.

[Mona Moustafa](#), a friend of mine and a graduate student at Brandman University who studies Human Resources is also a big fan of the show. She is not only looking at it from an Egyptian American Muslim point of view, she is giving us an HR lens. She reflects by saying that "Ramy is a human being after all, and humans make mistakes, terrible mistakes sometimes." Her main issue is the **stereotyping** - a problem faced by any hiring manager across the world no matter how neutral that person claims to be. All of us struggle with some perceived notions about us or about other people around us. What she likes about Ramy is that the writers were not shy about revealing and discussing these stereotypes and breaking them.

## **8. Black Muslims**

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, there was no better time to showcase a stellar example of a black Muslim family like the Sheikh's family.

According to the [Pew Research center](#), Black Muslims account for a fifth of all U.S. Muslims, and about half are converts to Islam. Yet, Black Muslims in America (and around the world) suffer from internal community racism despite it being against the Quranic and Prophetic teachings.

According to the Quran: *"And among His wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors. For in this, behold, there are messages indeed for all who are possessed of innate knowledge!" -Quran 30, 22*

***"There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab. Neither is the white superior over the black, nor is the black superior over the white -- except by piety." (Prophet Mohamed)***

While one of the beauties of this show is the relationship between Zainab and Ramy which unfortunately ended because of Ramy's irresponsibility and internal struggle before the wedding, I must compliment Ramy's authentic, organic and loving relationship with the Sheikh, Zainab and their family from day one. He showed respect and inclusiveness and he was intolerant to his family's comments. Even his mother did not dare to utter the word black when she looked at Zainab's picture on Instagram..she looked at him and said "She is.....beautiful"....and she is. Zainab was starred by the beautiful [MaameYaa Boafo](#)

I am so looking forward to Season 3, is there one?

***Disclaimer: This article does not express a religious opinion about the show, it is a personal reflection.***