



Belly Dance

New England

Everyone's talking about Egypt, but it's also time to listen

by Morgana Mirage

Watching events unfold in Egypt - and most recently, and amazingly, President Hosni Mubarak's ouster - I am keeping up as best I can, not only through news reports, but by staying in touch with my friends there. I was fortunate to have two opportunities to visit Egypt, and experience Egypt in very different ways. The first was in 2006, on the Treasures of Egypt tour with [Katia of Boston](#). The other was a year later, in 2007, when I went through the Rotary's Group Study Exchange.

In these past few weeks, as Egyptians protested the abuses of the Mubarak regime, and every minute seemed to bring a change of course in the story, I found myself like the rest of the world wondering what the outcome would be. I was also wondering, are my friends and their families all right? Amid the tumult, are ordinary people able to get basic necessities such as food and medicine?

My Egyptian friends gave me fascinating insights. It might be surprising to learn that, at least initially, some did not fully support the protests and some were not even sure what it was all about. Before you judge them or think they were just complicit in propping up a horrible, corrupt dictator, imagine that suddenly everything that is familiar to you is turned on its head, the future is suddenly up for grabs, and you are not even able to leave the house because it's unsafe. Imagine, as happened to some of my friends, you are traveling abroad when you see the protest on TV, but your family back home knows even less than you do because press freedoms are restricted, the Internet is abruptly shut down and even phone services have become tentative.

Caught in such turmoil it would not be unreasonable for your first concern to be about your and your loved ones' well-being. Even if the consensus is that change is necessary, change can still be frightening - especially when there are no clear answers about what will happen next.

Perhaps as dancers, with our particular affinity for Egypt and the Middle East, we feel the high emotions. It's more important than ever to take an objective look, seek out different points of view and not rush to conclusions, whether talking about the 1979 Peace Accord, the so-called "People's Army," the Muslim Brotherhood, or any other factor that may come into play.

Today, browsing through my Egyptian's friends Facebook updates, there are messages of pride, jubilation, hope, and wonderment. They express confidence in their ability to reshape Egypt for the better.

When I was in Egypt, a common response to questions was the warm reassurance "kulle mumkin" - colloquial Arabic, meaning "everything is possible." Even, it seems, democracy in a region historically beset by oppressive governments. Can Egypt - and for that matter, Tunisia, Algeria, and other nations in the region where unrest is stirring - create a state where all citizens are represented fairly, and that strives for peace with all its neighbors?

I believe that they can. It may not be easy, and perhaps there will be mistakes along the way, just as has happened in the Philippines, Chile, South Africa, the Soviet Union, and other countries where

people tired of a repressive leader or government system and sought alternatives. After all the U.S. is still evolving 200 years after gaining independence. I'm watching, and listening, and sending expressions of love and support to my friends in Egypt as they begin a bold new journey, the latest in their millenia-old history.

And not first the first time, amid uncertainty, Egyptians have shown that everything really is possible.

First published on Belly Dance New England on Feb. 13, 2011.



Morgana Mirage at the Pyramids of Giza, 2007.

Morgana is an associate editor of Belly Dance New England and a journalist who has covered the local Islamic community as well as traveled to Egypt and Turkey. She has studied Arabic and is happy to report it can be spoken and understood even with a New England accent. She welcomes visits to her Web [site](#).