

- This is Rana. She's the deputy director of ABC and you have a group called Aware

R- Yep

-One of the founders of that, or the founder.

R- One of them, yes

-so uhmmm...

R- Go ahead and have a seat. What's going on?

- Not too much...how's everything?

R- Good, crazy busy like I said but we're surviving.

-Yea ...for the convention?

R- yes, we are about three weeks away from the national convention, which as you know is held in D.C. every year, and it's the largest Arab American gathering in the country, so there's a lot of work that goes into planning that. I'm actually chairing the convention committee this year.

- Oh really?

R- Yeah, co chairing it, so it making sure all the logistics are in place. It's been pretty hectic.

-So, how many people from Michigan do you think will go to that convention this year.

R- Well, we're expecting a pretty hefty turnout from Michigan. We always do get a nice delegation, a nice sized delegation from Michigan. Obviously because it's the largest concentration of Arab Americans over here, but also because of really what the convention has to offer, in terms of the panels, and the speakers, and the people who attend and I think people really like the opportunity to be able to network with those kinds of people and at the same time, they use this one time during the year to get in touch with issues that the community is dealing with.

- Exactly, and any special highlights this year at the convention, anything?

R- Yeah, well, there's we have a lot of interesting people who will be there. Senator Chuck Hagal will be there. Keith Elson---congress was invited, he is expected to be there. We're going to have a special taped message from former President, Jimmy Carter. He was supposed to be in attendance, but he's unable to make it, so he's going to be sending a message. Queen Ronya is expected to be there, we are waiting on her conformation, looks pretty good, but our fingers are still crossed for that. Along with a number of other congress people, quite a few actually and Ralph Nader is expected to be there also. Those are just a few off the top of my head, but we have a very impressive line up this year of people.

-and the other thing you're working on was the kind of this once in a lifetime summit that's coming up in Washington right? Or what?

R- yes, we're in the process of putting together Aware is which is the woman's initiative of ADC, is in the process of putting together what will be the first U.S airborne summit ever, to take place in the U.S, and that's scheduled for the spring of 2008. Uhhh, we hope to be able to make it a tradition, so that every two years or so the summit would take place. This would be the first time that something like this happens in the U.S that what will essentially, what it will do is bring women from the U.S and women from the Arab world together to discuss issues that are universal to them and also work on bridging the gap between the Arab world and the Unites States. It's going to be in 2008, it's going to be an election year, we expect it to be pretty big, and it's going to garner some good amount of attention. Hopefully, it will have an impact, it will be in Washington D.C so right now we are gearing off plans to make the announcement which should come in the next week or two, and from there it's going to be just, full fledge push for really getting this thing off the ground.

- And the summit going to focus on women from both Arab and American worlds, and how they can bridge the gap, and that's going to be the theme.

R- Well, the theme of the summit is bridging the gap cultural divide

-Bridging the cultural divide, ok

R- Now, really goals of the summit are two fold. One, is we've identified several issues that are key important to women, and very important to women, regardless of where they live, whether it be issues in education, careers, politics, family, health

R- We feel these issues that regardless of where women live, are important to women. So what we want to do is by addressing these issues, by you having a platform to address all these issues, we're able at the same time to kind of bridge this gap between, not only between these two women, but between these two worlds. So the larger goal of the conference being that we are creating this understanding between the west and the Arab world, which unfortunately there is not enough, not enough of.

There isn't enough of this connect. And we feel as an Arab American organization, we're in a key position to do something like this, because we are connected to the United States through or citizenry, and we're connected through the Arab world through our heritage. So we do, we have this ability to bring these two worlds together and we want to be able to use those connects to do that.

- So, you're going to put out a press release for this within the next one-two weeks and maybe we can do a story when that comes out.

R- Yeah, well def., the goal, if it's not by Friday, it'll definitely go out by early next week.

-You're of course as a Detroit based group, right?

R- Aware is born out of...Michigan. It is an initiative out of the center, the American Arab center for civil human rights, which we established and we're working to build. But it is in every sense, a national and international initiative. Even though it was born out of ...Michigan, it is something that is, it reaches out on a much larger scale.

-....we'll be participating in that...

R- Definitely, we hope to have a lot of people from metro Detroit. It is going to be in Washington D.C, as I said but that goal of having it in Washington D.C is because we really wanted our nation's capital. It's symbolic and at the same time, because it's an election year. We wanted to be able to get some key players in the 2008 election as a part of this summit.

-And uhmm...so what else is going on? Anything else?

R- Well, you know, there's always so much going on. I mean, these are big projects that we're working on, a side from everything else that we deal with on a regular basis. Whether it be the cases that come into our office, which I'm sure...talked to you about or the other initiatives that we do, like our Martin Luther King initiative, or working with the government on specific issues. Or, even working with our ADC kids club. There's constantly something going on. It's just that what's particularly unique about this year is that there are several huge initiatives, like the summit, like the banquet that's coming up, like the convention which we're integrally involved

in this year that we're working on, which is kind of , uhmm, has focus, refocus much of our resources.

-And I haven't...that aware poster. Is that with the new group, or did you make that?

R- Yes, that's that logo, the official logo for Aware, and uhm, what it is, a symbol of, uhm, a woman holding up the world. If you notice the woman actually isn't identifiable at all by...you can't tell if...yeah, and that was the goal of that. But we wanted something that was symbolic of what we hope Aware to be. And that, uhmm, having these, having women come together to really unite the world. So that's what we thought was an appropriate.

-It looks good.

R- An appropriate logo.

-Yeah, it looks good. Definitely

R- Yeah, things are looking exciting and you know...thank you for all that you do, as far as really highlighting the issues that are really important to the community. This does matter to us.

-Oh, thank you

R-You've done a great job at being able to make sure that that you remain connected to the community in more ways than one. Uhm, obviously it's great to cover issues that affect the community, but you know staying in contact with the community on different levels and making sure you're in tuned to what the issues are is very important to. So, we appreciate that.

-Well I appreciate that, thank you so much and Rana you have always been a great help. Always with stories and, you know stories not related to Arab communities. You've helped me out so,

R- Any time, that's what we're here for

-Thanks so much

R-Thank you I know.....

-That's ok

-I appreciate it.

R- My pleasure.

-...It's always great to her about all sorts of issues. She's active in so many different things. I always appreciate her time.

R- Thank you.

R- No problem, good luck.