

Essraa Nawar
Chapman University
What you do not know about
Muslim American Mothers

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Essraa has studied, lived and worked in many places, including the Gulf area (Qatar), Washington D.C., where she worked for The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, and Alexandria, Egypt where she worked for Bibliotheca Alexandrina. In 2002, she moved with her husband and family to the United States where they have been studying, working, and living for 20 plus years. In this vulnerable presentation, Essraa will share for the first time her journey navigating motherhood as an immigrant, Muslim women while thousands of miles away from her family in Egypt. Everyday Essraa will ask herself: Is this Muslim Enough, Is this American enough? Through this journey, Essraa and her family discovered that there are no contradictions between being Muslim and being American. She dedicated her life the last 10 years to shattering stereotypes, changing narratives and most recently what she calls Disrupting narratives. All her kids consider themselves equally Americans and Muslims. Her two boys attend Military Academies for college and her 12 years old daughter is a ballerina, hip-hop dancer and a pianist. In addition to her work as an academic librarian, she has been an advocate for interfaith dialogue, diversity, equity and inclusion and storytelling. In 2017, Egypt's Ministry of Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates' Affairs recognized her as one of Egypt's top 30 Egyptian Women expats. Since then, she collaborated with the ministry on an Interfaith Dialogue Initiative. A project intended to raise awareness and encourage tolerance for other cultures and religions different from our own in Egypt. Last year, Essraa launched her new TV programme Salon Essraa, focusing on telling the stories of the Egyptian American Diaspora. The show chooses guests from different professions from the expected standard. Breaking away from the narrative of Egyptians abroad only being doctors, engineers, and attorneys, Nawar hand-picks interviewees from creative occupations, such as artists and athletes, among others. More bravely, within the topics discussed on her show, Essraa does not avoid subjects considered somewhat taboo in Egypt. For example, the topics of divorce and mental health issues are freely discussed on Salon Essraa.

In her role, which has continuously grown in scope during her tenure at Chapman, Essraa has re-imagined diversity at the Leatherby Libraries, creating and implementing the first ever Library Diversity Statement and Plan, leading the library to receive the first-ever Diversity Award. She curated over 50 diverse exhibitions, participates regularly in scholarly activity, and gave a popular TEDx talk at the Technical University of Munich on how to feel welcomed and empowered in a diverse world. She defines diversity holistically and organically. She led and implemented the library's inaugural Marketing and Fundraising Strategy, helping the library earn two CASE awards, one ALA PR award and raise over 5 million dollars in support of the libraries' activities and community engagement. A leader on women's empowerment, Essraa was invited by the Egyptian Government to participate in a women's conference and was honored as

one of the top 30 Egyptian women abroad. She works closely with the Ministry of State for Emigration & Egyptian Expatriates' Affairs and the National Council for Women on initiatives that benefit the Egyptian economy, tourism, interfaith understanding, and status of women. As an interfaith advocate, her campaign #changethenarrative aims to breaking stereotypes and promote peaceful coexistence. Essraa was recognized as a finalist for the Orange County Women of Influence as an Orange County Game Changer and recently was named as one of Orange County's 125 most influential people.