



Arab American National Museum

NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MILTON ROGOVIN'S YEMENI 'FORGOTTEN ONES' REMEMBERED IN AANM EXHIBITION

English and Arabic audio tours debut at December 4 opening

Dearborn, MI (November 10, 2008) – When social documentary photographer Milton Rogovin visited Lackawanna, New York in 1977, it was a bustling steel town with a small but unique community of immigrants from the Arab nation of Yemen. Devastating plant closings were a few years away, and daily life for Lackawanna's Yemenis was a combination of old-world traditions and contemporary American experiences.

The upcoming Arab American National Museum (AANM) exhibition *A Yemeni Community: Photographs from the 1970s by Milton Rogovin* resurrects that community and era with 30 photographs – **never before exhibited together** – that serve as a meditation on immigration history, cultural identity and the ways people adapt to a constantly changing world. The exhibition opens with a 6 p.m. reception on Thursday, December 4 and runs through July 5, 2009 in the Museum's Lower Level Gallery.

“Rogovin is a real star among social documentary photographers in the U.S.” says AANM Curatorial Department Manager Stephen Williams. “The Library of Congress now houses his collection, an honor not given to any other living photographer for 30 years. It is thrilling for us to be able to present his original works – the actual photos he so carefully crafted in his modest basement darkroom.”

“These photos are like a precious time capsule, a rich mix of old-world traditions and 1970s fashion. From many different perspectives, we can enjoy them and learn from them,” says Williams, whose team visited Milton Rogovin in New York and worked with Rogovin's son, Mark, to create the exhibition.

Milton Rogovin (b. 1909) is the son of Lithuanian immigrants who settled in New York City. The longtime Buffalo, New York resident is a Columbia University-trained optometrist and a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army. Rogovin bought his first camera in 1942, but it wasn't until the late 1950s that he undertook the social documentary photography for which he is known today.

Rogovin photographed those he called "the forgotten ones," beginning with a series on Buffalo's African American storefront churches, starting in 1957. During subsequent excursions to Mexico, Chile (at the invitation of poet Pablo Neruda), Spain, Germany and visits to Appalachia, New York City and other parts of New York State, Rogovin captured compelling images of miners, steel workers and other laborers. To read more about Rogovin, visit <http://www.miltonrogovin.com>.

The December 4 opening reception for the Rogovin exhibition also marks the **debut of a free, cell-phone based audio tour in English and Arabic** for both the Rogovin show and permanent exhibits in the Museum's Community Courtyard. Visitors may dial posted phone numbers on their personal cell phones for brief messages that enhance the Museum experience; a limited number of iPods are available for those without cellular telephones.

"Because we are a community-based institution, we recruited members of the local Arab American community, who are not professional actors, to deliver the English audio tour segments, while fluent ACCESS staff delivered the Arabic segments," says Devon Akmon, the Museum's Curator of Research who spearheaded the project. The English speakers include university professors, activists, business owners, and other professionals.

"What's more, each tour stop solicits thoughts and feedback on its content, making this a true conversation between the Museum and its audiences," Akmon says.

The Arab American National Museum documents, preserves, celebrates, and educates the public on the history, life, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans. It serves as a resource to enhance knowledge and understanding about Arab Americans and their presence in this country. The Arab American National Museum is a project of ACCESS, a Dearborn, Michigan-based nonprofit human services and cultural organization. Learn more at www.arabamericanmuseum.org and www.accesscommunity.org.

The Arab American National Museum is a proud Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Read about the Affiliations program at <http://affiliations.si.edu>.

The Museum is located at 13624 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI, 48126. Museum hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday (10 a.m.-6 p.m. May-August); noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday, Tuesday; Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$6 for adults; \$3 for students, seniors and children 6-12; ages 5 and under, free. Call 313.582.2266 for further information.

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