

Content of Film: Words and Images	Themes
<p>DEBBIE ALMONTASER: My family comes from Yemen. I was actually born in Yemen.</p>	
<p>AUDIO ONLY - RADIO VO: Then I came to the United States at the age of three. We got in to Buffalo, New York where my father decided to live at nighttime and I was asleep. The following morning I woke up and I looked outside the window and there was this huge blanket of white everywhere. And I started running around the house and I started screaming to my parents, “You have to wake up there is sugar everywhere. We have to get the buckets, we have to get the pans, we have to fill them all up with sugar. You know. My father said, ‘Honey it’s not sugar.’ I said, ‘No, this is America, this is where everybody comes and this is where you have everything you want, and now I have sugar.” (laughs)</p>	
<p>DEBBIE : It was 8:35. I went into the office. I got the folder for attendance. I walked out really feeling great because that day the sky was just so blue. And the sun was out, and the air was really crisp.</p>	
<p>AUDIO ONLY - RADIO VO: This just in to our newsroom, a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center.                  DEBBIE: She said, ‘Can I speak to you at the door?’ So I gave marker to one of the boys and I said, ‘Why don’t you finish the problem with the rest of the group until I come back?’                  And she said to me, she said, ‘We have just found out that one of the Towers has been hit by a plane.’</p>	
<p>AUDIO ONLY - RADIO VO: It is horrific. (Unbelievable) A second plane the size of a passenger jet flying into the second tower of the, of the World Trade Center.</p>	
<p>DEBBIE: One of the boys said to me, I saw smoke outside. And the smoke is coming from the World Trade Center area; the Twin Towers are on fire. He said, ‘I’m afraid, what is going to happen to us?’ And I think at that point, just hearing a child say that it scared me.</p>	
<p>05.12 AUDIO ONLY - WOMAN VO: The treasury has been evacuated, the Capitol evacuated, the Sears Tower in Chicago has been evacuated. . .and all of this. . .                   Oh, wait, oh my god, the building fell. Oh, my god. The building just fell. The</p>	

**REBIRTH - Debbie short film****Transcript**

entire World Trade Center on the, the south building just fell.	
DEBBIE: Debbie, Debbie I know who did it, it's those dumb Arabs that did it to us again. It's those dumb Arabs. Whenever anything happens like this it's always the Arabs who do this to us.	
DEBBIE: And I said, "Do you guys remember the first day of school when we sat and we were talking here in this circle and we talking about our childhood and where we come from and how important it is that we really understand each other?" And so the kids said, yeah. And I said, 'Do you guys remember when I told you I was Arab?' And their jaws dropped.	
AUDIO ONLY – WOMAN VO: That is the second tower. That is the second tower. MAN VO: (MID-STATEMENT) it just went down. A huge plume of smoke that came out of the middle of the building. And then the building just disappeared in the smoke.	
DEBBIE: I remember, Michael and he said to me. He said 'Well, yeah, that's right Debbie but you would never do this, you're a teacher, you would never do this.' The same child again said to me, 'Debbie, How are your getting home?' And I said I hadn't thought about it but I'm sure I'll be able to get home. He said, "Well, I'm afraid for you." He said, "I'm afraid for you because if I was Arabic and I was going home I would be afraid."	
MUSIC INTERLUDE – VIDEO MONTAGE, GROUND ZERO	
DEBBIE : On September 11th, my son went to his unit. September 12 they reported to Ground Zero. He was a part of the rescue mission, digging out the bodies and everything you could think of.	
MUSIC INTERLUDE – SHOTS OF GROUND ZERO	
DEBBIE : What was really devastating was the days that I would spend waiting for him to call.	
MUSIC INTERLUDE – SHOTS OF GROUND ZERO	
DEBBIE : One day he called and he left a message. And I saved the message. And I kept listening to it over and over again. But then eventually it got erased. He finally got the opportunity to come home – and that night was October 6 <sup>th</sup> . I heard keys wrestling at the door, and I reached over to the door and I opened it. And Youssef was just standing there. His face just looked so tired, and so stressed, and with so many wrinkles. It was just so scary to look at him.	
15.00 MUSIC INTERLUDE – SHOTS OF GROUND ZERO	
DEBBIE: My daughter looked at him and said are you ok? 'Cause you look really really tired. And he said, "You have no idea what where I've been, and what I'm	

<p>going through.” And I heard him say that and I started to cry. I said to him I said, “How is it out there?” He just looked up at me and said, “Mom, I can’t even begin to tell you.” He said, “It is the most hard thing that you can possibly see, and I would never ever want you or Dad or anybody to see what I saw. It’s like going to hell and coming back. And that’s all you see, all day long.” He said, “Mom, I can’t talk about it. I can’t”. I said to him, “What is stopping you?” He said, “Because if I start to talk about it I think that I will fall apart and then I can’t do anything for myself or for anyone, and I’ll be an emotional basket and I’ll probably go out of my mind.”</p>	
<p><b>2002</b> MUSIC INTERLUDE – GROUND ZERO AND SHOTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS</p>	
<p>DEBBIE: Then we started to have issues with people being picked up, by INS or by the FBI. We started to organize demonstrations in front of a detention center where there were actually 50 men who were picked up and who were imprisoned there. And we didn’t have their names, we did not know the charges. And quite frankly many of them who had families did not know whether they were there or if they were in the East River. When I saw it happening to people I knew, that’s when it truly hit home that this was happening. People who living in my community who were picked up and detained.</p>	
<p><b>2003</b></p>	
<p>DEBBIE: My husband was just frightened of what would come next. He was always, always urging me not to speak publicly at demonstrations and at rallies. He was always asking me to just be careful about the conversations I had in public. You don’t know who is listening and you don’t know what could take things and turn them around and use them against you.</p> <p>I will never forget that day.</p> <p>Two investigators came to my house. Weilman in October we had received a tip . . . from someone that they had overheard you saying anti-American things. And I said “Well, for the life of me I can’t ever think of a moment that I may have said anything anti-American, nor do I have anti-American sentiments. There seems to be a very big misunderstanding here - this is my home, this is my country, my family has come from the middle east, but that’s their country, this is my country, this is where I have chosen to raise my kids, to create a life for myself. I resent the fact that I have to justify my loyalty to you, my loyalty to this country is exemplified in my work as an educator, in my work as a community advocate and activist, and in everything that I do.”</p>	

**REBIRTH - Debbie short film**

**Transcript**

<p>DEBBIE: My kids, after that happened, they spent like two weeks calling me different times of the day. Just saying, “Hey Mom, so where are you?” That was the famous line: where are you. And I’m like, “I’m at work, at the store, or I’m still at work.” It was almost like they had to check that I was somewhere.</p> <p>I no longer speak at rallies and demonstrations. My family comes fist in my life and it would devastate me if anything ever happened to my kids.</p> <p>I hate the fact that I’ve been silenced.</p>	
<p><b>2007 MUSIC INTERLUDE – SHOTS OF WEBPAGES</b></p>	
<p>DEBBIE: They called me in the spring to develop an Arabic dual language high school. They said to me, “You know Debbie, this is an opportunity for you to develop the bridge between East and West. This is what all of your work is about. Building bridges of understanding.”</p>	
<p>MUSIC / B ROLL / SOT -</p> <p>MAN SOT: Let me start by really congratulating each and every one of you. I can imagine but only imagine what it’s like to start a new school and the excitement and the opportunity and the dream come true quality of it. I don’t want to kid you. It isn’t an easy assignment. On the other hand, I guarantee you, there’s no more rewarding challenge than the work you’re going to do.</p> <p>DEBBIE: This was my dream, and my aspiration. To become a principal. That was it.</p> <p>MUSIC / B ROLL CONTINUES</p> <p>- Debbie in school – but this is actually going to be the hallway. All the way down until that end. So they’re going to knock this down. The flags eventually would be hanging somewhere out here. So I don’t know if we can hang them... maybe we can hang them here.</p> <p>DEBBIE SOT IN OFFICE – So I’ve actually bought you some flyers. I would love for you to give it out to your families who have sixth graders – who are going to go in to sixth grade because that’s who we are opening with. Now you know we have the opportunity to have kids enrolled from all over the city. So here is the application. What they need to do is to fill it out. And we’re actually – this is our school right here...</p>	
<p>DEBBIE: But shortly after the school was approved, the blogs came up. I knew that there was going to be opposition to the concept of the school. But I was not prepared</p>	

<p>for what happened. MUSIC INTERLUDE / B ROLL /SOT – Signs and websites</p>	
<p>MUSIC INTERLUDE / B ROLL / SOT - HEADLINES</p>	
<p>DEBBIE: They portrayed me as a 9-11 denier. That I’m a terrorist sympathizer. And for them to take a quote and not completing the entire quote. Just taking the first part as if I didn’t believe that it was Arabs and Muslims.</p> <p>B ROLL / SOT –DEBBIE SOT- The Academy will be providing all New York City students the opportunity to learn Arabic as a second language. We will be teaching math, reading, science, social studies, students will be going to gym.</p> <p>Man SOT – This school is like sixty dual language schools that we have in New York City. It’s like dual language schools that teach Korean, that teach Spanish...</p> <p>VARIOUS SOTS – Is it because there is a Muslim community on Atlantic Avenue that you all feel that this school should be here? ... Is the philosophy of the school going to introduce ?? because I have a real problem with that.... Diversity is very very important thing. The Untied States is built on diversity. ... I want our children and the children that come in to know that we preserve our constitution in this country... But children in middle school should be learning about the United States. And our culture.</p> <p>WOMAN SOT – Did you that Arabs were not responsible for 9/11? I have it printed in a document... are you going to allow maps with Israel? DEBBIE SOT – I never said that...</p> <p>DEBBIE: They went to the park festival in Prospect Park. And they found the booth that was selling these stupid t-shirts. At the bottom it says – awaam.org – which is the organization that produced the t-shirts. Found out that AWAAM shares the same space as the organization, which I sit on the board in Park Slope. SABA – the Association of ?? Americans.</p> <p>The New York Post wanted to do a story on it. We got on the phone. You know being that you’re a school of language, what does the word intifada mean in Arabic? And I gave him the definition. I said if you look up the word [intifada] in the dictionary, it means “shake off.” I said “however, this word means different things for different people. And due to the violence in the Palestinian Israeli conflict where thousands of people have been killed. This is not an appropriate word to have because</p>	

it has this connotation. He left all of that out. The article came out and it was absolutely horrific.

He basically painted me downplaying the meaning of this word.

**BROLL VARIOUS HEADLINES**

No matter what is that I've done to sort of claim my space as an American citizen, it'll always be questioned and that's the part that hurts. It's like I know people in my community work double time to prove who we are, and how much we love this country and how much we are a part of this community, but when something happens, that all just goes right out the door.

The Mayor SOT... She said something a couple of days ago. She got a question, she's not all that media savvy, maybe and she tried to explain a word rather than just condemn.

DEBBIE: The Mayor he said, 'Oh she spoke about a word. She's not that all political savvy, she should've just condemned the word.' And I disagree with that. Where are we as a nation when we have leaders telling us that you condemn a word, you don't discuss it, you don't define it.

My American dream was turned into an American nightmare. But I've never felt differently about being an American, I have always loved this country, even when it has had ugly moments.

I am grateful I'm that I'm getting another day to live, and I continue to do the work that I am enjoying doing and at the center of that is actually the New York City public school kids, everything I do, is for the kids. Whatever decisions that I make, it is always on behalf of the kids.

MUSIC INTERLUDE / B ROLL / SOT DEBBIE PRAYING

END CREDITS

**SOT** Sound On Tape. Usually means primary interviews or primary sound from a main character or person.

**VO** Voice Over

**B Roll** secondary footage that adds meaning to a sequence