

**Transcript of *Travel with Rick Steves* Radio Show  
Guest; Justine Shapiro, producer of *Our Summer in Tehran*  
January 9, 2010**

**Rick Steves (RS):** Hi, I'm Rick Steves. We're heading East today on "Travel With Rick Steves" and we're getting inside Iranian culture with travel-filmmaker Justine Shapiro. After spending a summer in Tehran with her six-year-old son she learned that politeness and distance are sometimes two sides of the same coin.

Justine Shapiro (JS): The Persian walls are not just what you might expect in terms of censorship or dress but it's also very much in the nature of the Iranians

**(RS):** Film maker Justine Shapiro joins us to share what she found as a Jewish American single mom living for a summer in Tehran. With conservative Muslims as well as contemporary secular Iranians. Come along as we experience the world together on *Travel with Rick Steves*.

I had the joy of spending a couple of weeks in Tehran recently making out public television story on Iran, and I'll never forget a woman walking across the street, thumping her finger on my chest and telling me, "We just don't want our children to be raised like Britney Spears." She was so afraid that her child, if the United States was able to change their government, would become a boy-toy and a drug addict and a crass materialist. But I was a man-on-the-street and it was very tough for me to get inside of the domestic situation and learn what made these loving Iranian parents tick and why were they so afraid?

I'm joined by Justine Shapiro who's a television host with *Globe Trekker* and has made a two Emmy award winning documentary called *Promises* about Palestinian and Israeli children living together in Jerusalem and on the West Bank. Justine spent a summer in Tehran living with her son, Mateo, in three different households. And she's produced a documentary that will air sometime in the near future on PBS. Justine joins us to help us get inside an Iranian household. Justine thanks for being here.

JS: It's a pleasure

**RS:** Now you had the opportunity with your son Mateo who was six-years-old at the time to live in three different homes in Iran. How did those families contrast? How were they different?

JS: Well it was an opportunity that we created. I met with a really wonderful woman, named Marjaneh Moghimi, who is an Iranian-American producer she went about a year in advance of our shoot and met with many, many families in Tehran, from the middle-class looking for three families from diverse backgrounds. One thing I didn't know about Iran was that almost half of the population is considered part of the educated middle-class and I thought that was very interesting because we so rarely see that demographic in any developing country. And I asked Marjaneh if she could try and find a family who was very religious and pro-government. Because there are many very religious people in Iran who are not necessarily pro-Ahmadinejad and I asked her to find a single mom like myself and I asked her to find a family that was more secular, more modern, more Westernized. And she found many families actually who were interested in participating in this film. They really liked the premise of this sort of cross-cultural exchange between a mother and her son with their families.

With *Globe-Trekker* I've traveled as a single woman backpacker and when I meet people off the beaten track in the many countries I've been to I'm received as a young woman, part of this TV crew, and what I really loved about the prospect of making this film in Iran was that I was going to be received not as a journalist, not as a travel show host, but as a mom with my son. And I think that that's what the families there responded to as well. And of the many that were interested in participating we chose three families. Mateo and I spent the summer there. We didn't live with the families we had our own apartment but we spent a lot of time with them.

**RS: So how were you treated differently in the religious household compared to the secular household?**

JS: I was so nervous to meet this religious family. First of all the husband works for the Revolutionary Guards which as we now know they played such a prominent role since the June 12<sup>th</sup> protests. The Revolutionary Guards are a militia that supports the right wing of the government or the leadership, let's say, supports the right wing of the government. And Dr. Torabi works for the Revolutionary Guards and he lives in an area on the east side of Tehran that is a subsidized housing complex for employees of Sepāh.

**RS: What is Sepāh?**

JS: **Sepāh** is the Iranian nickname for the Revolutionary Guards.

**RS: Okay.**

JS: And they are a militia that was formed by the Ayatollah Khomeini to protect the regime. As separate from the regular army.

**RS: So they are very happy to live under a theocracy?**

JS: Well when many people are saying that in some ways Ahmadinejad came from the Revolutionary Guards, that's his base, and many people say whether it's true or not, I don't know, but some people say that in effect that what happened in June was a kind of a military coup and that the Revolutionary Guards have in effect taken over.

**RS: So this is the election fraud episode that we just went through, you're talking about?**

JS: That's right. That's right and during the years that Ahmadinejad was empowered he named many Revolutionary Guards to posts in government throughout Iran.

**RS: In other words some people have a hunch that Ahmadinejad infiltrated the country with his people, people in the Revolutionary Guard, that would support him. If he was going to go head on head with the religious leaders and establish what you're calling a military takeover of the country.**

JS: There's so much that's being written right now about what's going on in Iran. And the fact is that nobody knows, **nobody knows**, what is really going on. There have been a lot of experts, have lots of theories, one of them is a question about to what degree is the Revolutionary Guard in control and to what degree is the Supreme Leader in control. And clearly that leadership is fragmented, it's not clear who is really on top.

RS: Okay,

JS: When Marjaneh my producer said the religious family was going to be a Revolutionary Guard family, the first thing I asked Marjaneh was "Do they know I'm American,?" and she said, "Yes." And I said, "Do they know that I'm Jewish?" and she said, "no." And I said, "well should I tell them?" And she said "no." And the strange thing was that this was the family that I became closest to. I don't know why but the mother, Mrs. Torabi, she and I, it's hard to say why, there was an instant connection between us. A mutual curiosity, certainly.

**RS: Did she have children?**

JS: She has two children Elaheh, who at the time was 10 and Houra who just turned one.

**RS: Justine, in Iran I understand that Baha'i are discriminated against because their prophet came after Muhammad. Christians and Jews are okay because they're worshipping guys that came**

**before Muhammad, who came what, near 600 or 700. You're Jewish how did that impact your visit?**

JS: A lot of people were really concerned about the fact that I was going there not only as an American, not only as a woman but also as a Jewish person. I found that very, very interesting, I was really nervous to tell the religious family who were in the film that I was Jewish. And I realized that I'm extremely brainwashed myself even with all the travel that I've done, you know with this idea that Muslims hate Jews. And as you say Jews are a very much accepted part of the population in Iran. From everyone I have spoken to who actually lives as Jew in Tehran and who have family who are Jewish in Tehran they seem to be living just fine. And they have their own schools, and their own shops and their own Kosher bakeries and butcheries. If they want to leave, they can leave, and when they do leave it seems that they're leaving for economic reasons not for any reasons of persecution.

**RS: You know, Justine, you just said something that is so powerful to me. It's that people like you and me, professional travel writers and TV producers are supposed to be savvy and when we travel we realize the impact of our own media on us. And in so many cases, I felt like, wow, I'm just as ethnocentric and afraid as the people I'm not supposed to be like. And you just mentioned you were raised thinking Muslims hate Jews and you go over there and you realize that's not the case.**

JS: You know Rick, I feel like that so often. It blows my mind. You know when I was in Israel and Palestine, meeting with young Palestinian and Israeli kids and hearing them tell me how much they hated each other. That's when I decided to make the film Promises, because this was during the years of Oslo and everyone was talking about peace coming to the Middle East. And I thought my gosh if I'm blown away by the fact that these kids hate each other and are virulent about it, maybe that will be impressive for an audience. And when I decided to make this film in Iran, I met with a young Iranian woman who told me about how affectionate her grandfather was with her. And how affectionate all the men in her family were. And when she told me that, I thought "h my God, I have to make a film about Iran because I had never pictured an Iranian man as affectionate.

**RS: Well, that's the value of travel. I'm Rick Steves, this is "Travel with Rick Steves", I'm joined by Justine Shapiro. Justine had produced a documentary for public television called "My Summer in Tehran" her website is Promises Films dot com. Justine spent the summer with her son Mateo, a six year old son, in three different households. And Justine when you were having this experience, I'm curious about the situation of women in Iran. A lot of people think Iranian women are put down and kept down but somebody maybe who comes from the religious family that you stayed with would see it maybe as a mark of respect for women and modesty for women.**

JS: I do agree with you, I think, that a lot of Americans look at hijab and make very quick judgments that hijab means oppression and that it means a denial of rights to women. What I found in Iran is that women who are concerned with rights are not really talking so much about hijab they're talking about much more fundamental issues, legal issues, issues around the fact that their testimony is half the weight of a man's testimony in court. The fact that they have limited custody rights, they have limited rights around divorce. That there are certain positions they can't hold, they can't be judges. Hijab isn't so much an issue and in fact a lot of women that I spoke to who weren't religious they're aware that in America there is a lot of judgment about Hijab and they'll say things like, you know, you judge our hijab but in your country you use half-naked women to sell power tools.

**RS: Yeah, I mean think about the fundamentalist Iranian women looking at an American treatment of women and you've got these American babes at a car show on a revolving platform selling hot-rod in a mini-skirt. They look at that as a mark of disrespect for women, I would think.**

JS: Not even religious Iranian women look at that as a fundamental display of disrespect. I think a lot of women in general everywhere look at the way women are used as sex-objects to sell all manner of consumer products as a total perversion. We've just sort of come to accept it and we have come to equate that with a certain kind of liberation and freedom and "see look in America you can dress as you want and be who you want."

**RS: Now in Iran, women can dress how they want, be who they want when they're in their domestic world, is that right?**

JS: Behind closed doors. And that's what so fascinating about Tehran is the Persian Wall.

**RS: Let's talk about that. Yeah, tell me more, what is it like behind ... Because you got to go behind that wall and not many travelers do.**

JS: Well there all kinds of veils in Iran, there are the literal veils, the hijab and the walls and the doors. But then you know Iranian people also have a very veiled nature. You know I had spent quite a lot of time in Palestine and in Israel and I found the people there to be extraordinarily articulate and eager to share their opinions an extremely informal. I've worked in many countries and I would say that Iran is one of the more difficult countries to make a documentary film. Not so much because of the sense of oppression or censorship from the government, but because Iranian people themselves are really guarded and they're formal. For example, when I was making the film "Promises" with Palestinian and Israeli families there was never an issue about whether or not our crew could show up at their house at 4 or 5:00 in the morning to shoot sort of a fly-on-the-wall, cinema verite scene of people sleeping and waking up and what the morning rituals are because I'm very interested that sort of domesticity and that sense of ordinary daily life in parts of the world that we mostly understand through political headlines.

So that's something I like to do a lot, I like to be in the home when very ordinary things are happening. Well every person in Iran, whenever I asked if we could show up early in the morning and shoot their morning rituals, you know, all of them said, "well it's probably better if you come at about 12, once we've had a shower and cleaned the house and had some breakfast," and they're very protective about how they appear. Obviously when you talk to Iranians on camera about politics they will be guarded but even if you talk to Iranians on camera about personal things, they're also quite guarded. So, the Persian walls are not just what you might expect in terms of censorship or dress, but it's also very much in the nature of the Iranians. So, so when you go behind the Persian Wall, you know most of the women are wearing tank tops. It's hot. Especially, in the summer, it's really hot there. And you know Iranian women really do pay quite a bit of attention to their appearance, they tend to be quite slim and small boned and they tend to wear really attractive clothing, underneath their monto or underneath their chador, there's a sensuality, in Iran. So, there's a huge difference between going into these family homes with Mateo and hanging out and then I take the camera out of the bag and on went the monto or on went the chador. And you cannot see what I saw and back and that was a really interesting and frustrating part of making the documentary for me. Because what I could see, you couldn't see.

**RS: That was a frustration for us too. We went into the home in Shiraz and taking our camera we took in the public situation and everybody had to be more modest.**

JS: That's right, that's right. And one of the ways we tried to get around that is we went into a shopping mall, as you did, and showed some of the clothes that people wear when they are behind closed doors. But again what's so interesting about the Iranian culture that, I'm sure you came into contact with this Rick, there's the custom of Ta'arof which is this excessive display of politeness. Where you never say no. You never hear Iranians use the word 'no'. And they won't accept anything unless you offer it to them many, many times. And this kind of indirectness and politeness is also a kind of a Persian Wall.

**RS: Make a case for a way the women are treated in Iran from a religious Iranian perspective.**

JS: From the point of view of a religious perspective?

**RS: How can people keep their women covered up, not let them show their, the shape of their body or anything below their neck and keep their hair covered and how can women not be allowed to go to the soccer stadium because people are going to be cussing, how can there be a car on the subway just for women? I think a lot of Americans look at that and they think that it's a mark of disrespect and keeping women down in Iran but I know Iranians would defend it.**

JS: I think it's really interesting because in the west we look at the covering well, what's called hijab, which actually means more modesty. And we have a lot of opinions and judgments about Hijab because

it's the most visually obvious different thing from our own society. However being in Tehran, I don't know what you experienced when you were there Rick, but I found that hijab wasn't the issue. The truth about the Hijab is that it is a symbol. And like all symbols the meaning of hijab shifts depending on what time in history we're talking about. The Hijab when it's enforced in European countries, when they enforce the rule that women are not supposed to wear hijab, women will react by wearing the Hijab as a way of saying to the imperialists, "you can't tell us what to do."

**RS: I'm Rick Steves, this is travel with Rick Steves, we're talking "My Summer in Tehran" with Justine Shapiro who went to Tehran, spent a summer there with her son Mateo, stayed in three different households and learned a lot. Putting that into a special documentary film that will be put out shortly on public television.**

**Music: Interlude about Iranian poetry.**

**RS: We'll compare notes with filmmaker Justine Shapiro about some of the everyday elements about life in Tehran, it's just ahead on "Travel With Rick Steves."**

**Farsi translation by guy who travels with Rick Steves.**

**RS: I'm Rick Steves, this is "Travel With Rick Steves" I'm speaking with Justine Shapiro. She's a television host and international documentary filmmaker, her latest film is "My Summer in Tehran," scheduled to be out on public television, her website, Promises Films dot com. Justine I'm curious for your take, from the domestic sides of things, the Iranian living situation. How internet savvy were the people you met?**

JS: The Persian language is I believe the fourth most popular blogging language on the internet. Now there are only 70 million people living in Iran. So think about that. They're extremely...

**RS: So they're really into blogging.**

JS: Yes, Iranians are extremely internet savvy and every home we went to there was internet connection and people on the computer.

**RS: Is, for young people is it their window on the west?**

JS: Well for young people, it's not only their window on the west but it's the way for them to communicate with each other. Although the government has really started to crack down on Facebook pages and hacking people's emails.

**RS: But can an Iranian kid cruise the internet and go to all the sites we can go to.**

JS: For example you can't go to YouTube and there are certain sites you can't go to. But I was surprised when I was there, I could very easily access all the major newspapers. But there are certain words that are filtered however Iranians are so internet savvy, that they have proxies and they get all around all of those firewalls and they get everything.

**RS: Okay, it's a dry country. I've never been in a country that was as alcohol-free as Iran. I understand at home if you have a cell phone that you can get delivery, and you can have drugs, sex and booze if you want it. What was your take on that?**

JS: Well I think it's to be expected in a society where there is so much suppression in the exterior environments, I mean there are there are no clubs, there are no bars, you can't drink in the restaurants, everything happens behind closed doors and there's a huge drug problem in Iran. Although Iran deals with their drug addicts in a much more enlightened way than I think we do in this country.

**RS: What do mean by that?**

JS: It's not a criminal offense to be a drug user. It's a criminal offense to be a drug seller. But users have access to very good rehabilitation clinics.

**RS: Is there a lot of drinking, a lot of alcohol in the privacy of your own home?**

JS: You know I, I spent time in Tehran, and I spent time with the people I spent time with but alcohol is very easy to get. I met a lot of Iranians who make their own wine, who make their own Arak and the Christian Armenians are allowed to have wine for their religion and so they sell wine to the Muslims.

**RS: I'm Rick Steves. This is "Travel With Rick Steves," we're talking to Justine Shapiro who had a summer in Tehran, she took her six-year-old son, they stayed in three different family homes.**

## **MUSIC**

**RS: Julia's on the phone, in Round Rock, Texas, Julia.**

*Julia: Yes. As an American woman who had the opportunity to live with both a modern and a more religious family in Iran did you find that there was any difference in the way you were treated or viewed by the various family members?*

JS: As an American?

*Julia: Well as an American, or as a woman and I was wondering, if you have a son, and you notice a difference in the way he was treated vs. you as a woman by those family members of those families.*

JS: Well Iranians are extraordinary family orientated and they are extremely children orientated. And Mateo had his cheeks pinched, you know, 17 times a day. And people just would go up to him and kiss him and hug him. There wasn't any of that sort of American phobia of personal space with kids. So, they were really affectionate with Mateo. I think Iranians really respect family and they really respect mother. And as a woman, as a woman film director, as the mother, I never felt that I was discriminated against, or judged or put down. And that's partly because the cinema industry in Iran is one of the most important cinema industries in the world. Every year there are Iranian films in all the major film festivals and a lot of prominent and important Iranian film directors are women, so from the point of view as being there as a woman director, I didn't feel, that I was being treated as less than, and as a mother, I felt that people respected the fact that I was a mother, and that I was there with my child. As an American, Iranians are extremely curious about Americans and they make a very clear distinction between the people and government. I never felt that they equated me with the Bush administration, most of them were extremely vocal about how much they despised the Bush administration but they made an absolute distinction between the American people and the government. I felt incredibly welcomed in Iran.

**RS: Julia thanks for your call. Now TV for me was interesting because I would be in my hotel room and I'd go into the upper dials of the TV station and I'd have "Live Mecca" and I'd have "Ambiance to Pray By," just beautiful little babbling streams with gauzy kind of focus and beautiful sunsets rather than a shopping channel. In other words you really felt the power of the theocracy on the programming. What was your take on TV in Iran?**

JS: Well the estimate is something like 40% of Iranians have access to satellite TV.

**RS: Okay, so in my hotel room I had state-run television. But if you were at home and had any money you'd get a satellite so that you didn't have to watch babbling brooks to pray by.**

JS: Oh, its extraordinary. I mean, Iranians are watching satellite TV. They have the same cultural context that we have they can talk about the same films and the same TV shows?

**RS: What was a big topic of conversation? Were there any American TV serials that were like what everybody talked about at work?**

JS: Iranians are huge soccer fans. Huge soccer fans. I mean every league game plays every single night. I mean, my editor, would come home from the edit, we'd work from 11 in the morning until midnight. That was sort of Iranian hours, he'd get home at midnight his wife would serve him dinner, he'd be up until 3:00 in the morning catching up on all the soccer games.

**RS: Wow.**

JS: And Iranians love news, they publish over, I don't know, something like 50 newspapers a day. Albeit there is censorship, but they are news hungry. And so they are watching BBC, and CNN, and Al Jazeera, and they talk a lot about what is going on in the world. They're very conscious about what is going on in the world.

**RS: In regards to news, in our country we have sort of two different zones. We've got the people who love PBS news and public radio. And we've got the Fox News crowd, is there that kind of dichotomy in the Iranian society as well? As far as news and broadcast news goes?**

JS: I think that the way that dichotomy breaks down is that there are many Iranians who believe their television. Believe, well first of all the television in Iran is controlled directly by the Supreme Leader's office. So, for example during the elections the Supreme Leader can decide who gets to go on television and who doesn't. That's why you didn't see anybody campaigning on TV until two weeks before the election. You never saw, Alami or Mousavi, Karroub until two weeks before the election when they had the debate. So the fact that the Supreme Leader's office controls the television says a lot about what's on the television and when you ask the question about what population is going for what kind of television. There are a lot of Iranians who really believe everything that they see on TV in the way that a lot of Americans believe everything they see on TV.

**RS: So, in other words there's a less-sophisticated majority who just buys everything that their government puts to them that's masquerading as news?**

JS: There's a less sophisticated population and it's hard to say if they're the majority or the minority. I think that's one of the big questions that's come out of the June 12<sup>th</sup> protests.

**RS: Okay, another topic, Kleenex on the table. Did you notice how they have boxes of Kleenex on the table?**

JS: I have a scene in my film about the Kleenex on the table.

**RS: What's with that?**

JS: Well, I think, you know in Iran and you go to someone's house, they have Kleenex on the table and that's what you're supposed to use for your napkin. And sometimes there will even be a very nice cloth napkin, at your plate, but there will also be a box of Kleenex and invariably everybody will use the box of Kleenex. That's because Iranians don't want to make work for their hosts and again that's part of Ta'arof, that's an extension of Ta'arof.

**RS: Ta'arof, that's great. What about nose jobs? I was told there's more nose jobs per capita in Iran than in any other country. I got there and sure enough, every hundred yards I saw a woman with a white band-aid on her nose, recovering from a cosmetic nose job.**

JS: Iranians are proud of their nose jobs, it's a sign of affluence, even men will wear bandages on their nose even when they haven't had nose jobs.

**RS: Really? Just to fake that they care about how they look and they spent some money making their face look better.**

JS: Yeah, there's no shame in beauty in Iran. When you really just have your face to show the world, there's no shame in doing what you need to do to make it the best that it can be.

RS: What's your take on "death to America"? Why do they say that? Who says that, do they mean it?

JS: You know I've met so many Iranians who grew up in Iran who had to, with the rest of the kids in the school shout, "death to America, death to America," and no, I don't think they meant it at all, It was just something that you did sort of by rote. There was no real passion in it. And it's interesting actually when you look at footage of the protest movements and the movements around the revolution in 1979, those were really passionate movements. And when you look at the movement around June 12<sup>th</sup>, those were really passionate movements. I mean you can tell, looking at the population. These people are impassioned, they're inspired they're fearless, they're angry, they're emotional and in some ways they're willing to risk their lives. But usually what we see about Iranians, when they're burning the American flag or saying "death to America" in other words at any of those demonstrations that happen every week at the British embassy. These are besehji guys who are paid to go and stand in front of the British embassy and they're given ten bucks or something and that's what they do that morning.

**RS: And somebody painted their banners for them in English for the western press.**

JS: Sure and it's a game. You know the BBC goes out there with their cameras, and the BBC camera people know that these are besehji guys who've been paid to come and do these demonstrations. And it's a farce, I think it's quite amazing that they continue to shoot those demonstrations in front of the British Embassy when they know that it's really just a game.

**RS: I think it's quite amazing that Americans watch TV and they don't understand these posters have been handed out. These people have been bussed in to make it look like a ground swell of support. It happens in our country and across the seas. What about crossing the street? When I was crossing the street, they said, "now we're going to Chechnya," they actually called it "going to Chechnya" when you crossed the street. It was so chaotic on the streets but people mix it up with the cars and the motorcycles as if they belong in the middle of an eight-lane highway.**

JS: It's amazing, in fact that was one of my favorite shots in your shows, Rick, was this extraordinary overhead shot you had of the traffic and the cars all going in opposite directions. It was a great shot you could really see the chaos. I've never been in a country where people drive backwards on the freeway or just pull over willy-nilly in the middle of a freeway to stop and get something out of the back of the car. It's completely insane.

**RS: And people take it in stride, I mean nobody's honking at you like 'you idiot' that's what you do when you need to stop, you just pull over. Or eight lanes of traffic coming together with no stop sign.**

JS: And what's so extraordinary is that it's in such sharp contrast to the style that Iranians display when you meet with them individually. Because they're so polite, and you know it's such a contrast. (Chuckle)

**RS: It's the land of paradox in so many ways. What about going to the mall and seeing kids dressing naughty?**

JS: Well they don't dress too naughty at the mall, I mean, when I was there in 2007 that was the beginning of the crack-down on the dress code and...

**RS: So there's modesty police? Actually roaming around making sure the girls are not tightening up the waist belt to show the shape of their body?**

JS: Oh absolutely, I mean they're called 'the morality police' and they're part of ERSHAD (the Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Culture) and yes they drive around in vans and they spend a lot of time in northern Tehran which is where there are more middle-class and affluent Iranians live. And this happened a lot in 2007, there was a big deal, there were a lot of crackdowns on the dress code.

**RS: I'm Rick Steves and this is "Travel with Rick Steves." I'm speaking with Justine Shapiro, Justine has produced a television documentary called "My Summer in Tehran" where she and her six-year-old son Mateo lived in three different households. It will be airing on public television,**

**Justine's website is Promises Films dot com. Justine when you were in Iran what was the impact of the embargo, how did you see that impacting the people? Because the United States had an economic embargo on Iran for 25 years now, I think, and it has caused the society to be pretty much a cash society rather than a credit card society.**

JS: Yeah, I mean, I think that the big, big issue in Iran, the thing that people really talk about is the economy. People don't talk about, well, they don't talk about Israel. They don't talk about the, much about the nuclear issue. They're really talking about how the economy in Iran is in absolute shambles. The unofficial inflation in Iran is something like 25%. And if you spend any time in Tehran you're going to be in lots of taxis lots of people who went through University, who cannot get a job. So the economy is a huge issue there but it's really hard to say, to what degree that has to do with the sanctions and to what degree that has to do with the incompetence of the Ahmadinejad government. A lot of Iranians will say that is the biggest problem with the Ahmadinejad government in not so much with so-called oppression or censorship, but there incompetence in terms of the economy.

**RS: When you're sitting on oil like that, and when you have a theocracy that spends all it's billboards pushing kind of a religious and political propaganda rather than getting people to buy and sell, it just seems like the economy is going to be challenged.**

JS: You know, it's really interesting. When I would, I talked a lot to the taxi drivers there and I found them extremely willing to talk about politics. Not so much when I had the camera on. But certainly when the camera was off and I would ask the taxi drivers, 'What do you think about the nuclear situation?', and Iran's right to a nuclear program and they would say, "we don't need nuclear programs, we need refineries, we're sending our oil out to be refined."

**RS: That's a saavy answer.**

JS: They would also say, "we're not worried about sanctions," "we're not worried about a war," if the U.S. really wanted to put us out of business they'd stop buying gas but they're not going to do that.

**RS: Justine you spent a summer in Iran with your six-year-old son Mateo. As a parent how do you look back on it? What kind of impact do you think this had on Mateo and how will he look at Iran differently in the future?**

JS: One of the things I found so astonishing about Iran is that more than half the population is under 30 years of age. And it has the highest brain drain in the world, every year 150 to 180,000 Iranians leave Iran. And I can't really imagine raising my son in a country where he knows and I know that the idea is that one day, he'll leave. I think that the experience in Iran was certainly was profound for Mateo. I have absolutely no idea how it will play out. when I ask Mateo where he'll live he doesn't fear the world as he grows up, but you know when I ask Mateo questions like, 'where do you think you'll live when you're a big boy?' He'll say, "oh, Brazil, Mexico, France, England." He's really interested in the rest of the world and he doesn't fear the world. He looks upon it with, with wonder. And I really appreciate that because I think so many Americans, what they know of the world is what they know really simply from the Nightly news and if that's all you know about the rest of the world, you are going to live in fear of the world. And in fear of others. So I'm, I'm really grateful that my work has been able to include Mateo in seeing that we are really part of the same, the same small planet.

**RS: And to raise a child with that awareness is a beautiful challenge and role for a parent. Justine Shapiro thank-you so much for joining us.**

JS: It's a pleasure.

RS: Good luck with your work.

JS: Thank you.

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