



Fayruz Benyousef

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by Mabrookah Heneidi*

Education has always been important to Fayruz Benyousef's family. That is why, when she was only a toddler her family trekked to Pennsylvania from Libya. Fayruz's parents earned their Master's degrees and would go on to pursue their PhD's, except only Fayruz's mother, Noria Treki, would earn hers. Her father, who dreamed of getting his doctorate, was prevented when he relapsed with the Leukemia that had been haunting him for years. After undergoing a bone marrow transplant, which seemed successful at first, other complications arose and he passed away.

One year before her father passed away, Fayruz was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymphatic system, at the age of 16. Her treatment, and her father's illness kept them from returning to Libya. Fortunately, alhamdulillah, she has been cancer free since going into remission in 1987.

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Despite Hodgkin's, Fayruz was active in her high school- president of the student council, class historian, captain of cross country, homecoming queen and an honor society member. "I was even the school mascot for our football games. I dressed in a large white ram suit!" recalls Fayruz. Additionally, she was top of her class, and highly dedicated to pursuing a college degree. Going to college was a challenge though, as her father had just passed away and her mother was still finishing up her PhD dissertation. She says, "I knew that I had to go to college and wanted to do so, but the question was how on earth we would pay for it." But Fayruz managed to earn scholarships that helped her to alleviate some of the cost. She attended Dickinson College, a small, selective, liberal arts school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where she earned her



B.A. in History with a minor in French.

"Upon graduating," says Fayruz, "I realized I was too burned out to go on immediately to graduate school, so I landed a job on campus working in the fundraising arena- I was hired as the Assistant Director of Annual Giving." She entered into a world of philanthropy that she had not imagined existed, which would become the focus of her career. In 1997 she began working for The Dini Partners, Inc., a fundraising consulting firm that helps nonprofits with various projects centering on major gift fundraising. Fayruz now lives in Austin, where in April of 2002 she began a new position as Development Director for Ballet Austin, where she will continue her fundraising work.

Name:	Fayruz Benyousef
Born:	Tripoli, Libya 12 Dec 1971
Home:	Austin, Texas
Profession:	Fundraising Consultant
Position:	Development Director, Ballet Austin

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Fayruz has also been married for three and a half years. Her husband, Malek Ben-Musa, is a former professional soccer player, and

currently a professional coach. Sports has become a major part of the family's life, as Fayruz used to teach step aerobics and kickboxing at a local YMCA. These days she stays in shape by weight training and doing yoga.

This well-rounded arts enthusiast also dabbles in Arabic calligraphy and sings. "The reason I was named 'Fayruz' is because my mother was once named 'Fayruz Libya'- she has an incredible voice. I think I was blessed, alhamdulillah, to have inherited a little of it, and so she and I both enjoy singing," says Fayruz.



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To maintain a sense of Libyan culture in her life, Fayruz savors the authentic cuisine and loves to cook with Malek. She admits, though, that it is a challenge to foster the culture in a foreign country, "because so many Americans, friends and co-workers have a hard time understanding our culture, let alone our faith." But, food has become a hobby and a passion in her household, and she is always treating friends to the "joys of the good Libyan food." Couscous and Rishtat Kaskass are among her favorite dishes, but anything that her mom, Noria, or Malek's mother, Duja, make she will go "ga-ga" over.



Fayruz Benyousef is a testament that great things can be accomplished in the face of immense hardship. Education, family, and culture have always been central themes in her life, and although she is still young, she stands as proof to the endurance of Libyan spirit.

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