

**Bios and Statements**  
**by New President and Executive Director**

**2005**

**PRESIDENT:**

**KHALED MATTAWA**

**Bio**

Khaled Mattawa was born in 1964 in Benghazi, Libya, where he had his primary education. In 1979 he immigrated to the United States. He has an MFA from Indiana University and teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Mattawa is the author of two books of poems, *Zodiac of Echoes* and *Ismailia Eclipse*. He is also the translator of five books of Arabic poetry and the co-editor of two anthologies of Arab American literature. He has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts translations fellowship, the Alfred Hodder Fellowship from Princeton University, the PEN American Center Poetry in Translation Prize, and two Pushcart Prizes. Mattawa writes in English and has translated some of his poems to his native Arabic. His poems have also been translated to Polish and French.

**Statement of Vision**

1. *Raise the organizations' national profile*
  - A. Expand contacts with other writers and cultural organizations.
  - B. Enhance RAWI's publications and website to serve as effective means of representing the organization and its members.
  - C. Sponsor events at national professional conferences.
  - D. Develop a list of Arab American writers and intellectuals to serve as media contacts and as experts available as resources on the Arab American and Arab issues.
  - E. Promote the engagement of RAWI's members with other civic, cultural, and literary associations to serve as officers or to represent the interest of Arab American and Arab writers.
2. *Develop an aggressive fund raising campaign*
  - A. Provide training for RAWI officers in fund-raising strategies.
  - B. Organize several national fund-raising events for RAWI.
3. *Develop more activities promoting Arab American literature in the Arab world and Arab literature in the U.S.*
  - A. Sponsor and co-sponsor literary events that promote Arab American writing
  - B. Promote contacts between established and new Arab American writers.
  - C. Promote the translation of Arab American literature to Arabic and to other languages.
  - D. Promote the translation of Arabic literature to English.
4. *Energize the organization's interest in the freedom of expression.*

- A. Support Arab American writers and scholars whose freedom of expression is being threatened.
- B. Support writers in the Arab world whose freedom of expression is being threatened.
- C. Join the activities of human rights group and writers' unions in the promotion of the freedom of expression around the world.

5. *Energize RAWI's responsiveness to the needs of the Arab American community:*

- A. Issue press releases that convey the views of RAWI's membership regarding political or cultural initiatives that affect the Arab American community.
- B. Engage Arab American associations in promoting cultural activities as part of their services to the community.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

### **STEVEN SALAITA**

#### **Bio**

Steven Salaita is Assistant Professor in the Department of Languages and Literatures at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he specializes in Native American and Arab American writing. His first book, *Terrifying Patriotism: How Anti-Arab Racism Justifies Empire and Inhibits Democracy*, is forthcoming in September. Currently he is completing a monograph on Arab American cultures and literatures. In addition to literary criticism, Salaita occasionally writes creative nonfiction.

"I hope mainly to continue in the good work Barbara Nimri Aziz, Etel Adnan, and others have done for many years. Although RAWI has become a regular feature of the Arab American literary community, I would like it to expand somewhat in scope and dimension and help it become, at times at least, an intercommunal as well as a communal organization. That is to say, RAWI has an important--perhaps even necessary--role to play in the Arab American literary community, but it also has an important role to play in the broader dialogues about cultures and literatures occurring across the United States and outside its borders, both in mainstream and minority literary communities. Arab American writers have much to contribute to such dialogues. There is no reason that RAWI can't help facilitate such contributions.

"These are all broad ideas. In the short term, there are some pragmatic things I would like to see RAWI accomplish: acquire official nonprofit status; use that status to actively seek grant money; put itself and its newsletter on a regularly updated website; expand its membership to around 400-500; enhance networking opportunities among our members; refer literary and cultural organizations to our members; work closely with other Arab American community groups; make the conference an annual event; and sponsor publications featuring our members. I have a particular interest in seeing RAWI continue to be useful to emerging Arab American writers and scholars. RAWI's outgoing leadership has done an excellent job of providing a foundation to accomplish such goals, and so the next

generation of leadership needs merely to take advantage of the many preexisting opportunities a professional organization like RAWI offers."

**SECRETARY/TREASURER:**