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Searching For Baghdad: A Daughter's Journey

Produced and Directed by Carole Basri, Adriana Davis, Bryan Durr

Production Company: D-Squared Media NYC

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"I have searched for Baghdad throughout my life; yet, I cannot go there safely as an American of Iraqi-Jewish descent. Since I could not venture to Baghdad, I undertook a historic, geographic exploration of my Baghdadi heritage. I ventured to India, Hong Kong, Singapore and Myanmar. What I found there amazed and informed me. Join me on my search to find my Baghdadi Jewish heritage as I undertake a daughter's journey." – Carole Basri

Iraqi-Jews can trace their history in that country to 586 BC. At their peak, they numbered nearly 300,000. Today, there are only approximately 50 Jews living in Baghdad while hundreds of thousands continue to thrive in countries throughout the world. Yet, it is not possible for these descendants of this ancient community to visit the places their parents and grandparents called home.

Searching For Baghdad documents Carole Basri's travels to find the remnants of her heritage, outside of Iraq. With an eye toward history, her 21st century search leads her to the Iraqi-Jewish outposts established in the 19th century in the Far East. As she visits India, Hong Kong, Singapore and even Myanmar she seeks out the people, culture and contributions left by those Iraqi Jews who ventured out of Baghdad looking for a better life. What she finds is more than just the history of her people. She also finds her own family, in unexpected places, playing important roles within the legacy of the Iraqi-Jewish communities established beyond Baghdad.

As Carole journeys from synagogue to synagogue and sees food, music and names that could only have come from Baghdad, her desire to see the place of her ancestor's origin grows deeper. However, witnessing the enduring contributions of her ancestors to their adopted homes while realizing they still maintained their Iraqi-Jewish roots made her search a success.

Author: Adriana Davis © D-Squared Media 2002

After a glimpse via rare footage from 1995 of the small Jewish community that remains in Iraq today, several interviews with well-known experts gives a brief history of the Baghdadi-Jewish people. The viewer is then whisked off to a quartet of Asian countries and visits the centerpiece of each community...its synagogue. Though there are few Iraqi-Jews remaining in these countries today, we meet those who are dedicated to the upkeep of these buildings and the sustaining of the Iraqi-Jewish culture established over 100 years ago.

To paint a more complete picture of these societies, the producers sought out former residents of each community who offer their memories and experiences. These interviews are central to understanding the deep connection to those who remain in Baghdad today and why the desire to visit Iraq is so strong. For Carole Basri, the journey may have answered many questions about her unique Babylonian-Jewish heritage, yet it has left her standing on an unfinished bridge to Baghdad.