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Revolution and The Quest for Happiness in The Middle East

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka "Dr. Dave" interviews Doug Davis, PhD

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Simon Huggins)

Excerpt: *So this young Poet – his name is Laarbi Batma – I think of him as the Bob Dylan of Morocco – starts to write these incredible lyrics, and a lot of people our age, and a lot of people half our age carry reams of this stuff around in their heads. And I'll just give you a little bit of the flavor. There's one that is literally called 'The sheepskin'. The poetry starts out [Arabic given first] – "You servants of prophet enslaved, stonehearted, frivolous of heart, full of treachery, you've chained up the tombs, here's truth and here's falsehood."*

Introduction:

That was the voice of my old friend and return guest, Dr. Doug Davies, speaking about the revolutionary events playing out in Morocco and its middle-eastern neighbors.
Given the importance of breaking news in the Middle-East, this is a special edition of Shrink Rap Radio, pre-empting our previously announced line-up.

Douglas A. Davis, PhD, is a cherished friend from grad school days at the University of Michigan.

Not long ago, he retired from full-time teaching at Haverford College at Brenmoor, Pensylvannia, where he was a professor of psychology and for many years, department chair.

A frequent shrink-rap radio guest, Doug has spent many years studying and writing about Morocco, and speaks fluent Arabic as well.

Given what's going on in that part of the world at this very moment, and Doug's expertise, I thought another interview with him would be especially timely. So here's the interview…

Interview:

Dr. Dave: Dr. Doug Davis, welcome back, my old grad school friend to Shrink-Rap radio.

Dr. Doug Davis: Well I am very glad to be here, and as I say when I walk into the house of my oldest friend in Morocco, [Arabic] – Welcome to me.

Dr. Dave: Ok, well like the rest of the world, I've been following the events in the middle-east with awe and wonder, and also some trepidation, and knowing your long involvement in Morocco, you've been on my mind as well. And I recalled that in a previous interview with you that I got the impression that Morocco was a far more stable place than many of its neighbors, and now just today, I'm reading and I'm seeing on Al-Jazeera English, which I've been following, that there are protests in major cities throughout Morocco. Both you and your wife Susan speak Arabic. I understand that Susan is currently in Morocco, and that you will be joining her there soon. So both as an Arabic speaker, a scholar on Morocco, and as a psychologist, I think you have a unique perspective from which to share your view of what's going on in Morocco specifically, and Middle-Eastern neighbors more generally. So let's start with your overview of the protests in Morocco.

Dr. Doug Davis: Ok, and let me say about Morocco – It's certainly true – Susan has probably, since she went off to Morocco in 1965, right out of college as a peace corps volunteers, has probably logged 13-14 years if you added all the visits up together in the country, and I've probably logged about half that. We speak Moroccan Arabic fluently. And we go back every year, and I will be going in two weeks and spending eight weeks, and I really do hope to catch up on all sorts of things that we are going to be

talking about today. But the other thing I have to say… I have indeed been watching Al-Jazeera and CNN and the stuff at the New York times, and Russia Today, which has as surprisingly good irreverent coverage of Tahrir square and elsewhere. But I have to say, because it really does matter in the Arabic world, we have acted as if Islam is one thing, and Arabs are one people. Islam is as varied as Christianity, and Arabs differ – for example, the language that I will be talking in two weeks in Rabat would be almost completely incomprehensible to somebody in Tahrir Square in Egypt. The reverse is not quite true, because the Egyptians make most of the movies and TV shows, and people have got used to their particular dialect. But one of the things that is most powerful about what's been going on across North Africa and the Middle East is that it's using images that resonate with absolutely everyone. Even the slogans of Tahrir square are in an Arabic that everybody who has been to school for a few years, which most Arabs have, would understand even though it might not be how they might say it on the streets of Casablanca. And for people of our age who took place in demonstrations, and who used some very similar slogans in the sixties to what we're hearing now. A part of the point I want to make in my blog is that people need to try to get into the rhythm of the words. I have linked into my blog entry a photograph of a videotape of what looks like a nine year old girl on top of a car with a microphone. We've already heard thousands of other voices. They went around the square taking up calls – and the most recurrent on was [Arabic] – "The people want the ruler gone" – he should be gone – and that goes for the Regime too. I heard yesterday from a couple of the clips in Rabat – I heard some of the same chant, along with some very distinctively Moroccan stuff. But the first huge difference between Morocco and places further East (with the exception of Oman) – you wouldn't say the leader – you would say the King. So far, there are very few people in Morocco who are ready to say that. We can talk a little bit about why that might be so.

Dr. Dave: I read that Morocco is a constitutional Monarchy, but that the King has the power to both select and dismiss the Prime Minister, and to dissolve the parliament. Is that in fact true?

Dr. Doug Davis: That's exactly true. And it's probably worth explaining how it played in Morocco, because in some way it's revealing. The story that we are going to get to is that the underlying issues in Morocco are remarkably similar those in Tunisia and Egypt and in fact throughout this whole region, which is very highly Educated Unemployment, rapidly rising cost of living and increasing debt, a pervasive sense that corruption which has always been an issue, is getting bigger instead of smaller, hassles with police and security authorities, and constraints on expression have gotten stronger.

Dr. Dave: Now you're talking about the Middle-East, and not the US.

Dr. Doug Davis: Well, exactly. But, one of the things that I linked into my blog entry, because it's really {{{bloomy}}} way to see it, there's an American rapper whom I didn't know – I'm actually more hip to Moroccan rap than I am to American at this point called M1, and he's interviewed on Russia Today, and he basically brings it all back home. He say, "Well listen, the message is obvious – If you don't have freedom, what are you going to do to get it? And this is how you get it. " And there is evidence that the young activitists who have not by any means been the sole participants – in fact, they are a minority as the actual participants on the street, but have been tremendously important in setting this up, I think have their roots in what we saw in the sixties – they understand communications technology, they know how to handle administration, they have given a lot of thought on how to keep them peaceful, and disarm (not literally) – in terms of cosying up to the people who can otherwise do you such harm – a technique that worked amazingly well in Egypt except for a couple of days, and that was clearly provocation, but for example isn't working in Libya and Bengazi as we talk. The other point I would make about the region in general is that, you poured your income into your kid's education, and they

are still living at home at the age of thirty – people get jobs because of connections, and people who are well qualified sit unemployed for years after being educated. Any street seller – like the young man who burned himself in Tunisia – could be stopped by the Police, and asked 'Where's your permit? I need to get some money', and you have to pay them off, and suddenly your family doesn't eat, and that relentless petty corruption and the fact that the cities of Morocco and every other place in the Middle-East and North Africa are full of Palaces – I mean, really Palaces! Mubarak's major palace, the {{ampteen palace}}} – I've been talking to an old friend from Minnesota who's lived in Cairo for seventeen years – his entire small Minnesota town would fit inside the {{{empteen palace}}}. We're talking about the people who run all of the construction jobs – there's the massive massive construction outside every city from Casablance to Ankhara – where billions of dollars have been poured into popular tourist destinations like Marrakesh in recent times, and that money benefits the local people to the extent that they can scramble up on rickety wooden railings, and using hammers and chisels and carry cement up in bags, can build these structures, but that's the closes that they are ever going to get.

Dr. Dave: I am thinking about the growing gap between the very wealthy and the poor in our own country, but that's probably another topic. It's hard not to look at what's going on over there, and to think about the situation over here. I could imagine the same thing happening here, but again that's probably a whole Rap we could go down, but don't have time to get into today. I remember when we spoke before, you were very active in Moroccan's cyber-culture, and even helping to develop and set up and train people, and part of that, you were following hip-hop and rap music in the area. Talk a bit about the role of the internet and social networking.

Dr. Doug Davis: I went to Morocco on a Fullbright grant – a year's professorial grant in the mid-nineties – academic year 1995-96, to study the social impact of the internet on Morocco, and I timed it because I met some of the people (mostly academics) who were planning to bring the internet to the

colleges, universities and the general public. I knew that first generation, and we all gave talks all over Morocco about how this would revolutionize society. The first educational setting with a live internet feed was {{{Ach-Haleen?}}} university, started by the previous King – it's like the American universities further East in that it's an expensive private school, it has an American-style curriculum and teaches in English. And then slowly other Colleges and Universities followed. The civil society development that I didn't expect because I wasn't even using a cell-phone in the US at this time, is that cell-phones took over Morocco faster than any other country at that level of development, to the extent that it's hard to find anyone with a landline. They became very inexpensive, and since in the European type cell-phone setup, which Morocco has, you don't pay for calls to you, Moroccan's immediately developed a sort of code based on the word 'beep' which they took on and made an Arabic word. So someone says, "I'll pick you up and we'll head out to lunch today at the MacDo." When I get close, he says literally "Beep, Leeah, I'll Beep to yah!" – that is your phone will ring once, and that will be a code to come back, and they may even have other codes for "not right now", or something like that. Then Moroccan's got slightly more sophisticated phones, and they started SMSing, and again this is very cheap so is a very good way to communicate in a poor country, They quickly encountered a problem that everyone in the world that uses a script other than the Romanic script of Europe and the US / Northa America – discovered that in order to type what they heard in their head, the letters on the pad weren't adequate, so they started using a combination of letters and numbers. In Arabic, for example, you have a lot of letters like 'K', 'L', 'B' but you also have a lot of other syllables that don't fit, so they plug in numbers. That's how they type to each other. That turned out to have an amazing significance because it means you can go into any cber-café with its standard English or French keyboard, and you can type in response to a you-tube video of a hot new rap group with a great political line. You can immediately type in comments, and it works whether you are a kid in Casablanca, or that kid's cousin in Brussels or Utrecht. That hybrid Moroccan's call {{{Arabic Name}}}. I heard the young woman who wrote a very

successful novel about Saudi Arabian young woman, called "Girls of Riyadh". She wrote it about five years ago into several languages including English. She gave a talk at Princeton – she was training at that point to be an Endodontist, and she showed us her FaceBook page. Absolutely as hip and colorful as any other FaceBook page, she was a lovely young woman, who wore a headscarf that was more of a fashion statement than a conservative withdrawal, and I noticed that she had a lot of comments in a mixture of letters and numbers. I said, the "Moroccan's call it {{{Arabic name}}} – she said we call it {{{Arabdish}}}. So, the result is that all of a sudden, we had movements in Tunisia and in Egypt in which there's a live Twitter feed coming from every demonstration site, every gathering point, every cyber-café or house with an internet feed to co-ordinate all of this, so a few thousand people can put millions of people on the street. And what happened yesterday in Morocco was much smaller than in Tunisia or Egypt – hard to predict which way this will go, but there were perhaps 20,000 Moroccan FaceBook account holders out of a total of 3 million in that country alone who expressed solidarity with the event. Somebody takes a handheld video, which finds it way onto YouTube immediately – you could literally do it from the square if you have an iPhone or anything that has a high-end Operating System; You upload it to YouTube, and all of a sudden, people are tweeting its location, and they're linking it into their FaceBook page so that everybody into their FaceBook friends network, which remember could be thousands of people, get and Immediate, "Hey, so and so has updated their page and I can now watch the video of what's happening." - That's the way this spreads.

Dr. Dave: One of the chilling things about all of this is, that we take the internet so much for granted – it's almost become like the air we breathe – and the power of governments to shut it down. Talk a little bit about that. People seem to find wormholes; ways around being shut down – but still, they are able to clamp down pretty effectively, aren't they?

Dr. Doug Davis: David, your voice is breaking it up – it could be the video interfering – why don't you try shutting the video feed off. My voice is not breaking up?

Dr. Dave: That's true your voice is not breaking up.

Dr. Doug Davis: Alright, well then maybe it's ok. Let me tell you a little bit about how that is done. First of all, the technology is expensive for most people in Arab countries, but not hopelessly expensive – cell-phones are surprisingly cheap and all have SMS, and cybercafés are the way that the majority of Moroccans get access to the Internet – you can buy an hour in a cybercafé in your own neighborhood for 50 cents or less typically, so people can easily set up an online presence, they can start to post ideas, they are all downloading music in particular, video if they can, and that's how the latest political lyrics in the form of hip-hop and music video is spreading. In the case of Egypt, they had I think seven Internet Providers, and the government shut down six, and one stayed active. It mean 98% of the internet accounts shut down, and in a dictatorial system, you probably only have to make phone-calls to as many places as there are people, and say "You will shut it down immediately, otherwise the police will come pounding on your door," is the implication. They also had the technology to jam cell-phone communication, and so it was greatly disrupted in much of the country. I've seen little bits of both of those things in Morocco, a country that has not had major upheavals, and a country that receives only a tiny fraction of the billions of dollars a year that Egypt gets, but I think again it's probably again that American technical help in part that allows them to do this, and what I saw in Morocco a couple of times over the last few years, all of a sudden cell phone coverage would drop in parts of the city that had previously been good. I talked to a very sophisticated techie friend of mine that runs an internet business, and he would say "Yeah, they're after somebody." And after can mean blocking and also recording communication. Another thing that has happened to me several times is that a website – say the new York times – that is typically uploading in three or four seconds suddenly takes two minutes. I

can establish that this is not overall net traffic. By turning on my VPN software, and then although I'm in Rabat, I look like I'm in Haverford, and suddenly the web page loads in roughly American speeds. And that's all due to government attempts to block and monitor internet traffic. Different governments have approached that in different ways. I was in touch with the human rights watchperson that had the North Africa beat in the late nineties, and Morocco was at that time, and I think that this continues to be true, was the most open about Internet – they were not routinely blocking sites, or trying to scrutinize peoples' activities. Now that could have quietly changed in recent years – in fact, it must have to some degree, but you don't ever have the feeling of surveillance or sites being blocked. Tunisia by contrast has been very tightly controlled. All the email comes in through one SMTP server which means that the government by recording all that traffic, has in principle a record of everyone's email communications, and probably the technology at the very least to tag all communications from known email addresses to known email addresses, and probably to scan for keywords that might allow you to pick up information about a demonstration or an attack or something.

Dr. Dave: That's chilling, and yet people seem to find clever ways around that here and there, don't they?

Dr. Doug Davis: Well, several things. First of all, landlines weren't blocked, so if you know someone who has a landline, maybe it's your aunt, and you go and pay her a visit… A lot of these are University educated young people who are quite sophisticated even though they may or may not be employed. You find somebody who has that kind of phone, somebody calls them and passes the information on. If someone's cell-phone is miraculously working you use it. Before most of us knew there was a Google executive inside this whole music, Google announced that when the demonstrations were big but Mubarak had not resigned, it was hard to tell whether the violence had just happened – they announced a little hack where there were two international telephone numbers, and if anybody

called one of those numbers, they could make a tweet which would then be posted to anybody in the world who called those numbers again, which means anybody with a cell-phone or with a landline can immediately contribute to and can access a live twitter feed, even though the internet is ostensibly shut down in Egypt.

Dr. Dave: I saw that. Just this morning, I was looking Al-Jazeera live on my iPad, and they were publishing those phone numbers beneath the streaming video.

Dr. Doug Davis: Yes. Because all of these governments are prone to shut down news. One of the reasons that Tunisia takes off – there are been other incidents, lots of incidents like that, but if the government can stop anything from being on television, which is often government-controlled with a phone call, and if they can shut down any newspaper that offends them, the word simply doesn't get out. You would have to have known somebody whose cousin was on a taxi that was going through the City that told you this story. Now it goes like lightning, and there are many, many, many sources. And remember, people are also in touch with their relatives in Europe and the US – Millions, tens of Millions of Egyptians and North Africans live abroad, and they follow news at home very closely, and some of the most moving scenes even before Mubarak left were Egyptians talking about the emotion with which they felt pride in their own country. Which I think gets us closer to what's going on here psychologically.

Dr. Dave: Yes. I want make sure that we start talking psychologically since we are both psychologists and people tune into this show because they are interested in psychology, and one of the angles that I have been thinking of all of this from, is – I have been following positive psychology, and the explosion of research looking into happiness, and of course it brings to mind Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that says that you don't really have the opportunity to have the luxury of looking at such things

as happiness or spiritual development and so on, until you have satisfied the basic needs that you have to do, such as shelter, clothing, and particularly security, so when we see lots of people without jobs and so on, it kind of raises that question.

Yes, and I think it's fundamental. You can certainly get there from the psychological theories you and I study. You can also get there from various political commentaries. There's a line in Bertolt Brecht's Threepenny Opera - "First comes eating, then comes culture." And – it's interesting – there's probably some very good play on this on the Egyptian Street, but none of it made the level of the international coverage I was watching. In Egypt, bread is literally life – it's called *Ai-eesh* – it's from the verb *To Live*. If you are denied bread, you are denied life. But, what's denied in a country like Egypt, and this is again true across North Africa, is a sort of fundamental dignity. We've all read – and some of this has to be forgotten as we listen more to real Arab voices – there is some truth in the idea that Man in these traditional families are expected to provide to the family – they go out to do the work that brings in the income – and they command respect from their wife and their children. In a good Muslim household, they earn it by being reliable and solid, and so on. To see such a man humiliated if you were to walk down the street holding his hand, and he asks to step off the sidewalk in front of a car – he's greeting people with power in an obsequious way because maybe they can hand him a job or something – that's humiliating. And if the cops are literally shaking you down – there's a tidbit of the new technology – and it could happen anywhere in the world now – about five years ago, somebody put a telephoto video camera watching a highway on the Mediterranean coast in Morocco, and for 15-20 minutes, all we see (it's silent) is cops – one is waving down cars heading northbound, and the other southbound, and all we can see is that the cop goes up to the driver's side, the driver rolls down the windows, they have a very brief conversation – not over 15-20 seconds, then they shake hands, and the driver rolls up his window and starts driving off, and the cop goes back to his place in the road until another car comes along. And

you keep watching this, wondering what's happening. Finally you notice that as the cop goes back to his place in the road, the hand which he has shaken the hand of the driver goes to his right trouser pocket.

Dr. Dave: Right, they've palmed some money.

Dr. Doug Davis: Every few miles you get stopped, well – hey, you seem to be going a little fast, I think your license plate is a little dusty, and money changes hands. And, you know a friend of ours who really knows this system inside and out says, "Look, you're a young cop, you're not well educated, you flunked out of school, you managed to get this job because somebody pulled some strings – maybe your uncle is a cop – you've come through cop school, and your boss puts you on a decent intersection, and says "Ok, this is a good spot – a lot of taxis coming here loaded with people. You have inter-city taxis, stay away from the tourists – they make trouble – you probably know what kind of deep stuff you'd be in if you tried to arrest my boss, but otherwise – hey go for it, and I'm going to need a thousand Dirams – about $120 – a day from you, and beyond that, that's yours. If you can't come up with it, there's other police posts for you, my Sun – how about *Figig* – down on the desert?" - And everyone knows that's the way that the game has been played – absolutely everybody. So, you've got humiliation which arouses anger, which must be suppressed, as nobody wants to be arrested in these countries and hauled off to the police station. So under those circumstances, you are in a constant state, boiling with this frustration. And everyone has seen this who has lived in this part of the world, and what most of us have said is, "Isn't it so surprising that they are so nice to their friends and even to visitors like us – all the qualities that we admire that we admire about the Arabs – interpersonal warmth, strong connection to family, loyalty to friends" – those qualities didn't disappear,

but we've all wondered what would happen if things got started, and what was powerful – what was so emotionally overwhelming to somebody like me – it happens in Egypt and they don't get shot, and pretty soon, they are full of confidence. And when the government shuts down the internet, a hundred thousand people who might have been able to hear this from the kid down the street who's got an internet connection started to go out and see what the heck is going on – and they are Egypt – they are poor people working for a buck a day – they are guys, as my friend says, with little short handled sledgehammers, hoping that someone will hire them to knock down a wall where they are building a new high-rise apartment building. They are sellers of tea, and cigarettes, one-by-one. And increasingly, there's a hundred doctors from all over Egypt who have come to treat people who are injured. There are barbers... There are people picking up the garbage, then there's a holiday in Egypt where everyone brings out their new clothes basically for Spring – those people who are doctors, and lawyers, and college professors, whose kids are probably huddled by a computer or off with another bunch of kids in another part of the square, they are there also. And so, there are these conversations going on across a wide range of Egyptian society. Now, everyone understands that Mubarak has maintained power because everyone who takes his orders benefits hugely from doing so, and that includes not just all of those brutal police, trained one has to assume in American crowd control methods and armed with American equipment. But it's also true for the top military who are now running the country. These are people who are not free of the corruption that tainted the regime – but suddenly, light is shining on this process, and these meetings are occurring between young radicals and Muslims of various descriptions, and political opponents who would have been active if that had been any political opposition, and at the

end the young radicals immediately put up a summary on their FaceBook pages a detailed summary of what was discussed. There was a guy when the parliament in Tunisia was dissolved, and a bunch of people came in and started representing different constituencies - one of them is tweeting from the parliament room to give you a sense of what is going on. So societies that are closed to information become open, one of the most powerful sense for people in Cairo was a moment before Mubarak resigned that morning, in which we see a live shot of a meeting of the top military officials in the country, and Mubarak is not there. And we see the demonstrations in Tahrir square. Those demonstrations weren't even covered on national television – if that was your only channel, you'd have wondered what's all this shouting I'm hearing – right?

Dr. Dave: [agrees]

Dr. Doug Davis: So those conditions would be played out everywhere in the Arab world. It's not as if people don't know that who live there – everybody knows that. It's even what novels are written in French and English by North African French speakers and Middle-Eastern English speakers, are about. The music of the young people in the 1970s – A period that under the previous kind, when repression of dissent became much more common, partly one heard in the early '70s was what the King had seen going on in France and Germany and America, and thought "My god, what happens if my students started to act that way". Under that period that is now called by the Moroccans "The days of lead", the old bad days, you had a couple of wonderful music groups – my own group is one called [arabic name] – you can easily go out on YouTube or some MP3 site and find some of their stuff. They came out of a working class neighborhood in Casablanca. A bunch of tough

young kids. They wanted to become musicians, the thought about being Western European style romantic or rock musicians, they thought about being Lebanese / Egyptian style romantic singers, but happily a Moroccan playwright who trained in France and came back to make contact with Moroccan oral culture said, "Forget all that, we've got plenty of music here. Learn to play traditional instruments, learn the kinds of music that Moroccans used to pour out their souls in, and build your music on top of that."

So this young Poet – his name is Laarbi Batma – I think of him as the Bob Dylan of Morocco – starts to write these incredible lyrics, and a lot of people our age, and a lot of people half our age carry reams of this stuff around in their heads. And I'll just give you a little bit of the flavor. There's one that is literally called 'The sheepskin'. The poetry starts out [Arabic given first] – "You servants of prophet enslaved, stone-hearted, frivolous of heart, full of treachery, you've chained up the tombs, here's truth and here's falsehood."

Now, as popular music, that's pretty amazing, and they would push those limits, and that lyric ends up – I told you its title is "The sheepskin". It ends up with a wonderful lyric that basically translates (I think this is 1972) as "I added ten and ten and I knew how much that made – this is the twentieth century, and we are living like flies in a sheepskin. There may be a big difference between apple and pomegranate, but what's the difference between you and you and me."

I had a video that I showed to some young Moroccan audiences in 2008, when I was talking about blogs and the US election. I said "look at this video that I got on YouTube – there's thousands of young people there, and they are screaming at the top of their lungs, 'What's

the difference between you and you and you and me' - look closely at their faces – those are your parents – that's how they felt in 1972 – and that's how you feel now."

And what the Egyptian (it hasn't happened in Morocco yet) grown-ups (professional people who live under this regime – the ones who couldn't get out or who had some reason to stay) – have been saying to us is, "Our generation has longed for freedom our whole lives, we've thought about it every day. This young generation just set it up for us. It isn't done yet, but they created an opportunity that we never imagined. We have believed the ruler when he said what he has been saying to the Americans all these years – it's either me or the Islamists, man – you'd better support me wherever I go – to make some houmous, you've got to smash some chick peas" – and remember, Mubarak could have said this, and so could have several other countries in the neighborhood. "You know how many of your specially indebted guys I've got – remember that guy you took out of Afghanistan – Well after we broke his fingers, and subjected him to a little bit of stress, he's told us that there's some biological weapons in Iraq." If you roll that story back, you begin to understand why America's allies have played this role. Whether they were brutal, as Mubarak could certainly be, or benign, as the Moroccan regime basically is – I mean, I don't go to Morocco because I crave stress and fear, because my friends are all oppressed. It's a delightful country, but everyone knows how much better things could be if it worked the way it's supposed to work if you're education could get you a job, if you could speak your mind honesty, and the people who have been doing it – doing what we Quakers call "Speaking truth to power" are these young musicians, and they are amazingly articulate. Now the lyric that I just paraphrased part of for you was written in the early seventies. In 2006, one

of the biggest rap sensations of Morocco – a guy who literally calls himself – BIGG – produces a brilliant album called 'Moroccans to death". Every young Moroccan I know in Europe or Morocco knows this album. And in one of his pieces [Arabic] – which would be "My country is the country" or "My country is this country", he says "It's like Lee One said back in the day, we're living like flies in the sheepskin" and then he lays out his rap, and then he overdubs Laarbi Batma saying those immortal words, right? [Arabic]

What I'm trying to persuade people – and I'm going to try to do it using some more blogs about Moroccan popular language – is – young people in this country understand that music is made in different places. They are so hip to the way that music is made – it doesn't bother them much that they are not understanding the lyrics. These groups – we saw a Malian refugee group play in Minneapolis in the Cedar Culture Center; The Palestinian hip-hop group *Dam* perform here when their film *Slingshot Hip-hop* opened. Americans listen to this stuff even though they don't understand the words, but in the age of the internet, they can understand the words. They can get on to the You-Tube site, and say "I love the sound man, what the hell is he saying?" And by the way, you know we were talking about SMS mixtures of numbers and letters? Al-Jazeera just quietly set it up a couple of years ago so that if you are translating Arabic into English and you don't have the Arabic script, you can type in what's on your cell-phone and hit *Translate* and Google will turn it into real Arabic and give you the translation.

Dr. Dave: Ok, let me get you try to get you back to Psychology

Dr. Doug Davis: [laughs]

Dr. Dave: Somebody who studied personality theory and motivation and so on, what about this hunger for freedom? It seems like that really is a basic human need.

Dr. Doug Davis: I think it is a basic human need. It's a need probably in every human society except that you and I wouldn't recognize it if we were back in a time machine talking to Cro-Magnon or something, right? We wouldn't know the language, we wouldn't know how to express it – but in the 20th and 21st Century, everybody is saturated with the images. Remember that all the bandwidth of all the cyber-cafes, and all the schools in the Arab world are used every night, all night, for bittorrent downloads of the latest Hollywood stuff. So every kid is watching the most seductive, the most beautiful, the most killer-talented people in the world! The Arabs may hate our foreign policy, but they are still absolutely addicted to our culture, and if you start watching what they are doing with it – it's so interesting – is, they are mashing it up with theirs – you might take a Dylan lyric, and show pictures of cops in Egypt. One of the beautiful things that somebody had done with this song that I was just referring to, called *blehr-di-blehr* by 2006s. They had taken file footage of Moroccan riot cops beating up demonstrators, which happened regularly in Morocco particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. The IMF would come in and say "you are getting behind with your debt payments – you've got to cut subsidies, the price of bread and sugar and cooking oil would double overnight, there would be riots in Casablanca, by the next day there would be some shootings on the part of the police, and then half of the price would be rolled back… It's the rappers who are telling that story, and they are telling it in a language that deliberately parodies the language of the government. They make fun of Mubarak's attempts to read classical Arabic. He practically looked like he was half-

embalmed in the last video. And my friend who is there said to his Egyptian friends – "Look at it closely – it has obviously been cut and spliced."

Where this leaves us as Americans and Psychologists, David, is: We have not really been given access to what we would need to know to understand psychologically who these people are. There have been some wonderful psychological studies. I have a favorite of my own – a guy named Gary Gregg who is a fellow Michigan graduate, who did two absolutely wonderful books on Moroccan life stories using T.A.T.s, Rorschachs, drawing people out. But you've got to spend several years at least in the country. You've got to get your head around languages that are very alien to us, very beautiful and very rich, but very alien. You've got to earn the trust and respect of people. And the locals are not doing it. Their educational system is not producing the kind of home-grown urban anthropology and descriptive qualitative psychology that we would need to make contact directly with these people.

Dr. Dave: Well, boy – It's so exciting to have this opportunity to talk to you, and I know that you have another appointment coming up, so I think we're getting into the wrap-up stage here. Are there any other psychological reflections or implications that come to mind before we say goodbye?

Dr. Doug Davis: Well, yes, I think this is probably an educational psychology reflection. The world bank did a report about five years ago about education in the Middle-East and North Africa. The acronym for that is MENA. When I go to Morocco the next Spring, everybody was talking about it. They haven't read it because it's three hundred pages and written in English, but you can download it, and I did read it. It's a brilliant study and it shows where Morocco stands in a region that is ahead of the worst of sub-Saharan Africa, but behind

every other region in the world. Morocco is at the second from the bottom above Mauritania. This is a country that has a huge educational budget. Vast numbers of people. What the study shows is that they are not getting girls into basic literacy training in the countryside. They are getting them in the city, but there's still a lot of them going to work and not finishing elementary school. The kids who do finish elementary school and get to Secondary school are not getting all the way to the Baccalaureate high-school exam, which is what you need to supposedly get a job. Those who manage to get it are not finding jobs. The very, very few that make it into Universities which are very competitive in Morocco, are not getting jobs when they graduate. The biggest demonstrations in Morocco (certainly in terms of time taken) are for 15 years there has been a small group in front of parliament in Rabat – The Union of Unemployed University Graduates. There shouldn't be any unemployed undergraduates in a developing country! Meanwhile, another group of young people have been educating themselves. They have abandoned the school system. They may be sitting across the street, and they may be wasting some time with porn and American violent music and stuff, but they've learned to navigate around, they've all got FaceBook accounts. Again, think of Morocco, a developing country in North West Africa – three million FaceBook accounts – and they've all been sharing information with each other. I've got a little podcast site of my own which is mainly outtakes of Morocco, and a lot of it is in Moroccan Arabic. I went back a couple of days ago and listened to an interview I did in May 2006 – five years ago – with a young kid who was hoping to pass his baccalaureate exam that year. Very very bright, I've known his father and his whole family for decades. Thanks to a project that I did in the '90s, he had his hands on a computer since he was about 10 years old. He was in a technical high school, and he was

complaining that he was getting absolutely nothing that he could use to ever get to find a job. The prof was lecturing (in French mind you) about File Systems, and the organization of computer devices, and what he wanted to know was how to use Google. He wanted to find an encyclopedia on line. He wanted to collaborate with students in Algeria next door, and in Europe. The school was offering him absolutely nothing, and indeed he didn't finish the baccalaureate. He's one of this generation who've been waiting for something to happen in Morocco. We thought that when the waiting ended, there would be a bloodbath, and that's what the rulers told us. So far, we may be looking at a much, much brighter future, that these people have made despite the odds.

Dr. Dave: Yes – that was one of the amazing things, watching what was unfolding in Egypt: The restraint and grace of the people who were in the square and forming their own boundary to protect the process. That was just awe-inspiring.

Dr. Doug Davis: Yes. They knew how to create a little street community, and to keep it clean, and keep it running, and keep it civil; keep it so that people wouldn't be afraid to bring their little kids on their backs, or escort granny who's getting a little hard of hearing, so that she could partake of the excitement!

Dr. Dave: You know, in our media we've received mostly negative images relating to anyone who lives in an Islamic culture, so I think this was a very powerful corrective.

Dr. Doug Davis: I sure hope so. And you know, it came out of one of the great old countries of the world. Egyptians is the biggest Arab country, they've played a role in Arab history, they've played a role thanks to Camp David Accords, and the never-ending peace

process. But, in their hearts, most Egyptians don't think of themselves that way – they think of themselves as citizens of [Arabic Word – sounds like *Missara*] – Mother of the world. I mean they are like the Iranians – another country with a long, long history. Some of these countries are inventions of European oil countries at the end of WWI. But not Iran, and not Egypt. And it's interesting in Iran that the leaders that express such enthusiasm are the targets of a demonstration that wants to do for Iran what these demonstrators are doing for Egypt: Shake lose an autocracy and restore freedom.

Dr. Dave: [Agrees] – Well, I certainly wish them luck with that and will watch with considerable interest. Do you feel no fear at all, as your wife is in Morocco, and you're planning to go?

Dr. Doug Davis: I feel almost no fear. We've been going every year more or less since the sixties. The only time I'm afraid in Morocco is if I'm in a car on a winding road at night, because the surfaces are good and people drive too fast! I know enough after all this time that if a demonstration starts, I would head back to my hotel room until it's over, just because I look very different. But we get no hostility. When I approach a Moroccan looking like the retired American college professor that I am, they try to speak French to me. They may want to sell me something. But they are almost always friendly, and if I have a problem, they will help. When I get into a cab and start chattering with the driver like his country bumpkin uncle, we get into the most amazing conversations about what's going on in the world. For all of the fact they've lived under an oppressive regime, Moroccans face-to-face have never been shy about expressing their opinions. One of the things that an

oppressive regime does, if you've got a sense of humor, is that it teaches you very devious ways to get your message across!

Dr. Dave: [Laughs] – Well Doug, you continue to be an amazing, amazing guy. Keep it up! And I look forward to speaking to you again.

Dr. Doug Davis: Well, thanks Dave. That's very flattering. The blog entry I sent you a link to is a work-in-progress, and by the time I get into Morocco, I hope to be ready to be able to do some much more detailed looks at close-up bits and pieces of what young Moroccans are thinking about.

Dr. Dave: Okay. And I will put a link to your blog in the show notes, so that listening can go to the show notes and look for that link. Dr. Douglas A. Davies, thanks for being my guest again on Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Doug Davis: It's a pleasure, David, and you know one of these years, probably we ought to redo this interview, possibly sitting in this little café I know up in the Udiah, overlooking the waterfront in Rabat. Very nice on a Spring morning with a warm glass of mint tea.

Dr. Dave: Wow. Sounds good. I'll look forward to that.

Dr. Doug Davis: Alright, so long.

Dr. Dave (post-amble):

As you've probably noticed, I'm putting this interview up much sooner than I would in our regular rotation. I really wanted to get it out while the events unfolding in the Middle-East

are still fresh. Perhaps it was unrealistic or naïve of me to try to frame our conversation in terms of the 'Quest for Happiness'. There is a way in which our Western preoccupation with the pursuit of happiness and the academic study of it, pales next to the blood that is being spilt, the lives that are being lost, right now.

It is a fresh reminder for those of us in America, of the preciousness of freedom, and the price that it sometimes demands.

Our own revolution is three hundred years behind us, and I hope we will not need another one.

We have no way of knowing where these Middle-Eastern protests will end up: How much blood will be shed, and how many lives will be disrupted. We hope for the best, both for those countries, and for our future relations with them, that we may all live in a more peaceful world, one in which more people enjoy the basic freedoms that we have come to take for granted.

For the moment, I am in awe of the courage, resolve, and at times restraint shown by these protesters. I hope that they prevail, and move closer to the self-determination that they are seeking.

I am also appreciative of Doug Davies for sharing his copious knowledge, crackling intelligence and energy with us.

Do go to our show-notes for a link to his blog.

And, in the interests of getting this up the same day it was recorded, I am going to skip straight through to the closing theme music…

- End of Show -