

## Description

***Iranian Diaspora Identities: Stories and Songs*** combines oral history, storytelling, theories of communication, and performance studies into a unique study of an immigrant community. This book is the result of collaborative work between two Iranian-American immigrants. Ziba Shirazi is a well-known musician, artist and performer. Kamran Afary is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Cal State Los Angeles and a journalist and author. Using ethnographic, dramatistic, and oral history approaches, Ziba Shirazi gathered these stories of diaspora journeys of Iranians living in California and Toronto in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These stories were transcribed and developed into short performance pieces that included lyrics and songs and were performed in the United States and Canada to thousands of people in theater venues and libraries. These stories constitute a unique archive of the history of contemporary Iranian diaspora experiences. They are autobiographic vignettes that have helped constitute an artistic vision of Iranian exiles' own sense of community and their migratory experiences that inform the transformations they experienced in family, gender, and spiritual beliefs. In addition to providing an archive of experiences, the book uses social drama and storytelling to advocate for a new methodology for documenting Iranian diaspora accounts. It constitutes a new contribution to the existing literature on Iranian diaspora and furthers an exciting contribution to scholarship in qualitative research in Communication Studies.

## A Note About the Authors

**Ziba Shirazi (MA)** is a poet, singer, songwriter and storyteller who left Iran in 1985. As an artist, she is best known for her poignant songs and storytelling through poetry. Shirazi's compositions blend together flavors of Persian melodies with world music and jazz. She is the first Iranian female singer-songwriter to write all her own songs, as well as to produce and promote them in seven albums since 1990. Ziba is referred to as the 'voice of women' in the Iranian-American community; her lyrics are colored by passionate feminist tones, love, compassion, and universal human stories. Beginning in 2009, Shirazi created the ongoing project of Story & Song, a lyrical storytelling series of performances, set to live music with video projections featuring stories of Iranian immigrant families and their struggles since the Islamic Revolution. In the spring of 2014, Shirazi staged her first musical production, *Spring Love*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Her ongoing projects continue to touch audiences' hearts, crossing cultural gaps with her unique art of storytelling. To know more about her work, see: [www.zibashirazi.com](http://www.zibashirazi.com)

**Kamran Afary (PhD)** is the author of *Performance and Activism: Grassroots Discourse After the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992* (Lexington Press, 2009). He is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at California State University Los Angeles. He is also a Registered Drama Therapist (RDT) at the Drama Therapy Institute of Los Angeles. He has over twenty years of teaching both on campus and in prison education, and professional experience as a radio journalist and documentary-maker, producing programs focused on labor struggles, immigration, and race relations. Kamran Afary has contributed to the writing of this book by shaping the analysis of the performance scripts and theorizing this research into a scholarly project.

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## Endorsements for Iranian Diaspora Identities: Stories and Songs

Starting with a deceptively simple question, “When and why did you leave Iran?” Ziba Shirazi uncovered a trove of compelling, heartbreaking, loving, and funny stories that belie the western stereotypes of Iranian diaspora and their experience. This compelling work of Afary and Shirazi goes beyond the academic, esoteric, sanitized investigation of culture, migration, and global conflicts to examine the lived experiences of the sojourners’ struggles, triumphs and rebirths authentically by using the Persian cultural bedrock-medium of poetry and storytelling. This book brings intercultural communication, Diaspora Studies, immigration research and cultural studies theory alive providing scholars, students and instructors a wealth of material to consider, examine, discuss and explore.

### **Nancy Grass, PhD**

Author: *Public Speaking in American English: A Guide for Non-Native Speakers* (Pearson 2007)

Professor, Communication Studies  
Santa Monica College  
1900 Pico Blvd.  
Santa Monica, Ca. 90405  
310.434.8782  
grass\_nancy@smc.edu

A unique collection of engaging and moving migration stories of diverse groups of Iranians to the US after the Islamic revolution of 1979. Shirazi and Afary provide an informative introduction to the revolution and its subsequent social-political conditions that led many to leave the country. The authors offer an in-depth analysis of the themes of migration and the processes of acculturation and identity transformation that help the reader gain a better understanding of the experiences and challenges of Iranian diaspora in the US. An important work of oral history and unforgettable stories.

### **Mehrnaz Saeedvafa**

Author: *Abbas Kiarostami: Contemporary Film Directors* (Univ. of Illinois Press 2003)

Documentary Producer: *A House Is Not A Home: Wright or Wrong* (2020)

Professor, Cinema and Television Arts  
Columbia College Chicago  
1104 S. Wabash, Room 601-J  
Chicago, IL 60605  
(773) 699-7227  
msaeedvafa@colum.edu