Book of the Month I

Khaled and Jamila

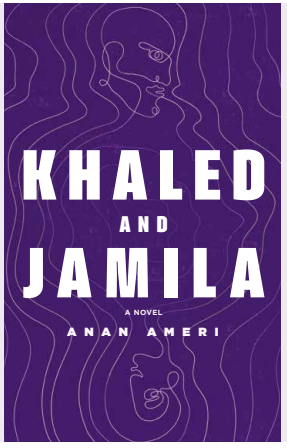
A Novel

By Anan Ameri

Paperback, full-color illustrations, 286 pages, US$18.95

Published by Interlink Books, December 2025





Khaled and Jamila is a sweeping, multigenerational novel by Palestinian American writer Anan Ameri that explores the enduring power of love and family across continents and cultures, asking what, in a divided world, truly lasts. "What in the world is beautiful forever? When disconnection rocks a family, the mistakes of one generation become the heartaches of the next."

The West Bank, Palestine, 1959. Khaled's bossy, hot-tempered father insists that his son go to college in the States so he can learn to help him run his business. Khaled, Arabic for forever, is reluctant to leave his secret, hometown crush. But he's bullied into taking off for Ann Arbor. There he falls for a blue-collar American girl. One thing leads to another, including a daughter named Jamila, Arabic for beautiful. Family mayhem erupts on all sides.

Fast forward to 1984. Jamila has come of age growing up in Ann Arbor during the turbulent sixties and seventies. There she falls for her brother's best friend, Ali, who she's known for years. But even though he's practically a member of the family, Ali is Black. Interracial marriages in the US are still few and far between. Mayhem breaks out again, tearing close ties apart.

And so, what might Sitti, the grandmother conciliator, have to say?

The names and heartaches of Khaled and Jamila ask, what in this mad world is beautiful forever? In Anan Ameri's noisy, impatient, vibrant novel, enduring beauty is the kind of love that family can teach us. And it's the larger, ever-expanding family of connections that love can show us when we learn to let it.

Dr. Anan Ameri is an activist, scholar, author, and the founding director of the Arab American National Museum, and the Palestine Aid Society of America. She has also served as the acting director of the Institute for Jerusalem Studies in Jerusalem and visiting scholar at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Ameri is the recipient of numerous local and national awards, including 2006 Michiganian of the Year and the 2020 Arab American of the Year. In 2016, she was inducted into Michigan Women's Hall of Fame. She is the author of numerous books and articles, including a two-volume memoir: *The Scent of Jasmine: Coming of Age in Jerusalem and Damascus* (Interlink, 2017, winner of the Palestine Book Award) and *The Wandering Palestinian* (2020). *Khaled and Jamila* is her first novel.

Laila Halaby, author of *The Weight of Ghosts,* offers praise: "*Khaled and Jamila* is a deeply authentic story, an important addition to the canon of Palestinian American literature, and a delightful read. We root for this family as a collective and are wowed by the bravery they each exhibit in the name of love."

Susan Muaddi Darraj, author of *Behind You Is the Sea,* states, "Written by one of Arab America's fiercest advocates and humanitarian leaders, this beautiful novel is a heart-wrenching family saga that travels across many decades and even more memories. A must read."

"After writing two memoirs, Anan Ameri has given us a gift with her first novel. *Khaled and Jamila* revolves around the lives of Palestinians. The story begins in the West Bank during the fifties, a few years after the *Nakba*. This book explores family, religion, community, love, war and race. It's a novel in which characters are defined by borders and boundaries that are personal as well as geographical. It's about each new generation finding their own way," comments E. Ethelbert Miller, a writer and literary activist, the 2023 Grammy Finalist for Spoken Word and Poetry "*Khaled and Jamila* is a moving story of intergenerational heartache from Palestine to the US. Anan Ameri weaves together dramatic events connecting the personal to the political, highlighting the hypocrisies and crushing disappointments that course through families. A moving reflection on how we repeat the same mistakes across generations," states Evelyn Alsultany, author of *Broken: The Failed Promise of Muslim Inclusion*"Anan Ameri's novel, *Khaled and Jamila*, is the heartwarming story of a Palestinian American family grappling with the challenges of cross-cultural marriage and intergenerational strife against the backdrop of Palestinian dispossession and the constant search for justice. Ameri takes us on a journey that explores the highs and lows of Khaled's search for belonging and meaning in his adopted home, as well as his relationship with his daughter whose life choices put his values and convictions to the test. A great read!" recommends Diana Abouali, director of the Arab American National Museum

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