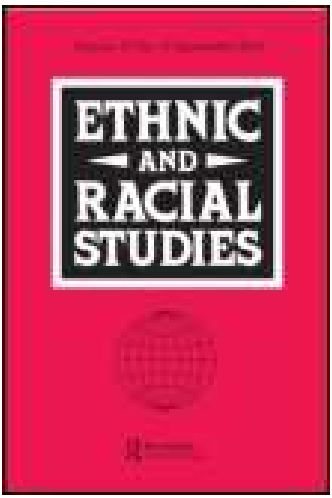

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Ambiguous insiders: an investigation of Arab American invisibility

Nadine Naber

Abstract

This article explores Arab American "invisibility" as a central theme in the historical narrative of Arab immigrants and their descendants in North America. "Invisibility" is primarily addressed in terms of Arab Americans' paradoxical positioning within the US racial/ethnic classification system. The article argues that four central paradoxes shape Arab American identity. The first paradox is that Arab Americans are a complex, diverse community, but are represented as a monolith in popular North American media images. The second paradox is that Arab Americans are simultaneously racialized as whites and as non-whites. The third paradox is that Arab Americans are racialized according to religion (Islam) rather than biology (phenotype). The fourth paradox involves the intersection between religious forms of identity that Arab immigrants bring to the US and racial forms of identity that structure US society. Overall, the article claims that each paradox of Arab American identity reinforces the difficulties associated in classifying this population.

Keywords: Arab American; race; ethnicity; Islam; identity; media.

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me (Ellison 1972, p. 3).

Introduction

Scholars, writers and activists have labelled Arab Americans the 'invisible' racial/ethnic group.[1] As writer Joanna Kadi states,

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> It's tough to name a group when most people aren't aware the group exists . . . that's why . . . I coined this phrase for our community: The Most Invisible of the Invisibles (Kadi 1994, p. xix).

This article addresses Arab American 'invisibility' as a product of factors both external and internal to the Arab American community. In part one, I address 'invisibility' as a central theme in the historical narrative of Arab immigrants and their descendants in North America. Government officials who have classified Arabs and their descendants according to multiple and conflicting categories have, in part, externally structured the social and historical invisibility of Arab Americans. Moreover, the Arab American community's diverse and constantly shifting make-up as well as the fact that Arab Americans themselves have identified according to multiple, conflicting labels shape the internal difficulties associated with classifying this population.

In Part Two, I explore 'invisibility' in terms of Arab Americans' paradoxical positioning within the US racial/ethnic classification system and highlight strategies of Arab American individuals and communities seeking 'visibility' on their own terms.

Part One: Invisibility, a historical narrative[2]

Although most Arabs are Muslim, the Arabs who immigrated to the US during the first period (1880–1945) were predominantly Christians of the Eastern right sects of Greater Syria.[3] The majority were from Mount Lebanon (Naff 1985, p. 3). The early immigrants' central motive for immigration was economic opportunity (Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989; Samhan 1994). While they upheld occupations such as mill work, garment making, and shopkeeping, pack peddling was their most common trade (Naff 1985; Shakir 1997).[4]

Although most early immigrants intended to acquire wealth and return to their country of origin, the majority eventually became permanent US residents (Suleiman 1989; Abraham 1995). No accurate records exist, but by 1916 it is estimated that 100,000 Arabs had immigrated to the US (Naff 1985, p. 2) and by 1924 the Arab population in the US reached 200,000. Scholars approximate that 185,000 were Christians and 5,000 were divided between Muslims and Druze and that of this Christian population, the Maronites claimed 90,000; the Greek Orthodox 85,000; the Greek Catholic 10,000; Protestants 5,000; and 5,000 were unaccounted (Hitti, cited in Ansara 1958, p. 12).

However, the categories of identity that Arab immigrants used to identify themselves did not always correspond with the categories of identity recognized in US society. The early immigrants primarily identified themselves according to family, kinship, village affiliation, and/or religious sect. However, in 1882, because they migrated from an Ottoman

province (Syria), US officials classified them as Turks. As a result, accurate statistical data on this new racial/ethnic group have not existed since the Greeks, Albanians, Armenians and other Eastern groups were all categorized under the Turkish appelative by the state and local authorities (Halaby 1980).

In 1899 immigration officials came to classify the early immigrants as a separate 'Syrian' ethnic group (idem). But even among immigration officials, inconsistencies over 'Syrian' identity in the US prevailed. Although in 1899 the Bureau of Immigration distinguished them from other Turkish subjects, the census of 1910 continued to include 'Syrians' under the category 'Turkey in Asia'. Newspapers and magazines of this period indicate that writers were also in conflict about 'Syrian' identity. They addressed the 'Syrians' as Arabians, Armenians, Assyrians, and/or Turks, and often conflated these categories with the category 'Syrian' (idem). Yet while early immigrants were classified according to a 'foreign' national category by US officials, most did not uphold a concept of either 'Syrian' or 'Arab' nationalism. Most early immigrants were nationally committed to their new home, the United States, even though they remained culturally and socially attached to their homeland (Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989).

A 1914 debate on the racial status of 'Syrians' exemplifies the complex nature of Arab identity in the US during the early period. In 1914, a South Carolina judge ruled that 'while Syrians may be caucasian, they were not "that particular free white person to whom the Act of Congress [1790] had denoted the privilege of citizenship" ' – a privilege he ruled was intended for persons of European descent (Samhan 1994, p. 3). While federal courts questioned the Syrians' citizenship rights, North American nativists of the early twentieth century did not perceive the 'Syrians' to be a significant threat compared to other immigrants because they were small in number and dispersed, and because their involvement in peddling was not particularly threatening to whites who resented the competition of immigrant labour (idem).

But even though the 1914 court decision was reversed in 1923, and even though Syrians were not perceived as a national threat, cases of discrimination against Syrians as non-whites, Catholics and foreigners were reported[5] (idem), particularly between 1914 and 1930, during a period of much anti-immigrant sentiment. Dr. A.J. McLaughlin, for example, the United States health officer at Marine Hospital who feared race degeneracy as a result of the new influx of immigrants, ended a report on immigration by referring to the Syrians as 'parasites in their peddling habits' (Halaby 1980, p. 6). Edward Corsi, the US Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization in the New York district published an account of his experience at Ellis Island in *In the Shadow of Liberty,* in which he stated that the Syrian is a 'doubtful element' of 'Mongolian plasma' attempting to contaminate the pure American stock (idem). Thus, from early on, the

'Syrians' occupied a precarious social position within the US racial system which contributed to what came to be referred to as 'invisibility'. On the one hand, the Syrians' non-European origin received national attention, while on the other hand, they were not targeted by racism and discrimination to the same extent as other communities, who were more distinctly categorized as non-whites, such as the Chinese, blacks, Jews, or Italians.

Significant shifts gradually transpired in the political and demographic make-up of Arab immigration and settlement among the second wave immigrants (post 1945) that complicated Arab immigrants' 'Americanization' process. On the one hand, by mid-century, Arab Americans were one of the best acculturated ethnic groups in America (Naff 1985). A majority of Arab Americans identified as white/Caucasian, anglicized their names, replaced Arabic with English, and restricted their ethnic identity to the private sphere (Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989; Samhan 1994), thereby participating in the process of cultural or ethnic erasure. But on the other hand, after World War II, when Arab nations achieved a certain level of political autonomy from Western rule, Arab immigrants brought new and specific forms of Arab nationalism to the US and began to self-identify according to the classification 'Arab' more than the previous immigrant wave (Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989). The second wave immigrants also differ from the first wave immigrants in terms of including a larger number of Muslim (Abraham 1995, p. 86) and women immigrants (Naff 1985, p. 117). Moreover, this group included refugees displaced by the 1948 Palestine War, others driven by particular political events and many professionals and university students, unlike the previous immigrants.

Scholars characterize the third immigration period (post 1960s) by relaxed immigration laws, resulting in a rapid influx of Arab immigrants to the US.[6] Heightened war and upheaval in the Arab world also contributed to the increase in Arab immigration and the altered immigration patterns during the third period. Overall, the post–1965 immigrants are more religiously and geographically diverse than previous groups and include more Muslims than Christians as well as students, professionals, refugees and entrepreneurs from every Arabic-speaking country and represent every religious sect in the Arab world (Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989). But it is their stronger sense of Arab nationalism, their heightened criticism of US policy, and their weaker civic identification that distinguishes this wave from their predecessors (Samhan 1994). 'The importance of retaining the cultural and religious traditions of their homeland further juxtaposed the new immigrants from their American-born co-ethnics' (idem). The trend towards an intensified political consciousness among the third wave immigrants has been forged by the meeting of political stances opposing Western imperialism that they brought to the US, ranging from pan-Arab sentiments to political Islam

(Lin and Jamal 1997), as well as the hostility and marginalization that Arab immigrants and Arab Americans encounter in North America.

The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 specifically instigated the shift towards a rising ethno-political consciousness among members of the Arab American community (Abraham 1989; Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989). For many Arab Americans, the Arab-Israeli War signified the beginning of their social, political and cultural marginalization. Not only did the war signify the US's confirmed alliance with Israel, but it gave Arab Americans their first taste of exclusion from a role in the political process (Suleiman 1989). This period also entailed the beginning of a war, waged by the US media, against Arabs at home and in the diaspora which has distorted the meaning of the term Arab and further complicated Arab American identity. Following World War II and the declaration of Israel's independence, Arab Americans came to share in the experiences of other racialized US communities who have been marked as being different from and inferior to whites/Caucasians. The media began to portray Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims as a monolithic category and as one of the pre-eminent enemies of the West. This anti-Western anti-American portrayal underlies the support of the American public for US cultural and economic domination and military intervention in the Arab world.

Heightened awareness of political conflict between the US and the Arab world, their experiences of social and political marginalization, and the 1960s' ethos of ethnic revival in the US (Zogby 1990; Aswad and Bilge 1996; Lin and Jamal 1997) culminated in the development of a distinct Arab American identity. After the Arab-Israeli war, many Americans of Arab descent, who previously identified themselves according to their country of origin, their religious affiliation, or as generically 'American' united according to the label 'Arab American' and established numerous pan-ethnic organizations, such as the Arab-American University Graduates, the National Association of Arab Americans, the American Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the Arab American Institute.[7]

The development of a pan-Arab American identity in the post 1960s period demonstrates that, whereas pre-1960s' generations tended to lose their identity to 'Americanization', growing numbers of the new generations are leaning towards an ethnically distinct identity. The post 1960s' unification according to the pan-ethnic label 'Arab American' can be understood as a political response to the process by which the state and the media came to group such geographically, culturally and religiously diverse persons according to a singular label 'Arab', while attaching to it mythological, derogatory meanings. By building coalition around the label 'Arab American', activists redefined the term 'Arab' on their own terms and deployed their racial/ethnic identity as a political strategy for claiming their rights.

But as Arab Americans attempt to define their ethnic identity, opposing forces simultaneously erase Arab Americans from the racial/ethnic map by distorting the meaning of the term 'Arab' and obstructing Arab American participation in the political process. Samhan names this form of exclusion 'political racism' in which anti-Arab attitudes and behaviour have their roots, 'not in the traditional motives of structurally excluding a group perceived as inferior, but in politics' (Samhan 1987, p. 11). What distinguishes this new racism (which is based upon politics) from traditional forms of racism, (which are based upon biology or phenotype) is that Arab Americans who choose to be active in Palestinian or Arab issues or organizations may be subjected to political racism, whereas those who choose not to be politically active may not. Jabara agrees that 'today we are seeing a totally new phenomenon . . . premeditated, calculated attacks, not aimed at individual Arab Americans but at the political activity of Arab Americans' (Jabara, cited in Hasso 1987).

The development of the label, 'Arab American', as a form of resistance to anti-Arab racism in the post 1960s era has meant rising tensions between Arab Americans and the majority US culture. 'The confused identity thrust upon the first wave emerged in the later immigrants as a confused identity of another type: one that perceives the cultural, political and religious values of their homeland in tension with the majority culture of their adopted country' (Samhan 1994, p. 4).

This confused identity, I have suggested, has developed in the context of a range of historical circumstances. The shift from predominantly Christian to predominantly Muslim immigrants is one of many factors that render the historical question of whether Arab Americans should be considered white/Caucasian or a non-white minority still unresolved. While Christians have more easily built communities around white American Christians, Muslims tend to be perceived as outsiders to the white American mainstream. Islam, religiously and culturally, generally conflicts with the white mainstream 'American' culture more than Christianity does. Moreover, as political conflicts have risen between the US and the Arab world since mid-century, the Arab American community has come to occupy various social paradoxes that further complexify their racial/ethnic identity and exacerbate the problem of Arab American 'invisibility'.

Part Two: The paradoxical identity of Arab Americans

The first paradox: Although Arabs belong to a multiplicity of religious affiliations and emigrate from diverse regions, the idea that Arab can be defined as a monolithic category persists in popular North American images (in TV shows, films and the news media)

When this paradox displays itself in Arab Americans' everyday lives, it comes to mean that violence, racism and discrimination against

Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim individuals are acceptable behaviours.

Suad Joseph (in press) explains that when she teaches courses on the Middle East, she starts by arguing that it is impossible to find any agreement on a definition of Arab. She writes,

> There are Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Kuwaitis, Yemenis, Saudi Arabians, Bahreinis, Qataris, Dubains, Egyptians, Libyans, Tunisians, Moroccans, Algerians, Sudanese, Eritreans, Mauritanians; there are Maronites, Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Jews, Sunnis, Shi'a, Druz, Sufis, Alwaties, Nestorians, Assyrians, Copts, Chaldeans, Bahais; there are Berbers, Kurds, Armenians, bedu, gypsies and many others with different languages, religions, ethnic and national identifications and cultures who are all congealed as Arab in popular representation whether or not those people may identify as Arab.

Furthermore, the categories Arab and Middle Eastern are conflated in popular representations. As a result, linguistic, cultural, racial and historical differences between non-Arab Middle Easterners, such as Turks and Persians, and Arab Middle Easterners are erased (Joseph, in press; Naber, in press). By conflating the categories Middle Eastern and Muslim, popular images also erasing the reality that the majority of Muslims are neither Arab nor Middle Eastern, but Indonesian, Malaysian, Filippino, Indian and Chinese (Joseph, in press). Joseph argues that 'these sets of conflations are glossed on to Arabs in America, again covering the historical fact that almost all Arabs in America were, until very recently, Christians' (idem).

Conflations of the categories Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim are not new, nor are they specific to US images. Rather, they are rooted in a history of Western prejudice against Islam (Said 1978). Prior to the rise of Islam, the Byzantines viewed Arabs as primitive and sexually immoral savages. The Byzantines' views of Arabs structured those of Western Europe and constituted part of the Western image of Arabs during the rise of Islam. The dark and evil picture of Islam originally painted by the Byzantines came to dominate the attitudes of Western Europeans and was later transposed to the Americas by European colonists (Suleiman 1989, p. 257).

Moreover, conflations of the categories Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim are not random, or irrational; nor are they based on ignorance. Rather, they are products of a systematic process that scholars refer to as neocolonialism (Shohat and Stam 1994). Neocolonialism employs contemporary ideological [that is, media portrayals/popular narratives] or economic strategies to ignore, displace, unravel, justify, uphold and explain racism, genocide, sexism, gender inequality, nationalism,

colonialism and imperialism, as needed (Buescher and Ono 1996). Neocolonialist media images, for example, portray a dominated group as a homogeneous mass with no differences among them and then characterize them as inherently different from and inferior to the dominant group. As a result, these images serve to justify and maintain colonialist, imperialist and/or racist practices against the dominated group. 'Neocolonialism pretends to offer a kinder version of present global economics [politics] than past colonialism; hence, its presence may at times be quite subtle' (idem).

I use the term 'neocolonialism' to name the process by which media images 1) erase differences among Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims; 2) portray a fixed boundary of difference between the 'Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim' and the 'white American'; 3) create an imaginary hierarchical relationship between the superior 'white American' and the inferior 'Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim'; and 4) serve to justify US intervention in Middle East affairs. I add gender to my analysis by arguing that imaginary portrayals of gender relations among both the dominated and the dominant group are used to further justify lived colonialist, imperialist, racist and patriarchal practices.

To explore the process through which the term 'Arab American' comes to be incomprehensible, I investigate media images that conflate the categories Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim. I argue that Arab Americans are primarily associated with three different types of media images. These media-types reinforce the idea of an 'Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim' generic and inferior Other. The first media-type portrays generic Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim men as irrationally violent, particularly towards women. The second media-type portrays generic Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women as a supra-oppressed group of women in comparison to white American women, who are idealized to represent equality, democracy and justice. The third media-type is that of the 'absent Arab woman' (Saliba 1994). This image juxtaposes Arab men with white women, while Arab women are entirely absent from the scene.

The first media-type can be seen in episodes of the TV shows *Alice* (1980s) and *Trapper John MD* (1980s); the documentary *Death of a Princess* (1980); the Disney movie *Aladdin* (1992); and the *New York Times* articles on Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] (1993–96). These representations portray Arab women as victims of either Islam or Arab culture's imaginary sexually abusive patterns.[8] Repeated images of excessively oppressed Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women justify Western intervention in Middle East affairs on the ground that, according to these images, Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim society is cruel and backward and therefore in need of Westernization/civilization.

The second media-type portrays a supra-oppressed and inferior group of Arab women as compared with white American women, who are depicted as the most liberated and superior group of women on earth.

Films such as *Protocol* (1984), *Harem* (1985) and *Not Without my Daughter* (1991) exemplify this media-type. In these films, generic Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women are portrayed as a homogeneous mass, with no differences among them, whereas a singular white American heroine acts not only as an individual but as liberator. The Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women are oppressed; the white American heroine is liberated. The distinction between the mass of Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women and the singular white American woman renders Arabs inferior in comparison with what is portrayed to be white American superiority.

Saliba (1994) explains the 'absent Arab woman' or the third media-type in terms of popular images of the Gulf War. For example, she argues that most newspaper articles on the Gulf War portrayed white American women in the military in comparison with Arab and white American men, while Arab women were completely absent from the scene. I add that the 'absent Arab woman' (idem), can be seen in the films *The Sheik* (1921), *Raiders of the Lost Arc* (1983), *Sahara* (1983), *True Lies* (1994) and *GI Jane* (1998). In these portrayals, Arab men are depicted as barbaric terrorists as compared with civilized white American women and absent Arab women. Arab women's absence from male spaces creates the idea of Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim women's secondary social status compared to white American women who transgress male spaces. This media-type portrays women's oppression as rooted in an oppressive Islamic culture which controls women in contrast to white American culture which produces women who are in control of themselves.[9]

But anti-Arab media images that perpetuate the idea of a generic Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy are not isolated from lived experience. The premieres of anti-Arab TV shows and films systematically coincide with specific US government interventions in the Middle East region. Just before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, for example, the film *Harum Scarum* portrayed a rich, corrupt Arab sheik (Elvis Presley) tying a woman to a stake. Films such as *Harum Scarum* have reinforced the US government's use of Arab 'backwardness' as a justification for supporting Israel.

The anti-Arab imaging in *Alice*, *Trapper John MD* and *Death of a Princess* on television and the films *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, *Sahara*, *Protocol* and *Harem* similarly reinforced US government interests in the Middle East during the 1980s – when the Iranian revolution devastated the US government (1981); when the US intervened in Lebanon (1982); when US Arab oil wars continued; and when the US bombed Libya (1986).

The 1990s brought the Gulf War, continued US support of Israeli occupation of Palestine, Israel's 'accidental' bombing of Lebanon (1996), the repeated US bombing of Iraq and the US bombings of Sudan and Afghanistan (1998). The 1990s also brought movies that perpetuated anti-Arab images of an Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy and

justified US intervention in the Middle East, including *Not Without my Daughter* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *True Lies* (1994) and *G.I. Jane* (1998).

Recently, anti-Arab media images have taken a new turn, signified by 20th Century Fox's film, *The Siege* (1998), in which the generic backward Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enacts violence in the US rather than in his home country. By bringing the Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy into a North American setting, *The Siege* intensifies the idea that 'Arabs' are a threat to US security and that 'Americans' need to protect themselves from the 'Arab enemy'. American Muslim and Arab Americans, who have seen portions of the film, fear *The Siege* will 'feed suspicion and hatred of Arabs and Muslims in the United States' (Goodstein 1998). Although ADC made serious efforts to engage in constructive dialogue with 20th Century Fox and suggested several ways in which the perpetuation of anti-Arab stereotypes could have been avoided, Fox met this concern with disregard (Maksoud 1998).

Hala Maksoud, ADC president, responded to Fox's disregard towards the Arab American community's disquiet over *The Siege*. Her response represents a consensus among many Arab American activists that anti-Arab media images not only contribute to Arab American invisibility by erasing who Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims are, as well as the differences between these categories, but they also help to reinforce the standard that violence and discrimination against Arabs and Arab Americans are acceptable practices. In Maksoud's letter to Fox, she stated,

> The film is insidious, dangerous and incendiary. It is bound to have a negative impact on the millions of Arab Americans and Muslims in this country. It incites hate which leads to harassment, intimidation, discrimination and even hate crimes against people of Arab descent (Maksoud 1998).

Members of the Arab American community expressed concern over *The Siege* because attacks against Arab American individuals and community organizations tend to occur in the context of US crises in the Middle East and the media images that sensationalize them. After the 1985 TWA hijacking in Lebanon, members of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee's [ADC] Roxbury, MA, branch found a pipe bomb in front of their office and the ADC's West Coast regional director Alex Odeh was assassinated (ADC 1986a). After the Odeh murder, ADC closed its New York City office whose director, Bonnie Rimawi, had been harassed and threatened for months. But 'anti-Arab violence and harassment, are quickly forgotten or have gone largely unnoticed in the American mainstream' (Abraham 1989, p. 20). The unresolved Alex Odeh murder, for example, 'would have faded completely from memory had not Arab Americans and others continued to press the government to keep the investigation open' (Abraham 1989).

Abdeen Jabara, who was elected president of ADC in 1986, adds that in the aftermath of Odeh's assassination 'the silence on the part of public opinion makers – politicians, celebrities, religious and labour leaders – was deafening'. He adds that 'Arab Americans strained to find any public outcry over this brutal murder' (ADC 1986a). Jabara contends that the motivation of these attacks was to halt the development of Arab American political organization and to exclude Arab Americans from the larger political process by instilling fear in the one Arab-American organization that strives towards the development of a mass-based membership organization operating within the larger American society (idem). According to Jabara, the media and public officials' lack of concern reflected the weakness of both Arab American organization and the indifference, ignorance or malice of the media and the public officials (idem). The Alex Odeh murder is but one example of the push-pull effect in which Arab American individuals and community organizations strive for 'visibility', while dominant groups mark their issues insignificant and non-existent, and thereby render Arab Americans 'invisible' by excluding them from the larger American society.

Like the Odeh murder, numerous attacks against Arab Americans have coincided with US interests or involvement in a Middle East crisis. Attacks and beatings against Arab students in the US and violations against Arab Americans were reported when the US bombed Libya in 1986. The 1985–1986 period also included the al-Faruqi murders in which a Palestinian American Islamic scholar, who was outspoken in his views regarding the Palestine question, and his wife were killed in their suburban Philadelphia home (ADC 1986b); attacks against ADC offices in Boston and Washington, arson at the United Palestinian Appeal office in Washington, numerous cases of vandalism and attacks against local Arab community offices and businesses; violence against Arabs, Muslims, and other Middle Easterners in Dearborn, (Michigan), Houston, Chicago Syracuse, Philadelphia and Brooklyn (Abraham 1989, p. 20); and the bombing and destruction of a Houston mosque (ADC 1986a). In 1985, FBI director William Webster stated that Arab Americans and those supportive of 'Arab points of view' had entered a 'zone of danger' (ADC 1986a).

The reality of Webster's statement intensified, particularly for the 'LA 8', the seven Palestinians and one Kenyan who were arrested in Los Angeles on 26 January 1987 and publicly labelled 'a terrorist threat' even though they were engaged in legitimate activities protected by the First Amendment. Although the FBI dropped charges that they were terrorists, the FBI used section 241 of the McCarthy era McCarren-Walter Act to state that aliens can be deported for the possession and distribution of literature that promotes world Communism (a section of the law has never been used in its thirty-five year history) (McDonnell 1987, p. 5). Initially, the LA 8 were suspected 'terrorists' because they were

connected to an organization that the US government classifies as 'terrorist', even though the LA 8 only supported the organization's humanitarian efforts (Eversley 1998). An Arab American publication reports that common activities among the LA 8 are Palestinian folkdancing and attendence at Arab American community events. None the less, the LA 8 were treated as a maximum security risk and held in prison. Khader Hamide was in solitary confinement for the first thirty-six hours and all the detainees, confined two to a small cell, spent twenty-three days in maximum confinement, were shackled even when they were escorted under guard to talk to their attorneys, and were not allowed to see their relatives (McDonnell 1987, p. 5).

Although the LA 8 were released from prison almost a month after their arrest and have successfully fought repeated deportation attempts by the Federal Government through claiming selective enforcement, the Justice Department continues to fight back (Eversley 1998). The Supreme Court heard their case in November 1998 and responded to the LA 8's claim that selective enforcement was being used against them by deciding that 'an illegal alien has no right to protest selective prosecution' and that 'the US government has the right to target illegal aliens for any reason, even if only to harass the nation that they come from (Nawash 1999). As of July 1999 the case is still pending. It will be heard next in immigration court (no date has been set) even though immigration courts are not allowed to consider constitutional matters. This means that the trial will only hear what the LA 8 were accused of while the LA 8 will not be allowed to rely upon the First Amendment in their defence.

Whether the LA 8 are deported or not, this incident and a series of events that followed it represent the US government's attempt to instil fear in Arab Americans and the general American population so that they will avoid participation in Arab and Arab American community affairs. On 24 February 1987, an anonymous phone caller told the Civil Liberties Union that if attorney Paul Hoffman was representing the LA 8 then he should be careful before lifting the bonnet of his car because it might blow up in his face. Maxine Shehadeh, the wife of detainee Michel Shehadeh, was fired from her job as director of a child care centre for a Dominguez Hill firm, labelling her an unstable employee (McDonnell 1987). In response to phone calls from Arab Americans who were concerned that they could be arrested for going to Arab dances and programmes, Mark Rosenbauem, an ACLU attorney stated, 'What the US government is saying to Arabs is Shut UP or Get Out of this Country' (McDonnell 1987, p. 7).[10]

Not only do the LA 8 court proceedings signify the denial of these eight individuals' civil rights, but they also represent the 'political racism' (Samhan 1987) and discrimination practised against Arabs as a generic category, who are perceived to be associated with the generic label

Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy. ADC reports that a Justice Department contingency plan was revealed during the LA 8 court proceedings. It distilled fear in the Arab American community by providing a blueprint for the mass arrest of 10,000 Middle Eastern residents of the US. The plan also included provisions for detention in camps in Louisiana and Florida and the possible deportation of Middle Eastern residents (Joseph, in press).

But it is the FBI's continuing harassment of Arab Americans, that began, in part, with Nixon's 'Operation Boulder' (1972),[11] that particularly chills 'Arab students, and Arab American community members, in the exercise of their constitutional rights, and is not related to the discovery and prosecution of criminal activity' (ADC 1986c). FBI tactics involve phone calls and visits to the individual, – whether they are US citizens, resident aliens of Arab descent, or non-Arab Americans sympathetic to Arab causes – as well as to their relatives, neighbours, friends and employers (ADC 1986c, p. 2). 'Invariably, no criminal charge is involved and the individuals are being investigated because of their origin and/or political beliefs' (idem). The harassment is primarily intended to obtain non-criminal information about pro-Arab political activities; to obstruct interaction and cooperation between Arab political activists and other segments of North American society; and to diminish support for Arab American causes by creating an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and isolation (ADC 1986a, p. 4). According to ADC, Arab Americans are regularly harassed for exercising their First Amendment's rights, including voicing their political views, belonging to American Arab organizations, organizing or participating in demonstrations in support of imprisoned Arabs and urging a more balanced US role in the Middle East (ADC 1986c, p. 4).

Since the US and Iraq went to war on 16 January 1991, a dramatic increase in the number of attacks involving physical violence such as arson, bombings and physical assaults against Arab Americans has taken place (Joseph, in press). Moreover, during the Gulf War era, a *Sacramento Bee* newspaper article reported that US Representative Norman Mineta referred to the 1987 contingency plan that the FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service drew up to detain Arab Americans at a camp in Oakdale, LA, in the event of war with certain Arab states. Mineta said that the plan could still be initiated to 'round up' Arab Americans (*The Sacramento Bee*, 24 January 1991, A9, cited in Joseph; in press). Around the country, Islamic mosques were broken into or bombed, shots were fired into the homes of known Arab Americans, a taxi driver in Forth Worth, Texas, was attacked and killed, some Muslim schools and Islamic societies were vandalized, and hate calls were received by Arab Americans throughout the Gulf War period (idem). Jamin Raskin, a writer for *Nation* magazine, argued in a February 1991 article that Arab Americans are the Japanese of 1991 (Raskin 1991,

p. 117) and ADC has reported that 'Arab Americans proved to be the domestic casualties of the war'.

In the late 1990s violence and discrimination against individuals and community organizations in the US who are perceived to fit the generic label 'Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim enemy' continues. A 1998 *New York Times* article reported that there were more than two dozen immigrants around the country who were facing deportation or exclusion from the United States largely on secret evidence that they are not permitted to see and that comes from people who are unidentified. The Federal Government defends the use of secret evidence in such cases because they involve allegations of association with terrorists, but not actual charges of terrorism. The article added that all the twenty-five men being accused in those cases were of Arab descent or were Muslims. The article quoted Hala Maksoud, president of the ADC who stated that this had the smell of 'human and civil rights somehow being suspended when it comes to Muslims' (Smothers 1998).

The reports of violence and discrimination against Arab Americans demonstrate that the conflation of the categories Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim, which obliterates who Arab Americans really are, often manifests itself in the forms of racism, discrimination and violence against Arab Americans in their everyday lives. When the US attacks an Arab country, anyone who may be identified as an Arab, Muslim, or Middle Easterner living in the US may be targeted as a terrorist-enemy. I argue that this first paradox, in which the diverse Arab American community is lumped together as a generic Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim contributes to the invisibility of the Arab American community. Anti-Arab imaging removes all trace of the diverse composition of the Arab American community. The resulting attacks against individuals and community organizations instil fear in Arab Americans and lead many Arab Americans to conceal their ethnic identity and avoid participation in Arab American community organizations, thereby halting the community's political development and silencing its voice within the larger American society.

The second paradox: Arab Americans are racially white, but not quite

The US is a society that grants persons their citizenship and their rights primarily according to their position within the US racial system.[12] According to the US Census Bureau, Arab Americans are defined as whites and/or Caucasians. However, in many social contexts they are perceived and defined as non-whites. A heated issue being currently debated by Arab American scholars and activists is whether Arab Americans should seek minority non-white status or remain classified as whites/Caucasians. But the question of Arab American's racial/ethnic classification is no simple matter.

While many Arab Americans phenotypically (that is, hair texture or dark skin) pass as white, some live racially marked lives. Others are racially marked by choice, because they consciously decide to self-identify as 'non-whites' or as 'persons of colour' to distinguish themselves from European American whites and to align themselves politically with other racially marked groups, such as blacks, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and/or Chicanos(as)/Mexicans. They employ the label 'non-white' or 'people of colour' as a political strategy for claiming their rights in the face of racial/ethnic or religious discrimination. Moreover, many Arab Americans differentiate their histories, cultures and religions from European Americans and other racial/ethnic groups by identifying as specifically 'Arab', 'Arab American', 'Middle Eastern', or 'Muslim'. These Arab Americans are engaged in a process of identity affirmation. That is, they are reclaiming and redefining the meaning of 'Arab' 'Arab American' 'Middle Eastern' or 'Muslim' on their own terms, in the face of the state's and the media's distortion of their identities. On the contrary, few Arab Americans introduce themselves according to non-Arab racial/ethnic labels, such as Greek, Italian, Puerto Rican, or generically American to avoid the stigmatization often associated with the label 'Arab.'

However, Arab Americans do not always possess the power to choose 'to pass', or 'not to pass', as white. North Americans who associate Arabs with media images of the Arab world, the Middle East, or Islam often perceive Arab Americans, whether they are phenotypically marked or not, as different from and inferior to what is considered 'white'. When an Arab American's ethnic or religious identity is made public, media-created myths of Arabs frequently cast a shadow over their lived experiences and their identities. Especially during a political crisis between the US and the Arab world, the US media (including newspapers, TV shows, TV news, Hollywood and films) tends to portray Arab men as terrorist enemies and Arab women as being pathologically oppressed by their men, their society, their religion and their culture. But when no allusion to an Arab or Muslim identity is made, those who 'can pass' as whites return to their neutral, yet privileged position as 'white Americans'.

While Arab Americans (like other racial/ethnic communities) have been forced into the binary classification 'either entirely white or entirely non-white', differences within the population indicate that Arab Americans do not quite fit into the US's either/or racial labelling system. Whereas some Arab Americans have blonde hair and blue eyes, others have crimpy hair and very dark skin. Some members of the Arab American community, (like members of other communities) can be classified as two overlapping categories at one and the same time. Should a Moroccan, for example, be classified as Middle Eastern or African American? Although many social scientists writing before the 1940s argued that 'race' as a biological formation exists, most contemporary scholars agree

that 'race' is not a biological, but a social and political construction (Frankenburg 1994; Omi and Winant 1994; Harrison 1995). Since Arab Americans, as a population, do not biologically fit into any one fixed racial category (as is the case with other racial/ethnic groups), the debate about whether Arab Americans should be classified as 'white' or according to a separate racial/ethnic category can then be assessed in terms of the community's social and political positioning rather than their biological make-up.

The third paradox: 'All Arab Americans are Muslims, therefore, All Arab Americans are racially inferior to whites'

For most racial/ethnic groups, the media associate backwardness and inferiority with phenotype. A racist viewpoint, for example, would refer to African Americans as inferior to whites because they have dark skin or crimpy hair. Although some Arab Americans experience racism based upon phenotype, they may also experience another, unique form of racism. Many media portrayals that depict Arabs as inferior to whites are based on what I refer to as 'the racialization of religion'. In other words, Arab Americans become racially marked on the assumption that all Arabs are Muslim and that Islam is a cruel, backward and uncivilized religion.

The corrupt men in the films *Not Without My Daughter* and *Protocol,* for example, are portrayed as barbaric, primarily because they are Muslim. They make references to their Muslim identity as they enact uncivilized violence and victimize women. Throughout the films, the abusive treatment of women is sensationalized to the extreme and blamed on Islam. Hala Maksoud (ADC president), in her letter to Twentieth Century Fox, regarding their film *The Siege,* states that a clear and direct link is made between Islamic religious practices and terrorism. Indeed, images of a Muslim man washing his hands before prayer, as millions of Muslims do every day, precede acts of terror in the film. This firmly reinforces fear of Muslims in the viewer's mind. Without enumerating them, the film is packed with stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims as violent, unscrupulous and barbarous (ADC 1998).

The media's use of Islam, as a device to racialize Arabs as being distinct from and inferior to white Americans can be explained in terms of liberal humanist perspectives on religious politics. Liberal humanist discussions of religious politics make the assumption that religion is in opposition to modern liberal political structures (Mahmood and Reynolds 1995, p. iv). Non-Western religions, [specifically Islam] are especially regarded in antagonism to what is understood as modern (Asad 1995). With the global ascendancy of the West there came the institutionalization of secular spheres within European discourses. Islamic communities (or revival movements) that are not conditioned by the secular

tradition have been defined as anti-modern and degenerate as compared to secular societies that are defined as modern and progressive. Many liberal humanist writers, for example, have referred to religious movements in Iran and Egypt as pathological (Asad 1995, p. 1). I would suggest that media images exploit this liberal humanist position as part of the process of rendering Islam as anti-modern, and creating and maintaining an ideological hierarchy between white Americans and the entire Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim world.

The use of Islam as a means of racializing Arab Americans further complicates and confuses Arab American identity. I contend that it is primarily the distorted use of Islam, rather than phenotype, that marks Arab Americans as non-white Others. Thus, an additional factor that shapes Arab American invisibility is that Arab Americans do not quite fit the US media's racial scale because they are primarily racialized through religion rather than phenotype.

The Fourth Paradox: The intersection of religion and race

The social structure that Arab immigrants bring to the US creates yet another paradox in the development of Arab American identities. Many Arab immigrants bring a social structure to the US that organizes differences between social groups according to religious categories (Lavie 1995). In Arab countries, new acquaintances commonly ask one another, 'Are you Muslim or Christian?' But in the US, difference is primarily organized according to racial/ethnic categories. New acquaintances commonly ask one another, 'What are you, white, or a person of colour?'

The social structure, which upholds religion as the primary marker of social difference is rooted in the Ottoman period of Middle East history. During the Ottoman period, before the nation-state (roughly the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries) Islam was a mediating force that created religious categories that transcended ethnicity and organized social difference (Rodrigue 1995, p. 82). The Ottomans established the fundamental categories of Muslim and non-Muslim and each category had multiple subgroups. Although other groups existed, the differences between a Muslim and a non-Muslim were the predominant categories that structured social arrangements. Each religious sect or rite was organized into 'millets' and civil rights were assigned and administered by religious sect or rite (Younis 1995, p. 11). Consequently, the most important public discourse was one which defined groups and identities in terms of religious categories (Rodrigue 1995, pp. 84–87).

A focus on the pre-Ottoman and the post-Ottoman periods is important to our understanding of contemporary Arab immigration because despite the emergence of the nation-state, structures that organize difference according to religion have not disappeared in the Middle East and continue to structure Middle Eastern societies. Middle Eastern

immigrants bring these structures with them when they immigrate to the US (Lavie 1995).

Research on the early Arab immigrant experience (Hitti 1924; Kayal 1975; Haddad 1981; Naff 1985; Suleiman and Abu-Laban 1989) reveals that immigrants identified themselves more in terms of their religious sect (and their family and/or village of origin) than they did in terms of their ethnic, racial, or national attachments. Philip and Joseph Kayal, for example, in their detailed study of the Syrian-Lebanese in America, demonstrate that the Church has been the most important source of identity for Melkites and Maronites in the US (Kayal and Kayal, cited in Suleiman 1987). Likewise, research on Arab Muslim immigrants indicates that upon arrival, most of them, like Christians, tend to identify primarily according to religious sect or village rather than race or ethnicity (Naff 1985, p. 248).

But for Arab immigrants, the organization of difference according to religious categories has conflicted with the US social structure that organizes difference according to race/ethnicity. Although early immigrants, for example, defined themselves in terms of their religious sect, US immigration officials defined them in terms of racial/ethnic labels, such as 'Turks' or 'Other Asians'. I suggest that the categories of race/ethnicity and religion overlap in the identities of Arab Americans and contribute to confusion over their identity. Although many Arab immigrants upon arrival, primarily identified according to religious sect, they have learnt that some racial/ethnic identification has had to be made (Suleiman 1987). But for Arab Americans, who have been labelled 'Turks', 'Other Asians', 'Syrians', 'Arabs', 'Muslims', 'Middle Easterners', 'white/Caucasians', and/or 'non-whites', racial/ethnic identification is no simple matter.

While I have argued that the paradoxes of Arab American identity are multiple, the dilemma facing the Arab American community is clear. By occupying a confusing status within the US racial/ethnic system, Arab Americans have been rendered 'invisible'. But if 'visibility' requires that Arab Americans should occupy a more distinct place within the US racial/ethnic system, what place should they occupy? Should Arab Americans seek status as a separate racial/ethnic group, or remain classified as white?

Each paradox of Arab American identity reinforces the dilemma of Arab Americans' racial/ethnic status. In my discussion of the first paradox, I argued that the mass media's conflation of the categories Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim distorts the meaning of 'Arab'. But in distorting who Arabs really are, they mark Arab Americans as different from and inferior to whites and justify racial attacks against Arab Americans. When I addressed the second paradox, I argued that the US census classifies Arab Americans as whites and that many Arab Americans identify and pass as whites. However, the media portray Arab

Americans as non-whites and some Arab Americans do not pass as whites, or they self-identify as non-whites. Like the first paradox, then, the second involves a dilemma of racial/ethnic classification.

In my analysis of the third paradox, the question of Arab Americans' unique and therefore confusing racial/ethnic status was brought to light. I argued that Arab Americans are 'racialized through religion' rather than phenotype. I suggested that when Arab Americans, whether they are Christian, Muslim, Druze, or Jewish, are associated with the media's image of a generic Islam, they are perceived as non-white Others. Finally, within the fourth paradox, in which categories of religion meet categories of race, Arab Americans also face a dilemma of racial/ethnic identification. After immigration to the US, although they primarily identify according to religious sect (and family and/or village of origin), they realize that some sort of racial/ethnic identification has to be made. But the question what that racial/ethnic identification should be remains heatedly debated among Arab Americans.

Part Three: Visibility/coming to voice

Although US social categories render Arab Americans invisible on a socio-structural level, in everyday life, individual Arab American actors gain visibility by making themselves heard or seen on their own particular terms, between the contradictions that bind them. In developing an understanding of the factors that render persons or communities invisible and exclude them from participation in the larger society, many university students and community organizers find room for movement, in the cracks of the social system. They choose speaking up over silence and demand recognition over erasure. They maintain their language and their Arabic names; they call for equal rights and justice; they educate non-Arabs about who Arabs really are; and they teach their children. They are not embarrassed or afraid to identify as Arabs in public spaces nor are they afraid to post fliers on telegraph poles in broad daylight announcing future events relevant to Arab Americans. These Arab Americans make choices that 'allow [them] a measure of resistance against the larger patterns that map [them], a measure of self-creation' (Majaj 1994, p. 83).

Although the voices and actions of individuals and community groups that make Arab Americans more visible in everyday life contribute to Arab American visibility, some scholars and activists suggest that additional socio-structural changes must be made to address the problem of 'invisibility'. Because rights are granted according to racial/ethnic categories in the US, and because the US organizes social differences according to racial/ethnic categories, many Arab Americans contend that the issue of Arab American 'invisibility' must be dealt with in terms of Arab Americans' status within the US census' racial/ethnic classification

system. As long as Arab Americans are classified as whites, many scholars argue that they will remain relatively invisible and vulnerable in American society (AAI 1994). What is necessary, according to some Arab Americans, is for Arab Americans to obtain federal status as a separate, non-white racial/ethnic group. However, not all Arab Americans agree with obtaining a separate category, indicating that the Arab American community as a whole is still in the process of defining itself and reaching a consensus on who they are and how they should be defined.[13]

Conclusion

The US's racializing system, which is reinforced by the US media, has racialized Arab Americans according to a unique and contradictory process, resulting in their white but not quite racial/ethnic status. The Arab American community's internal diverse and constantly changing make-up contributes to the complexities of classifying this population.

In addition to these factors, ongoing change in the make-up of the Arab American community necessitates both new methods for conceptualizing the community and further research on Arab American identity. The growing number of Muslim immigrants, in a context where Arab is already associated with Islam, places Arab Christians, who were previously a majority, in a new and different position within their community. If the distortion of Arab identity is produced through the association of Arab with Islam, will a trend to disassociate themselves from the category Arab and associate more with the 'white' classification develop among Arab Christians?

New economic factions within the community may alter Arab American individuals' identification with either the 'white' or the separate Arab or Middle Eastern racial/ethnic classification. The theorization that 'class whitens' means that economically mobile members of a given community enact white cultural practices while denying their own more than members of the working class. While many Arab Americans have built communities within white middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods, an increasing number are entering the working class (Aswad and Gray 1996, pp. 223–41) . History indicates that movement into the working class, particularly among US born children of immigrant parents, leads to heightened political consciousness and identification with the traditions of other racially and/or economically oppressed groups rather than mainstream, white middle-class traditions. The Arab American community has reached a level of settlement within larger US cities, such as Detroit, where research can be conducted that explores whether the children of Arab immigrants tend to orbit around the traditions of whites or non-whites. Arab Americans' identification with a white or non-white identity will be altered depending on which American traditions Arab Americans come to orbit around.

Moreover, Arab Americans' racial/ethnic associations could be affected by changes in population size. Will the Arab American community's population size increase so that it factionalizes across class and racial lines in ways that are similar within larger immigrant racial/ethnic communities (that is, Latino, Asian American) or will an increase in population size lead to increased social and political cohesion and identification among Arab Americans as a separate racial/ethnic group? If there are no major shifts in population size, will the Arab American community develop in ways that are similar to the small East Indian communities where families remain tight and class distinctions hardly take shape?

While research is needed to assess how these changes might manifest themselves over time, the pressing issue of civil rights' violations against Arab immigrants and Americans already forms Arab Americans' relationship to the US racial/ethnic classification system and proves that denying Arab Americans their political rights has become an acceptable US practice. This clearly distinguishes Arab Americans from European American whites. Arab Americans have not (yet) been racially victimized to the same degree as other communities who have a history of racial oppression within the United States, by the United States government (Asian Americans, African Americans, Chicanos(as)/Mexicans, and Native Americans). But particularly since the Gulf War, violence, racism and discrimination against Arab Americans have rapidly increased.

Consequently, the Arab American community faces pressing new challenges. Community members who pass as white or who avoid participation in Arab American issues or politics may not ever feel the effects of their new positioning as the 'enemy Other'. But how will the community grapple with the crisis that sectors of the community who identify with Arab causes or organizations are denied their political rights and taken advantage of politically? And how will Arab Americans deal with the problem of racial discrimination that community members, who do not pass as white due to their appearance or their association with Islam, experience? Will Arab Americans come together as a whole to defend the rights of sections of their community? Or will Arab Americans continue to straddle the white/non-white boundary until *The Siege* becomes a reality and any persons of Middle Eastern descent can be placed in detention camps like the Japanese? What type of racial/ethnic label might position Arab Americans so that they can adequately address contemporary social and political challenges? Although it is up to Arab Americans themselves to map their future, solving the problem of 'invisibility' must be approached with the US structure for granting group rights in mind.

In the US the right to political participation is granted to members of identifiable/visible racial and ethnic communities. This organizing system has placed individuals who want to be recognized/visible but do not want

to acquiesce to North American racial divisions between a paradox (Ono 1998). However, diverse communities who have been racialized by the state and the media, who have been silenced from the larger American society and who have been denied their political rights, have acquiesced to racial divisions and identified according to a racial/ethnic label (that is, Asian American) for the purpose of claiming their rights, gaining recognition and attaining a voice (Ono 1998).

But Arab Americans cannot adequately address the extent to which they should acquiesce to US racial/ethnic divisions until a consensus is reached on how to label the community and who should be included as its members. Consensus requires conversation, cooperation and action between community members, activism and researchers. Then, by building coalition around a comprehensible racial/ethnic label, Arab Americans can determine their strategy for positioning themselves within the US racial/ethnic system and defending themselves against external forces despite their internal divisions/differences, in order to gain visibility, voice and recognition on their own terms.

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Notes

1. See Hentoff (1990); Awad (1981); and Ohanian (1986).
2. A significant portion of research for this paper was conducted at the NAFF Arab American Collection, Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of American History.
3. For more information on why more Christians immigrated than Muslims and the factors that led to early Arab immigration to the US, see Dlin (1961), Saliba (1982), Abraham (1995) and Younis (1995).
4. For more information on pack peddling, see Naff (1985), and Zogby (1990).
5. See Suleiman (1987, pp. 41–46) for an assessment of race prejudice against early immigrants. See Conkiln and Faires (1987, pp. 74–49) for an analysis of racism against Alabama's Lebanese Catholics in the early 1900s.
6. For demographic information on the third immigration period, see El-Badry (1994).
7. For more information about each Arab American organization, see Suleiman (1987) and Zogby (1990).
8. See Shaheen (1983) and Scheinn (1993).
9. See Shohat and Stam (1994).
10. See McDonnell (1987); Anderson and Van Atta (1991); LaFraniere (1991); AAI (1993); Gordon (1993); Opatrany (1993) and Paddock (1993).
11. See AAI (1993).
12. For an extensive study of rights, citizenship and race in the US, see Bock and Bowen (1998).
13. See AAI (1994) for more information about the debate over racial/ethnic status within the Arab American community. See Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

(1997a, b) for more information on the Federal Government's response to the idea of creating a new, separate racial/ethnic category for Arab Americans.

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