So our history doesn't become your future: The local and global ...
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SO OUR HISTORY DOESN'T BECOME YOUR FUTURE:

The Local and Global Politics of Coalition Building Post September 11th[1]

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INTRODUCTION

On September 11th, in the marginalized and geographically distant spaces of activism in Oakland, California, and my neighborhood in Cairo, Egypt, a shared response emerged: "Clearly, the September 11th attacks were heinous, but the U.S. government should share responsibility for pursuing imperialist policies that helped create the historical conditions within which these attacks were inspired, planned, and carried out."[2] Within weeks after the attacks, activists in the U.S. who focus their work on immigrant rights and racial justice opposed the Bush Administration's use of the "war on terror" to persecute immigrants of color, particularly those perceived to be Arab or Muslim, in ways that trample upon the very "freedoms" that it purports to be defending. This paper traces shifts in progressive activism in the San Francisco Bay Area in the aftermath of September 11th. My analysis is based on ethnographic research among members of several community-based organizations.[3] I focus on the transformative possibilities of coalition building and the political challenges that have surfaced as Arab/Arab American histories have been brought increasingly into conversation with people of color politics in general and Asian/Asian American politics in particular.

I argue that the aftermath of September 11th expanded the possibilities for coalition building among activists engaged in homeland struggles

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in the diaspora (such as Palestinian or Filipino liberation). Yet it also affirmed historical polarizations of class, religion, and citizenship, particularly among communities targeted by September 11th related bias, hate violence, and governmental policies. Moreover, for immigrant rights organizations which historically have organized within Latino/a and Asian communities, the aftermath of September 11th meant forging new alliances with the "targeted communities." Forging new alliances has required transgressing "ahistorical notions of common experience."[4] Yet since immigrant rights activism has been generally inattentive to West Asian and North African experiences, grounding political unity in specific histories has been an arduous task involving substantial cultural and historical education. Educating activists on the "targeted communities" has required, for example, disaggregating the categories "Arab," "Middle Eastern" and "Muslim," highlighting a heterogeneity of histories shaped by intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and nation, and exposing histories of European and U.S.–led colonialism and neo-colonialism in the "Middle East." Throughout my research, a general sentiment among Arab/Arab American activists was that, until the aftermath of September 11th, progressive political groups have rendered acceptable the lack of information and activism related to North African and West Asian histories of migration and racialization, even though the racialization of Middle Easterners and Muslims has been "decades in the making."[5]

In addition to activism focused on homeland politics and immigrant rights, this paper explores the formation of multi-racial anti-war coalitions post-September 11th. I contend that anti-war coalitions have reaffirmed a lack of consistency in analysis of racism, colonialism, and imperialism among progressive organizations, particularly in relation to Palestine. They have simultaneously provided new vantage points from which to link local and global issues. As a framework for building transnational unity, coalitions led by women of color have emphasized that the war on terror disproportionately "escalates violence against women of color and third world women globally."[6] Coalitions led by people of color have centralized racial justice as a basis for mobilizing their constituents against the impact of the war on terror on "third world nations and communities of color at home."[7] Overall, this paper contends that

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coalition building is a power-laden process where differences of race, class, gender, and nation are constantly transformed and reproduced. Requiring an understanding of historical commonalities and differences, coalition building also necessitates consistency in the willingness to forge political unity with a variety of struggles against racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, colonialism, and imperialism, despite differences in the benefits or repercussions of supporting one struggle as opposed to another.

Local and Global Linkages: U.S. Foreign and Domestic Policies Post-September 11th

Post-September 11th, the Bush administration has used September 11th as an excuse for increasing military intervention in the Philippines, waging war on Afghanistan, and forcing a regime change on Pakistan, among other imperialist acts. As the Bush administration currently plans to colonize Iraq and restructure the entire West Asian region, it uses Israel as a testing zone for its ideological propaganda of cleansing itself of "the terrorists" through a program of militarized patriotism. Moreover, dominant Israeli state discourse celebrates soldiers who provide "security" through a policy that kills Palestinians until they say "uncle," while the Bush administration celebrates New York City policemen who receive their training in Israel. The Bush administration then provides Israel with the rhetoric of "war on terrorism" to support its intensified ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

Domestically, the Bush administration has expanded its definition of "immigrant" beyond the axes of "illegal criminal" to "evil terrorist enemy within." In San Francisco, the INS has passed as local police in an effort to uphold Attorney General Aschcroft's message that "undocumented immigrants are the enemy, and members of local law enforcement are part of the solution."[8] After 9-11, many Latinos/as in San Francisco reported that "the INS was engaging in random raids—at supermarkets, bus stops, and among unlicensed flower vendors."[9]

In February 2002, the federal government officially took over airport security. Throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, the federal government marked Filipino/a airport screeners as scapegoats of the attacks and laid

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them off en-mass—"even though they were just doing their thankless job on 9-11."[10] Across the U.S., improving security has meant replacing many non-citizen workers with citizens who tend to be retired white military and policemen—and who receive better pay, more benefits, and more respect.

Some Filipino/a activists have argued that the policy of deporting Filipino immigrants is linked to the U.S. government's designation of the Philippines, as an Al Qayeda harboring country. Attacks against Filipino/a immigrants, they explain, have taken place alongside the deployment of U.S. advisors in the Philippines who are committing human rights violations against local people.[11] These advisors seek to quell the dissent of anyone who speaks out against the war campaign and to ensure that the president of the Philippines will say, "I'm with George Bush—and I'll give him my military base." More than ever before the reality that the local is global and the global is local has become strikingly clear.

Further, the Bush administration has used the attacks of September 11th to heighten the president's unconditional authority to mark as a criminal any individual or group with ties to organizations that the president deems "terrorist" or criminal. The president's list includes bandit groups that operate on their own and do not represent a legitimate people's movement. It also includes organizations that legitimately represent segments of the grassroots, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Communist Party of the Philippines, and the National People's Army. Moreover, the Bush Administration's actions have coincided with corporate, state, and media discourses that lump groups like Abu Sayyaf of the Philippines (and other signifiers of "Islamic extremism" previously trained and deployed by the Central Intelligence Agency) with legitimate grassroots movements as an excuse to kill all the movements altogether. As Bobby Tuazon of Bulatlat puts it,

> . . . Philippine defense and armed forces officials, in collaboration with their American counterparts, are simply playing up the Abu Sayyaf "monster" and its alleged connection to bin Laden's al-Qaeda network to justify bigger U.S. military assistance to their modernization program, and ultimately, to renewed armed intervention in the Philippines.[12]

In Palestine, a democratic national liberation movement guides the revolt against occupation among many sectors of society. Yet hegemonic

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U.S. and Israeli state discourses brand all Arabs, Muslim or Christian, secular or religious, as actors in a religious war led by extremist Islamic leaders who oppress women. They mask Israeli attempts to crush Palestinian resistance behind the rhetoric of a war against Islamists or Islamic Jihad. These distortions legitimate Israeli liberals' reduction of history to "the extremists on both sides" and their concomitant avoidance of the material realities of Israeli colonization, occupation, apartheid, and racism.

At the same time the U.S. state and media campaign to quell dissent marks as anti-American anyone who thinks critically of U.S. foreign policy —or believes in national self-determination–as anti-American; it mistakenly vilifies all critiques of Israel state and its colonialist, racist nature as anti-Semitic. In the U.S., few spaces exist where Arab/Arab American activists and their allies can name their oppressor (Israel) without being met with the charge of anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitic bigotry indeed exists, Zionist movements have systematically deployed the anti-Semitic charge as a deafening response to critiques of Israeli state policies. This strategy derails scholarly and political debate about Israel and marks as traitors or self-haters anti-Zionist Jews critical of Israel.

The global Zionist movement funds millions of dollars a year–through the media, labor organizations, educational institutions, and churches (especially black churches) and among progressives as well as radical people of color–to promote a series myths that justify, rationalize or legitimate Israel's history of colonizing Palestine.[13] These myths include theological arguments, such as "the Palestinian crisis is a religious war." They also include gendered, neocolonialist arguments, such as "Arab men are backwards terrorists who oppress their women" or "Arab women are bad mothers who raise children full of hate and throw them out on the streets to die." Other myths refer to Palestine as "a land without a people for a people without a land," further seeking to justify colonization by erasing altogether the existence of the indigenous Palestinians.[14]

These myths disguise the fact that Israel was created in 1948, with British support in the context of European expansion; that, out of the 1,500,000 acres that were granted to Palestinians in the "peace process," Israel occupies 750,000; that Israel has demolished 10,000 homes and 120,000 olive trees;[15] that any country choosing to resist Israeli policies

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pays the heavy price of U.S.-imposed sanctions, such as those which have contributed to the devastation of the economies and infrastructures of Sudan and Iraq; that Israel is a colonialist state with imperial aims in the region; and that there is a massive asymmetry in the balance of powers between Israelis and Palestinians.

In April 2002, Ariel Sharon reminded us that massacres are central to the agenda of Israel. By ordering a major military operation in the *Jenin* refugee camp, he set a new precedent for the September 11th world order. This precedent says that under a guise of fighting terrorism, a war criminal[15] can come into power, conduct a massacre, and receive international protection. Following *Jenin,* Sharon's government labeled as anti-Semitic every United Nations official who attempted to explore Israel's gross disregard for human life and threatened with expulsion from the region every United Nations official who attempted to conduct an investigation. In this case, Bush's "war on terrorism" gave Israel a cover to conduct "unlawful and deliberate killings,"[17] as it justified the process by which the United States coerced the United Nations, our upholder of international law, into silence.

On 9-11, many Arab and Arab American activists expressed concern about the future, and their concerns were unfortunately validated: that Sharon would use the "war on terror" to rationalize Israeli massacre; that dominant U.S. and Israeli rhetoric would reduce Palestinian resistance to fanaticism; that Israelis would become victims of terror to be mourned with the victims of 9-11; and that Palestinian blood would be devalued increasingly, and erased out of history.

Since 9-11, most U.S. media have been complicit with the Bush administrations' political agenda and have forsaken accountability to communities of color in the process. Together, the U.S. state and media have reproduced the historical contradictions of U.S. racial formations that fuel hate violence, while at the same time promoting tolerance and diversity. As a result, the newly visible victims of hate violence and racialization (including Arabs, Iranians, Afghans, South Asians, and any other individual or group perceived to be Muslim) have been positioned as both "the targeted groups" and "the hot new item(s)" within liberal multicultural tokenism. Many progressive organizations, for example, have

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announced for the first time that, "we must include 'an Arab' in our organizing."[18] As this new tokenism has become gendered, I have overheard white men and men of color alike express interest in attending Arab/Arab American community events to check out the "beautiful women." Post-September 11th, "dating an Arab" has emerged as the hip new thing.

Talking Within National Communities

Domestically, after 9-11, many mainstream Arab American individuals and organizations tried to distance themselves from the intensified U.S.-led wars in their homelands and the increasingly visible racist backlash against their local communities. There were Arab/Arab American Christians who said, "this is a Muslim issue and we don't have anything to do with all of this."[19] Some middle-and upper-class Arab American Muslim citizens distanced themselves from poor Arab Muslim immigrant and refugee non-citizens, rendering the new immigrant and refugee Muslims as "the problem."

For these Arab Americans, the message was, "We are Americans, and we're waving the flag." In the Bay Area, fear led nearly every Arab/Arab American organization to disappear completely from the post-September 11th scene. Most organizations closed their doors, cancelled their activities, and said, "It's not convenient to be Arab."[20] Yet a few months later, many Arab Americans realized that, "no matter how many times you shave your beard or change your name, you will not be allowed to assimilate any longer."[21] In the attempt to protect themselves from state projects that label as un-American those who critique U.S. foreign and domestic policies, the national office of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, National Chapter, went so far as to support publicly the bombing of Afghanistan in the name of "Arab Americans," asking all of its members to cooperate with the FBI. Local members of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, San Francisco Chapter, challenged the national office, however, and demanded that it develop programs to educate its constituents about their rights.

These different and competing responses to the backlash following 9-11 exposed right and left leanings within several communities that had

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previously gone unaddressed. At a protest against the detainment of hundreds of Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles in December 2002, some Iranians said, "We are not the terrorists! We are Iranian! Not Arab." Others pointed to the predominantly Jewish base among Iranian communities in Los Angeles, to distance themselves from racialization, and said, "We are not the terrorists! We are Jewish and not Muslim!" These responses indicate that, while hegemonic U.S. state and media discourses fix and conflate the categories "Arab-Muslim-Middle Eastern" in the racialization of the new Enemy Other/Enemy Within, the performativity of these categories emerges as fluid, multi-layered, and constantly shifting. The extent to which persons associate or disassociate with one or more of these categories has thus depended on the type of body being racialized at a given historical moment.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, members of the Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA) explained that, in the process of becoming more visibly racialized, South Asian communities witnessed similar inner-communal shifts and polarizations. Along with the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, San Francisco Chapter (ADC SF), Chinese for Affirmative Action, the Intergroup Clearinghouse (IC), and the Islamic Networks Group (ING), ASATA joined the coalition, "United Response Collaborative." The United Response Collaborative came together to provide assistance to community groups and individuals negatively affected by the backlash following the attacks of 9-11. This coalition focused particularly on working with Arab, Muslim, and South Asian groups to increase community capacity and identify appropriate strategies for preventing and addressing bias-motivated violence and discrimination."[22] For South Asian activists, multi-racial coalitions have served as key sites for addressing anti-South Asian racism and forging new links with Arab, Muslim, and other organizations committed to racial justice. Multi-racial coalitions additionally opened up new spaces for confronting anti-Muslim sentiments within and between South Asian communities.[23] While South Asian activism since 9-11 has increased the visibility of South Asians within the organizing spaces for racial justice, it has also entailed confronting divisions within and between South Asian communities. For example, since 9-11, South Asian activism has brought heightened atten-

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tion to the role of U.S.-based right-wing Hindu fundamentalist community groups, who lend financial support to anti-Muslim projects, such as mosque demolitions, in India.

Talking Between National Communities

Activism focused on the deportation of immigrants and refugees, INS police raids, and indefinite detentions has constituted a key political site where activists from various national communities have forged inter-community alliances. In San Francisco's Mission District, for example, immigrant rights activists, who had been organizing primarily among Latino/a communities, received phone calls from members of the "newly targeted communities" who have been less visible historically (such as North Africans, South Asians, West Asians, and others perceived to be Muslim). Callers asked for advice on strategies for reaching and educating their grassroots about their rights. Immigrant rights activists were thus required to craft new tactics, such as going out to taxi stops[24] or approaching workers within the Mission District's liquor stores and cafes in order to reach communities with different experiences vis-à-vis labor, politics, culture, and economics than the communities with whom they previously had worked.

Additionally, immigrant rights activism has exposed links between various immigrant communities who are experiencing the impact of the "war on terrorism," such as Arabs, South Asians, Cambodians, Filipinos/as, and Koreans. In the San Francisco Bay Area, some Asian American activists are developing programs for educating their constituencies as to the similarities between the methods the U.S. government has used in recent involuntary deportation cases targeting Filipinos/as and South Asians. In one San Francisco case, for example, a group of Filipinos were handcuffed and chained to one another on their sixteen-hour flight to the Philippines. A group of South Asians from New York City was deported in similar fashion. The Asian Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment's (API ForCE) Fall 2002 newsletter is one example of alliance-building since 9-11. This newsletter brings together articles on Southeast Asian deportation and attacks against Filipino/a immigrant workers and Arab and Muslim immigrant communities, highlighting the lack of due process and the violation of human rights in all of these cases.[25]

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Multiracial organizing after September 11th has led to several successes. The city of San Francisco, for example, has reaffirmed its sanctuary status as an INS Raid Free Zone and has reaffirmed that airports belong to San Francisco and not to the federal government. Moreover, representatives from South Asian, Arab, and Muslim groups have held two meetings with labor and immigrant rights organizations, one with INS representatives and the other with two supervisors and a mayor's representative in San Francisco, to bring visibility to the impact of the post-September 11th political climate on various immigrant communities. Moreover, during the period of Special Registration, in which males from most Arab and predominantly Muslim countries were required to register with the INS, facing the possibility of detention or deportation, activists documented the name of each male who entered the INS building in order to document the name and numbers of those who did not come out. Through this system, they developed a record and sought legal assistance for each person detained inside the building. They also delivered the message that state attacks against immigrants have been documented, recorded, and publicized.

In addition to immigrant rights, alliance building between national communities since 9-11 has been sparked by increasing awareness of the ways that nationality based communities become racialized when the U.S. goes to war in their homelands. For many Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans, moreover, the post-September 11th backlash against Arabs, South Asians and anyone perceived to be Muslim evoked memories of World War II, Japanese internment, and the fear of being labeled un-American, un-patriotic, criminal Other, or Enemy Within. After the Bush administration's call for war on Afghanistan, Nosei, a Japanese American organization, held an event in San Francisco's Japan Town and invited Japanese folks as well as Muslims from various racial/ethnic communities to participate. This event was meant to respond to the backlash following 9-11 in a different way than among the mainstream Japanese American community organizations, such as the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL).

Rather than evoking a liberal multicultural discourse that called for tolerance and diversity, Nosei decided to expose the similar ties between

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the racist backlash against Japanese and Muslims in the U.S., while emphasizing the link between domestic and foreign policies, or U.S. state racism at home and U.S. led-wars abroad. The theme of the Nosei event was, "So it won't happen again." Japanese speakers made references to the patriotism of World War II and the discussions among Japanese Americans during World War II about whether they should wave the flag. In such statements of solidarity with Muslim Americans, Lisa Nakamura explained, "We should step up and speak out .... Maybe they can't make any statements against the war because they are feeling so targeted just like we did."[26] Other parallels made between Japanese/Japanese American history during World War II and Arab/South Asian/Muslim American histories since 9-11 focused on the similarities in the governments' compilation of "dangerous peoples" names, in the government's scrutiny of community organizations, and in the difficulties of fundraising when community activism is marked as a threat to national security.[27]

For Nosei activists, 9-11 not only enabled new alliances; it opened up new spaces in which to re-evaluate Japanese and Japanese American histories. Post-September 11th, some Nosei activists forged links with the Japan No War Network, a group of anti-imperialist Japanese nationals who had been insisting on the link between Okinawa and Palestine for decades. Connecting with these Japanese nationals after 9-11, Nosei's Japanese American activists began exploring the ways that, "World War II and the war on terrorism are both about oil ... and why understanding Palestine is so important to understanding U.S. imperialism."[28]

While alliance-building has enabled new inter-communal solidarities, it has also prompted a revisiting of master narratives and a rewriting of intra-community histories. The aftermath of 9-11 led some Japanese Americans, for example, to question how their communities have dealt with the "citizen vs. non-citizen" divide. Grace Shimuzo explains this process with particular clarity:

> If there is one thing we can learn from 9-11, it's that we need to critique the master narrative of our history. World War II was not just about internment. It was about non-citizens and what they went through: being restricted, picked up, and being victims of human rights violations before internment. That is a direct parallel to what's happening now and we shouldn't forget it.[29]

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The aftermath of 9-11 led some Japanese American activists to revisit the reality that, "I am a citizen," often implies that," I am not the immigrant enemy;" that the category Asian American often excludes immigrants and refugees; and that redress should speak to the histories of citizens and non-citizens alike.

Progressive activists from various "national" communities additionally have come together in forging anti-war mobilizations. In the San Francisco Bay Area, twelve Filipino organizations, including women's groups, student groups, environmentalists, and labor organizers, forged the coalition, "Filipinos for Global Justice Not War." This coalition organizes, educates, and mobilizes the Filipino community to participate in building the anti-war movement, particularly relative to issues that impact the Filipino community in specific ways, such as attacks against airport screeners and U.S. militarization in the Philippines.

As the movement against increased militarization in the Philippines expands, Filipino/a activists in the San Francisco Bay Area increasingly are making links with Arab activists and their allies who similarly are organizing in resistance to U.S.–led imperialism in their homelands. A contingent of Filipinos/as who participated in a broad-based anti-war rally after 9-11 used, "Free Palestine" as one of its primary slogans.[30] More than ever before, in fact, Filipino/a activists are talking about the liberation of people in Palestine. Most of the Filipino/a-led political demonstrations in the Bay Area since September 11th have featured at least one speaker from the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, San Francisco Chapter. Likewise, Arab activists and their allies have given Filipino/a speakers a central place in the demonstrations organized for the liberation of Palestine and against war on Iraq.

Progressive activists who organize themselves according to the category "Asian Pacific Islanders" similarly mobilized against the Bush administration's calls for war following 9-11. The notion that "we are here (in the U.S.) because of war," or that "our communities know war so we say no to war,"[31] inspired groups of Asian Pacific Islanders in the San Francisco Bay Area to organize against the war. Following September 11th, one group, the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition Against War (APICAW), distributed literature that included its analysis on the "impact of war on

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Asian Pacific Islander Communities in the United States."[32] Its members took a stance in opposition to hate crimes against Asian Pacific Islander and other communities, highlighting the vulnerability of non-citizens to harassment, abuse, intimidation, and detention. They also provided information on the USA Patriot Act, which has increased the power of authorities to detain and deport immigrants. Furthermore, they exposed the rate of U.S. government spending on the military, as opposed to health and human services, and additionally explained the ways that U.S. militarism continues to devastate Asian Pacific Islander communities in the U.S., Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, Japan, Okinawa, and the Pacific Rim.

In addition to highlighting the impact of war on Asian Pacific Islander Communities, APICAW's literature called upon all Asian and Pacific Islander communities to voice their "disgust and condemnation of Israeli atrocities enacted on the Palestinian people."[33] While demanding immediate Israeli withdrawal from Palestine and supporting the right of return for Palestinian people, they explained, "Because Asian and Pacific Islander communities have experienced the bitter consequences of US economic, political, and military intervention in our homelands, we must stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people who are being oppressed by the same forces."[34]

Yet despite these gains, the effort to build coalitions has not transpired within a celebratory space of multiculturalism or conflict-free diversity. Those who organized among Filipino/a airport screeners, for example, often confronted the viewpoint that, "We need to racially profile anyone who looks Muslim because they are the ones who committed the attacks."[35] Organizing airport screeners thus required a pair of simultaneous achievements. Activists were forced both to demand labor rights and racial justice for Filipino/a workers and to challenge the racialized assumptions among some airport screeners, who reproduced the dominant U.S. state's and media's conflation of the categories "Muslim" and "terrorist." Moreover, when a group of Arab American and African American activists met in the San Francisco Bay Area after 9-11, ostensibly to address shared struggles with racial profiling, a discussion ensued regarding African American experiences of racism within Arab owned liquor stores in poor black neighborhoods.[36]

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Coalition building since 9-11 has necessitated crafting frameworks for tackling racism that are flexible enough to expose sites of commonality and hierarchy between communities. This process also has meant recognizing that the corporate state and the media racialize different communities differently. While characterizing Filipino airport screeners as non-citizen immigrant workers or disposable labor, they have homogenized Arabs and South Asians as "Muslims" and, therefore, as backwards, fanatic, foreign threats to U.S. security. Moreover, while Filipinos/as are clearly racialized as non-whites, Arabs/Arab Americans are required to check "Caucasion" on U.S. census forms. While this classification might engender privilege for those who can indeed pass as white, it renders invisible or marginal Arabs/Arab Americans who are marked as non-whites or people of color within racial justice movements.

Promoting Diversity and Tolerance or Promoting Racial Justice?

After 9-11, the hegemonic media selectively chose to highlight hate crimes that followed the terrorist attacks of 9-11 as the most pressing issue of our times. Yet even as George Bush claimed, "this is not a war on Islam," he set into play a pattern among conservatives and liberals alike that argued against this assertion. While deploying the discourse of "tolerance" as a cover, the Bush administration had planned a strategy of unchecked militarism and war in Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, the Philippines, Columbia, and/or North Korea. Within the United States, it initiated attacks on civil rights, detentions, deportations, surveillance, and budget cuts produced by a wartime economy.

While the state made millions of dollars available for diversity initiatives across the country, opportunistic NGOs quickly learned the rules of the game: access to funding would be granted to those who worked with the targeted/tokenized communities: Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims. Suddenly, a series of NGOs, which had no previous commitments or connections to these communities, rushed in solidarity to the side of Arabs, South Asians and Muslims, in order to take advantage of the money. Critically needing the funds, Arabs, South Asians, or Muslims had few options other than linking up with these NGOs because they were not well con-

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nected to funding agencies. Yet when the resources became available, the position among many mainstream, predominantly white NGOs grew clear: "Since we are here, we might as well get a piece of the pie."

This power-laden process through which targeted groups have gained access to funding since 9-11 set into play a neocolonialist approach to building solidarity. White liberal activists not only became the gatekeepers of public funds; they became the spokespersons for Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims in the name of coalition building. Post-September 11th, NGOs with predominantly white leadership organized a series of events designed to position their organizations as leaders in the struggle against the post-attacks backlash, while at the same time marginalizing grassroots Arab, South Asian, and Muslim organizations. As a result, predominantly white organizations—with privileged access to public discourse, civil society, and the media—sought to foreground a liberal multiculturalist perspective that stressed the need for tolerance, bridge-building and diversity. Their efforts obscured viewpoints emerging from the "targeted communities," which sought to hold the media accountable to communities of color while exposing the social institutions that reinforce racial inequality. The messages that received the most media attention were not those which politicized the hate crimes, but were those which called for "tolerance, education and standing by Arab, South Asian and Muslim people who are part of our community."[37] Thus, support for Arab, South Asian, and Muslim organizations has emerged as a white liberal tactic for increasing an organization's access to resources and heightening its status within mainstream activism for tolerance and diversity. At the same time, it has demeaned the work of genuine activists, under the weight of an all-too-familiar rhetoric: "We must speak on their (Arabs', South Asians', and Muslims') behalf. We cannot let them speak on their own. We will talk about how targeted they are, but they should never be empowered enough to speak for themselves, present their perspectives, or run their own projects."[38]

Selectively Anti-War or a Zionist Free Anti-War Movement?

In a manner similar to the evolution of diversity initiatives, most predominantly white anti-war, anti-imperialist mobilizations attempted to

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expand their power base by excluding Arabs/Arab Americans from leadership positions. This approach sought to develop a "no war, no racism, no attacks on immigrants" campaign, while silencing the issue of Palestine and thus avoiding the links between Palestine and Iraq. Appealing to Zionist tendencies within white leftist groups that seek to silence critiques of Israel, this approach chose organizational expansion over consistency in its critique of imperialism and war, in the interest of developing a "no war on Afghanistan/no war on Iraq" campaign. The position emerging out of progressive Arab/Arab American communities, however, insisted that "a politically developed anti-war movement [should] recognize the essence of the interdependency between liberation struggles against Empire both at home and in the periphery, as in Palestine. An opposition to war must therefore be total - otherwise it is but a silly exercise of liberal futility."[39] For Arab American activists and their allies, U.S. support of Israel and the U.S. war on Iraq are interconnected components of U.S.–led imperialism in the Arab region and U.S. interests in Arab oil, labor, and the mobility of capital. Yet the voices of Arab/Arab Americans, who connected the significance of solidarity with Palestinian liberation to an anti-war, anti-imperialist stance, were often marginalized within predominantly white anti-war efforts.

Alternatively, in cases when broad based anti-war mobilizations explicitly linked Iraq and Palestine, the progressive split on the issue of Palestine became clear. At the ANSWER rally of October 26, 2002, one of the largest anti-war mobilizations in San Francisco since the Vietnam War, several speakers linked solidarity with Palestine to the "no war on Iraq" campaign. During and after the rally, ANSWER received a series of complaints that claimed, "This was advertised as a no war on Iraq rally. If we had known this was going to be a pro-Palestinian rally, half of these people would never have shown up!"[40]

That Palestine was centralized at the October 26th ANSWER rally emerged out of a history of struggle between Arab/Arab American activists and their allies. After systematic marginalization from various anti-war mobilizations, a group of Arab/Arab American activists established the Justice in Palestine Coalition. This organization sought to create a space for "establishing a Zionist free peace movement and demanding

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that any peace and justice movement that deals with Palestine should deal with three groups of Palestinians: 1) Palestinians under occupation; 2) Palestinians living as second class citizens inside Israel; and 3) Palestinian refugees."[41] In April 2002, Justice in Palestine brought together forty Bay Area organizations to co-sponsor a rally in support of the Palestinian people. Out of the 40,000 who attended this rally, the majority were Arabs/Arab Americans. Faced with such numbers, anti-war activists had little choice but to recognize the needs and perspectives of Arab/Arab American communities. As Dena Al-Adeeb puts it,

> They saw mothers, veiled women, fathers, brothers, babies, strollers, families. . . . Palestine is at the forefront and you can't 'include us' without including Palestine. This is what Arab community folks want to see—the link between Zionism and imperialism and an anti-war stance that does not exclude Palestine.[42]

After this rally, new spaces were opened up for critiquing the politics of a tokenism that includes Arab bodies while excluding their perspectives. Some Arab/Arab American activists argued that the April 2002 rally successfully put Arabs/Arab Americans on the political map of the San Francisco Bay Area—"as a force to reckon with in the dissent movement."[43] Others added that, after the rally, Palestine became the "in-thing and was commodified . . . everyone wore a Palestine t-shirt and a *kuffiya,* but it was unclear how long the commitment to Palestine was going to last."[44]

People of Color–Led Coalitions and the Challenges of Transnational Unity

Within anti-war coalitions led predominantly by people of color, such as Racial Justice 911 (RJ911) and UCAWAR (United Communities against War and Racism), most participating organizations have recognized links between U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine. Yet debates over the kind of strategy to adopt vis-à-vis Palestine have persisted. For example, while some organizations have supported Arab/Arab American leadership on this issue by taking an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist stance, others have limited their position to demanding an end to Israeli occupation or an end to U.S. aid to Israel.

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Beyond the lack of consensus on Palestine, coalitions led by people of color confronted the additional challenge of adding an international focus to activism that had been focused primarily on domestic issues. A common tendency among activists of color in throughout the 1990s was to implicitly accept the notion that anti-imperialist, anti-war, international solidarity organizing takes place within national community boundaries –Koreans or Asian Pacific Islanders work on North Korea, Filipinos on the Philippines, and Arabs on Palestine. Alternately, the dominant approach was to assume that organizing around domestic issues—the prison industrial complex, police brutality, welfare, and gentrification–takes place within broad-based, multi-racial "people of color–led" coalitions. Yet immediately following September 11th, at a Snowpark rally in Oakland, many activists agreed that "a breakthrough was made,"[45] and that broad-based people of color activism was no longer limited to the domestic United States. Within the slogans and the speeches at this rally, the underlying theme was that U.S. imperialism is an extension of U.S. domestic policies. Following Snowpark, the predominantly people of color coalition, United Communities against War and Racism (UCAWAR), was formed with the intention of mobilizing grassroots communities of color against war and racism simultaneously.

Regrettably, as the post-September 11th hysteria died down, UCAWAR soon fell apart. Some members explained that developing a common framework for bringing together activists who work on the domestic and the international, or welfare/poverty/police brutality and war, was a grueling task. As a result of these challenges, less than a year after 9-11 international issues tended to be repositioned within the context of separate, nationally based activist spaces, such as Arab, Asian Pacific, Korean, Filipino/a, or South Asian.

Yet as the Bush administration prepared to bomb Iraq in March, 2003, an integrated analysis of local and global issues resurfaced as a top priority of many organizations, and the labor of this integration re-emerged as a complicated task. The anti-war task force of Members of Incite! Women of Color against Violence, for example, continues to grapple with this issue. In one conversation, some members suggested "violence against women" as a basis for linking resistance against race, class, and gender

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oppression in the U.S. and U.S.–led imperialism in the third world. Others argued that the term "violence" does not adequately capture the specificities of economic and racial justice struggles. Despite debates such as these, organizations such as Incite!, the Women of Color Resource Center, and Racial Justice 911 remain committed to exposing the impact of the "war of terror" on communities of color locally and globally.[46] A statement issued by Incite! in May, 2003, for example, affirmed that,

> Invading armies and police control have NEVER liberated women. Only WE can liberate ourselves! . . . The police and militaries have been attacking our communities for centuries. The new "War of Terror" intensifies these attacks and sets out to colonize our Arab, Latin American, Asian and African sisters and brothers. Resist "The War of Terror" on our communities![47]

Racial Justice 911 (RJ911) is an additional formation that has worked closely with Incite! in developing "a national network of racial justice organizations . . . that can help build broad-based opposition to the U.S.'s dangerous foreign and domestic policies, known as the War on Terrorism among people of color."[48]

For RJ911 members, a difficult challenge lies ahead: Will activists who organize themselves according to the category, "people of color," continue addressing domestic and international campaigns separately, or will they work from a place that recognizes the relationality of these efforts? That RJ911 seeks to link attacks against immigrants and refugees to the historical struggles of U.S. people of color indicates a significant point of recognition: while some people of color are denied access to education, employment and health care because the U.S. has gone to war abroad, others are "here" because the U.S. went to war "over there."

Where do we go from here?

The transition of Arabs/Arab Americans from invisibility to visibility within racial justice discourses and movements produced shifts in multiracial coalition-building. As "including an Arab" came to be the in-thing, tokenizing has taken a variety of forms, ranging from the centralizing of Arab/Arab American bodies while silencing their voices to exotifying Arab/

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Arab American women's beauty while dismissing their politics, particularly when it comes to Palestine.[49] Transgressing the politics of tokenism, some organizations with anti-racist, anti-colonialist, anti-war agendas have forged solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination while encouraging Arab/Arab American leadership in activism and movement-building. In so doing, they have demonstrated consistency in their politics.

For racialized diasporas, traditional categories of privilege for organizing identities and political movements within U.S. racial and coalitional politics have constituted an additional site of tension and struggle. Grassroots racial justice movements and Ethnic Studies Departments on college campuses tend to extol categories that imply integration into U.S. society, such as African American, Arab American, Asian American or Latin American. Conversely, they generally avoid categories that highlight the transnational dimensions of such racialized identities as African or African Diaspora and Arab or Arab Diaspora. As a result, communities which define their primary battle as the national liberation of their homeland and the consequent opportunity to return home often are excluded from the analytical frameworks that shape racial/ethnic studies discourses and movements. For many Palestinian activists in the U.S., for example, the liberation of Palestine is the key struggle that ignites their participation in racial justice movements. Thus, positioning oneself as a racialized-American (Arab American, for example)–the most common strategy deployed by U.S. activists of color for resisting racism and claiming one's rights– might not serve as a viable position from which to resist for Palestinians or others seeking national liberation and/or the option to return. Whether there is a space within U.S.-based justice movements for politicized diasporas–who increasingly are participating in the formation of anti-racist perspectives and positionalities post-September 11th–has yet to be determined.

In making links between domestic attacks against immigrants and refugees (vis-à-vis Homeland Security) and U.S.-led wars internationally, some activists have called further into question the categories privileged in their organizing. As immigrants, refugees, and their advocates have participated increasingly in people of color organizing, they have exposed North-South tensions or the privileging of U.S.-centric organi-

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zational models. These tensions have opened up new spaces for asking a number of critical questions:

> Who is included and excluded by the term 'people of color' or 'women of color?' Must an Iraqi refugee woman who has been displaced from her homeland and does not speak English identify as a 'woman of color' in order to be granted the legitimacy to speak about her oppression? What are the different models for organizing or different organizing skills adopted by activists whose communities have had access to institutional support and public funding and those whose communities have not?

All of these questions raise a pressing challenge for racial justice organizers: "What are the points of unity between those who are here because the U.S. went to war in their homelands and Native Americans and African Americans, for example, who share histories of domestic colonialism and slavery by the U.S. state?"

Conclusion

More than ever before, coalition building post-September 11th reveals as bankrupt the notion that "I am a radical person of color and am therefore against all forms of oppression." U.S. people of color often are separated from their immigrant and refugee allies by such issues as the censoring of information within the U.S., the realities of U.S. foreign policy, U.S.-led militarism abroad, and U.S. immigration policy. The denial that hierarchies of color indeed exist among us frequently obscures the reality that racialization is not the same for everyone, at least not all the time. Sexism in the movement(s) often excludes women from leadership, even when they have done most of the work along the way. Homophobia among activists of color often privileges anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-sexist organizing, while ignoring the intersection of race, class, gender and homophobia or the issues that particularly impact lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals, transgender folks, and queers. Orientalism often marks Arab women as either exceptionally beautiful or exceptionally oppressed and "Arab culture" as extremely religious and, therefore, always patriarchal and never progressive.[50] Zionism often silences any and all critiques of Israel. Neocolonialist activism tokenizes activists from targeted communities while

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dismissing their perspectives. All these problems remind us that no one ever said the revolution was going to be easy. On the contrary, alliance-building is arduous work and is often tense and painful.

While requiring an understanding of commonalities and differences, alliance-building also necessitates honoring those activists who have struggled for justice both within and beyond their communities. In the aftermath of September 11th, it should compel progressive activists to honor Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans who stepped up, when those perceived to be Arab or Muslims were silenced by fear and racism, and to recognize Filipino/a airport screeners who have organized in the face of exploitation and intimidation. Forging political unity should also entail paying tribute to all Asian Pacific Islander folks who have supported the liberation of Palestine in a U.S. context in which supporting Palestinian rights to self-determination is often mistaken for supporting violence, religious extremism, and anti-Semitism. By insisting on the specificities of each of our histories and our struggles, while mounting the strength of our collective power, I truly believe that we will overcome these difficult times. I also believe that if we organize—and if we expand the movement to liberate the September 11th detainees—then all of the detainees will be set free.

Notes

1. The ethnographic materials developed in this paper have been collected as part of a larger study on Arab and Muslim American identity formation in the aftermath of September 11th funded by the Russell Sage Foundation. I am indebted to Eman Desouky, Gary Okihiro, Kent Ono, and Tony Peffer for their generous feedback throughout the development of this essay.
2. Between September 2001 and September 2002, I was an Instructor and Assistant Professor at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. I did not participate in post-September 11th organizing in the San Francisco Bay Area, about which I write in this paper, until September 2002. While I was living in Egypt, I followed developments among progressive activists in the Bay Area via e-mail. Upon my return to the San Francisco Bay Area in September 2002, I participated as a board member of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, North America, Incite! Women of Color against Violence!, Racial Justice 911 (RJ911), and the Women of Color Resource Center.
3. My research consisted of interviews with a series of activists who played key roles within nationally based communities as well as multi-racial coalitions led by people of color and participant observation among various progressive

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organizations and anti-war coalitions. I am grateful to the following activists who took the time to participate in interviews about their experiences as organizers within multi-racial coalitions post-September 11th: Dena Al-Adeeb (Arab Women's Solidarity Association S.F. Chapter, Racial Justice 911, Women of Color Resource Center), Youmna Chlala (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, S.F. Chapter, Women of Color Resource Center), Cindy Wiesner (United Communities against War and Racism, Women of Color Resource Center), Eman Desouky (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Arab women's Solidarity Association, S..F. Chapters), Osama El Qasem (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, S.F. Chapter), Riva Enteen (National Lawyers Guild), Jess Ghanam (Al-Awda Right to Return Coalition), Lina Hoshino (Nosei), Sun Hyung Lee (Asian Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment, Asian Pacific Islanders against War), Eyad Kishawi (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, San Francisco Chapter), Annamaria Loya (La Raza Centro Legal), Vivek Mattal (Alliance of South Asians Taking Action), Lisa Nakamura (Nosei), Rhonda Ramiro (Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines), Clarissa Rojas (Incite! Women of Color against Violence), Renee Saucedo (La Raza Centro Legal), Grace Shimuzo (Nosei), Kawal Ulanday (Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, Filipinos for Affirmative Action), and Cindy Wiesner (United Communities against War and Racism (UCAWAR) Women of Color Resource Center).

4. Chandra Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997): 3–29.
5. Moallem, "Whose fundamentalism?" Distributed on the Middle East Women's Association (AMEWS) E-mail List Serve, October 1, 2001.
6. Incite! Women of Color against Violence, Preliminary draft of a public statement, entitled, "The 'WAR OF TERROR' escalates violence against us as WOMEN OF COLOR and THIRD WORLD WOMEN and Our COMMUNITIES globally, 2003.
7. Racial Justice 911, Text of a postcard distributed at a political action, May 19, 2003.
8. Renee Saucedo, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.), October 15, 2002.
9. Annamaria Loya, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.), October 15, 2002.
10. Rhonda Ramiro, Interview by author (Oakland, Calif.), November 2, 2002.
11. Rhonda Ramiro, "One Hundred Years Later: Why U.S. Troops Have Returned," *Kilusan: A Movement's News and Views*. 1(1): 5.
12. Bobby Tuazon, "Abu Sayyaf, Taliban, CIA Connection," *Bulatlat.com*, 27 January–2 February 2002.
13. Here, I build on Buescher and Ono's definition of neo-colonialist images that rationalize, explain, justify, or legitimate racism and imperialism. For a

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full definition and analysis, see Derek T.Buescher and Kent A. Ono, "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric," *Women's Studies in Communication.* 19(2) (1996): 127–153.

14. For further analysis on the history of Palestine, see Arab Women's Solidarity Association, San Francisco Chapter, "The Forgotton-'ism: An Arab American Women's Perspective on Zionism, Racism, and Sexism," *Time to Rise* (Berkeley, Calif.: Women of Color Resource Center, 2001); Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987); S. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1989); Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinin, "Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation," in *The Israel/Palestine Question,* Ilan Pappe,. ed. (Boston: South End Press, 1988); and Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).
15. Elias Rashmawi, Interview on KPFA radio, March 2003.
16. In September, 1982, Ariel Sharon led a massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla in Lebanon. Although the Israeli government reported the death of 800 Palestinians, the first journalist to enter the camps after the massacre, Amnon Kapeliouk who happened to be an Israeli, mentioned that there were over 3,000 corpses. A body count by the International Committee of the Red Cross revealed 2,750 dead. Some Palestinian statistics stated that the number exceeded 7,000 Palestinians.
17. Human Rights Watch, "Israel/Occupied Territories: Jenin War Crimes Investigation Needed," *Human Rights Watch Report Finds Laws of War Violations* (www.hrw.org), May 3, 2002.
18. Before September 11th, an ongoing critique among Arab/Arab American activists was that progressive political events, such as conferences, workshops, and teach-ins rarely addressed issues related to West Asia and that progressive organizations rarely invited West Asians as speakers for their events or as leaders and decision-makers within their organizations. Post-September 11th, however, a shift had taken place. Nearly every progressive political event I read about, heard about, or attended included a section on West Asia and a space for West Asian speakers to address the issues relevant to their peoples and histories. Arab/Arab American activists with whom I spoke had different experiences vis-à-vis this "inclusion." Some experienced it in terms of genuine solidarity, but there was a general sentiment that their bodies and issues were often tokenized due to the post-September 11th context that rendered a political action or event successful as long as it "included an Arab." Moreover, many Arab/Arab American activists explained that they often were asked to address issues sensationalized in the U.S. media, such as war, conflict, violence, or religious differences rather than the variety of issues that shape Arab/Arab American histories and experiences.
19. This trend among Arab American Christians does not represent progressive Arab Christian individuals, organizations, or leaders.
20. Osama Al Qasem, Interview by author (Berkeley, Calif.), October 25, 2002.

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21. Ibid.
22. United Response Collaborative, Press Release, 2002.
23. As Vivek Mittel from the Alliance of South Asians Taking Action puts it, "For us to be working with Islamic organizations was not just to say that we are all being targeted but to show that we want to work on our internal issues and on better communalism within the South Asian community;" Vivek Mittel, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.), November 10, 2002.
24. Loya, Interview, October 15, 2002.
25. API ForCE. *The Force: News, Opinions, and Writings from Asians and Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment* (Winter 2002).
26. Lisa Nakamura, Public statement presented at a Nosei event in San Francisco, California in solidarity with Arab and Muslim people, 2001.
27. Addressing these similarities at a Japanese American event in solidarity with Arabs and Muslims after September 11th, Japanese American activist Yuri Kochiyama asserted, "We should feel a kinship with Arabs and Muslims." At the same event, Amjad Obeidat, a Palestinian Muslim, added, "I never dreamt that your history could become part of my future."
28. Lisa Nakamura, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.), October 17, 2002.
29. Grace Shimuzo, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.) October 17, 2002.
30. Ramiro, Interview, November 2, 2002.
31. Sun Hyung-Lee, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.), October 10, 2002.
32. APICAW (Asian Pacific Islander Coalition against War), Press release distributed in Fall, 2001 against Israel's intensified ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, 2002.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ramiro, Interview, November 2, 2002.
36. Al Qasem, Interview, October 25, 2002.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Elias Rashmawi, "Lessons of the January 18th Mobilization," An article distributed via e-mail, February 2003.
40. In February, 2003, I attended an anti-war rally in San Francisco. For a two-hour time period, I was standing beside the stage along with the organizers of the rally. During that time, I heard several people who attended the rally to take a stand against the war on Iraq complain to the rally organizers about speakers who addressed the issue of Palestine. One person in particular stated, "If we had known this was going to be a pro-Palestinian rally, half of these people would never have shown up!" A week later, organizers of the rally explained that they had received several phone calls expressing a similar complaint.
41. Eyad Kishawi, Interview by author (San Francisco, Calif.) October 28, 2002.
42. Dena Al-Adeeb, Interview by author (Oakland, Calif.) October 3, 2002.

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43. Kishawi, Interview, October 28, 2002.
44. Al-Adeeb, Interview, October 3, 2002.
45. Cindy Wiesner, Interview by author (Oakland, Calif.), October 10, 2002.
46. Incite! Women of Color against Violence, Preliminary draft of a public statement entitled, "The 'WAR OF TERROR' escalates violence against us as WOMEN OF COLOR and THIRD WORLD WOMEN and Our COMMUNITIES globally," 2003.
47. Ibid.
48. According to a preliminary mission statement issued by RJ911, RJ911 seeks to link U.S.-driven wars abroad to the "domestic war . . . carried out primarily against people of color who are viewed as a security risk." While opposing the ongoing U.S. war against Iraq and Palestine, RJ911 relationally confronts the denial of due process to all immigrants; the detention and deportation of immigrants; intensified racial profiling; surveillance; and harassment of all people of color as well as the expansion of the prison/detention/policing complex. Moreover, in opposing U.S. violations of international law, RJ911 challenges the ways that people of color are disproportionately recruited by the U.S. military to fight, kill and die for the U.S. war program; see Racial Justice 911, Preliminary mission statement, distributed to members via e-mail, 2002.
49. See "The Forgotten-'ism: An Arab American Women's Perspective on Zionism, Racism and Sexism," a publication of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (2001), for a feminist analysis of Zionism.
50. For a further analysis of Arab American histories of racialization and marginalization within the U.S., see Nadine C. Naber, "Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab Invisibility." *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* 23(1) (2000): 37–61; see also Suad Joseph, "Against the Grain of the Nation-The Arab," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future,* Michael W. Suleiman ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999): 257–272.

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