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INTRODUCTION



## Palestine—and Empire—Are Central to Arab American/SWANA Studies

Louise Cainkar

### ABSTRACT

Taking the small number of ethnographic studies of Palestinian communities in North America as its problematic, this article situates that predicament in the larger context of decades of academic silencing of Arab American and SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa) studies, efforts that represent but one component of a larger political project to quash pro-Palestinian activism. Abetted by the absence of a racial category, scholars continue to face substantial hurdles at the institutional level, inhibiting the robust growth of the field and boding poorly for an expansion in community studies. Yet recent scholarship on Palestinians in North America—exemplified by the articles included in this special issue that center the complexities of identities; activism; and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) solidarities—evidences real changes on the ground for Palestinian activism. Those changes, and continued advocacy for institutional change, are necessary to invigorate community studies, a critically important method of scholar-activist praxis because of their power to enhance a community's access to resources, well-being, organizing capacities, and local-level power and solidarity building.

### KEYWORDS

Arab American studies; Palestinian diaspora; race; surveillance; solidarity; censorship; community studies; SWANA

WHEN I WAS ASKED by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* to spearhead a special issue on the Palestinian diaspora in North America (Turtle Island), I had to think about it deeply.\* While I presumed that the *Journal* was approaching me because of my own demographic and ethnographic studies of Palestinians in Chicago, and was indeed honored by the request, I also recognized that most of my Palestinian-specific research had been undertaken a few decades earlier. I thought about the body of ethnographic studies of geographically bounded, self-defined Palestinian communities in the United States that had accumulated since that time—a pool of work it was safe to assume had grown in the intervening years—and came up with very little. The fact is that our repository of studies of Palestinian American communities is not much larger now than it was when I first started such research in the 1980s. At that time, I had located three prior studies, all of them unpublished and conducted in Chicago, which made sense: the Chicago metropolitan area has been a primary location for Palestinians since the turn of the twentieth century and remains to this day a place where they are numerically dominant among communities of Arab origin.<sup>1</sup> Two of these studies were doctoral dissertations that compared aspects of Chicago's Palestinian community with its Syrian/Lebanese community, and one was a 1947 University of Chicago master's thesis on Palestinian Muslims in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> Between then and now, Randa Serhan's ethnographic study of a U.S. Palestinian community is the only published work<sup>3</sup> I can think of that is situated between my 1980s–early 2000s work and Loren Lybarger's recent book.<sup>4</sup> This bleak state of affairs is somewhat shocking,

\* The term North America is used in this article as shorthand for the United States and Canada – Ed.

especially considering that Palestinian communities in North America are growing in size, spreading in location, and multigenerational, and that they are neither off the radar of surveillance nor dissolving into whiteness.

What I want to consider here is why, over the course of the past five decades, and since the rise of race and ethnic studies in the academy, scholars have access to no more than a bare handful of studies on Palestinian American communities. I am not arguing that community ethnographies are *the* most important type of research, because we surely need a robust field of study that encompasses a wide range of topics, methodologies, and perspectives. Furthermore, our scholarship needs to draw conclusions that make claims and demands that are national and transnational in scope. Nevertheless, community studies are important because they arm a community with data that helps it obtain access to resources, fight discrimination, build local solidarity and power and, especially in the case of Palestinians, organize against erasure and document its continuous presence as an involuntary diaspora. Here I lay out explanations for this state of affairs, at points using my own career trajectory to mark the larger issues at stake. I link the Palestinian case to the wider struggles of Arab American studies, which nearly five decades after its inception as a field of study still faces marginalization if not invisibility in the academy, despite a rising number of scholars and publications across a broad range of disciplines.

Palestine is absolutely central to this disconcerting situation. Beginning in the 1960s, groups long silenced by white supremacy fought bitter struggles for the establishment of race and ethnic studies programs in the academy. They demanded an end to their communities' neglect and misrepresentation in university curricula and advanced claims for a decolonized academy that not only recognized but lifted up their communities. Yet more than fifty years later, we find that scholars of Palestinians, and Arabs more broadly, in the United States have largely been denied a seat at the race and ethnic studies table. Minus a few notable exceptions, it is still difficult to major in or even find courses in Arab American studies, let alone Palestinian diaspora studies, at most universities and colleges in the United States. Access to grant funding for humanities or social science research on these communities is little better than it was fifty years ago. (It is notable, but I think no accident, that today research on American Muslims<sup>5</sup> is gaining in visibility and seems to be facing fewer obstacles to recognition, especially if its contextual framework evidences historical amnesia, is detached from U.S. empire, and evokes liberal multicultural frameworks of religious difference.<sup>6</sup>) This predicament of obscurity results in large part from the decades-long marginalization and silencing of a body of scholarship that gives Palestinians and Arab Americans voice in the United States, scholarship that rightly criticizes the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the substantial human rights violations caused by the machinations of U.S. empire in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)/SWANA region. Despite recent paradigm shifts that challenge earlier silences within the disciplines as well as in area studies and race and ethnic studies, Arab American studies has been easily disregarded by scholars who see "racial" subordination as defined only by domestic policies, legal bars, and official categories, ignoring the interplay of empire and race—a standpoint that plays into the hands of others actively trying to suppress Arab American voices. Scholars are silenced when they cannot get published, speak at mainstream conferences, locate funding for their research, or teach in their field, and when the growth of their field is hampered by the need to persistently resist these efforts at suppression. This silencing is but one part of what I have called the "war-on-terror racial project,"<sup>7</sup> a systematic set of ideological tools and

policing practices that rely on racialized tropes to discipline and quash dissent while simultaneously denying “race” by replacing it with “threat.”<sup>8</sup> For scholars of Arab America, documenting this racial project as an important step toward dismantling it required our scholarly lens to be wide-ranging, as its representations and disciplining were not aimed at Palestinians alone, but at Arabs, “Middle Easterners,” and Muslims more broadly. As a result, after more than one hundred years of Palestinian presence in the United States and over fifty years since the birth of Arab American studies, we have only a handful of scholarly studies of Palestinian communities in North America.

While I concede that this void is not the most pressing issue of our time, as we have much in the way of injustice to fight, I will return to why these studies should nonetheless be seen as important. My intervention here, which I lay out chronologically and thematically, explains how Palestine is central to both the scholarship and fates of Arab American studies scholars and why scholarship on Palestinians in North America has taken a more recent shift that foregrounds solidarity. I argue that while we may continue to face barriers from above, we are witnessing successes from below. Here, I offer a brief roadmap of my argument, which has been constructed quite thinly from an Arab American studies perspective and hopefully not too thickly for those outside the field.<sup>9</sup> In short, supporters of the Israeli conquests of 1967 launched a wide-scale racialization project in the United States (and other places) in order to silence criticism of these conquests and their attendant population removals, land confiscations, and other human rights violations. Although the discursive project that cast Palestinians as inferior human beings had been in place for a very long time, the U.S. domestic climate in the late 1960s had witnessed significant changes, including the rise of the civil rights movement, pan-ethnic organizing, and Third World solidarities, all of which posed the potential for popular censure of Zionist expansionism. This project intentionally built on the logics of white supremacy by deploying hierarchical notions of superior and inferior people in narratives and representations that cast Arabs as inherently violent and as terror threats. Working on more than ideological levels, a “war on (Arab) terror” commenced that policed pro-Palestinian activists and scholarship on Palestine and Palestinians, effectively keeping the ranks of both sparse. Because the racial trope was about Arabs, its negative impacts—including discrimination, surveillance, bullying, hate crimes, and social and political exclusion—spread widely across all Arab American communities. Over time, scholarship on Arab Americans shifted from community studies intended to make communities visible and proclaim their existence to a cohesive and integrated body of work that constituted a pan-Arab American demand for political and scholarly recognition of racialization and racism. But scholars and activists leading this charge were rebuffed from above (and often from below) by counterarguments that they were ineligible to make these claims because they were not a *racial* minority. To scholars of Arab America, the mass collective impacts of 9/11 on Arabs and Muslims—as all were held accountable for the acts of a few—evidenced the ultimate success of this racial project.

Today, as scholars of Arab America are still waging the struggle for a place in the academy, the central role of Palestine in the oppression and exclusion faced by Arab Americans (and by Muslim Americans, although that story is more complex) is being elided in favor of a new narrative that conveniently starts the “war on terror” on 9/11 and thus implicitly identifies Arab/Muslim terrorists as the cause of racialization. But changes on the ground mean that different stories can now be told from below. As anti-racist and anti-colonial solidarities widen,

they invite explorations of the challenges inherent to struggles for Palestinian freedom taking place within the context of other freedom struggles. These stories represent emerging themes in Arab American and Palestinian American studies and are featured in this issue in the writings of Loubna Qutami and Chandni Desai. Lybarger's contribution highlights changes within Palestinian American communities to which activists must attend if they are to grow their movements at the local level. Indeed, knowing one's community at this level is critical to mobilizing it for solidarity work and to building relationships with other groups marginalized under white supremacy. It is also critical to gaining access to resources to build a community's power and strength, which are essential to furthering the anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperial struggles discussed in this issue by Qutami, Desai, and Lybarger. Such access has long been a demand of social justice work and is central, for example, to the current re-visioning around calls to defund the police and invest instead in communities,<sup>10</sup> and to the demands of opponents of countering violent extremism (CVE) programs for resources not tied to surveillance.<sup>11</sup>

### **Documenting the Racial Project and Its Broad Scope of Representation and Repression**

Dissent is stifled by keeping people voiceless, policing them, denying them resources, and by propagating caricatures that promote fear, devalue human life, and deny human dignity. These tactics have a long and deep history in the United States, one that is familiar to groups subordinated by white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and ableism. Bringing about an end to such practices requires their documentation and exposure and a place at the table, as well as some measure of power. For reasons I discuss in detail elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> Arab Americans were spared the worst of white supremacy until the second half of the twentieth century, when systematic efforts to silence and police them unfolded. Recognizing earlier aspirations to whiteness, Arab American studies scholar Alixa Naff once wrote, "If the political events in the post-World War II Arab World had not reactivated Arab immigration and provoked the descendants of the first wave into an Arab identity, they might have assimilated themselves out of existence."<sup>13</sup> The events Naff references included the rise of the United States as a global superpower, the creation of Israel in Palestine and, most directly for Palestinians in the U.S. diaspora, the 1967 Israeli conquest of the rest of Palestine. Arab American studies points to 1967 as the year in which emerged the systematic mass media framing of Arabs as barbaric, uncivilized, and inherently violent people, largely in the context of U.S. news coverage of the 1967 war. Policing of Arab Americans and pro-Palestinian activists began shortly thereafter, under the wholly invented pretext that they constituted a domestic terrorist threat. While aggressive spying, monitoring of bank accounts, intimidating interviews, and efforts to deport activists were formalized in Richard Nixon's Operation Boulder, those kinds of policing/disciplining practices began before that time and have continued long after.<sup>14</sup> Representations of Arabs as terrorists, and only terrorists, saturated the American news and film industry after 1967 in an ideological effort to construct a "common sense" understanding for interpreting events on the ground, both in the United States and globally.<sup>15</sup> By design, these constructions were not centered on Palestinians: recall that Golda Meir said Palestinians did not exist, Joan Peters claimed they were all immigrants, and Zionist activists argued that Jordan was the Palestinian state—all arguments comprising the project of erasure that accompanies settler colonialism.<sup>16</sup> Narratives

about Arabs as terrorists provided a justification for repressive domestic state actions as they also unleashed a pattern of hate crimes that continues to this day.

Anthropologist Nabeel Abraham noted in 1994 that while the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed little interest in investigating hate crimes against Arab Americans, it was actively surveilling and harassing them as potential terror threats, even though there had not been a single act of Arab terrorism in the United States.<sup>17</sup> (The “Muslim ban” was similarly based on fabricated threat allegations.<sup>18</sup>) Equally important but far less studied were the organized efforts to thwart Arab American mobilizations against such repression and representation with interventions designed specifically to deny them partners in the struggle. Longtime Arab American activist James Zogby refers to these measures as “campaigns of pressure designed to make us ‘radioactive,’” and “to have us excluded” from a wide range of organizations, advocacy coalitions, and political campaigns.<sup>19</sup> He cites reports that were circulated to potential partners in solidarity referring to Arab American activists as “Arab propagandists,” “a made up community,” “anti-Semites,” and a “subversive plot” supporting Palestinian terror.<sup>20</sup> Arab American activists and scholars understood these silencing, demonizing, and policing efforts as mechanisms that aimed to: build and maintain popular support for the Israeli conquest of Palestine; to divert attention away from Israel’s population removals, land confiscations, and other human rights violations; and to produce popular acquiescence to U.S. policies in the region. Orientalism, as well as centuries-old demonization of Islam and the logics of white supremacy wholly inspired the tactics and discourses deployed to justify silencing and policing—hierarchical notions of superior and inferior people, and binaries of civilized and uncivilized “races”—giving them immediate traction in a society built on such logics.

While this racial project had Palestine at its root, its impacts in the United States were pan-Arab. Scholars conducting community studies found that no matter which Arab American community they were looking at, their research was unified by a common overarching context of discrimination, exclusion, and fear that powerfully shaped the daily lives of those they wrote about. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the terrorist trope was expanded to Muslims using the same language and the same images. Arabs and Muslims were conflated, and Muslim American communities—beyond those of Black Muslims who had been surveilled for decades—were also vilified and policed. By the 1990s, scholarship on Arab Americans had gathered a liberatory momentum, with scholars calling for the recognition of Arab Americans as racialized minorities and demanding an end to the political subjugation, social exclusion, scholarly invisibility, and hyperpolicing of Arab American communities. Efforts to deny Arab Americans a place at the civil rights table,<sup>21</sup> as well as the refusal of race and ethnic studies scholars to acknowledge the racialization of Arabs, were buttressed by the post-civil-rights-era classification of Arabs and others from the MENA region as Caucasian by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB Directive no. 15, issued for the purpose of civil rights monitoring). Joanna Kadi observed in 1994 that “in the United States and Canada, it is not only white people who refuse to see us, it is other people of color—Latinos, Africans, Asians, Natives—who do not acknowledge our existence.”<sup>22</sup> Mobilizations to create a separate census category for Arab Americans began in this era in an effort to diminish what scholars and activists referred to as invisibility.<sup>23</sup>

When the 9/11 attacks occurred in 2001, the groundwork had been laid for an all-out siege of Arab American and Muslim American communities, by the state and public alike, and for minimal popular action to protest that state of affairs; low levels of joint solidarity meant that

Arab and Muslim Americans stood practically alone.<sup>24</sup> Attorney General John Ashcroft's statement that Arab/Muslim terrorists were living "in our communities—plotting, planning and waiting to kill Americans again," actively launching a "reign of terror" while enjoying "the benefits of our free society even as they commit themselves to our destruction" made seemingly common sense.<sup>25</sup> The racial project that was launched to stifle dissent over Palestine had achieved its greatest victory. It successfully silenced dissent on the treatment of Arabs and Muslims *anywhere*, not only in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen, but also in the United States. The pan-Arab/pan-Muslim scope of the racial project and repression meant that the next wave of scholarship, conducted on the impacts of 9/11 in the United States, had to be broad and inclusive, a pattern that marks all of the post-9/11 studies, whether by Nadine Naber in the San Francisco Bay Area, Sunaina Maira in Boston, Jen'nan Ghazal Read in Texas, members of the Detroit Arab American Study Team (Wayne Baker, Ronald Stockton, Sally Howell, Amaney Jamal, Ann Chih Lin, Andrew Shryock, and Mark Tessler), or myself in Chicago. Studying just one community, whether Palestinian, Lebanese, Yemeni, Syrian, or others, risked missing the vast reach of collective post-9/11 punishment. As we worked with the categories of meaning at the time, Palestinians were elided, just as they were when the Arab terrorist construct was created. As these shared conditions continue to obtain—whether in the form of surveillance, immigration bans, CVE programs,<sup>26</sup> or lack of recognition of Arabs as racialized—studies focusing on one community seem to lack relevance.

## Harassment and Censorship of Scholars

If the field of scholars of Arab America had been sufficiently large, especially among social scientists, we would have been able to focus on making the claim of collective racialization and repression while also accommodating distinct community studies. Before and after 9/11, we would have had the space to conduct research on different Arab American communities—to compare and contrast their experiences with racialization, policing, and bullying; to examine their transnational patterns, including movement and remittances, and analyze them in relationship to state policies and domestic economic possibilities; and to compare different urban settings and theorize about how local context shapes patterns of inclusion, exclusion, activism, and power. But we did not have this luxury because we had neither the breadth of scholars nor the research funding, and we were spending lots of energy fighting our exclusion (as we continue to do). It is nothing short of remarkable to me as I write on the cusp of 2021 that we must put our energies into fighting against the exclusion of Arab American studies from California's ethnic studies model curriculum,<sup>27</sup> and must call out the absence of culturally competent mental health trainings and institutional invisibility on college campuses (both of which deprive Arab and Muslim Americans access to needed resources),<sup>28</sup> that quotes about bullying from interviews I conducted some fifteen years ago are being used to educate high school teachers today,<sup>29</sup> and that colleagues and I had to struggle for the inclusion of SWANA-identified junior scholars, who were referred to by one committee member as foreigners, in a campus-climate study conducted by our professional association's task force on minorities.

Our scholarly ranks were thin because heading into the 9/11 moment, scholars and potential scholars of Palestinian and Arab Americans had countless negative experiences that had real impacts on our scholarly careers, on imagining possibilities for ourselves in the academy. We were shouted down at academic conferences, told by our mentors that we would never get

jobs, and dissuaded from studying topics of our choosing if they were about Arab Americans. Until the post-9/11 era, there were few places we could publish scholarly research on Arab Americans, except in books on Arab Americans, published by Arab Americans, that were mainly read by Arab Americans and scholars of Arab America. We were sidelined, siloed, and institutionally silenced. We had no home. We were not part of Middle East studies, were rejected by race and ethnic studies, and fought for decades for inclusion in the programs of our professional associations.<sup>30</sup> There were almost no places we could teach Arab American studies or obtain research grants to do our work, let alone be considered for any type of recognition or award.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, a field of study with few academic positions and little access to research funding, whose scholars are hampered and harassed and find difficulty publishing in mainstream scholarly venues, will not grow and will lack mentors, further impeding its robust development. For my part, when I finished my dissertation on Palestinians in Chicago, I left academia and became an activist-scholar, working in various paid and unpaid capacities to advance justice for Palestinians.<sup>32</sup> I continued to publish my work in popular and scholarly venues (largely within the Arab American market to which we were restricted) because it was still important to do so, and in case I would ever be permitted to return to the academy.<sup>33</sup> I took with me a skeptical attitude toward academics and their gatekeeping and a commitment to continue writing in a style that is legible beyond academia, an approach nourished by my teacher, noted sociologist Howard S. Becker.

## **From Existence to Resistance and Solidarity**

When I was first conducting research on Palestinians in Chicago, scholars of Arab America and Arab American activists (most scholars were both, and most were affiliated with the Association of Arab American University Graduates [AAUG]) thought community studies were crucial to asserting their existence, both historically and contemporaneously. If known at all, Arab Americans were seen mainly through the lens of the terrorist trope, or as foreigners. In order for them to take their place on the racial and ethnic map of the United States, Arab American scholars encouraged the production of ethnographic studies and the documentation of what we might call “social facts,” such as how many there were; their histories of settlement; range of locations; and social, economic, and political characteristics. My mentors at Northwestern University, Janet and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, also felt it was important to specifically say the name “Palestinians” and to count their numbers in the United States as part of the project to document the growing forced diaspora.

Scholars and activists believed that Arab Americans would not be so easily vilified if they were known, and that more knowledge production was the answer. But as we know, facts alone do not produce change; power does. The facts of anti-Black racism, Black poverty, and abusive policing of Black communities have been known for many decades, but that knowledge has changed little; a powerful, broad-based social movement is needed for change to occur. Our post-9/11 studies showed that decades of marginalization, demonization, policing, and political exclusion of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans had left them few allies with whom to protest the wide-scale surveillance, interrogation, special registration, deportation, arrests, and hate crimes to which they were subjected. After 9/11, existence was no longer in question; it was now undeniable that Arab and Muslim Americans (and persons perceived as such) were the subjects of collective and state-sponsored disciplining

and repression. They were, as I wrote in a 2002 piece for *Middle East Report*, “no longer invisible.”<sup>34</sup>

The authors of the initial post-9/11 studies were scholars seasoned in Arab American or Asian American Studies. They knew that Arab and Muslim Americans faced collective punishment for the attacks because they had already been essentialized and racialized. In other words, they knew the history that preceded 9/11 and that it marked a “turning point, as opposed to a starting point,” in the words of Naber.<sup>35</sup> But based on the many articles and books I have been sent for review over the past few years, I see that a new story line has emerged: that the racialization of Arabs and Muslim was a *result* of the 9/11 attacks.<sup>36</sup> All of the history I presented above has enabled this erroneous argument, including the sparsity of courses and scholarly mentors well versed in the field, as well as the marginalization of our scholarship in the academy, in race and ethnic studies, and by our professional associations. This claim about 9/11 defies everything we know about racialization; no entire group of people pays the price for the acts of a few unless they have *already* been collectively racialized as monolithic and inferior. For example, widespread support for Japanese internment in the United States would not have been possible in the absence of anti-Asian racism.

This new narrative comprises a number of problems, not least of which is that Arabs and Muslims (like other BIPOC communities before them) are held responsible for their own racialization, at the center of which lies the Arab/Muslim terrorist, effectively giving this social construction even greater traction and power. Most importantly for our discussion here, not only is thirty years of prior scholarship on Arab Americans made irrelevant, the centrality of Palestine to the racialization process is wiped off the map. This type of revisionism and its accompanying erasure of historical facts has been experienced by every group racialized as inferior by white supremacy (it’s called “blaming the victim”), so we should not be surprised by it. Just as the “threatening” Black man eviscerated a white reckoning with slavery and Jim Crow, the Arab/Muslim “terrorist” frees conquest and empire from accountability for the oppressions faced by Palestinian and Arab Americans. From the histories of others, we also know the impacts of historical erasures: further criminalization and justification for segregation, policing, and all types of walls (prisons, borders, bans). As Qutami argues in her article, we must make the effort required to restore history; doing so necessitates maintaining a continuous thread in scholarship before and after 9/11 and preventing the erasure of Palestine from its critical place in Arab and Muslim American Studies. Silencing efforts from the powers above remain a serious obstacle not only to the growth of Arab American and Palestinian diaspora studies, but also to pro-Palestinian activism, as the work of Palestine Legal attests.<sup>37</sup>

Yet facts on the ground reveal another story: robust and expanding solidarity movements locally, nationally, and globally that do not bend to—indeed, on principle, would not bend to—pressures to exclude Palestinians and Arabs. It is this agitation from below that ignites new scholarship in Arab American studies, forefronts the scholar-activist praxis witnessed in Qutami’s and Desai’s pieces in this issue of the *Journal*, and provides hope from a liberatory perspective. This growing body of scholarship, characteristic of critical race and ethnic studies, focuses on resistance, solidarities, and the interconnected struggles that situate Palestine in the context of broader anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-settler-colonial movements.<sup>38</sup> We see in this literature a radical rethinking of Arab American positionalities within transnational spaces and more complex understandings of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, activism, and identities.<sup>39</sup> We find deeper explorations of the global and intersecting dimensions

of violence that do not detach local experience from imperial conquest or separate one group's experiences from another's, and that reveal how the militarization of policing affects all communities oppressed by white supremacy, albeit in different forms.<sup>40</sup> Other studies complicate the notion of borders, when Latinx and Palestinian perspectives are put in conversation with each other,<sup>41</sup> and expose the role of landscape transformations and environmental degradation brought about by global capitalism, empire, and settler colonialism in forcing population movements.<sup>42</sup> This work also includes recent scholarship featured in the special *JPS* issue on Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity published in 2018 and scholarship on Arab American activism within the Third World liberation struggles of the 1960s–80s, as well as the *Jadaliyya* roundtable on anti-Blackness and Black-Palestinian solidarity.<sup>43</sup> We also find a sense of power and optimism in new scholarship on South/South alliances, on the global flows of artistic and cultural forms of resistance that build internationalism from below, and in the stories being uncovered by scholars that reveal the historical breadth of these ties.<sup>44</sup>

In this issue, we feature scholarship that is interested in understanding the contexts and challenges that frame the hard work of building larger and more powerful movements in North America for the liberation of Palestine, as those efforts must engage with the liberation of other oppressed communities. Qutami and Desai underscore parallels between earlier revolutionary formations fighting for Palestinian freedom and current structures. They identify the challenges these mobilizations faced and consider them for the lessons learned and complexities that must be grasped in order to expand in size and liberatory effectiveness. Lybarger brings our attention to the fact that Palestinian communities in North America are ideologically multidimensional, providing a range of challenges to and opportunities for solidarity work. Each of these pieces recognizes the institutional voids that were produced when the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) ceased to be a global liberation movement, voids now being filled by new organizational vehicles and alliances.

Qutami's article is a detailed exploration of the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) grounded in the histories of its predecessors, the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) and the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). Noting that students and youth in exile have always played major roles in the Palestine liberation project, she argues that an effective movement must be grounded in knowledge of the past. Palestinians have been in a perpetual position of *starting over* their pursuits of liberation, she notes, and youth organizers are too often presented with fragments of the past because it has been subjected to persistent annihilation. Anchoring the work of OAS and GUPS within their transnational formations and funding streams, she pays particular attention to ways in which transnational events required repeated reconfigurations of organizational structure and liberatory scope; she also articulates the similarities between these and the challenges faced by the PYM in its own transnational configuration. Qutami points to the significant differences in vantage points between OAS and GUPS activists—who were, for the most part, born in the Arab world and had an intimate, organic, and emotional relationship to Palestine—and U.S.-based PYM activists, who share a degree of “linguistic, cultural, social, and political distance” from Palestine while also facing racialized oppression in the United States. Thus, while OAS activists worked in Third World liberation coalitions largely from the standpoint of the colonization of Palestine, coalition work for PYM activists is also rooted in their personal experiences of racism and in local and U.S. national anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles. As she elaborates on the damaging impacts of partisanship on OAS and GUPS, Qutami argues that the nonpartisan character of PYM

means it will face fewer internal challenges. She identifies the “main task at hand” for PYM as learning how to function at multiple scales—local, national, transnational, and in the context of both U.S. and Palestinian liberation struggles—while at the same time working at great distance from Palestine and without the transnational linkages once provided by the PLO. Those severed linkages were an outcome of the Oslo Accords and the ruptures leading up to them that all but liquidated the Palestinian liberation project and required the U.S. PYM to step into an institutional vacuum. Qutami’s piece is at once scholarly and prescriptive; as she unearths the past to inform the future, she calls for the rebuilding of grassroots institutions and renewed cultivation of youth activism, much of which, I argue, needs to be done at the local level.

Desai’s exploration of Indigenous/Palestine solidarity in Canada from the 1970s to the present is grounded in a sense of shared struggle and deeply informed by Indigenous scholarship. She identifies the first significant wave of this solidarity as occurring during the era of Red Power and the Third World anti-imperialist, anti-colonial movements of which the PLO was a part; after a period of decline, these joint struggles witnessed a resurgence in the first decade of the twenty-first century. While identifying “key historical, juridical, and political-economic distinctions between the settler states of Canada and Israel,” Desai’s work complicates narratives of sameness, which she argues obstruct joint struggle. Her objective is to avoid collapsing the specificities of each context, especially with reference to capitalist social relations and hierarchies of race, class, and gender. More specific to her scholar-activist praxis, she problematizes the settler-colonial framework of analysis, arguing that it lacks the capacity to incorporate widespread capitalist violence and elides race and class differences in settler societies. By denying the complexity of such societies, the settler-colonial framework misinforms the bases for resistance and solidarity. The settler-Indigenous binary flattens history, “obfuscates the dialectical social relations of colonialism, racial capitalism and imperialism on a global scale,” and delinks settler colonialism from slavery, war, occupation, and the racist oppression of Black and immigrant communities, therein shrouding both the connectedness and necessity of joint struggle and creating an “oppression Olympics” that inhibits mass popular resistance. In complicating the settler-Indigenous binary, Desai argues for a more complex understanding of the relationship between migration and colonization, one that has the power to mobilize “arrivants”—a term Jodi Byrd used to describe newcomers to settler colonies who are themselves colonial and imperial subjects—in “radical possibilities of relationality” and joint struggle, instead of leaving them behind in confusion or false consciousness.<sup>45</sup> As she identifies a range of Palestinian Canadian positionalities that take into account being both victims of settler colonialism and immigrants who benefit from it, she argues for work on the ground that promotes a better understanding of the larger forces at play which produce a wide range of injustices and injured peoples, because therein lies the potential for growing a radical resurgent solidarity based on the vision of “worldmaking.”<sup>46</sup>

Lybarger’s focus is the local level of the Chicago metropolitan area, where he analyzes transformations in diasporic Palestinian institutions and activism since the 1990s. He argues that these are significantly different from “earlier PLO-aligned” institutions and orientations, which met their demise in the wake of the Oslo Accords and in the context of the rise of Muslim institution building in Palestinian diaspora communities. Having previously studied post-Oslo changes in the occupied Palestinian territories, Lybarger finds parallels in the diaspora context but also unique features produced by domestic racialization and systematic

policing. He argues that “despite the mosques’ undeniable dominance and the community’s correspondingly widespread embrace of piety-minded orientations and practices, secularism . . . has not disappeared,” even if the internal workings of secular organizations have been reshaped to accommodate “the new religiosity.” He similarly argues that mobilizations for Palestine that ground themselves in Islam “bear the marks of secularism” in their platforms, suggesting that here too secularism never really went away. Turning his attention to the ways in which youth and young adults have responded to this climate, he finds a wide range of individualized and hybridized forms of identity and performance, which are often accommodations to and reactions against “the new piety-minded orientations” in the diaspora enclave. He suggests that these new forms of subjectivity offer new possibilities for solidarity and for the “emergence of a new, broader secularism” in Palestinian activism.

### **Community-Based Work Still Matters: Power and Solidarity Is Locally Built**

Whether considering Qutami’s call for rebuilding grassroots organizations, once the hallmark of the PLO in North America, or Desai’s invitation to promote more complex understandings of the bases for solidarity, all of this is work that must be done locally if we want to create strong and enduring movements that are interconnected nationally and transnationally. I thus conclude this journey through Arab American and Palestinian diaspora studies, which sought to explain why over the course of fifty years we have only a handful of studies of Palestinian American communities, by making the point that community-based research is still important and that we also need scholar-activist praxis at this level. All oppressed communities need to persistently “take their temperature” and continuously make a public record of it. Effective activism and solidarity work require communities that are not beaten down by poverty, mental health issues, or fear, and that have youth who feel lifted up. We need to write our stories as our own stories but also link them up to those of others. We need to advocate for community access to resources, and to be able to do that, our grassroots institutions also need access to resources. We need to grow strong and active Palestinian and Arab American communities that do not have to keep fighting for recognition and cannot be so easily wiped off the map. We also need to advance our work in coalition with other communities to build that sense of shared struggle and to jointly demand access to transformative power.

My final autobiographical vignette demonstrates the power of local-level scholar-activist praxis and what it can mean for communities. In the mid-1990s I came back (after working on Palestinian rights, documenting the impacts of sanctions and the first U.S. war on Iraq, and then the expulsions of Palestinians and Jordanians from the Gulf) to research in a new way and in a new role, as director of research for the Arab American Action Network (AAAN). I occupied a largely unpaid position in this new community-based organization that emerged during the period Qutami describes as the “post-Oslo vacuum” and Lybarger refers to as the “hollowing out of the PLO as a framework for organizing and orienting the diaspora.” The AAAN established itself within Chicago’s Markaz al-jaliya al-arabiyya, a Palestinian-led community center with strong ties to the Palestine Solidarity Committee and to the Union of Palestinian Women’s Associations of North America that focused on advocacy for Palestine, youth formation, and left-oriented Arab nationalist and progressive politics. (See Lybarger’s article in this issue for more details.) AAAN founders sought to continue advocacy for Palestine but also to focus on the community in Chicago where many families faced serious economic

struggles, youth reported bullying in schools and police harassment, and both a Palestinian street gang and theft ring (that mainly victimized other Palestinians) had formed. For the reasons I discussed above—marginalization, stereotyping, political exclusion, surveillance, and efforts to deport community leadership—community members felt alienated and voiceless, and they were locked out of access to social services and community development resources.

When the AAAN looked for funding to address these and other issues, it faced total rejection. It represented a largely unknown community (to mainstream funders) that could not produce a single piece of data on what its members were experiencing. The AAAN applied for and received a \$10,000 grant from the Chicago Community Trust (CCT) to conduct a needs assessment that would document the community's existence and lay out its socioeconomic and political conditions. This study, which I conducted over a two-year period in partnership with community members, was not only a piece of research, it was a major political step forward for Palestinians and Arab Americans in Chicago. In our report, titled *Meeting Community Needs, Building on Community Strengths*,<sup>47</sup> we offered demographic, socioeconomic, and qualitative data; we provided a history of Arab immigration; we tied Palestinian migration to “continuing de-Arabizing policies by Israel” and its increase to the Oslo Accords; and we loudly proclaimed that Arab Americans were “voiceless,” “misrepresented,” and “shut out” on multiple levels due to efforts to advance “the U.S. government’s pro-Israel, anti-Arab policies.”<sup>48</sup> We called for an end to hostile stereotyping and the political and social exclusion of Arab Americans. We demanded Arab American participation in decision-making bodies, planning committees, and boards. We called for schools to end the use of educational materials that stereotyped Arabs. We recommended that external service providers working in areas of Arab residential concentration hire Arabic-speaking staff and train non-Arab staff in cultural competencies. We recognized that only when we built up the communities’ strengths would they be more empowered to act against injustice and the intersecting systems of oppression they faced on local, national, and transnational levels.<sup>49</sup> Our report generated special coverage in the *Chicago Tribune*, titled “Arabs Build Solid Base in Chicago,”<sup>50</sup> and the CCT, a dominant funder in the area, now said of us:

The Arab American Action Networks [*sic*] vision is for a strong Arab American community, whose members have power to make decisions about actions and policies that affect their lives; and have access to a range of social, political, cultural, and economic opportunities in a context of equity and social justice. Formed in 1995 by community activists, organizers, academics, professionals, and non-Arab allies, the AAAN became one of the very first non-profit organizations providing services and advocacy to the Arab community of greater Chicago.<sup>51</sup>

Chicago’s Palestinian and Arab communities were on the map. Once armed with the data funders wanted, the AAAN was able to grow significantly in resources; expand youth development; offer social, translation, immigration, citizenship, and domestic violence support services; and increase community outreach. The post-9/11 moment brought about another major advance for the AAAN when, while organizing in defense of besieged Arab and Muslim American communities and in opposition to the ensuing war in Iraq, the organization convinced key foundations seeking to fund local community mobilizations that it had a history of organizing and solidarity work (such as within the Third World liberation struggles mentioned above), as well as a “rich history of organizing from our countries of origins. . . . We didn’t have to be exclusively Alinskyists to do effective,

impactful work.”<sup>52</sup> Resuturing the activism of the PLO era with the present, and indeed pointing out the line of continuity between them, the AAAN was able to secure financial support for organizing women and youth in the community and broadening its solidarity work, locally and nationally.

In this way, community studies conducted in partnership with grassroots organizations evidence a liberatory methodology that fuses existence with resistance. Funding for community studies is often difficult to obtain and poorly paid, and we need joint activism to demand that these investments be continually made by funders. Such studies not only evince a scholar-activist praxis; they can also be transformed into the type of scholarly talks and publications required for promotion in academia.<sup>53</sup> After serving as AAAN’s acting director for one year, I was hired by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) to conduct research in twenty-seven immigrant communities as part of an organizing effort to gain access to a committed pool of state funds dedicated to immigrant communities. The success of this effort resulted in a \$1 million annual pool of money, distributed and administered by ICIRR, that continues to this day to build the voice and power of immigrant communities who, for example, insisted that Chicago and Illinois become immigrant sanctuaries.<sup>54</sup>

Studies of Palestinian American communities are not only important for these reasons of empowerment. Circling back to how we got where we are—the many-faceted efforts directed at silencing and erasure that effectively steered research away from Palestinians in diaspora—there are enough reasons, scholarly and otherwise, to foster a climate in which such studies can flourish. I identified above some of the research we could have been conducting if our field of study had been allowed to grow in an unhindered and robust manner, such as comparing Palestinian communities across different urban settings and theorizing about how local context shapes patterns of inclusion, exclusion, activism, and power.<sup>55</sup> That example is from sociology, but the possibilities for research are wide, considering the range of disciplinary perspectives that could be engaged. This growth is unlikely to happen, however, without change from above: institutional change. Scholars still need jobs and funding for their research, and recognition in race and ethnic studies is still a work in progress (American studies has witnessed the most positive change in this regard, and we see small movement in Asian American studies, English, history, and comparative Latinx studies). This means that our best hope for growth right now is in unfunded doctoral theses, but this avenue too is limited by the systemic lack of mentors. The institutional changes needed can be mobilized from below, as with the birth of race and ethnic studies, but until that time, our most promising possibility might be imagining a field of global Middle East, Palestine, or SWANA studies that has a broad lens and includes diasporas. That too needs advocacy.

## About the Author

**Louise Cainkar** is professor of sociology and social welfare and justice at Marquette University, where she won the 2021 Marquette University Community Engaged Teaching Award. She also directs the major in peace studies and minor in Arab and Muslim American studies. She has published widely on Arab Americans and Muslim Americans. She is coeditor, with Michael W. Suleiman and Suad Joseph, of *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2021) and of *Sajjilu Arab American: A Reader in SWANA Studies*, with Pauline Homsy Vinson and Amira Jarmakani, forthcoming from Syracuse University Press. Her book *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience after 9/11* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009) was honored as Outstanding Adult Non-Fiction by the Arab American National Museum. She is a past president of the Arab American Studies Association and board member of the Association for Middle East Women’s Studies.

## Endnotes

1. For example, Jen'nan Ghazal Read and Kristine J. Ajrouch, "Executive Summary, Pilot Census Study Report, Arab American Research Initiative" (unpublished report, Dearborn, MI: Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services [ACCESS], 2017). The data from this report were used to produce ACCESS, *Arab Americans: A Community Portrait*, n.d., <https://insight.livestories.com/s/v2/arab-american-heritage-v2/0adb9ffd-937c-4f57-9dca-80b81ee46b9f/>.
2. Abdul Jalil Al-Tahir, "The Arab Community in the Chicago Area: A Comparative Study of the Christian-Syrians and the Muslim-Palestinians" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1952); Ali Shteiwi Zaghel, "Changing Patterns of Identification among Arab-Americans: The Palestinian Ramallites and the Christian Syrian-Lebanese" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, Evanston, 1976); Lawrence Oschinsky, "Islam in Chicago: Being a Study of the Acculturation of a Muslim-Palestinian Community in That City" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1947). While not a community study, the following article highlighted the impacts of remittances from Palestinians in the United States on a Palestinian village: Marisa Escribano and Nazmi El-Joubeh, "Migration and Change in a West Bank Village: The Case of Deir Dibwan," *JPS* 11, no. 1 (Autumn 1981): pp. 150–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536052>.
3. Randa Serhan, "Palestinian Weddings: Inventing Palestine in New Jersey," *JPS* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2008): pp. 21–37, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2008.37.4.21>; and "Suspended Community: An Ethnographic Study of Palestinian-Americans in New York and New Jersey" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2009).
4. Loren D. Lybarger, *Palestinian Chicago: Identity in Exile* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).
5. I use American Muslims and Muslim Americans interchangeably here, but I acknowledge that there is deeper meaning in these terms that renders them not interchangeable. See Sylvia Chan-Malik et al., "A Space for the Spiritual": A Roundtable on Race, Gender, and Islam in the United States," *Amerasia Journal* 40, no. 1 (2014): pp. 17–33, <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.40.1.3435mt821736k874>.
6. Erik Love examines how these approaches are considered by Muslim activist organizations in *Islamophobia and Racism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).
7. See Louise Cainkar, "Fluid Terror Threat: A Genealogy of the Racialization of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian Americans," *Amerasia Journal*, 44 no. 1 (April 2018): pp. 27–59, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.44.1.27-59>.
8. Michael Omi and Howard Winant define a racial project as follows: "A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines." See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in The United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 57–58.
9. My lens here does not incorporate important contributions, moments, and shifts in Palestinian and Arab American literature, music, theater, and the arts more broadly. They too matter and occurred contrapuntally with what I describe here. See the forthcoming volume, Louise Cainkar, Pauline Homsy Vinson, and Amira Jarmakani, eds., *Sajjilu Arab American: A Reader in SWANA Studies* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press), where all of these elements are given due space.
10. See, for example, Angela Davis, "Freedom Struggle: Angela Davis on Calls to Defund Police, Racism and Capitalism, and the 2020 Election," interviewed by Amy Goodman, Democracy Now!, 7 September 2020, [https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/7/freedom\\_struggle\\_angela\\_davis\\_on\\_calls](https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/7/freedom_struggle_angela_davis_on_calls).
11. Nicole Nguyen, *Suspect Communities: Anti-Muslim Racism and the Domestic War on Terror* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
12. Louise Cainkar, "The Social Construction of Difference and the Arab American Experience," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, nos. 2–3 (Winter–Spring 2006): pp. 243–78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27501698>; and "Fluid Terror Threat.

13. Alixa Naff, "The Early Arab Immigrant Experience" in *The Development of Arab American Identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 23–35, quote at p. 35.
14. M. C. Bassiouni, ed., *The Civil Rights of Arab-Americans: "The Special Measures,"* information paper no. 10 (North Dartmouth, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1974); Michael R. Fischbach, "Government Pressures against Arabs in the United States," *JPS* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1985): pp. 87–100, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536955>; and "Palestinian Offices in the United States: Microcosms of the Palestinian Experience," *JPS* 48, no. 1 (Autumn 2018): pp. 104–18, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2018.48.1.104>. For explorations of Arab American activism at the time, see also Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s–1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Sally Howell, "Southend Struggles: Converging Narratives of an Arab/Muslim American Enclave," *Mashriq and Mahjar* 3, no. 1 (2015): pp. 41–64, <https://doi.org/10.24847/33i2015.63>; and Suraya Khan, "Transnational Alliances: The AAUG's Advocacy for Palestine and the Third World," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2018): pp. 53–72, <https://doi.org/10.13169/arabstudquar.40.1.0053>; and Qutami in this issue.
15. See Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV Arab* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984); "The Comic Book Arab," *The Link* 24, no. 5 (Nov–Dec. 1991); "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 588 (July 2003): pp. 171–93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1049860>; *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2009); Laurence Michalak, *Cruel and Unusual: Negative Images of Arabs in American Popular Culture*, issue paper no. 15 (Washington, DC: Arab American Anti-discrimination Committee, 1988); Ronald Stockton, "Ethnic Archetypes and the Arab Image," in *The Development of Arab-American Identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) pp. 119–54. Equally negative was the portrayal of Arabs in school textbooks: see Ayad Al-Qazzaz, "Images of the Arab in American Social Science Textbooks," in *Arabs in America: Myths and Realities*, ed. Baha Abu-Laban and Faith T. Zeade (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975); Elizabeth Barlow, *Evaluation of Secondary-Level Textbooks for Coverage of the Middle East and North Africa* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies; Tucson: Middle East Studies Association, 1994). In university-level race and ethnic studies textbooks, and unlike any other group, Arabs were credited with causing their own racialization because of Arab terrorism; see Louise Cainkar "An Analysis of the Place of Arabs and Muslims in Ethnic Studies Textbooks: 1988–2003," (presentation, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, August 2003).
16. In 1969, Israeli prime minister Golda Meir said, "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." See Golda Meir, interview with Frank Giles, *Sunday Times London*, 15 June 1969; reprised as "Golda Meir Scorns Soviets: Israeli Premier Explains Stand on Big-4 Talks, Security," *Washington Post*, 16 June 1969, p. A15. See Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984). It was reprinted in 1985, 1993, 1997, 2000, and 2002 by other publishers. From 1967 through the late 1980s, prominent supporters of Israel argued that Jordan was the Palestinian state. In other words, denying the existence of Palestinians and centering Arabs more broadly was key to this scheme.
17. Nabeel Abraham, "Anti-Arab Racism and Violence in the United States," in *The Development of Arab-American Identity*, ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 155–214.
18. Louise Cainkar, "The Muslim Ban and Trump's War on Immigration," *Middle East Report*, no. 294 (Spring 2020), <https://merip.org/2020/06/the-muslim-ban-and-trumps-war-on-immigration-2/>.
19. James J. Zogby, "The History of Anti-Arab Sentiment Is Too Deep, the Pain Too Real," *LobeLog*, 16 July 2017, <https://lobelog.com/the-history-of-anti-arab-sentiment-is-too-deep-the-pain-too-real/>.
20. Zogby, "History of Anti-Arab Sentiment."

21. Helen Samhan referred to this exclusion as “political racism.” See Helen Hatab Samhan, “Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab-American Experience,” in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999), pp. 209–26.
22. Joanna Kadi, “Introduction,” in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, ed. Joanna Kadi (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994).
23. Decades later these efforts succeeded as the Census Bureau had nearly completed testing of a MENA ethnic (not racial) category when further work was canceled by the Trump administration through the OMB. Notwithstanding the U.S. census’s flaws, growing dissatisfaction among scholars with the very construct of MENA in favor of SWANA, and the fears of some Arab Americans that being counted would increase policing, the absence of such a category has many adverse consequences, including for data collection across the entire U.S. institutional structure (for example, health, education, employment) and in the continued marginality of Arab American studies.
24. See Louise Cainkar, *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience after 9/11* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2009).
25. Attorney General John Ashcroft, “Prepared Remarks for the US Mayors Conference,” Office of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, 25 October 2001, [https://www.justice.gov/archive/ag/speeches/2001/agcrisisremarks10\\_25.htm](https://www.justice.gov/archive/ag/speeches/2001/agcrisisremarks10_25.htm).
26. Nguyen, *Suspect Communities*.
27. See Arab Resource and Organizing Center, “Take Action: Save Arab-American Studies,” n.d., <http://araborganizing.org/actionalerts/take-action-save-arab-american-studies/>. An EdSource article commenting on the removal of Arab Americans says, “Gone from the new draft are a glossary full of jargon and academic language and a section on Arab-American history with references to Israeli oppression of Palestinians. . . . The language of the new document is more moderate and inclusive, encouraging classroom discussion of all students’ ethnicities and family backgrounds.” See John Fensterwald, “New Draft Ethnic Studies Curriculum for California Students Issued after a Year of Study,” EdSource, 1 August 2020, <https://edsource.org/2020/new-draft-ethnic-studies-curriculum-for-california-students-issued-after-a-year-of-study/637506>.
28. See for example, Souzan Naser, “Counseling Arab-American Students: Are Your Campus Mental Health Professionals Prepared to Support Students from a Variety of Backgrounds?” *Liberal Education* 106, no. 3 (Fall 2020): pp. 34–39, <https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2020/fall/naser>; and Nina Shoman-Dajani, “Racial Identity Construction of Arab American College Students: Moving beyond Invisibility,” (PhD diss., Benedictine University, 2016), <https://www.ben.edu/college-of-education-and-health-services/higher-education/upload/Shoman-Dajani-DISSERTATION-FINAL-Sept212016.pdf>.
29. Arab Resource and Organizing Center teacher training workshop I attended online, November 2020.
30. Steven Salaita posted a comment on Facebook a few years ago, after his firing under donor pressure from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which said something to the following effect: “Thanks to everyone who tells me they want their university to hire me but never come through.” Although our circumstances are very different, I so identified with his pain, as I too was often told over a period of more than fifteen years, “We would love to hire you, but . . .” There was no space! On the struggles of anthropologists of the Middle East within their discipline, see Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, *Anthropology’s Politics: Disciplining the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).
31. The forthcoming book by Cainkar, Homsy Vinson, and Jarmakani, eds., *Sajjilu Arab American*, provides much detail on these topics, so I need not expand further here.
32. See for example, Louise Cainkar and Jan Abu-Shakrah, “A Critique of the U.S. State Department’s 1986 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in the 1967 Israeli-Occupied Palestinian Territories,” *JPS* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): pp. 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536652>. At that time, through 1992, I was writing human rights reports for and directing the international office of the Jerusalem-based Palestine Human Rights Information Center.
33. My return took eighteen years. Nadine Naber brought me as a visiting professor to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in the program in American culture, during which time I was hired by

- Marquette University to teach in its social welfare and justice program. I must admit to tears of joy upon being hired by Marquette.
34. Louise Cainkar, "No Longer Invisible: Arab and Muslim Exclusion after September 11," *Middle East Report* 224 (Fall 2002): pp. 22–29, <https://merip.org/2002/09/no-longer-invisible/>. See also Nadine Naber, "Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): pp. 37–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329123>.
  35. Nadine Naber, "Introduction: Arab American and U.S. Racial Formations," in *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, ed. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 4.
  36. This claim interestingly mirrors what I found in my survey of ethnic studies textbooks through 2003; Arab terrorism was the *cause* of discrimination against Arab Americans (see note 15).
  37. Palestine Legal is an independent organization founded in 2012 to protect the civil and constitutional rights of Palestinian solidarity activists in the United States. For more, see the about page of their website, Palestine Legal, <https://palestinelegal.org/about>.
  38. I am not covering here the growing movement in support of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement because it will be the focus of a forthcoming special issue of the *Journal*.
  39. See for example, Nadine Naber's *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012) and Umayyah Cable's "Projections of Palestine: Negotiating Diasporic Palestinian Identity in the United States through Film Festival Participation," forthcoming in Cainkar, Homsy Vinson, and Jarmakani, eds., *Sajjilu Arab American*.
  40. For example, the *Deadly Exchange* report issued by Researching the American-Israeli Alliance and Jewish Voice for Peace demonstrates how the sharing of technologies and practices between the Israeli military and U.S. law enforcement instills "militarized logics of security into the civilian sphere, normalizing practices of mass surveillance, criminalization, and the violent repression of communities and movements the government defines as threatening." See *Deadly Exchange: The Dangerous Consequences of American Law Enforcement Trainings in Israel* (Researching the American-Israeli Alliance and Jewish Voice for Peace, September 2018), p. 1, <https://deadlyexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Deadly-Exchange-Report.pdf>.
  41. See for example, Leslie Quintanilla and Jennifer Mogannam, "Borders Are Obsolete: Relations beyond the 'Borderlands' of Palestine and US-Mexico," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2015): pp. 1039–46, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/605049>.
  42. See for example, Danielle Haque, "Water Occupation and the Ecology of Arab American Literature," *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2019): pp. 65–86, <https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/mly064>.
  43. See the special issue on Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity in *JPS* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019). On activism, see: Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left*; Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018); Howell, "Southend Struggles"; Khan, "Transnational Alliances"; and Yoav Di-Capua, "Palestine Comes to Paris: The Global Sixties and the Making of a Universal Cause," *JPS* 50, no. 1 (2021): pp. 19–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2020.1861906>. Also see *Jadaliyya*, "Roundtable on Anti-Blackness and Black-Palestinian Solidarity," 3 June 2015, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32145>.
  44. I am thinking here especially of the inspiring body of work of Hisham Aidi and the notion of the Moorish Atlantic, such as explored in the work of Ella Shohat and Evelyn Alsultany, editors of *Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).
  45. Jodi Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
  46. Robin D. G. Kelley, "From the River to the Sea to Every Mountain Top: Solidarity as Worldmaking" *JPS* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): pp. 69–91, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2019.48.4.69>.
  47. See AAAN, *Meeting Community Needs, Building on Community Strengths, Addendum*, 1998, <https://aaan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>; and Louise Cainkar, *The Arab American Action Network: Meeting Community Needs, Building on Community Strengths*,

- (AAAN, 1998), quote at p. 12, <https://aaan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AAANneedsassessment.pdf>.
48. See AAAN, *Meeting Community Needs*; and Cainkar, *The Arab American Action Network*.
  49. We addressed the fact that Palestinians largely worked as shopkeepers in African American communities, that some Palestinian community poverty stemmed from employment as underpaid clerks working long hours, and that Palestinian shopkeepers had responded to pressure from Black leadership to hire African American clerks. We also noted that welfare reform would have negative impacts on Black communities and therein also affect Arab Americans. What we did not address was anti-Blackness, which was a concern of Markaz leadership, but by no means a community-wide concern.
  50. Teresa Puente, “Arabs Built Solid Base in Chicago, Study Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, 18 June 1998, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-06-18-9806180251-story.html>. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights sponsored our press conference.
  51. See the grantee page for AAAN, CCT, <https://www.cct.org/what-we-offer/grants/arab-american-action-network/>. We later received a \$10,000 matching grant from the Chicago Department of Human Services.
  52. Alinskyists are activists that deploy a well-known style of community organizing developed by Chicago-based Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation. See for example, Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Hatem Abudayyeh, AAAN executive director, in conversation with the author, 8 December 2020, Chicago.
  53. For example, based on this study, I gave a talk at Illinois State University in 1999 titled “Palestinians in the US: When the Global Is the Local” and published a chapter called “The Deteriorating Ethnic Safety Net among Arabs in Chicago” in Suleiman, ed. *Arabs in America*, pp. 192–206.
  54. I was later hired by Executive Director Maricella García as the first director of this program. For the Keep Illinois Families Together Act, Public Act 101-0019 (effective 21 June 2019), see Illinois General Assembly, <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=101-0019>.
  55. Although a pan-Arab study, Emily Regan Wills’s *Arab New York: Politics and Community in the Everyday Lives of Arab Americans* (New York: New York University Press, 2019) provides a nice example of a community study that explores everyday politics among Arab Americans.