

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

History 610
Senior Project

Exploring Arab American Roots within America's
Borders

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Department of History and International Studies

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Table of Contents.....	i
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: 1900s to World War I	9
<i>Finding homes and reliable work</i>	9
<i>Establishing an “American” Identity</i>	12
<i>Fighting in World War I</i>	14
<i>World War I in the Levant</i>	15
<i>Conclusion</i>	19
Chapter 2: The Roaring 20s.....	20
<i>Building a Permanent Home</i>	20
<i>Arab American Political Parties</i>	22
<i>Proving who is “American”</i>	24
<i>Orientalism</i>	26
<i>Conclusion</i>	28
Chapter 3: The Great Depression	29
<i>Arab American Clubs</i>	31
<i>Immigration and Unity</i>	34
<i>Conclusion</i>	36
Chapter 4: World War II	38
<i>Work and Home</i>	38
<i>Palestine Conflict in Palestine</i>	40
<i>Palestine Conflict in America</i>	42
<i>Conclusion</i>	45
Conclusion.....	47
Bibliography	51
Primary Sources	51
Secondary Sources	52
Glossary of Words	55

Abstract

Every major city has different ethnic groups that have made a large impact on the surrounding politics in both modern day, as well as when they first started migrating. Arab immigrants made impacts in many different cities, including New York and Boston, where they settled down and raised their families. Living in these cities brought change, whether it was by their hand or against them. One city that has faced many changes with the help of Arab Americans is Dearborn, Michigan, which holds the largest congregation of Arab Americans within the United States. While using the Arab American story of settling and growing within the United States, we can see the changes that were brought on the city, as well as other aspects of their lives. Looking at the cultural, religious, and political ties to the change brought, we can see how Arab Americans have impacted the city since its establishment.

في هذا البحث سأتكلم عن العرب الأمريكيين في ميشيغان ١٩٤٠-١٩٠٠. سأنظر إلى مشاركة العرب الأمريكيين في السياسة في أمريكا وفي الشرق الأوسط. سأنظر في النوادي في ميشيغان وكيف المسلمون ومسيحيون يسكنون في أمريكا. كيف العرب الأمريكيون أن يسكن في مدينة ديربورن في ولاية ميشيغان؟

Introduction

Dearborn, Michigan has a population of 108,420 thousand people.¹ The city was established decades ago with the rise of the automobile industry, building from those who moved away from Detroit. This city also has the largest congregation of Arab Americans within the United States.² This demographic has been possible after years of Arab migration and establishment of the culture within the city. This large population is not a well-known fact, however. When I would talk to friends and classmates about the city, I would often get a response along the lines of “I didn’t know we had a large Arab population, especially in this city!” I, myself, did not know about this city or the amount of Arab Americans there were until I went to college. I believe that the demographics hold a lot of importance to the city, and I want to look into how this community was built. How did the community build itself up and make its impact on the city, as well as on America?

Why would it be important to know more about this city and the Arab American community in it? In a post-9/11 world, there have been a large amount of changes made surrounding foreign relations, as well as federal laws. While many of these affect all of those who live within the United States, many of the laws enacted target Arab Americans.. There were many actions that the United States has taken that show they view Arab Americans as a threat.

Treatment of Arabs changed drastically after the attacks on the towers. We see this with Christian Iraqis, or Chaldeans, who were one of the most welcomed groups to America before

¹ US Census

² Logan Whiteside, Richa Naik, Peter Valdes-Dapena, “Capital of Arab America stung by travel ban,” *CNN Money*, February, 3, 2017. <https://money.cnn.com/2017/02/01/news/dearborn-arab-americans/index.html>

9/11.³ America was all right with welcoming Iraqis seeking asylum as they were from one of America's "favorite villains".⁴ Chaldeans' applications were nearly rejection proof, with an approval rate of 82%.⁵ This changed mere hours after the attack in New York, with Mexican officials rounding up those who were there illegally and sending them to a Mexican jail. The U.S. supported and funded these arrests, wanting to stop the illegal immigration that was happening, as well as finding those who were "suspicious characters of Middle Eastern origin."⁶ For months Chaldeans and Iraqis that were being held in the U.S. and Mexico could not be deported due to the poor relations with Iraq.⁷

This swift change towards those that the United States previously had positive feelings towards shows the continued hostility that Arab Americans continue to receive. There is the idea that they are criminals, painting them with the idea of being others. The United States does little to hide this and we can see that with the USA PATRIOT Act and the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. The Patriot Act stands for "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism", with its creation giving more freedom to the government in their search for terrorists.⁸ This act has been criticized for the freedom it gives authorities with the intention of finding terrorists. One such example of this is the creation of FISA warrants, which are warrants that give government agents the ability to "surveil targets if there is probable cause that the subject of the search is a foreign

³ Joel Millman, "Chaldeans, Once Welcomed by America, Find Themselves Shut Out by Terror War," *Wall Street Journal*, November, 29, 2001.

⁴ Millman, "Chaldeans."

⁵ Millman, "Chaldeans."

⁶ Millman, "Chaldeans."

⁷ Millman, "Chaldeans."

⁸ Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, "USA PATRIOT Act," accessed March 21, 2023.
<https://www.fincen.gov/resources/statutes-regulations/usa-patriot-act>

power or agent of a foreign power.”⁹ While this was something that law enforcement could get before 9/11, what could be obtained through the warrant had expanded under the Patriot Act. The term “record” now included “any tangible item that contains information.”¹⁰ This could include anything from phone records to receipts from the grocery store, taking away some private freedoms that Americans had. Michelle Louise discusses this controversy in her book *Balancing Liberty and Security: An Ethical Study of U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance, 2001-2009* and goes into more depth about the information that could be accessed and other aspects of life that the Patriot Act had changed. She names many points that were brought against the government, but one that I want to focus on is the “mandatory detention and deportation of non-U.S. citizens suspected of having links to terrorist organizations.”¹¹ This heavily affected the Arab American community, especially within Dearborn and Detroit. An example of this was the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was officially created as its own department within the federal government with the Homeland Security Act of 2002.¹² This office was built with the idea of looking into terrorist attacks within the United States, grouping together multiple other federal departments.¹³ The DHS made a consistent effort to watch the Arab American community in Dearborn, with Dearborn being home to one of their offices. This act alone shows that the government would view this area as a potential threat to America, the reason very likely being the high Arab American population in the city. More investigations were brought towards those of Arab origins, with many Arab Americans being targeted for anything that is seen as suspicious.

⁹ Michelle Louise Atkin, *Balancing Liberty and Security: An Ethical Study of U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance, 2001-2009* (Washington D.C., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 28.

¹⁰ Atkin, *Balancing Liberty*, 28.

¹¹ Atkin, *Balancing Liberty*, 30.

¹² Homeland Security, “Creation of the Department of Homeland Security,” accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.dhs.gov/creation-department-homeland-security>

¹³ Homeland Security, “Creation”.

Another example is that there was mistrust towards those who lived in Dearborn and owned guns. There was one man, Mr. Salame, who was investigated for his gun purchases, where he was then accused of smuggling weapons to Hezbollah.¹⁴ The authorities had stopped by his home when no one was there, so they resigned to come back later. That same day Mr. Salame reported that there was a break in and 15 of his guns had gone missing.¹⁵ The authorities were suspicious that he had faked the break in, but he denied this. Mr. Salame was not the only one that they investigated, they were also investigating a man who used to live with Mr. Salame, Fred Berry, who married Mr. Salame's cousin, and a Mr. Ajami. What these men had in common is that they collected guns, and they all worked for the police department, in a volunteer or paid position.¹⁶ The authorities had gone to their chief to ask for Mr. Salame and Ajami's records, but Chief Deputy Shannon hesitated, saying,

“I said, ‘You know, this is not going to look good,’ Mr. Shannon recalls, noting that both men are Lebanese. “I asked, ‘Are you going to ask for the records of our regular police officers?’.”¹⁷

It was these investigations and the negative attitudes that fellow officers had towards the men that pushed them to feel they were not welcome in America, creating a feeling by being “other”. It is these events and others that encouraged me to look into the history of Arab Americans in America, looking at Dearborn.

When beginning I believed that there was some major event that pushed Arab immigrants to move to the United States. There was no major push, but there was a pull factor that was a large driving factor, and that was the jobs that were available. The automobile industry

¹⁴ Marjorie Valbrun, “U.S. Probe Compounds Anger Among Border Volunteers,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2002.

¹⁵ Valbrun, “U.S. Probe Compounds”.

¹⁶ Valbrun, “U.S. Probe Compounds.”

¹⁷ Valburn, “U.S. Probe Compounds.”

was beginning to rapidly grow and provided some of the best job opportunities for Arab immigrants. Henry Ford's factory near Detroit and within Dearborn gave the Arab immigrants moving there a stable job that required little-to-no skill to work there.¹⁸ Edward Curtis IV gives examples of Arab Americans who worked at the factory themselves or had family members who did. He shows how important the factory was, stating that during the 1920s there were around 100,000 people working in Henry Ford's Highland Park factory.¹⁹ Curtis IV then discusses that during the 1930s the factory lost nearly 91,000 factory workers, leaving a large amount of Dearborn's population unemployed during the worst financial crisis in America's history.²⁰

Heather Barrow describes Dearborn as one of "the most advantageous geographically" for Henry Ford to further expand his company.²¹ She describes that Dearborn had a highway and some transit that would work well with the industry, as well as two rivers that are connected to the Great Lakes through the Detroit river.²² This gave great opportunity for Ford to ship products a farther distance to reach more people, which will later lead into more products produced and more job opportunities. Barrow does not focus her research on Arab Americans, but the difference between the lives of African Americans and foreign and American born whites.²³ While she does not focus on the lives of Arab Americans, her book gives a basis for the industry surrounding Ford's factories. She describes "garage homes" that many families would live in when they could not afford larger homes, those who would receive grants to move into houses in the nicer parts of Dearborn from Henry Ford, and some further statistics on Detroit and Dearborn during the time.

¹⁸ Edward Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland* (New York: New York University Press, 2022).

¹⁹ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 174.

²⁰ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 175.

²¹ Heather Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan for the American Suburb* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press), 21.

²² Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan*, 21.

²³ Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan*, 25.

Sally Howell investigates the lives and the building of early Muslim communities within Dearborn and Detroit, the same areas of study that I am focusing on. A major question that comes up in the research of establishing identity is who gets to be considered “white”. Howell discusses the impact of religion on this identification. As her focus is on the Muslims within the cities, she compares Syrian Muslims to Syrian Christians and the different problems that they had to face. In her comparison she brings up the view that Americans have of Muslims, citing the catastrophe that is the Armenian Genocide.²⁴ This genocide was seen by Americans as an attack on Christianity, an attack that was done by Turkish Muslims. This is a very important note to make as it is during the 1920s and 1930s that Americans lump in all Muslims under the identity “Turkish”.²⁵ This identity as Turkish affects their chances of gaining citizenship. Many believed that it is inherently impossible for Muslims to be able to blend in or assimilate into American culture, and one of the reasons that is cited for this reason is the ability for men to marry multiple women.²⁶ The differences in religions led many Americans and the justice system to deny Arab immigrants’ citizenship.

Howell builds some of her argument off of Sarah Gualtieri’s article “Becoming ‘White’: Race, Religion, and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States” where she looks into what Syrians did in order to be considered white. The biggest action that was taken was going to court and arguing that Syrians were from the Caucus area, therefore they fall under the classification of white.²⁷ As stated by Howell, she focuses less on the “religion” aspect of being considered white and the purely race argument. She discusses the different arguments that Syrians

²⁴ Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014), 67.

²⁵ Howell, *Old Islam*, 70.

²⁶ Howell, *Old Islam*, 68.

²⁷ Kevin Yuill, “In the Shadow of the 1924 Immigration Act: FDR, Immigration and Race,” *Immigrants and Minorities*, 32, no. 2 (January 2014): 183-205, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2013.860692>

brought to the courts and the reasoning that they had for this desire to be considered white. Howell poses this idea that there was another reason to be considered “white” in the law besides the legal benefits that it would lead to them. She argues that it was this attempt to avoid this idea of “other” that was tied to being African American during this time.²⁸ This argument of who is considered white or not white plays into the roles and treatment that Arab Americans would receive from their neighbors and within the law. I believe that this topic is still relevant in today’s conversations as well, and it is important for us to see how we have arrived to the point we are at now. Why are Arab Americans considered “white” on the census when they feel they are not treated that way? Does this idea apply to all Arab immigrants, or does it differ from their country of origin? I look into this question further, looking at how arguments change with each decade and the ever-changing attitudes that America has toward immigrants during the decades.

I will be looking at points in Arab Americans’ lives during the decades in further chapters. This will include the politics that surrounded groups during the time, how some would stay connected to their culture and language, as well as how this community continued to grow and thrive within Dearborn and Detroit. I will also be looking at major political events that were happening in the Middle East to give context to the politics that Arab Americans will find themselves a part of. I want to draw this understanding that though they moved away from their lives back in their countries of origin, this does not mean that they stopped caring. There were many people that would advocate for their countries within the United States, fighting for their families and friends’ rights back home.

In Chapter 1 I will look at the 1900s through the 1910s. Chapter 2 is focused on the 1920s and the founding of Dearborn and the shift in politics. It is important that in these two chapters I

²⁸ Sarah Gualtieri, “Becoming “White””: Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States”, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 20, No. 4 (Summer, 2001), 31.

will be mentioning other cities, such as Detroit and Flint as Dearborn was still growing and Arab Americans' presence as a group was not as known then. It is in chapter 3 where I focus on the 1930s that I will focus fully back into Dearborn and Detroit, how the community starts to create a staple in the city. This is where it is an outward facing community, working to be considered American while holding on to their religion and cultures. Chapter 4 focuses on World War II as well as the Israeli-Palestine conflict, how Arab Americans responded and reacted.

Chapter 1: 1900s to World War I

The first two decades in the 1900s encompasses the end of the first major wave of Arab migration to the United States. The groups who immigrated during this period included Lebanese Christians, Chaldeans, and some Yemeni men.¹ Syrians also followed this trend, this group being one of the highest to migrate to the Detroit area during this time.² It is important to note that the distinction between who is Lebanese and who is Syrian is blurry. 'Lebanon' in this sense refers to those who lived in the Mount Lebanon region that was within the Ottoman controlled Syria.³ The country of Lebanon that we know today was not officially formed until 1943, though I will be following the pattern of other historians and attempt to draw a distinction between Lebanese and Syrian.⁴ I will be looking into how they settled into America and the struggles they faced while establishing themselves in their new homes. It is during this time that I will be alternating between Arab American and Arab immigrant, as the conversation of citizenship comes up here.

Finding homes and reliable work

During the 1900s and 1910s, there was a particular trend of how families would migrate to the United States. While many immigration stories include the entire family moving to a new country, in the case of Syrians, it was the able-bodied men who made their way across the sea.⁵

¹ Rosina Hassoun, *Arab Americans in Michigan* (East Lansing, Michigan, Michigan State University Press), 23.

² Hassoun, *Arab Americans in Michigan*. 23

³ Karen Rignall, "Building The Infrastructure," in *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*, eds. Andrew Shryock and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 51.

⁴ Rignall, "Building The Infrastructure". 51

⁵ Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*, (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press), 85.

This was the case for both Syrian and Yemeni men, who worked odd jobs in the States in order to make a living for themselves and to send money back to their families.⁶ Before World War I, interviews with Syrian immigrants showed that they did not plan to stay in America forever. Their life plan was to “...make money and return within two or three years to live better in their villages.”⁷ It was not uncommon for those who were able to make it over to sponsor other family members, such as brothers or cousins, who wanted to make their own journey over to the States.⁸ This was seen more with Yemeni immigrants, though it is not far-fetched to believe that Syrian and other Arab groups followed the same immigration pattern.

What jobs were there for these men when they made it to the states? One way that they were able to make their money was by walking door-to-door selling goods that they had brought from home.⁹ This was a way to both learn the city and who lived there, and also get to be known around town. One of the most available jobs for Arab men was working in the automobile industry, flourishing under Henry Ford.

Henry Ford was not the only man building a car industry at this time, though he is one of the most influential. His influence in the Detroit area goes as far as creating a new suburb—our focus city, Dearborn, Michigan. Ford had moved his factories to the outskirts of Detroit for ease of access, but also to build his vision of the perfect American Suburb.¹⁰ The automotive industry was one of the things that pushed the suburb boom, with the factories moving out of the cities and allowing families to follow the jobs and move into their own homes. These homes often belonged

⁶ Rignall, “Building The Infrastructure”. 51

⁷ Naff, *Becoming American*, 82.

⁸ Rignall, “Building The Infrastructure”, 51.

⁹ Rignall, “Building The Infrastructure”, 51.

¹⁰ Heather Barrow, *Henry Ford’s Plan for the American Suburb* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press), 19.

to Ford's factory workers, where they would drive to and from work with Ford vehicles.¹¹ This expansion would lead more people to rely on cars, even if there was public transportation to and from the city, because it was more convenient to drive their own car.

Ford's ideal suburb was one that was built on this growing ideal that families should be able to live on their own plot of land in a single family household. Word of his job opportunities made it all the way to Iran and Yemen, though it is not certain on how news was able to reach Yemen. The most commonly cited explanation is that Ford sent a boat to Yemen in order to find workers for his factories.¹² Rignall states that there seems to be no mention of this ship, though there are similar stories involving ships and Ford, so she believes this could be the mix up. Word could still travel far as Rignall mentions. One man could make his way to America, send home

money and news that there were stable, well-paying jobs for those who were willing to come.¹³



Figure 1: Workers seen leaving the Ford's Factory in Detroit, Michigan, 1916. Source: Library of Congress

It was also an important factor in Ford's ideal American suburb that it was only white. Ford would not fund or support African-Americans moving into Dearborn, and would not pay enough for them to find a house in Dearborn.¹⁴ Ford would sponsor some of his employees in order for them to afford a house in Dearborn, but within a subdivision that included three hundred houses, only white workers

¹¹ Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan for the American Suburb*.

¹² Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan for the American Suburb*, 51.

¹³ Rignall, "Building The Infrastructure", 52.

¹⁴ Barrow, *Henry Ford's Plan for the American Suburb*.

were able to move on.¹⁵ Comparatively, Ford hired more African-American employees than his competitors. He would place them in “unskilled jobs” and pay them at a rate that was nearly less than the minimum wage.¹⁶ Arab immigrants received slightly better treatment than this. Arab factory workers were able to live in Dearborn according to an interview with two Arab Americans whose parents had immigrated to Dearborn. In the interview, Katherine Amen shared that many Arab immigrants would move to Dearborn because it was closer to the factories.¹⁷ She also shared with the interviewer that many immigrants worked in Ford’s factories, as it was the easiest place where you knew you could be hired.¹⁸

There was still difficulty living within the city. Even though Ford’s factories were placed in Highland Park and some were able to live there, other families lived on the Eastside and would take public transportation in order to get to work. According to Amen, her father was one of these people. It was easier for him and other immigrants to work there because high-skill labor was not required on the factory line.¹⁹ While it was dangerous and dirty work, it was easier. But we can see with this interview that it was easier for Arab immigrants and Arab Americans to work closer to the factory, where African Americans were unable to do so. A major explanation for this is that Arab Americans were considered white.

Establishing an “American” Identity

In recent years, Arab Americans have been fighting for a place on the census. They do not feel that selection “white” correctly describes them or their experiences and have been taking this

¹⁵ Barrow, *Henry Ford’s Plan for the American Suburb*, 114.

¹⁶ Barrow, *Henry Ford’s Plan for the American Suburb*, 115.

¹⁷ Katherine Amen, Interview with ACCESS, October 22, 1999.

¹⁸ Katherine Amen, Interview with ACCESS, October 22, 1999.

¹⁹ Katherine Amen, Interview with ACCESS, October 22, 1999.

to the court in order to add a section on the next census for Arab Americans.²⁰ While there are some Arab Americans who believe this, there are others who believe that since they look and benefit from looking white, they are all right with marking it on the census.²¹ This is a feeling that is similar to that of Arab immigrants and Arab Americans during the 1910s. There was even difficulty obtaining US citizenship for similar reasons, leading some to take their struggles to the courts. One such case is George Dow, a Syrian man who applied for naturalization and was denied. He tried to appeal it, but it was once again denied.²² Dow decided to take it to court and it soon reached the desk of the Supreme Court in 1915.²³ What he was arguing in court was that because he was from the Caucasus region, a region that is close to Europe, he and others from the region should fall under the category white.²⁴ He argues that,

The term “white persons,” as used in Rev. St. 2169 (Naturalization Act March 26, 1790, c. 3, 1 Stat. 103, as amended by Act Feb. 18, 1875, c. 80, 1, 18 Stat. 318 [Comp. St. 1913, 4358]), authorizing the naturalization of aliens being “free white persons,” is not to be constructed according to its import in 1790, and, in view of the course of legislative discussion and enactment, includes a Syrian.

Why was he arguing this? There was a law that anyone who was a free white person was able to apply for citizenship, as long as they lived in the US for the allotted amount of time.²⁵ In order for him and many other Syrian immigrants to receive citizenship, they had to convince the United States government that they were white. He succeeded, with Arabs officially being

²⁰ Saraya Wintersmith, “Arab Americans Say the Census and Other Forms Don’t Consider Their Roots,” *NPR*, March 9, 2022.

²¹ Wintersmith, “Arab Americans”.

²² *Dow v. United States*, 226 F. 145 (1915).

²³ *Dow v. United States*, 226 F. 145 (1915).

²⁴ *Dow v. United States*, 226 F. 145 (1915).

²⁵ Kevin Yuill, “In the Shadow of the 1924 Immigration Act: FDR, Immigration and Race,” *Immigrants and Minorities*, 32, no. 2 (January 2014): 183-205, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2013.860692>

considered white in 1917. Now that they had the ability to obtain citizenship, there was another battle that they must face.

Fighting in World War I

World War I plays a large factor in the wave of immigrants. Moving from the 1900s to the early 1910s, fewer people were moving for jobs and started to move for safety. Syrian people were sending their able-bodied men overseas so that they would be able to avoid being drafted into the Ottoman Empire's military.²⁶ Naff states that they knew if their sons or husbands went off to war, it was likely they would never see them again. It was safer to send them to America where they had a chance of making their own life, and later being able to bring their family over to live with them.²⁷

The United States had yet to establish a strong and stable military by the time it joined the war in 1917, having only 127,500 soldiers and little money for weapons.²⁸ Arab Americans were able to help support the war through Liberty Bonds.²⁹ Liberty Bonds were incredibly important to the United States. They were sold to Americans so that the government could use money and then pay back the citizens later, advertised also as a "Victory Bond" to help with the war effort.³⁰ There was a group under the name of Syrian-American Club that encouraged their members to help with the war effort by buying these Liberty Bonds.³¹ It was a way that those who were still

²⁶ Naff, *Becoming American*.

²⁷ Naff, *Becoming American*.

²⁸ Library of Congress, "The American Expeditionary Forces."

²⁹ Francis Malouf, letter to Professor P.J. Sachs, June 12, 1917.

³⁰ Museum of American Finance, "Liberty Bond."

³¹ Francis Malouf, letter to Professor P.J. Sachs, June 12, 1917.

unable to gain citizenship or were unable to fight could still help the war effort, in order to support their new home.

Arab immigrants also joined the US Army. Some Syrian men would apply for citizenship and then would apply to join the army.³² In Michigan City, located in the neighboring state of Indiana with a high Syrian population, men like Mohamed Debojah who would apply to fight for the United States shortly after they gained their citizenship.³³ There were some worries about fighting against their brothers at home, with some men stating that they do not want to fight in Syria.³⁴ This shows that these immigrants would hold the United States to high standards, going as far as risking their lives for the country that has hosted them.

World War I in the Levant

World War I had brought the end of the Ottoman Empire, and the creation of mandates within the Middle East. I believe to understand future political groups and Arab American attitudes with the United States, that there should be an understanding of how the region was divided. The fall of the Ottoman Empire gave many who had lived under their rule the chance to establish their own country. A large part of the politics that Arab Americans followed were centered around the futures of Syria and Palestine.

The people in the region helped the British take down the Ottoman Empire by rioting during the war, creating another problem for the Ottoman while they were fighting off the British.³⁵ This revolt was not a sudden event – there were discussions between the Emir of Mecca,

³² Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 100.

³³ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 100.

³⁴ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 101.

³⁵ James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 196.

Husayn ibn-Ali and British Commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon. Sharif Husayn had reached out to McMahon as he believed that bringing down the Empire would be in his and the region's best interest. Within the letter, Sharif Husayn discusses that they—meaning Arab tribes within the region—would help the British if the British would recognize Syria as its own country upon success, and he lists what this territory would include.³⁶ The area that he lays out contains most of the Syrian borders that we know today, as well as the area of Palestine. He also writes political and economic deals that would be in place when England recognizes the former as independent, and how they would interact as allies.³⁷

During these correspondence, England was making a secret deal with its ally France on how to divide up the land. They also worked with Zionist in England on a promise to give them land within Palestine for a Jewish state. These agreements were all secret at the time, as we can see in McMahon's response when he does not mention either of these treaties.³⁸ He lists his own points that they will agree to, redefining what land would be under Syria, saying "The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded."³⁹ These regions he has listed were regions that the French and the Zionist had been interested in, so they seem to be alluding to the treaties without explicitly saying so. He goes on to say that since he is asking for assistance from England, then those who will be consulted for a set border for Syria would only be British.⁴⁰ The land disputes within this letter

³⁶ "The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, Negotiating the Establishment of an 'Arab Kingdom'," in *Sources in the History of Modern Middle East* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

³⁷ "The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence".

³⁸ "The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence"

³⁹ "The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence" 130.

⁴⁰ "The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence" 131.

were not able to be fully discussed until after the war. This uncertainty paired with the secret treaties that England had would prove to be a problem when it came to dividing the land.

With the war over, President Woodrow Wilson put together rules that he believed all nations should follow in order to create a better world and avoid another war. These today are known as Wilson's 14 Points. These 14 points brought hope to those in the region due to two rules that Wilson had listed, which would help their cause and allow them to govern themselves. With the Ottoman gone, there was now the need to discuss and readdress borders, so those who had been hoping for a Syrian country—referred to as the Syrian Congress, run by Emir Feysal—believed it would give them a say. Point five of Wilson's point says,

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.⁴¹

This call for impartial and end of colonial claims on the region gave the Syrian Congress the impression that they will be able to discuss and decide their own borders and have their own needs met. This does not happen.

The congress drew up their own desired rules and how they believed they should be governed with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The desire of the people was to have a constitutional monarchy under the rule of Feysal.⁴² The congress did not believe that they should be under a mandate as the League of Nations was suggesting, quoting that they were no lesser than their Serbian or Romanian counterparts, so there was no need to be put in a “middle stage of

⁴¹ Milestone Documents, National Archives, “President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points (1918)”.

⁴² “Resolution of the Syrian General Congress at Damascus, 2 July 1919,” in *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 200.

development”.⁴³ However, the congress understood that the European nations may not believe that they could handle themselves, so they write that they would like to be under the watch of America, as “...the American Nation is farthest from any thought of colonization and has no political ambition in our country...”, as long as this assistance from America did not exceed twenty years.⁴⁴ If they were unable to be under America’s watch, then they would agree to be under a British mandate. Under no circumstances were they going to accept being under a French mandate. Yet this is the mandate that they were put under, due to England’s secret agreements.⁴⁵



Figure 2: British and French mandates within the Middle East, 1920s. Source: Geoffrey Gaudreault, 2004, NPR.

These secret agreements and different correspondences end with France controlling the mandate of Syria, England controlling Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq.⁴⁶ We can see the

⁴³ “Resolution”.

⁴⁴ “Resolution”.

⁴⁵ “Resolution”.

⁴⁶ Gelvin, *Modern Middle East*. 197.

mandates in the picture above with the modern day borders. It was these political boundaries and desires for the Syrian people that had Syrian and other Arab groups rallying for change from the United States. While fighting many of their own battles within America's borders, they also push for America's interference with happenings back in their country of origin.

Conclusion

It is important to understand that moving may not have always been a permanent solution for many Arab immigrants. Some wanted to move for the jobs that were offered so that they could send money back to their families, while others did want to find a new life in America. No matter which reason it was, it was still hard work to find your place within a new country. It becomes harder when they must convince the government to grant them citizenship on grounds that they fit the definition of "white" created a century before. Dow began the fight in small claims court, later having his case heard by the Supreme Court and passed. This case will start the continued theme of who falls under the classification of white, but in different ways each decade.

Being an American citizen opened up more opportunities, one being able to fight for the United States. Many Arab Americans decided to take this route as a way of showing loyalty to the States, though they did not want to fight anyone from their country or within their home country. I believe that this desire to set a boundary on who they would fight shows there is still a connection back in their countries of origins. There were also large changes happening back in the Middle East with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, changes that families in Dearborn were. These changes were important to the families living in America then, and will continue to affect the politics that the community involves itself in. The changes created tensions and issues that are not solved easily. For now, we can look at how Arab Americans were able to establish stability within their new homes.

Chapter 2: The Roaring 20s

Entering the Roaring 20s, Dearborn was starting to establish itself as a city. The city began to annex more land to accommodate the growing population, which grew from around 2,500 residents to around 50,000 during this time.⁴⁷ Arab Americans were beginning to settle down within the area. It was a time of prosperity, as well as hardship. Laws were put in place that limited the migration into the area, the question of who is “white” once again discussed. Politics in the Middle East also began to affect those who live in the United States, pushing many of them to act and try to bring a change. This was a period of bringing more attention to the group within America, a period that is shaped by Americans views of Arab Americans and the Middle East. We will see why groups formed and what their goals were, as well as the struggles that Arab Americans had to go fight together as a community. Though it begins with claiming a home.

Building a Permanent Home

There are multiple indicators that a person or a group of people are settling for many years. One of these signs was the establishment of places of worship. Syrian Christians had built churches that were open to those of Syrian descent, a more welcoming church for those immigrants than the churches that were already established.⁴⁸

Arab Muslims were also beginning to build mosques, though the mosques that they originally built were not just for praying. Sally Howell explains in her book *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* that in Chicago, there was a mosque that was built with

⁴⁷ Edward Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 173.

⁴⁸ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 102.

non-Muslim attendees in mind. While this was a place of prayer, those who were interested in seeing how Islam prayer worked could go and watch, the Imam sometimes putting on a show-like appearance.⁴⁹ It was closed down shortly after it was built, but in 1921 it was followed by the second mosque to be built in America in Highland Park, Michigan, a city surrounded by Detroit. This mosque focused more on being a place of worship than somewhere that Americans could see an “exotic” religion.⁵⁰ As pockets of ethnic groups were starting to appear in cities like Detroit and Dearborn, these mosques show the care that is put into building a local community. Another way that you can see that this home is permanent was the establishment of cemeteries meant for those who were Muslim. A Syrian group by the name of Asser El-Jadeed Society had made the effort to put more into the community and bought a plot of land in a cemetery that they set aside for Muslim people who passed away.⁵¹ This is important because many people want to be buried somewhere that they considered home, somewhere that they held close to them. Islamic burial rituals are also different, the major difference being that it is important to bury the dead as soon as possible, sometimes within the same day.⁵² This can be difficult to arrange and also follow the same traditions within Islamic burying rituals. Setting aside a space once the community grows larger gives it a sense of permanency and home, somewhere that other Muslims families can go knowing that all stages of life will be considered.

⁴⁹ Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 31.

⁵⁰ Howell, *Old Islam*, 31.

⁵¹ Curtis IV, *Muslims in the Heartland*, 104.

⁵² Sami Yenigun, “A Muslim Cemetery Helps To Ease Funerals’ Strain,” *NPR*, July 20, 2012.

Arab American Political Parties

As stated before, it was the group Asser El-Jadeed Society that helped purchase land for local Muslims for a cemetery, though they did more for the community, and they are not alone. There were other groups in the United States, most being headquartered in cities like Boston, New York, and Flint, with Flint being the closest one to Dearborn. These parties would focus on issues that were happening in their countries of origin, typically in Syria, and how they could do more to send help from America.⁵³ To discuss these politics and what has been done, I will be focusing on the group the New Syria Party (NSP), a Flint-based political group whose focus was freeing Syria from the French mandate that they were under.⁵⁴ The reason that I want to focus on this group is that they had members in Detroit, Michigan, which will give us a good look at the politics that would be important to those living in the Dearborn area.

The NSP was built as a direct response to anti-French feelings that had been building in Syria.⁵⁵ They had begun to campaign after a revolt that the French had tried to suppress, later beginning to focus on the idea of a Syrian statehood.⁵⁶ The idea of Syria that they campaigned for was one that was based on “historical and inalienable rights to self-determination under persistently severe political pressures and under the familiar banners ‘Syria for Syrians’.”⁵⁷ For them, rallying for the American government to be involved was one of the most important steps.

America played a large role at the end of World War I, as I had discussed earlier with Wilson’s 14 Points. American politics and Syrian desires at the time were aligning and giving Arab Americans hope that America would be able to help them achieve the country they want. In

⁵³ Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).

⁵⁴ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 104.

⁵⁵ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 104.

⁵⁶ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 104-105.

⁵⁷ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 105.

1917, a letter was written in the Arabic newspaper *Mirat al-Gharb*. The letter was named “Lajnat tahrir Suriyah wa Lubnan” (Committee for the Liberation of Syria and Lebanon) and was published on October 2, 1917.⁵⁸ The extent of the letter was to appraise Wilson on his political stances within the Middle East and his vocal desire to provide freedom for Armenians and Arabs at the end of the war.⁵⁹

These hopes were soon lessened when it came out that America had ratified the Balfour Declaration, effectively supporting the separation of Palestine from Syria.⁶⁰ Arab American activists began to share their side of the story to the *New York Times*. Activists wrote stating they wanted to end Zionist immigration to Palestine for the fact that they have not seen natives of Palestine being treated fairly, as written within the Balfour Declaration.⁶¹ Another article shares that the same activists reached out to Prime Minister James Macdonald of England, again urging for restriction of immigration to Palestine.⁶² They say in their cable gram:

Arab delegation of Palestinians in America heard with mixed feeling British Ambassador at Washington read them part of your speech regarding Palestine. Happy that you express appreciation of culture of East whose people are entitled to freedom enjoyed by Europeans. Sorry you characterize present Palestinian uprising as ordinary crime. It is in defense of our national rights, our country, our homes.⁶³

These efforts to reach out to country leaders in both the United States and England show the strong love and hope for Palestine does not end when they immigrate to the United States. The

⁵⁸ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 108.

⁵⁹ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 108.

⁶⁰ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 116.

⁶¹ Special to The New York Times, “Arabs Ask Stimson to Aid in Palestine,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1929.

⁶² Special to The New York Times, “Arabs Here Appeal to MacDonald for Aid: Urge Revocation of the Balfour Declaration--Voice Regret Over His Reference to ‘Crime.’,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1929.

⁶³ Special, “Arabs Here”.

passion for a better future from those living abroad gives hope to those who stayed that there is support for their movement.

Proving who is “American”

While the community was working together to create spaces for themselves, there was also a divide when it comes to identifying race. As stated before, Syrians were able to argue their Arab identity as falling under the category of ‘white’. It was largely Dow’s Supreme Court case that helped make it easier for Syrians to naturalize. However, the 20s brought up this question of who falls under the classification of white; specifically, how religion plays into this. Even with Dow arguing that Syrians should be white, there were cases of Syrian Muslims being unable to achieve citizenship due to their religion.⁶⁴ Part of the reason that this happened, argues Howell, is that Syrian Christians would use the Ottoman’s oppression to gain American support for them becoming American citizens.⁶⁵ The Ottoman Empire was a Muslim majority empire, with laws that would discriminate against Christians and Jewish citizens.⁶⁶

Syrian Christians were able to use the Ottoman Empire as an enemy to further push for naturalization rights. A major reason for this was the atrocity that was the Armenian Genocide committed by the Turks during the first World War. This genocide was seen partly as an attack on Christians by those in America, and because of this, Syrian Christians could use this negative view of the Ottomans in order to gain sympathy.⁶⁷ In the process of this, the Christians had to

⁶⁴ Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁵ Howell, *Old Islam*, 70.

⁶⁶ James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁶⁷ Sarah Gualtieri, “Becoming ‘White’: Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, no. 4 (2001): 29–58.

separate themselves from Syrian Muslims and African Americans (which was another way that one would be able to gain citizenship in America—being the descendant of a slave or African-descent was another way that one could naturalize).⁶⁸ Sarah Gualtieri states that they did not create this distinction because they truly believed in the American idea of being white, but “...they adhered to Ottoman-influenced understandings of social difference perpetuated by the millet administrative⁶⁹ regime.”⁷⁰ In other words, this push to be seen as white for the chance to gain citizenship led to a division and distinction between Syrian Christians and Syrian Muslims. These tensions were not seen as much within Dearborn, though it is still important to note that this idea to be considered American was not the same fight for every Arab American.

These points lead up to the Immigration Act of 1924, a highly restrictive act that severely suppressed Arab migration to the United States. The goal of the act was the “set quotas on the basis of the national origins of Americans who were in the country in 1890,” with these quotas targeting Southern and Eastern Europeans, as well as those from Asia.⁷¹ The quota made sure to exclude those who would be in the supposed “middle” of being black or white.⁷² I did not find that the Middle Eastern region were explicitly excluded in this act, though it still had an effect as some of their reason for denying people was if someone was deemed ‘too dark’.⁷³ There was a country-wide denial of those who were different because of this view of people “invading” and “underliving” the American experience, and these families explicitly were worried whether those who immigrated would have children with white people and what their children would turn out to

⁶⁸ Gualtieri, “Becoming White”.

⁶⁹ According to James Gelvin, the millet system was an Ottoman era administrative practice where they allowed minority religions to control their own affairs, including judicial, charitable, and education. This system also allowed them to handle their own representation in Istanbul.

⁷⁰ Howell, *Old Islam*, 70.

⁷¹ Kevin Yuill, “In the Shadow of the 1924 Immigration Act: FDR, Immigration and Race,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 32, no. 2 (May 4, 2014): 185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2013.860692>.

⁷² Yuill, “In the Shadow”, 185.

⁷³ Howell, *Old Islam*, 70.

be.⁷⁴ Without going into the racist rhetoric of the time, you can see that there is this blatant denial of those who are different, and many of those who were from the Arab region would unfortunately fall under this title of “different”. While they may have fallen under the category of “white” according to Dow’s case, their religion itself was seen as anti-American.

Orientalism

The ability to identify as “American” relies on how the people see a certain culture. If there is a part of the culture that the majority decides goes against what it means to be “American”, then it becomes more difficult for people from said culture to gain citizenship. This can be seen with the Arab culture and the struggle to be seen as American when they are Muslim, a religion that many Americans deemed unable to work with the American view. This belief comes from a misconception of the Middle East, a misconception that we know as orientalism.

Edward Said says that:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.⁷⁵

Edward Said was the author that changed the older definition of orientalism to this one that describes how the Western world sees the East. It was orientalism that played a major role in Muslims being unable to naturalize.

⁷⁴ Yuill, “In the Shadow”.

⁷⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, Random House Inc., 1978), 3.

During this time, Arab Muslims were grouped under the identification of “Turks” due to this orientalist view point.⁷⁶ To tie this to the desire for American citizenship, there were Americans who fought to stop Muslims from becoming citizens due to their misguided belief of Islamic practices.⁷⁷ This played a hand in the continued separation of Syrian Christians and Syrian Muslims, as Syrian Muslims would be further looked down for the reason of being “Turkish”. One such instance was when a local newspaper called *Detroit Saturday Night* ran articles written by Faye Elizabeth Smith who looked at different “foreign colonies” that had formed in Detroit.⁷⁸ Smith focused primarily on the marriage and gender customs of the Turkish group as a way to show that they would not be fit for American society. According to Smith, the fact that polygamy was allowed within Islam was proof enough that they should not be able to have a culture within the States.⁷⁹ She said “The Detroit Turkish colony is made up of 1,500 young bachelors wedded to polygamy,” this language building off the previous assumptions that Americans had from films and media where Muslims were lustful, oppressing women and were a part of a religion that was never changing.⁸⁰ Why is this important? Smith had only looked at the three groups in Detroit, and none of these groups were Syrian or Arab American living within the city. What she did was lump in Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds under this definition of Turk, building off the orientalist view that Americans had at the time, and then used this false rhetoric of how the groups would be as a way to state her opinion on who should be able to naturalize as an American citizen.

⁷⁶ Howell, *Old Islam*, 68.

⁷⁷ Howell, *Old Islam*, 68

⁷⁸ Howell, *Old Islam*.

⁷⁹ Howell, *Old Islam*, 68.

⁸⁰ Howell, *Old Islam*, 66.

Conclusion

The growing communities within Dearborn and Detroit during this time led the way for political groups to start forming. With the United States being a larger power and Syria wanting to be under their mandate (if they had to be under one), it was important for the communities to show their voice. Instead of only hearing the protests of those who live outside the States' borders, they were able to pressure and fight for actions they wanted played out from within. It gives the movement more power as there were Americans pushing for the mandate to be lifted or given to the United States and keeping Palestine with Syria.

These communities had to deal with the issue of fighting to be considered "American" now that they were able to naturalize. It was not an easy task, as Muslims were seen as "Turks" and Syrian Christians were able to assimilate as Americans, but often once they separated themselves from Syrian Muslims. Many Americans did not believe it was possible for Arab Americans who were Muslim to truly fit into the American lifestyle, though this was all built on Orientalist prejudice and misunderstanding of the Middle East and Islam. This idea that the West dominates over the East and that they cannot possibly blend together is harmful to the communities. While they were able to create the political groups to have their voices heard, that is only in one aspect of life. Having an accurate version of the religions and cultures was another battle that was yet to come.

Chapter 3: The Great Depression

The Great Depression was the worst financial crisis the country has gone through, as well as affecting countries all over the world. There were 150,000 people unemployed within Detroit, with the automobile industry being hit hard.¹ The depression brought a decline in desire for cars, as it was not something that Americans would begin to think of spending their money on when food and jobs were hard to come by.² This heavily affected the Arab American community as their lives were heavily reliant on Ford's factories. In fact, 40% of those who were unemployed within Dearborn during this time had been employees of Ford's factories, though Ford did not help out the city despite this fact.³ This brought one of the first attempts of workers pushing back against Ford and other managers within the company. To protest and demand help from their former employer, former employees organized a march down to the employment offices. Ford retaliated to the protest and sent out his own security forces as well as the Dearborn police to stop them.⁴ The protest ended with a clash between the protesters and the police where four people died.⁵

This added further weight to those who were suffering during the Depression. There were Arab Americans who would lose their jobs, later losing their homes. Children themselves would lose their homes and often go hungry, this experience being shared with Arab Americans within Dearborn and Detroit.⁶ One such example would be Kamel Osman, who was 15 years old when the Depression hit. He had to jump around from job to job, sometimes only making a dollar a

¹ Edward Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland* (New York: New York University Press, 2022).

² Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 175.

³ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 175.

⁴ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 175-176.

⁵ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 175-176.

⁶ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 181.

day.⁷ He took up odd jobs such as washing dishes or delivering papers, sometimes up to 12 hours a day.⁸ Kamel, like many other children within the United States, would go hungry many nights without a roof over his head. He was unable to ask his father for help due to pride and knowledge that his father had to provide for his mother and siblings as well.⁹ After struggling for many years to live a stable life, Kamel was finally able to land a job for nine years with Ford's factory, due to his Uncle's help.¹⁰ While this job gave him a stable income, it was not a safe nor happy job. Managers were always watching employees, not allowing them to take breaks and would punish them if they took too long in the bathroom.¹¹ Kamel was not the only employee victim to these practices, and Ford was not the only company who deemed it acceptable to perform these practices.

The lack of care for both current and former employees pushed those who worked for the factory to establish a union. One such union was the Union Auto Workers, founded in 1935.¹² They began striking against the company the next year, performing sit-ins where the employees would lock themselves inside the factories so that no work would be completed.¹³ The UAW were the ones to organize the Great Sit Down strike, where automobile workers from multiple companies walked into work and stayed there, preventing anyone from using the equipment. It had lasted for 44 days before the first automobile company relented.¹⁴ This act shows the importance of the union as a whole and the good that it brought to the workers. While this strike

⁷ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 182.

⁸ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 182.

⁹ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 181.

¹⁰ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 182

¹¹ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 182

¹² United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, "UAW Through the Decades", accessed March 10, 2023.

¹³ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 180.

¹⁴ UAW, "UAW Through the Decades".

was successful and it worked to give more power to the workers, there was tension within the union as well. Tensions based on race would arise, even if these issues were not at the forefront of the union.¹⁵ One man was important in keeping the union together during these times, and that was a Syrian Lebanese man named George Addes. George Addes was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin and had begun working for Willys Overland plant in Ohio at the age of 17.¹⁶ He joined in founding the UAW during the 1930s after years of working within the industry, where he then became the union's secretary treasurer. He held this role for ten years and during that time, had done his best to bridge understanding between black and white union members.¹⁷ Despite his and other members' efforts, it was not until 1941 when Ford would recognize this union within his factories, though that speaks more to their success than anything else. With unions working hard to help workers, individuals working hard to get back on their feet, we begin to see the community beginning to build itself a stronger base.

Arab American Clubs

The 30s bring further development and creation of clubs for Arab Americans within Dearborn. The most prevalent one was the Progressive Arabian Hashmie Society, opened in 1937. The society was built as a mosque and a hall by the Shi'a sect in the city, though it was open to all Muslims.¹⁸ This society was built during the worst time of the Depression by the Simons family. This family had been struggling with teaching their nine daughters' prayers and Islamic traditions,

¹⁵ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 180

¹⁶ "George F. Addes, 79; Helped Found U.A.W.," *New York Times*, June 21, 1996, accessed April 15. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/06/21/obituaries/george-f-addes-79-helped-found-uaw.html>

¹⁷ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 180

¹⁸ Howell, *Old Islam*, 98.

as their mom would take on that burden.¹⁹ There were other families within the Southend of Dearborn that were having the same difficulties, the weight of teaching Islam falling on the parents' shoulders as there were no Islamic schools nearby for them to send their kids to. Before the creation of the Hashmie Society, families would pool together money and pay a local man to teach the children Arabic and the Quran three times a week.²⁰ In order to create a more permanent solution for their children and future generations, they followed in the footsteps of other immigrant groups. It was the American way, according to Jabara, daughter in the Simons family, to build churches and clubs. She believed that for Muslim Americans, if any of them wanted to raise their children as Muslims, "...[they] would have to build mosques and clubs."²¹ They were able to achieve this local place for Islamic teaching and worship, holding gatherings at the Hashmie Hall.

Another mosque followed shortly after, one that was focused on the Sunni sect of the religion. The Islamic Mosque opened a few blocks away from the Hashmie Society, also being advertised as a mosque and a society for Muslims in the area.²² It is important to note that while these clubs were created with specific sects, they were not exclusionary. They had the same idea of building a community amongst those within the Southend area. These were safe spaces for Muslim Americans who desired somewhere to raise their children and create a community based on Islamic values.²³

These mosques are incredibly important to the establishment of an Arab American community within Dearborn, as these mosques still stand today. They struggled in the beginning

¹⁹ Howell, *Old Islam*, 99.

²⁰ Howell, *Old Islam*, 99.

²¹ Howell, *Old Islam*, 99.

²² Howell, *Old Islam*, 98.

²³ Howell, *Old Islam*, 99.

of their formation, never becoming a part of larger communities.²⁴ They stood strong during the period of the 1940s, with the Islamic Mosque later being renamed the American Moslem Society in 1942 and the Progressive Arabian Hashmie Society being renamed Hashmie Hall.²⁵ While these mosques began to expose Americans to the Arab Americans who lived alongside them, Howell states that they were a way to find their own identity within America. Their creation shows that these religious traditions can be established without fear of backlash from the majority population.²⁶

With the migration of groups to the United States and the attempt to establish the culture within the States, Howell speaks of the process of objectification. Objectification is the decontextualization of religious identities and subsequent efforts to reestablish their meanings within the context of a new home country.²⁷ This is described as a direct result of migration, with groups trying to establish what their religion and culture is outside of their home countries. It was easier to know the basis of your traditions and religion when you are surrounded by thousands of people who practice the same thing. There are many obstacles that people had to face when they were recontextualizing their religion within America. One such obstacle is their ability to read and write, both in English and Arabic.²⁸ This leads to trouble with reading their own religious text, and when it came to the case of Muslims in the region, having to rely on themselves to read or teach their children their religion becomes difficult when they must try to understand the text themselves, or find a friend or family member that knows how to read in order to understand the text.²⁹ This is not to say that every Arab American who moved to the States did not know how to

²⁴ Howell, *Old Islam*, 99.

²⁵ Howell, *Old Islam*, 98.

²⁶ Howell, *Old Islam*, 101.

²⁷ Howell, *Old Islam*, 101.

²⁸ Howell, *Old Islam*, 101.

²⁹ Howell, *Old Islam*, 103.

read, though it was a difficulty for some. While Howell focuses on the Muslim population in Detroit and Dearborn, it is likely that this same issue would affect those who were Christian as well.

These religious groups faced an issue when people of different cultural backgrounds, but the same religion, tried to work together to build these communities. Islam and Christianity are both very large religions that span across multiple countries, and religion plays into each culture differently. So when people who practiced the same religion came from different cultures, they had to work out differences and what was more important in teaching the religion or what belonged to each person's culture.³⁰ One such example was when the mosques were completed, there was tension on how they should be structured. As there were many who were not well versed in the religious text nor any religious leaders, they had to work together to decide how the mosques would run.³¹ It was also important that there were spaces where prayers could be observed, or scriptures taught. It was better if these were established through rituals instead of creating a space and simply saying it is Muslim.³²

Immigration and Unity

Issues with immigration continued into the 1930s. A large political focal point during this decade was the Immigration Act of 1924, with President Herbert Hoover and his administration focusing on the immigration of Asians.³³ With the previous immigration act, those who would be

³⁰ Howell, *Old Islam*, 103.

³¹ Howell, *Old Islam*, 103.

³² Howell, *Old Islam*, 103.

³³ Kevin Yuill, "In the Shadow of the 1924 Immigration Act: FDR, Immigration and Race," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 32, no. 2 (January 2014): 183-205, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2013.860692>, 186.

unable to gain citizenship would be turned away. That continued during the 1930s, as Hoover announced in 1931 that “nearly 100 thousand otherwise eligible aliens had been denied visas on the basis that they were likely to become a public charge.”³⁴ They referred to these people they denied entry to as LPCs, or “Likely to become a Public Charge”. What is a public charge? According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, it is someone who would likely “become dependent on certain government benefits in the future” if they were to be granted admission or a green card.³⁵ Even in today’s terms it is still used as grounds for denying someone access. In the 30s the grounds were very nearly the same. They defined immigrants who did not already have a job lined up as becoming a public charge, so they would deny them visas based on this.³⁶ Someone could be considered a public charge for any reason, as long as the United States believed they would use public funds to get by. Though even if one was struggling, government funds may not be the route they took for help but turning inward to their community.

In some of my previous paragraphs, I have given the impression that in order for some progress to be made in the community, there was division between religions. I believe that it is important to discuss the unity there was within Arab communities outside of religion. For many, religious identity was not something that stopped those from being close and celebrating their Arab identity. This is seen with the mosques and among religious leaders, as the Arab American community in Detroit had Shi’a Muslims who also supported the idea of a nonsectarian political future within the Arab world.³⁷ It was also Syrians that helped create the El-Bokka League, a league named after the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.³⁸ This same league and group was later able to

³⁴ Yuill, “In the Shadow,” 193.

³⁵ Immigration Legal Resource Center, “Public Charge”.

³⁶ Immigration Legal Resource Center, “Public Charge”.

³⁷ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 187.

³⁸ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 187.

gather the funds and resources in order to create the first Sunni mosque in Dearborn.³⁹ Amongst individuals it was the same. Curtis discusses the individual life of Mary Ali Unis Shamey, who grew up in an Arabic speaking community in Dearborn's Southend. Shamey and her family were Christians, though this did not prevent them from supporting their neighbors and friends in their religions.⁴⁰ Shamey would visit her friends' mosques when she could, and in turn, her friends would visit her church with her.⁴¹ The community would celebrate important events together no matter the religion. This shows the sense of community is built on their culture rather than the religions alone. Shamey shares that even after she was married, she would have her door open to the community if they wanted to talk with her.

Conclusion

The community was growing together, supporting each other when things went wrong. They worked together in order to create a better future for their children, leaving them mosques and churches where they are able to learn how to worship, as well as learn Arabic. This sense of community is what has been building up through all the changes that have been happening among Arab Americans. It is this sense of community that builds the population in Dearborn, showing that it is somewhere families can move and not feel as out of place. Politics are widely important as well, with Arab Americans being involved with the mandate and local politics as well. It was important for the community to form groups that dealt with more domestic issues as well so that they would be able to put together things that many may not think about, such as the cemeteries.

³⁹ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 187.

⁴⁰ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 183.

⁴¹ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 183.

While there were many Americans who did not want Arab Americans, specifically Arab American Muslims, to assimilate into American life. They did what they could to share why they believe that Arab Americans should not be allowed citizenship. The ideas that they built on were based on false knowledge of Middle Eastern culture, leaving the Arab American groups to push back against the prejudice. While these battles made things more difficult, it was not impossible, and more Arab Americans were able to gain citizenship and settle into America. These issues will not disappear, though they will come up again after World War II. Before that, we will see how the community was involved with the war effort.

Chapter 4: World War II

The 1940s brought the United States into the second World War. The war created many jobs for all of those who were unemployed, drastically shifting the energy within the States. Factories focused on war efforts, more people began joining the war efforts, and it led to a time of unity and division.¹ Everyone had to make sacrifices—Arab Americans were not excluded from this. There was still a fight to be recognized as American, to be fully accepted into society while blending American and Arabic traditions. There are fights to gain citizenship and more lines drawn on who qualifies, establishing more Arab clubs, and continued political activism. There was a focus on the Palestinian conflict from the Arab American community as well, bringing the community together as a whole for a shared common interest. The 1940s brought a sense of permanency among the community where they show that being Arab American was no longer a foreign idea.

Work and Home

With the end of the Great Depression, there was a massive desire to get the American people back to work and healing the community. Said job opportunities opened when the United States joined the war. Henry Ford and his factories once again became a place of hope for the Arab American community.

Ford's factories once again became a money-making machine, though no longer for cars. Multiple factories switched their production to military equipment in order to help with the war

¹ Edward Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 188.

efforts. They were not only creating weapons for the United States military to use, but for all the allies to use as well.² This switch allowed more jobs to be created, vastly lowering the previously high unemployment rate. Unemployment in Detroit dropped from 135,000 people to 4,000 by 1943.³ While there were now more jobs available, this did not mean that jobs became any easier or safer. The government made a deal with unions and company leaders that there would be no strikes during this time, a change of attitude from the strikes during the 1930s.⁴ This agreement led to years where the company leaders—not just Ford—would be gaining millions of dollars while workers would be left with the same salaries. Work conditions were unable to be discussed or negotiated as well.⁵ If any workers decided to organize a strike during the war, they would be accused of supporting the enemy.⁶

With the war, there was more push for Arab Americans to be considered “American” and their culture to be welcomed within the country. We see this work being done by Arab groups, such as the Arabian Hashmie Society and their effort to bring Arab Americans towards the war efforts. There was also an effort given by the club to help bring peace to families and hold funerals for those who were lost during the war. One such time was the funeral for Allie Joseph Said, who left his job at Ford’s assembly factory in order to join the war effort. He was highly regarded as a hero within the military, though tragically he had gone missing in a plane crash during a mission. Years after the war, they found the crash site in the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia, Canada.⁷ His remains were then shipped back to Dearborn to his mother, where she organized a funeral procession with the Arabian Hashmie Society.

² Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 188.

³ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 188.

⁴ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 188.

⁵ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 188.

⁶ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 188.

⁷ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 190.

His funeral held importance for multiple reasons. For one, he had been an Arab American Muslim who was well respected within the military and by his peers. His funeral also showed that it was possible for Islam and American culture to coexist, as his funeral mixed both Islamic rituals and nationalist symbols, showing the blend between the two.⁸ It showed that you did not have to follow Christian ideals to be considered a patriot. The mentality that one must support the same ideas or religion continues to carry on throughout the decade, where it is widely seen with the Palestinian conflict.

Palestine Conflict in Palestine

The Palestinian conflict has been ongoing since the end of World War I. There were multiple attempts to find common ground and a solution between the Jewish immigration to Palestine and the Palestinians that were living there. There was never a solution that either side was happy with, and they continued to clash. What had happened for it to get to this point?

There were multiple waves of Zionist migration into Palestine from before the Ottoman Empire fell. There was a large wave of migration outside of Eastern Europe into safer places for Jews, but Palestine was not the first place in mind. In fact, most Jews migrating between 1882 and 1923 moved to the United States.⁹ Palestine became the best place to move once the United States had begun limiting migration during the 1920s—the same restrictions that affected Arab migration. It was when the United States started turning away Jewish people that the focus was set on Palestine. Migration was possible due to the British mandate of Palestine, as previously discussed. Zionists had accepted these mandates and supported them while Palestinians and other Arab elites were against the move. It is important to note that during this time, Palestinians still

⁸ Curtis IV, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 190.

⁹ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 234.

saw themselves as Ottoman citizens or Syrian citizens.¹⁰ The Palestine identity that we know today was beginning to form due to the mandate.

The migration to Palestine consisted of two slogans to describe the Zionists' movement. The first one was "the conquest of land", representing the desire to settle in this "new" land.¹¹ Many Zionist settlers were told that there was no one living on this land, therefore it was free to take. This was far from the truth, which was Palestinians had been living on the land for hundreds of years. The other slogan that heavily affected the Palestinian community was "conquest of labor". The story behind this line is that many Jewish citizens were unable to work freely in the previous countries they lived in, often being forced to work certain jobs. With the migration to Palestine, they wanted to have more jobs held by Jewish people without restrictions. The other half of the idea is that Palestinians were more likely to work for a lower wage. The Zionists and other elites were worried about this dragging down the cost of labor, so they focused on keeping Palestinians out of most jobs.¹² Zionist settlers were purchasing land and forcing Palestinians out of their homes, leading to 30 percent of Palestinian farmers having no land and nearly 80 percent of Palestinians not having even land to comfortably live.¹³ Tensions between the two sides came to a head in 1936 with the Great Revolt.¹⁴

The Great Revolt resulted in a large rift in the Palestinian community. The British had attempted to deal with the dissent in Palestine by using force—this included burning villages, destroying homes, as well as deporting protestors.¹⁵ Wealthy Palestinians had begun to flee the country, leaving a rift among the community and no stable political standing to support their

¹⁰ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 235.

¹¹ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*.

¹² Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 234.

¹³ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 236.

¹⁴ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 236.

¹⁵ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 236.

cause. The revolt went on for many months, leading to England deciding they needed to find a solution to the conflict. There was an attempt to divide the land amongst Zionists and Arabs, though this was rejected. The final attempt was the 1939 White Papers, which would effectively slow and restrict Jewish migration to Palestine and a close watch on land sales. However, it did not state in the White Papers that they would completely end either of these actions.¹⁶ The White Papers were presented right on the cusp of World War II. Because of this, the situation had to be put on hold by the British, with Zionists not wanting to take British focus away from Europe as the Nazis were hunting Jewish citizens and Palestinians still healing from the Great Revolt.¹⁷

The conflict and its effects were being felt by Arabs and Palestinians in America, with many advocating for change to be made. The war never ended the protests and the fights for their rights, though focus had shifted away from the conflict for a short while.

Palestine Conflict in America

For as long as the tension has been building in Palestine, Arab Americans have been fighting for Palestine. When they were unable to keep Palestine as “Southern Syria”, activists in America changed their focus from keeping Syria together to protecting Palestine, as Zionist settlers had started moving into the country.¹⁸ Activists were aware of the fighting going on and the “conquer of land and labor” rhetoric being pushed within the country. Activists and other Arab Americans took up the struggle their friends and families were going through in Palestine.

¹⁶ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 237.

¹⁷ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 237.

¹⁸ Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014),166.

They fought for governments and other citizens to support the Palestinians in keeping their land and country. It was not an easy fight.

Many Americans were supporting the Zionist movement to Palestine. This did not mean that Arab Americans gave up fighting for the Palestinian cause. We have seen the ways they reached out to officials in both America and Britain, as well as writing within the New York Times and Arabic newspapers based in America. The New York Times was one of the only newspapers that would publish support for the Palestinian side and criticism against the Zionist movement.¹⁹ It was important to have a space to widely spread criticism, as Arab Americans sharing their stories and fighting for the Palestinian cause grew stronger when the Zionist movement started gaining strength.²⁰ The line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism was beginning to blur, with more and more people starting to believe that Palestinians were pushing back against Jewish settlers because they were Jewish. One of the ways that Arab Americans defended themselves was specifying their reasons against Zionism, which can be seen in a booklet written by H. I. Katibah named *The Case against Zionism*.²¹ In this booklet he addresses the tension between Palestinians and Zionists with the goal of pushing back against the political Zionist claims. He refutes the idea that this is a fight based on religion and emphasizes the anger of Zionists pushing Palestinians out of their homes.²²

With the truth of the Holocaust and Hitler's attacks on Jews in Europe becoming known, any anti-Zionist protests or attempts were seen as antisemitic. It became difficult for Arab Americans to protest what was happening in Palestine without having to fight back against

¹⁹ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*.

²⁰ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 183.

²¹ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 183.

²² Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 183.

antisemitic accusations.²³ There were times they would have to rely on anti-Zionist Jews within the States during the 1930s and the 1940s—one of them being Rabbi Elmer Berger who grew up in Flint.²⁴ Berger was outspoken against tactics used by Zionists. His main reasoning for not supporting the cause was the idea that Jewish people should be able to preserve their religion and identity anywhere they lived, like the struggle that Arab Muslims had to go through when they first moved to the United States.²⁵ Berger did not believe that he had to be a Zionist in order to be seen as a full American either, as this was the stance that was quickly being taken by Americans during this time.²⁶ Berger wrote a memoir of his view where he had stated his view of Zionism; within this memoir he states that the Arab view of the conflict in Palestine was circulated within the States.²⁷

Arab Americans kept fighting. There were calls to keep fighting for the Palestinian cause, one such time being in an Arabic newspaper circulated in New York called *Al-Salem*. They published a response (in English) to a resolution that was introduced to the House of Representatives that would support Palestine being recognized as a “Jewish Commonwealth”.²⁸ In this letter they named multiple reasons as to why the resolution should be denied, citing that it would go against all of the United States’ interests and that England has already decided that the land should be in the control of Palestinians with their 1939 White Paper.²⁹ This resolution was introduced during the war as they also quote that this would fuel “Axis propaganda” directed

²³ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*.

²⁴ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 184.

²⁵ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 184.

²⁶ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 184.

²⁷ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 184.

²⁸ Arabic newspaper

²⁹ Arabic newspaper.

towards Arabs. Religion once again becomes a case in this document, though it is arguing that Palestine is home to all religions, not just Judaism:

Fourth: Palestine is holy not only to the Jews, but also to the Christians and Moslems.³⁰ These latter are about 275 million people, and all of them have had faith in the United States and its traditions of fair dealing...

Sixth: The Middle East is very strategic in this war, and the cooperation of the people there is imperative. Such a resolution adds fuel to Axis propaganda directed towards those peoples.³¹

Activists never stopped pushing back against the idea of a Jewish state. Arab Americans that had been born to U.S. born parents were fighting this fight as well, showing that this was an issue that still held importance to those of all generations.

Conclusion

The war brought hope and change to the American people, a way for them to leave the Great Depression behind them. For Arab Americans, it also brought more ways to show their loyalty and care for the United States. There were well respected Arab American fighting in the war for America, giving their lives. We see that the local community clubs were still up and running. They did more during these years, but holding funerals and services is one way that they kept the community together and showed support. It is holding up the space for Arab Americans within American society and culture, giving them room to practice in their own way as well.

The war also brought on more hardships for the community as tensions were growing within Palestine between Zionists and Palestinians. There was a large effort to fight for Palestine to stay its own sovereign state, but this was a fight that was done within a country where the

³⁰ "Moslems" is the old way of spelling "Muslims."

³¹ Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans*, 184

Zionist movement was the best deal. While Palestinians were struggling to gain respect and rights from the British and Zionists, Arab Americans were also advocating for their cause against those who believe they were doing this for antisemitic reasons. While there were non-Arab people who also supported the Palestinians cause, such as Rabbi Berger, it was still a difficult battle. This fight to support Palestine is an ongoing subject within the Arab American community in Dearborn, even to this day. These political movements, the protests, as well as the clubs and the jobs all work together to create a stable foundation for which the Arab American community can continue to grow.

Conclusion

Arab Americans have been participating in American culture and living in America for longer than some today may believe. They have built their own community within Dearborn, and today that community makes up around 40% of Dearborn's official population.¹ Dearborn does not shy away from this population either. The city has grown farther than Henry Ford could have imagined, likely changing the original plan that he had for his ideal suburb that I mentioned in the beginning of this essay. The Arab American community has become a stable part of Dearborn and I believe that Dearborn would not be the same without it. They have both the largest mosque in North America and the oldest mosque in North America, which is the previously mentioned American Moslem Society, and they recently created voting ballots that are completely in Arabic.² These mosques are also a large symbol that the Arab American is a strong one within America. Its existence shows that America is home to many religions, and they can grow to a large scale. While it is possible for this to happen, it does not mean that it was easy.

Most Americans did not have a positive view of those who immigrated to the States. In the case of Arab Americans, they had to push against orientalist views as well as argue to be considered 'white' legally. There was active action taken by white Americans to deprive Arab Americans from their right to naturalize. Even after Dow had gone through the court system all the way to the Supreme Court to gain the label of 'white', many did not believe that they still fit into the American idea. Despite this struggle, those who immigrated made a home for themselves within Dearborn and gained citizenship. Arab Americans were drawn to the jobs available in

¹ Niraj Warikoo, "Dearborn council approves resolution requiring Arabic-language election materials," *Detroit Free Press*, March 24, 2023. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2022/03/23/dearborn-arabic-language-ballots-elections/7136907001/>

² Warikoo, "Dearborn."

Henry Ford's factories, a job that gave them some stability and they settled and grew. With many Arab Americans working for Ford's company, they were the ones that would also be a part of the unions that formed. In the case of George Addes, he played a large role. He helped form a union that is still around today to help factory employees fight for the rights they deserve as workers. It is a not-so-small thing that has made an impact on the people of the time and the people today, helped along by Arab Americans.

Political groups have a similar role. These groups demonstrated the power and strength that the community had when they would demand freedom and rights in the Middle East. Their protests and calls for action show us that they did not stop caring about politics once they left their home countries. The groups worked hard every decade to spread the word and fight for the change that they desired to see. These groups and individuals would bring national attention to themselves and their cause, public in calling on both American and British leaders to act in the Middle East. This political movement in America was an extra voice for those pushing back against the mandates within the Levant area. We can see this in today's world, when there were protests in Dearborn against deadly attacks against Palestinians at al-Aqsa mosque back in 2021.³ The protests were put together by student group Wayne State University's Student for Justice in Palestine and New Generation for Palestine.⁴ This action shows that there are still groups today that are pushing for the same change as then, including new groups that were not around during the time period I have covered. As mentioned previously there has been a push to add Arab American on the census as there are many who do not identify with the classification of "white" as those who before them did.

³ Miriam Marini and Niraj Warikoo, "More than 1,000 march in Dearborn as death tolls ticks higher in Israeli-Palestinian crisis," *Detroit Free Press*, May 17, 2021, accessed April 15, 2023. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/wayne/2021/05/17/march-dearborn-support-palestine/5121968001/>

⁴ Marinin and Warikoo, "More than 1,000 march."

There are also other ways the community is making change. As of 2022 Dearborn has made voting more accessible for Arab Americans in the city. Voting polls, registration forms, absentee ballots, anything involved with voting shall be included in Arabic.⁵ The actual resolution is that they must translate ballots into languages that over 5% of the population speak, but currently Arabic is the only language that reaches that threshold.⁶ With almost 40% of their population being of Arab descent or origins, it shows a care for the community that is there and allows them to exercise their rights. It

also shows the local government’s awareness of the large ethnic communities within their city, especially the Arab American community. There was some push back against passing the resolution as quickly as they did, though that does not undermine the importance of the resolution. Councilman Mustapha Hammoud says “It’s a victory for voter access. Voting is one of the most important rights we have as American citizens.”⁷ This shows that the work

and effort that the previous



Figure 3: Example photo of an Arabic polling card for the Dearborn primaries. Source: Detroit Free Press

⁵ Warikoo, “Dearborn.”

⁶ Warikoo, “Dearborn.”

⁷ Warikoo, “Dearborn.”

generations of Arab Americans put in for Dearborn and the community has been paying off, with governments recognizing the importance of the language. The resolutions' wording also shows how big the Arabic language in Dearborn is today.

The connection between the Middle East and Arab Americans who moved to Dearborn was one that was not severed when they crossed the ocean. Families continued to stay in contact with those back home, there were still movements to fight for the rights they had within the States. There are times in history when you forget that everything is connected in some way, and I believe that when it comes to Arab immigration, there is a tendency to forget that their lives may still be affected by what happens overseas. We can see this with the pushback against the Zionist movement when they continued to speak against the cause and would have to justify their reasons as to ward off antisemitic accusations. We also see it with the mandates that were created, and the political groups that formed in response to them. The two histories are tightly connected, even when they go through different struggles. New Arab immigrants had to learn how to establish themselves in their religion when that religion is no longer the majority. In the case of Syrian Christians, it was the case of finding themselves within the American culture without losing the Arabic culture that they were raised in.

There has been a lot of research done on the Arab Americans within America. Different authors focused on specific groups, or they looked at multiple cities to see the Arab American experience in whole. There are still people today whose families traveled to Dearborn to work in Ford's factories and are able to share what life was like. I believe that this is something that can be continued to be built on as well, looking further into how the politics in the Middle East affects Arab Americans and the community.

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Glossary of Words

Arab Americans	العربي الأمريكي
Politics	سياسة
Identity	هوية
Census	التعداد
Citizenship	المواطنة
Mosque	المسجد
Correspondence	مراسلة
Primary Sources	المصادر الأولية
Prime Minister	الوزير الأول
President	رئيس
Nationality	جنسية
War	حرب
Church	الكنيسة