



Healing the Nation

The Arab American
Experience After
September 11





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Healing the Nation

The Arab American Experience after September 11

a first anniversary report by the Arab American Institute

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September 11, 2001 will forever be remembered as the day the American spirit was tested to a greater degree than at any time since World War II.

For Arab Americans, the deep shock and anger over this national trauma and grief over lost relatives and friends were compounded by a rush by some to blame Arabs collectively for the attacks. Arabs and Muslims in this country were suddenly confronted with the double pain of mourning an attack on their country and simultaneously having to defend themselves, their families, and their stature as Americans.

But in the aftermath of that tragic day, and despite acts of misguided hatred and violence, September 11 has also reminded us of the best of the American spirit. For every story of heartache on September 11, there is a story of heroism. For every act of violence or hatred that came in the wake of the attacks, there are dozens of examples of selflessness, compassion, and kindness.

The first anniversary of the attacks is an appropriate time to document the Arab American experience in the days, weeks, and months following the terrorist attacks and to tell some of the stories of the past year that have yet to be told: the Arab American firefighters and doctors who rushed to Ground Zero to help in the recovery efforts. The hundreds of thousands of dollars raised by Arab and Muslim groups to aid victims. The Americans across the nation who lent assistance and support when their Arab and Muslim neighbors were threatened. Blood drives, interfaith prayer vigils, and fundraisers that brought together Americans from all backgrounds and faiths. The many Americans who sought to learn more about Arab culture and the Muslim faith, and the many Arabs and Muslims who stepped forward to promote greater understanding.

This anniversary is also an opportune time to look toward our nation's future, to some of the challenges in balancing a fight to defend ourselves with the need to protect the rights and freedoms we all hold dear. Arab Americans have, out of necessity, been in the vanguard of those fighting to safeguard civil and constitutional rights - not just for the sake of those of Arab origin, but for all Americans.

While it would be impossible to chronicle the entirety of these moving stories, this report endeavors to serve as a record of how Arab Americans responded to and were affected by the momentous events of September 11, 2001.

ARAB AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE SEPT. 11 ATTACKS

“We are in the midst of a national nightmare of unimaginable proportions.”

“Arab Americans, like all Americans, are transfixed by this tragedy. We have family and friends who worked in the World Trade Center. We mourn for those who lost their lives and those who were injured. We mourn, as well, for our country in this time of national trauma.

“We urge our fellow citizens not to rush to judgment and point fingers at their Arab American neighbors and colleagues who are suffering, like all Americans, from these despicable acts.

“Regardless of who is ultimately found to be responsible for these terrorist murders, no ethnic or religious community should be treated as suspect and collectively blamed.”

from an Arab American Institute press release, Sept. 11, 2001

This press release touches on the horror that Arab Americans shared with the rest of the country as news of the events in New York City, Washington DC, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania thrust themselves into the national consciousness. Arab Americans were consumed by all of the same emotions so familiar to all of us: disbelief and shock, anger, grief, and a deep sense of violation. And they perished alongside their fellow citizens and those of some 80-plus countries on that Tuesday morning.

For Arab Americans, it was not just a violation of nation and citizenry, but also of heritage and, for some, of faith. The attacks were a particular affront to Arab Americans, striking as they did at their collective sense of cultural pride and religious belief. From the very first moments after the attacks, the Arab American community joined fellow Americans in channel-

ing this hurt and anger into dedicated efforts to help the victims and their families. It would be impossible to chronicle the full extent of the Arab American contribution to relief and healing efforts; what follows are but a few examples.

Rescue and Recovery

The ranks of law enforcement personnel and firefighters who were involved in the initial, heroic minutes after the World Trade Center attacks included Arab Americans. Arab American physicians joined those who tended to the wounded in hospitals throughout the New York metropolitan area. Among the crowds that descended onto Ground Zero in the days and weeks after September 11 were Manhattan's deli owners, including Arab Americans, to distribute sandwiches to the crews working to save people at the World Trade Center site and recover the remains of those who did not survive.

Ali Taqi, a firefighter from Troy, Michigan, drove to New York City the afternoon of the attacks, along with seven other firefighters from Troy and nearby Bloomfield. Taqi felt a deep sense of purpose in what he and his fellow firefighters were about to do, as an American and particularly as an Arab American. "We're Americans, we're trying to do as much as we can to help...We're grieving also." Taqi's group unloaded supplies, carried buckets of debris, and searched for victims at the site of the World Trade Center. (1)

Iraqi-born Ron Kuley, a member of the Fairfax County, Virginia Fire Department, also joined a team of relief workers that traveled to New York and spent seven weeks at Ground Zero. And an Arab American served as a grief counselor to support the families of Pentagon crash victims.

Dr. Taufik Kassis, a medical resident at Jersey City Medical Center across the Hudson River from the World Trade Center site, treated many of those wounded on September 11. "It's important to speak out so people understand there is a huge difference between the terrorists who committed these attacks and other Muslims and Arabs or Arab Americans," he said.

Fundraising

The American Red Cross was the recipient of the largest concentration of funds nationwide in the months after the tragedies of September 11, and this was reflect-

ed in the giving patterns of Arab Americans.

Among those giving to the Red Cross were many members of the Arab American community of Orlando, Florida, under the leadership of the Arab Community Center. They raised \$50,000 by the 15th of September - 21 percent of the total donations received by the

October 3 profits from all of his restaurants to a relief fund for the families of firefighters and police officers killed in the World Trade Center attack. Helping is "our duty as American citizens," Mr. Chahine said, and "a way to demonstrate that I'm an Arab American, I love this country, and I'm committed to this country." (2)

Andy Shallal, owner of three Washington DC-area eateries, hosted an event at his Mimi's American Bistro in Washington that raised \$14,000, the entirety of the day's profits, for the Twin Towers Relief Fund. Shallal challenged fellow members of the Restaurant Owner's Association of Washington to do the same thing.

The Casablanca Restaurant of Alexandria, Virginia, in partnership with a number of groups in the Washington DC area, raised money in late September to be used in support of

Pentagon families who lost loved ones in the attack on the Pentagon.

In a show of fraternal support, the police officers and firefighters of heavily Arab American Dearborn, Michigan, raised \$125,000 for the families of the almost 350 firefighters who lost their lives working as part of the rescue effort at the site of the World Trade Center.

The Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese American Clubs raised \$20,000 for their September 11 Fund, which was donated to the Twin Towers Orphan Fund.

Bassam Amin of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn coordinated a fundraiser at his mosque, the Beit El Maqdis



photo: Max Ortiz,
The Detroit News

Orlando Red Cross up to that point. The National Arab American Medical Association brought in \$100,000 in support of national and local American Red Cross 9/11 relief efforts. In Tarrant County, Texas, the Arab American and American Muslim communities raised \$20,000, while the Al Aqsa Mosque of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania donated \$15,000 to the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund.

Arab American restaurateurs hosted numerous fundraisers across the country for 9/11 disaster relief funds. Talal Chahine, owner of the ten-restaurant La Shish chain in Dearborn, Michigan, donated the

"We as Americans express in the strongest manner possible our utmost outrage at the senseless and barbaric act of terrorism that occurred today around our nation.

We condemn this act of violence.

We express our grief for the loss of life that has taken place as a result of this cowardly act of terrorism.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to all the victims and their families. In a sense, we as a nation are also victims of this tragedy...

We urge our community to join in volunteering in every possible way, including by participating in blood drives and other humanitarian needs to help reduce the suffering."

Statement from the Coalition of Chicago Arab Organizations, September 11, 2001

Islamic Center, which raised close to \$5,000.

The Arab Bankers Association of North America (ABANA) was able to raise \$100,000 in the Arab Bankers Association of North America Disaster Relief Fund. Contributions, which came from dozens of Arab American individuals and companies, were donated to the New York City Firefighters 9/11 Relief Fund. Geoffrey Milton, ABANA Vice President and General Manager of Arab Banking Corporation, said the funds were collected through "the efforts of dozens of individuals and organizations in the Arab American business world who

are dedicated to aiding those families in their community suffering losses resulting from these horrible events." (3) As ABANA President Dr. Hani Findakly said, "This effort is part of our responsibility to our community and larger family." (4)

Vigils, Rallies, and Blood Drives

Many groups held candlelight vigils, rallies and blood drives to demonstrate their support for the victims of the attacks and their families.

The American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC) organized its national membership to donate blood for the wounded in Washington, DC and New York. "We are here to first of all give our condolences to the families of the victims of this heinous crime and to give our support. This is the time to give our charity and help those in need because we are feeling the pain of everybody," said Aly Abyzaakouk, Executive Director of the American Muslim Council. (5)

The Iraqi Center of Nashville, Tennessee held a rally on September 22 in front of the U.S. Courthouse in Nashville to condemn the terrorist attacks as well as to show solidarity with their fellow Americans. The group collected donations, held a blood drive, and made other plans to join in the relief effort.

Dearborn, Michigan community leaders sponsored a prayer vigil on September 12 to remember the victims, and the Muslim community of

G r e a t e r Chicago conducted a special prayer service at the M o s q u e Foundation in Bridgeview, Illinois for the victims of the

"We are here to first of all give our condolences to the families of the victims of this heinous crime."

attacks and their families.

And for Arab Americans living in New York, the grief and fear in the weeks following the terror attacks were overwhelming. Like all New Yorkers, shock and anger were palpable. In the heavily Arab neighborhood of Brooklyn's Atlantic Avenue, a candlelight vigil brought together generations of mourners, some holding the photos of their sons on duty at Ground Zero.

Thanks to the steady leadership and stamina of the Brooklyn-based Arab American Family Support Center, hundreds of immigrants were able to find counseling and legal services to cope with trauma of the attacks, as well as the detentions and the extra scrutiny placed on Arabs and Muslims. Despite modest resources and staff, the AAFSC under the direction of Emira Habiby Browne stayed on the front line as a vital link to the media, government, and the general public.

Individual Efforts

Individual contributions towards the healing of the nation were often



Arab American members of the New York City Police Department who took part in the rescue effort were honored at the Arab American Institute Foundation's 2002 Kahlil Gibran "Spirit of Humanity" Awards gala.

the most powerful and uplifting.

Even as the fires continued to burn at the Pentagon, Kamal Nawash, an attorney in private practice in the Washington, DC area, enlisted the help of Arab American attorneys to assist the families of those who did not survive the Pentagon attack.

Author Ray Hanania set up a special section on his website where Arab Americans could post messages of support for the families of those who died in New York City, in order to demonstrate that "we are not responsible for the killings, we do not support the murder of innocent people and we do not support the terrorists who were behind this act." (6)

One of the largest providers of American flags is the Alamo Flag Co. in Falls Church, Virginia. The owner and founder of Alamo is Fawaz "Tony" Ismail, an American of Palestinian descent. Ismail's company has sold millions of American flags since September, with a portion of the company's earnings going to assist the families of the vic-

tims of the terrorist attacks. "It's not all about the money," Ismail said. "The freedom that we have here, you can't take it for granted." (7)

The Utah National Guard, home to the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade, was in need of Arabic and Farsi translators after September 11. After soliciting the help of Arab American groups to get the word out to their communities, the Guard was "overwhelmed" by the number of Arab Americans volunteering as translators, according to Capt. Chris Patterson. "We are getting an outpouring of support from Arab Americans everywhere, one that I've heard has been duplicated at recruiting centers throughout the country." (8)

Similarly, the response to the FBI's appeal for Arabic translators was enormous. FBI Director Robert S. Mueller said that after the initial call for linguists on September 17, "the Arab American community and others immediately overwhelmed our telephone switchboard." (9) ♦

"We condemn in no uncertain terms the horrifying attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11. We are shocked and angered by such brutality and share all the emotions of our fellow citizens against these attacks, which targeted all Americans without exception."

Statement from a meeting of Arab American and American Muslim leaders in Washington, DC, September 12, 2001

"[We] condemn the horrifying series of attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York and government buildings, including the Pentagon in Washington, DC...Arab Americans view these attacks as targeting all Americans without exception."

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

BACKLASH AND THE NATION'S RESPONSE

"Be it resolved that the Congress-

1) declares that in the quest to identify, bring to justice, and punish the perpetrators and sponsors of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, that the civil rights and civil liberties of all Americans, including Arab-Americans, American Muslims, and Americans from South Asia, should be protected; and

(2) condemns any acts of violence or discrimination against any Americans, including Arab-Americans, American Muslims, and Americans from South Asia."

Concurrent Resolution of the U.S. Congress, September 12, 2001

Phoenix, Arizona: On Sept. 15th, Frank Silva Roque shot to death Balbir Singh Sodhi. Roque allegedly killed Sodhi as part of a multiple-incident shooting rampage that included shootings at a Lebanese-American clerk who escaped injury, at another gas station in Mesa, and at the home of an Afghan family. (Arizona Republic, Sept. 18)

Reedley, California: Abdo Ali Ahmed, a Yemeni grocer, was shot to death in his shop over the weekend. Family members said the day before he was killed, death threat that included anti-Arab statements was found on windshield of Ahmed's car. It is being investigated as a hate crime. (Washington Post, Oct. 3)

Fresno, California: Rien Said Ahmed was shot and killed while at work. Witnesses saw four males speed from the store in white sedan. No money or merchandise was stolen. Ahmed had received threats since mid-September. (The Fresno Bee, Oct. 2)

Cleveland, Ohio: Ford Mustang driven through entrance of Ohio's largest mosque. Mosque unoccupied at time; only driver injured. (Estimated damages: \$100,000) (AP, Sept. 13)

Within hours of the September 11 attacks, the tragedy and violence of that terrible day was compounded by personal attacks on Americans of Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian heritage. Even Hispanic Americans were singled out for attack because of their physical similarities to Arabs.

But it was just a tiny minority of Americans who carried out these actions; the vast majority was disgusted by and ashamed of such acts of hatred and misdirected anger. Americans of all persuasions took proactive steps to come to the aid of Arab and Muslim Americans and offer their sympathy and support at a time when all Americans were dealing with the shock and trauma inflicted upon the nation.

From government officials to community and religious leaders to ordinary citizens, Americans rallied to

support those of Arab heritage in the United States.

Americans from all walks of life made sincere and sustained efforts to stand in solidarity with their Arab American neighbors. Dialogues were started, various faiths emphasized their common principles, and funds were donated to assist in the repair of damage from acts of vandalism. The point was repeatedly made that the diversity of America is what makes it strong and the fostering of such diversity will only make the United States stronger.

Government Efforts

Early and forceful statements by President Bush put the federal government on record that acts of violence against any Americans because of their skin color, religious affiliation, or ethnicity would not be tolerated and would be punished to

the fullest extent of the law.

On the day of the terrorist attacks, Arab American and Muslim American leaders were already in Washington, DC for a previously scheduled meeting with President Bush to discuss the use of “secret evidence” in certain immigration proceedings and racial profiling of Arab Americans at the nation’s airports and security checkpoints.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, these leaders set two goals: to give President Bush clear support for his response against the terrorist attacks, and to stave off the backlash against Arab and Muslim Americans.

“As soon as the event happened, we kicked into action,” said AAI Chairman George Salem. “We anticipated the inevitable.” From the White House to the FBI to the Justice Department, it was emphasized early and often that hate crimes and discrimination would not be tolerated.

Congress also helped reassure the Arab American population that the country stood with them and supported them after the attacks. The U.S. Senate Democratic leadership invited Arab American and Muslim American leaders to the Capitol in October to discuss ways to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity and to ensure the security of the United States. The meeting was also an opportunity to show that just as all Americans were united against punishing those responsible for the terrorist attacks, Americans are also united against acts of hate against innocent Arab and Muslim Americans.

The United States Capitol building was also the site for a Bipartisan Interfaith Event held ten days after the terrorist attacks. The ceremony included speakers from the Muslim,

Sikh, Christian and Jewish faiths, as well as the Speaker of the House, the Minority Leader, and the Minority Whip and was attended by members from the House of Representatives.

Among the federal agencies that took early and proactive steps to deal with the backlash was the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Assistant Attorney General Ralph F. Boyd Jr. stated that “Any threats of violence or discrimination against Arab or Muslim

“Our nation should be mindful that there are thousands of Arab Americans who live in New York City, who love their flag just as much as [we] do, and...that as we seek to win the war, that we treat Arab Americans and Muslims with the respect they deserve.”

President George W. Bush, in a telephone conversation with New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, September 12, 2001

Americans or Americans of South Asian descents are not just wrong and un-American, but are also unlawful and will be treated as such.” (10) The Civil Rights Division established a special initiative to combat post-9/11 backlash, headed by Joe Zogby, which facilitates referral of civil rights complaints, educates communities about hate backlash, and coordinates efforts with other government agencies.

The Department’s vigilance in combating backlash has affected AAI directly. It tracked down and prosecuted a man who had threatened AAI President James Zogby and his family. This is just one example of the numerous cases in which guilty pleas have been obtained in the wake of the Department’s increased focus on 9/11-related abuse.

Other cases involve the conviction of a individuals telephoning a bomb threat to a family in

Wisconsin, setting fire to a restaurant in Utah, attempting to set fire to a mosque in Seattle, assaulting managers of a hotel in Tennessee, among many others. Also, Irving David Rubin and Earl Leslie Krugel of the Jewish Defense League have been indicted for conspiring to bomb a mosque and the California office of Rep. Darrell Issa, an Arab American member of the U.S. Congress. In Des Moines, Iowa, the Midwest Federation of American Syrian-Lebanese Clubs was prohibited

from holding a convention at a Marriott hotel. Marriott agreed to pay a fine and develop a training program to educate employees about Arab Americans.

In all, about 70 state and local criminal civil rights cases have been initiated, and ten more on the federal level.

Among the penalties for these crimes are time in jail, probation and community service; some of those convicted were ordered to do service for the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Dearborn, Michigan.

Within weeks of the September 11 attacks, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Chair Cari Dominguez initiated meetings with leaders of major Arab American and Muslim organizations to receive community feedback on how the backlash was impacting the workplace. By the summer, over 600 complaints had been filed by workers alleging mostly religious discrimination, predominantly discharges and harassment.

Given the serious increase in backlash related complaints, the EEOC issued in May fact sheets for both employers and employees that address frequently asked questions about the employment of Muslims,

“Vigilante attacks and threats against Arab-Americans will not be tolerated. Such acts of retaliation violate federal law and, more particularly, run counter to the very principles of equality and freedom upon which our nation is founded. The FBI and the Department of Justice are committed to aggressively investigating and prosecuting violations of the federal hate crime laws. We, to date, have initiated 40 hate crime investigations, involving reported attacks on Arab American citizens and institutions.”

FBI Director Robert Mueller,
September 17, 2001

Arabs, South Asians and Sikhs. The commission also posted as special “September 11 Information” section with materials and resources on its website.

Secretary of Education Rod Paige called on educators to take a leading role in the prevention of harassment and violence directed at students perceived to be Muslim or Arab American. “We are all committed to making sure our children across America can attend school in a safe and secure environment free from harassment and threats,” Paige said. The Secretary also stressed to educators that when assemblies, classroom discussions, and other school activities to honor victims of the tragedy are held, they do not inadvertently foster targeting Muslim or Arab American students for harassment. (11)

State governments as well made it clear that all citizens are equal under the law and that any unlawful acts directed against fellow citizens would be dealt with promptly and appropriately.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC), which enforces Pennsylvania's civil rights laws, played a major role in looking after the rights of Arab Americans in that state after the September 11 attacks. The Pennsylvania Inter-Agency Task Force on Civil Tension, a body within the PHRC, has focused specifically on bias- or hate-related incidents in Pennsylvania. In much demand since September 11, the PHRC had logged sixty hate-related incidents in Pennsylvania as of late October.

The State of California created a hotline to aid targets of harassment and hate crimes after September 11. Staff members answering the calls, including interpreters, took reports and helped callers fill out forms to aid criminal investigators.

Community Efforts

Local communities came up with many ways not only to denounce hate crimes, but also to demonstrate that Arab Americans are an integral part of their social fabric.

In the northern Virginia suburbs, county officials in Arlington and Fairfax counties moved swiftly to confront the backlash by holding emergency press conferences that featured the board of supervisors, police chief, chairman of the school board, and human rights commissioners.

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and Illinois Governor George Ryan declared November to be Arab Heritage Month as a salute to the community's contributions to society. More than 500 Arab Americans joined Mayor Daley and the Chicago Human Relations Commission at the inaugural celebration. Marwan Amarin, Advisory Board Chairman of the Advisory Commission on Arab Affairs, thanked Mayor Daley, “who was one of the first elected officials to formally recognize in public the cultural uniqueness of the Arab American community in Chicago...We are proud Americans. We will continue to be proud Americans even in the most challenging of moments that we face.” (12)

In Paterson, New Jersey, Mayor Martin G. Barnes and other officials joined local Arab American leaders for a joint press briefing on September 14. The briefing followed a series of meetings in which the Arab and Muslim community reported incidents of harassment. All Paterson officials present emphasized that the community would not tolerate any discrimination or hate crimes.

The Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco adopted a resolution two days after the attacks that had been

introduced by the Arab American community there. The resolution condemned "all discrimination and racism directed against Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, and people of Middle Eastern descent," and "supports the use of all legal authority, and release additional resources as necessary, to prevent and respond to discrimination, hate crimes, and harassment in all forms." (13)

Redford Township, Michigan, hosted a three-day diversity workshop in October entitled "Different People, Common Ground," part of a series of workshops that have taken place throughout Michigan since 1999. The discussion sessions included origins of stereotyping, effects of prejudice on the community, subtle ways prejudice is practiced, and creating inclusive communities. "This program is a great way to strengthen relationships and build new ones," said Redford Township Supervisor Kevin Kelley. (14)

In Philadelphia, the human relations commission worked with Marwan Kreidie of the Arab American Community Development Corporation to set up an Arab American "control center" on the day of the attacks to monitor the needs of the community. They made sure the police knew where Arab American areas were located and that mosques would be protected. They held meetings with the FBI and the Attorney General's office, offering assistance and making sure that Arab Americans weren't going to be targeted.

The Orange County, California Commission on Human Relations adopted a plan entitled "Orange County Together: United We Stand" to respond to the increase in hate crimes after September 11. The plan involved responding to hate

crimes, building understanding, and raising awareness.

In Indiana, Pennsylvania, posters and flyers in several languages were distributed stating: "Our community is a hate-free zone." And: "Every language on this poster is spoken by members of the Indiana County community, as are many other languages. We have posted this sign to show our commitment to keeping

"We have posted this sign to show our commitment to keeping Indiana a community that treats all its members fairly and with respect, regardless of race, nationality, or religion."

Indiana a community that treats all its members fairly and with respect, regardless of race, nationality, or religion." (15)

A direct response to fears of backlash in the Louisville, Kentucky, area was the implementation of the Green Armband Project, which brought together volunteers who agreed to escort people who were afraid to venture out in public, to speak out against harassment and to patronize businesses owned by Arabs or Muslims. Similarly, the Mennonite Church in Boise, Idaho offered to accompany members of the Muslim community, particularly women who wear *hijab*, to shop, to school, or to pray.

Organizations

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), in addition to its fundraising and public education efforts post-September 11, expanded its network of attorneys doing pro bono work to aid victims of hate crimes and discrimination, in cooperation with the National Lawyer's Guild and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

In an effort to promote racial and religious tolerance, the Afghan-American community in the Washington, DC area, in collaboration with several other organizations and the American Red Cross, organized an Interfaith Memorial on September 23 to show support for the victims of the attacks and for America itself. Speakers included Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian leaders.

The Korean American Coalition (KAC) lent its support to Arab Americans, encouraging its members to support the ideals of American democracy by contacting mosques or Islamic schools to offer support. As the KAC National Executive Director, Charles Kim, stated, "Any attack on someone of perceived Arab ancestry is not only an attack on his or her civil rights, but also an attack on our country's sense of justice and equality."

A lunchtime rally organized by a grassroots group of South Asian and Asian Pacific Americans was held at the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in Washington, DC on September 13. The gathering drew around 200 people to show solidarity with Arab and Muslim Americans.

Antonia Hernandez, president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, stressed that it "remains incumbent on all Americans to ensure that no ethnic or religious group is targeted" and that "our communities, the Arab American and the Latino, would stand to suffer a great deal if any widespread xenophobic reaction is not checked."

The Asian American Journalists Association urged the news media to maintain responsible news reporting of Arab Americans. In a press release issued by the AAJA, they reminded the media that "Arab

Americans, along with all of us, are victims of this attack.”

One aspect of the response to the September 11 attacks was the creation of new organizations. One of these is Solidarity USA, based in Washington, DC, which is a civil liberties and human rights advocacy task force. It monitors human rights and civil liberties violations of Muslims, Arabs, South Asians and anyone else who has been affected by the post-September 11 backlash. The group has also worked to refer those in need of humanitarian aid and legal consultation to appropriate legal and humanitarian organizations.

Neighbors for Peace, too, was founded in response to the September 11th tragedies by a group of concerned citizens in the Chicago area. Stirred to action by escalating hate violence, the group, under the leadership of Anya Cordell, formed the Campaign for Collateral Compassion, a grassroots movement petitioning the major September 11th charities to include as beneficiaries families of victims of the racist backlash. Amber Amundson, whose husband was killed at the Pentagon, and five others who also lost family in the attacks, endorsed the group's efforts, saying that “As members of September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, and friends and relatives of 9/11 victims, we support ways of helping those who have been victims of 9/11 hate crimes. They too are victims of terrorism, just like those who died on September 11.”

Several philanthropic organizations awarded grants to support the victims of the backlash and the communities most affected by it.

The California Endowment of Southern California focused on granting millions of dollars in funding to grassroots organizations throughout the region that were committed to combating intolerance. “One of the things we wanted to do was reach into communities and support programs that focus around reducing hate and increasing understanding - particularly understanding the culture of Arab

“It has been a difficult time... feeling pain with the rest of the nation and at times feeling ostracized. But when we began feeling like we didn't belong, our community embraced us with love and support.”

Americans and Muslims,” according to Gwen Foster, program director for the California Endowment. (17)

The Open Society Institute made grants to 29 frontline organizations nationwide to meet the post-9/11 challenges to civil rights and liberties. More than \$2.5 million was donated in April to promote the safeguarding of civil liberties and immigrant rights and monitor hate crimes and racial profiling. Several Arab American organizations, including AAI and ADC, were among those awarded by OSI. The Atlantic Philanthropies also funded work to support affected communities, and in January the New York-based Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrant Rights cosponsored a briefing for funders on policy changes and direct needs in the aftermath of the attacks.

In February, the Maryland-based AmeriDream Charity, Inc. awarded

\$25,000 to assist families and organizations who were victims of hate crimes in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Partnering with the Arab American Institute Foundation, AmeriDream established the Arab American Rebuilding Fund to assist Arab Americans and others who were victims of bias attacks.

“All Americans were deeply affected by the attacks in New York and Washington last September. It is unfortunate that certain Americans were further victimized by hate crimes simply as a result of their heritage,” said Steve Smith of AmeriDream. The Fund provided grants to those who suffered property damage on or after September 11. Eight Arab, Muslim, and Sikh American

families and two religious institutions from ten cities across the United States were assisted by this program.

One recipient of the AmeriDream grants was the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, after an unknown assailant fired one shot on September 12th at the Center's stained glass window. Center Property Chair Mr. Hider Naserdin, in accepting a \$1,000 AmeriDream grant, commented: “It has been a difficult time for a lot of Muslim Americans, feeling pain with the rest of the nation and at times feeling ostracized. But when we began feeling like we didn't belong, our community embraced us with love and support.”

The Sikh Cultural Society of Washington, DC was another one of the grant recipients. The society was attacked with spray paint and eggs in late October. A flag and

Sikh banner were also vandalized. AmeriDream awarded \$2,750 to the society. An appreciative Satwant Kaur Bell, board member of the society, stated that "We must work in unity, we are all Americans, together we become one. United we are one."

"While a few have chosen to use violence to drive Americans apart, many more have decided that our diversity is the basis of America's strength. The partnership between AmeriDream and the Arab American Institute in the Rebuilding Fund is one that proves that, in the aftermath of September 11, when we come together, we can turn adversity into prosperity," said AAI President James Zogby. (17)

Media Efforts

Some of the widest-reaching efforts to stem the tide of hate violence and intolerance after September 11 came from dedicated media professionals. Taking a leading role, the New York-based Ad Council launched a powerful series of print, radio, and television public service announcements against hate, their largest single advertising campaign since World War II.

The campaign against hate began with a series of "I am an American" television spots that featured faces representing the diversity of America's racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Middle Eastern, South Asian and other groups most victimized by the backlash.

The Ad Council then collaborated with the Arab American Institute to produce a series of four radio spots that spoke forcefully and

frankly against hate violence. Mary Berry, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Attorney General John Ashcroft, Arizona Senator John McCain, and pop music superstar Mandy Moore acted as the spokespersons for the four spots, which were also promoted on AAI's website.

Meanwhile, in the Cleveland, Ohio offices of advertising agency Brokaw, Inc., Bill Brokaw and his staff were trying to come up with a way to contribute to the nation's healing. After hearing from a Pakistani employee that his wife was so afraid of being attacked as a Muslim that she refused to leave the house, Brokaw knew the direction his agency would take. The agency created a print ad entitled "Twin Towers," featuring the anti-hate message of the ad forming the image of the fallen World Trade Center towers.

In an effort to gain a wider audience, Brokaw submitted his idea to the Ad Council which, in coopera-

tion with AAI, ran it as a print public service announcement in over 10,000 newspapers and 1300 magazines across the United States. AAI converted the ad to a full-color poster (see box on the next page) and began distributing it to schools and community groups as part of its own public information campaign. The powerful message of the poster resonated so well that AAI has made it available for shipping costs only via Amazon.com.

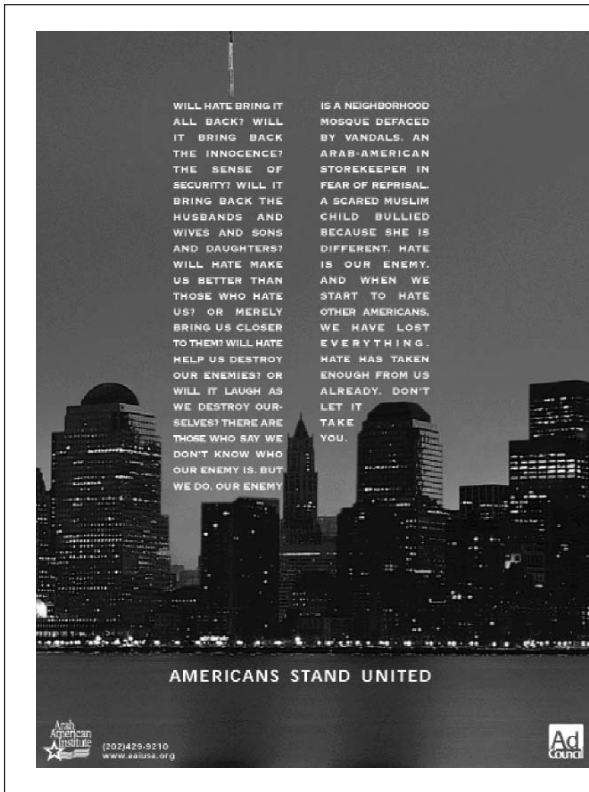
Meanwhile, Starz Encore Group, the leading provider of cable and satellite delivered premium movie channels in the United States, was also looking for a way to help the victims of intolerance. Its founder and president, John Sie, himself an immigrant, empathized deeply with those being targeted for hate since September 11.

They decided to produce a television spot conveying the message of "Tolerance" and working with AAI and Brokaw, a version of the "Twin

Members of the Islamic House of Wisdom in Michigan held a special prayer for the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks. They invited members of local Christian churches, shown here seated in the background, to attend. (photo: Millard Berry, Dearborn Press & Guide)



"I wish to extend my apologies to Arab Americans everywhere for the unconscionable acts committed by some against you at this sad time in our country." - Arlene Rosso-Baron



The Brokaw Inc./Ad Council/Arab American Institute anti-hate poster "Twin Towers." The text reads:

"Will hate bring it all back? Will it bring back the innocence? The sense of security? Will it bring back the husbands and wives and sons and daughters? Will hate make us better than those who hate us? Or merely bring us closer to them? Will hate help us destroy our enemies? Or will it laugh as we destroy ourselves? There are those who say we don't know who our enemy is.

"But we do. Our enemy is a neighborhood mosque defaced by vandals. An Arab-American storekeeper in fear of reprisal. A scared Muslim child bullied because she is different. Hate is our enemy. And when we start to hate other Americans, we have lost everything. Hate has taken enough from us already. Don't let it take you."

Towers" print ad was converted into a television spot featuring the narration of "Family Ties" star Michael Gross.

In addition to airing the spot on its own ten cable channels, Starz Encore enlisted the support of the six largest cable operators in the nation, among them Comcast and Time Warner, to run the public service announcements in all of their markets. The total number of households exposed to the ads was 64 million.

The campaign was announced in December at the largest Arab American press conference ever, which was held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The press conference featured Starz Encore CEO John Sie, Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences President Jack Valenti, Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, and Secretary of Transportation Norman Minetta.

Individual Efforts

Sometimes it is the smallest acts of support and friendship that make the biggest statement.

In the small town of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, two Egyptian brothers, Osama and Muhamad "Mike" Mansour, immigrated to the United States in 1987 and opened a new diner at a location that had seen two other eateries come and go. They found success, until Sept. 11. Shortly after the attacks, rumors began to circulate that the two were somehow connected to the attacks, and business plummeted. After a local newspaper reporter wrote of their plight, business not only picked up, but exceeded its previous brisk pace. "The people who started these rumors should be man enough to come in and apologize," said Dave Brossman, a regular. Another longtime customer, Elroy Stauffer, said, "these are just two great guys. The rumors got out of

control, and it hurt them." (18)

Adisra Jittipun, a Muslim woman who wears a headscarf, and two non-Muslim friends had just sat down to eat at the Chason's Country Buffet in Winchester, VA when a waitress approached them. The three expected trouble, but instead the waitress returned their money, explaining that the restaurant wanted to give them a free meal. "She knelt by our table and was very sympathetic," said Jittipun, "saying that she didn't want us to go to war" and that "she was very proud that I had the strength to wear the Islamic attire." (19)

An attorney from Columbus, Mississippi offered his legal assistance to Arab Americans living in Mississippi and Alabama. In Rockville, Maryland, Linda Jasper, an English teacher at Rockville's Magruder High School, and some friends stood guard at night for a week outside the Islamic Center of Maryland to make sure it was undisturbed. "The idea of someone being

afraid to pray is crazy to me," she said. The Islamic Center in Athens, Ohio, reported being mailed a \$100 check from a non-Muslim couple who wrote that "we are all one people." (20)

In Falls Church, Virginia, Patricia Morris organized a candlelight vigil outside the Dar al-Hijrah mosque the Friday after the attacks to show neighborhood support. In appreciation, Muslims who had been at evening prayers distributed white roses to the vigil's participants.

George Chiplock, principal of Corpus Christi, a Catholic elementary school in Falls Church, Virginia, brought more than 450 cards made by students to the nearby Dar Al-Hijrah mosque. "We teach respect, tolerance, and love of neighbor here," he said, "and thought it would be a good idea to contact our neighbors and let them know we are thinking of them." (21)

Houses of worship across the religious spectrum including Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, and others participated in ecumenical services across the nation in support of tolerance and diversity. In Orlando, Florida, religious leaders held such a service a week after the attacks to express solidarity with Arab Americans of all faiths. "There's a feeling among a group of religious leaders that we need to make a public witness of solidarity with our Arab American brothers and sisters," said the Rev. Fred Morris, executive director of the Florida Council of Churches.

In Berkeley, California, Inkworks Press created window signs with the captions "Justice, not Vengeance/ Let us not become the evil that we deplore," and "Hate-Free Community/Stop Racist Attacks," for free distribution.

A group of Chicago businessmen pledged \$7000 to the families of those who were murdered in hate crimes after September 11, after consultations with the Campaign

for Collateral Compassion.

After severe damage to Columbus, Ohio's oldest mosque and only Islamic school at the hands of vandals, the First Congregational Church volunteered its facilities as the new temporary home of the Islamic school. It was chosen by the Islamic Center's leaders due to its size and proximity to the school's regular home. A number of other houses of worship offered their sites, including a synagogue. The Rev. Tim Ahrens, First Congregational's senior minister, noticed how similar the children were to his own students, remarking that when he asked if they liked being back in school, all the girls said 'yes' and all the boys said 'no', "just like my school." Mahmudur Rahman, the Islamic school's director, felt comfortable holding classes in the church, pointing out that Muslims believe in Jesus as a prophet. (22)

A number of people set up solidarity websites where web surfers could post messages of support for the Arab American community. Among the most immediate gestures extended to the Arab American community were the thousands of personal email messages sent to AAI and to other organizations.

A fitting close to this focus on the compassion of Americans towards Americans in the face of hate is the experience of Pakistani-born Richmond, Virginia doctor Abid Khan. Upon seeing members of a Presbyterian church outside his mosque one Friday holding up banners of unity, he encapsulated the beauty of the American spirit when he said: "You have to give the credit to the people who are keeping a positive, friendly attitude. That's what makes America great. It's not its military or its advances in science. It's the kindness, affection, helpfulness, and tolerance which is found in the large majority of people here." (23) ♦

AAI received an outpouring of support, in the form of emails, from individuals around the country in the days and weeks following September 11:

"I know that you are suffering with all America because of the events of the past few days, and are being forced by some to endure even more sorrow because of your ethnicity. Please know that your pain is not going unnoticed and that the whole country is not against you."

- Joe Borghi

"What is done to any American, regardless of their background, is done to all of us, and those who persist in expressing their ignorance and hatred only help those that mean to do us harm. We are deeply sorry that you have to have such burdens added to an already overwhelming sense of violation."

- Gregg Ferencz and Barbara Taylor

"My heart and thoughts are with you and all Arab and Muslim Americans. I am sickened at the misdirected anger of our fellow citizens." - Alison Locke

In Their Own Words

**From a poem
by Suheir Hammad:**

fire in the city air and i
feared for my sister's life in
a way never before. and
then, and now, i fear for the
rest of us.

first, please god, let it be a
mistake, the pilot's heart
failed, the plane's engine
died.
then please god, let it be a
nightmare, wake me now.
please god, after the second
plane, please, don't let it be
anyone who looks like my
brothers.

i do not know how bad a life
has to break in order to kill.
i have never been so hungry
that i willed hunger
i have never been so angry
as to want to control a gun
over a pen.
not really.
even as a woman, as a
palestinian, as a broken
human being.
never this broken.

thank you to the woman
who saw me brinking my
cool and blinking back tears.
she opened her arms before
she asked "do you want a
hug?" a big white woman,
and her embrace was the
kind only people with the
warmth of flesh can offer.
i wasn't about to say no
to any comfort.
"my brother's in the navy,"
i said. "and we're arabs."
"wow, you got double
trouble."

Naomi Shihab Nye, the acclaimed Arab American author and poet, heard from a man who said that he was afraid for his daughter to admit that she is half-Arab.

Her response was: "never deny it. Maybe Arab Americans are twice as sad as other people. But we are still proud of everything peaceful and beautiful that endures. Then speak beauty if we can - the beauty of culture, poetry, tradition, memory, family, daily life.

"Because men with hard faces do violent things, because fanaticism seizes and shrinks minds, is no reason for the rest of us to abandon our songs. Maybe we need to sing louder."



Dearborn, Michigan,
September 2001
(photo: Millard Berry,
Dearborn Press &
Guide)

"In My Own Skin: The Complexity of Living as an Arab in America," a documentary film directed by Jennifer Jajeh and Nikki Byrd, sheds light on the complexities of the Arab American experience through candid, in-depth interviews with five young Arab American women living in post-September 11 New York:

"In high school, my friends who think it's just a joke or they don't mean to hurt my feelings say, 'You Arab terrorist,' in a joking way. But to me it was always hurtful because it's what a lot of people believe - it's the general perception that Americans have of who an Arab is."

"Recently, because of what happened on September 11th, I was afraid to walk out on the street with my regular headwear. So I tied it around the back, so I don't look Muslim or Arab or I don't get too many stares." - Rabyaah

ARAB AMERICANS REACH OUT TO EDUCATE AND INFORM

It was not only the support of the American people that kept the Arab American community strong in the face of hate crimes, but also the proactive stance taken by the community itself. Both individuals and groups recognized the need to educate fellow Americans about Arab culture and the Muslim faith - and recognized the desire of many Americans to learn more about their Arab and Muslim neighbors.

An editorial in *The Economist* remarked that "Rather than railing against the Islamic world, most Americans are desperate to understand it. The best-seller lists are full of books on Islam, the Taliban and the Middle East. University students are crowding into courses that touch on the current crisis. Washington's Middle East Institute reports that applications for Arabic courses have doubled." (24)

Arab Americans, both organizations and individuals, have helped their fellow countrymen better understand what being Arab American means.

The surge in public interest about Arab Americans, Islam, and the Middle East is exemplified by the

volume of requests for information that hit every major Arab American and Muslim organization and academic center with expertise in the region. AAI, for example, dedicated on September 12 a special section of its website that offered resources, made referrals, and kept track of breaking news about the fallout from September 11. On September 10, AAI had projected reaching five million hits on the website by the end of the year; instead the number was ten million.

Media interest in the Arab American viewpoint was obviously at its peak after 9/11, and requests for interviews from the electronic and print media (local, national and international) were heavy and steady throughout the fall. For AAI's part, staff members participated in more than 400 broadcast interviews including television networks such as ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, CNNI, BBC, Unavision, Al-Jazeera, FOX News, MBC, MSNBC, Abu Dhabi TV, CNBC, Nile TV, LBC, Court TV, Telemundo, Future TV, CBC, and ANN. In the months following September 11, AAI responded to more than 1,500 print interviews

Immediately after the September 11 tragedy, Nour Naciri and his wife Zainab A. Elberry of Nashville, Tennessee, received calls and visits of concern, friendship, and support from many members of their community. Both saw not only a tremendous need for understanding and tolerance, but also a desire among those in their community to learn and come together in a time of crisis.

On October 23, Nour delivered an address entitled "Islam: An Overview in Context" to around 500 members of the Nashville chapter of the Exchange Club, a national business social and volunteer organization, by invitation of a local church. The gathering spawned further visits and meetings with church and interfaith groups.

Zeinab, who is a board member of the Women's Fund of the Nashville Community Foundation, helped organize the Foundation's annual fundraiser for women and children. Mavis Leno, wife of late-night talk show host Jay Leno, was the guest speaker at the event, and spoke in support of the rights of Afghan women and children. In May, Zeinab was asked to organize the annual fundraiser for The Links, Inc., an African-American civic organization. The event, attended by many members of the local Muslim community, became an opportunity for intercultural and interfaith understanding.

with publications like the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and countless others across the nation and around the world.

AAI also responded to regular invitations for speakers from federal and local government agencies, civic groups, and universities. Not only did AAI staff deliver keynote speeches to conferences and gatherings regarding Arab Americans and the impact of September 11, AAI also addressed numerous public appearances ranging from testimony before members of Congress to panels sponsored by the EEOC, Department of Justice, FAA, Department of Transportation, Department of State, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, state and local agencies, the National Association of Attorneys General, the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the American Federation of Teachers, National Immigration Forum, and similar professional associations. AAI President James Zogby participated in President Clinton's forum on Islam

and the West featuring many prominent scholars and analysts. (See appendices.)

Perhaps the most intense appetite for information came from the nation's educators, who needed to take advantage of the critical teaching moment brought about by tragedy and its aftermath. AAI's Foundation quickly compiled a resource packet for use in classrooms that answered questions about Arab Americans, Muslims, and the Arab world, using its own demographic profiles and handouts from other publishers. Since the early fall, several thousand schools nationwide have received resource packets and poster reprints of the "Twin Towers" anti-hate PSA message (see page 12). (A complete list of materials available from AAI appears in the appendices to this report.)

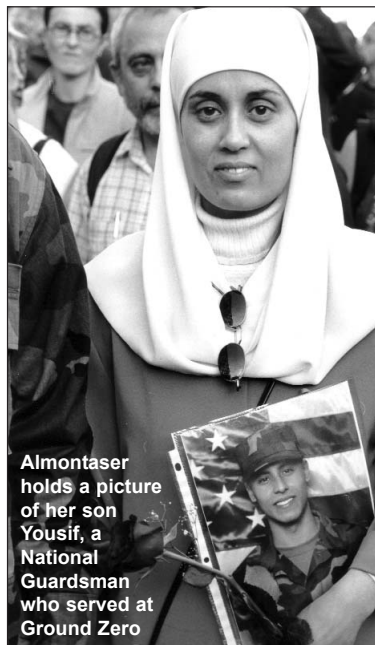
The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), based in Dearborn, Michigan, embarked upon an ambitious program of educating Americans about the Arab world

and the Arab American experience in the aftermath of the attacks. The program will over the next two years offer "cultural competency" training and education to those in positions to influence the attitudes and behavior of others, such as state legislators, teachers, and law enforcement personnel in major cities throughout the state of Michigan.

Jamal Baadani, a Marine Corps staff sergeant and Gulf War veteran, decided to form an organization to highlight the contributions Arab Americans have made in the armed forces of the United States, dating back to World War I. "We want to close that gap by educating Americans about our service, because the more Americans understand what we do, the more they'll say, OK, they are Americans." Baadani's group, the Association of Patriotic Arab Americans in the Military (APAAM), has over 300 members from all of the US armed services. (25)

Various Muslim organizations opened their doors to the public in an effort to bridge the gaps in understanding. The mosque in Birmingham, Alabama hosted an open house to educate Americans about Islam. The Prince George's County, Maryland Muslim Association is involved in an ongoing effort to educate the public about Islam.

The Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church, Virginia has undertaken a program entitled "The Peaceful Inter-Community Project" (PIP). PIP's main objective is to improve relationships among members of the community near the Islamic Center, across lines of race, ethnicity, class, and age through workshops, a youth forum, guest exchange speeches, and a continuous mentoring program. The Center stressed that this undertaking is particularly important in the aftermath of September 11.



New Yorker Debbie Almontaser, a Yemeni who came to the US at the age of three, was deeply struck by the Sept. 11 tragedy. A teacher with the NYC Board of Education, she was overwhelmed with requests by community groups to help foster interfaith dialogue after the attacks, and has discussed her faith and heritage in countless classrooms and panels.

Debbie co-founded Brooklyn Bridges, a program in which volunteers escorted students of Arab and South Asian origin who feared for their safety. With the help of the Christian Children's Fund, she established the Sept. 11 Curriculum Project, a group of educators who developed materials and workshops to educate other teachers about Arab and Muslim culture. And in February, she put together a multicultural festival and fundraiser with Arab, Jewish, and South Asian performers.

The Power of Individual Action

Individuals across the country spoke with religious groups, schools, businesses, and community organizations about the impact of September 11 on Arab Americans as well as what Islam is really about. A prime example of individuals making a difference is the case of Dr. Ahmad Abul-Ela of New Castle, Pennsylvania. Besides speaking about Islam to large groups at various churches, he started a group called Conflict Resolution with a professor of theology from Westminster College. The group sponsored a student-faculty talk at the college, which drew 400 people, discussing Islam and the terrorist attacks.

Mona Ismail of Washington, DC posted events organized by Arab American organizations on her website. "Educating Americans and guiding them to find the best source of information was a priority in my view, as a lot of damage was done to our community and our children from the bias in the media," said Ismail.

Mary Kamalick, an Arab American from Houston, Texas, has been providing information on the customs and traditions of the Arab world, focusing on language, religions, food, customs and traditions. She takes her program to middle school and high school students, church and civic groups, and companies.

Diversity trainer Lobna Ismail has spoken on the impact of September 11 on Arab and Muslim Americans and on Islam to a wide range of groups, including the Jewish Community Center, an Episcopal Church, and the Fairfax County Virginia Schools. Virginia activist and educator Sharifa Al-Khateeb has also made dozens of presentations on Islam to government and school groups. ♦



Samira Hussein and her family lost their West Bank home in the June 1967 war and emigrated to America five years later.

Growing up in America, Samira observed that few people truly understood Arab and Muslim culture. During the Gulf War, her family experienced acts of hatred due to this lack of understanding. Samira volunteered to share her culture and religion at her daughter's school in Montgomery County, Maryland. Soon her work became a full time job in educating both students and teachers about the Arab and Muslim worlds.

After September 11, Samira worked tirelessly within the Maryland public school system to combat a resurgence in hatred she had herself experienced during the Gulf War. A few days after the attacks, she spoke on a three-hour interfaith panel on National Public Radio. She organized an iftar meal at a local mosque for public school teachers so they could experience Ramadan with American Muslims, and

held a conference for over 400 high school students to discuss Islam and oversaw the establishment of Arab Heritage Month in July 2002.

For her work as a cultural liaison, Samira has been awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Montgomery County Board of Education, and in February 2002 she was recognized in *Rosie* magazine as one of Rosie O'Donnell's "Extraordinary People." In March 2002 she was inducted into the Human Rights Hall of Fame of the Montgomery County Human Rights Commission.

On the morning of September 11, Marwan Kreidie, executive director of the Arab American Community Development Corporation, was busy making phone calls. Even before the second plane had struck the World Trade Center towers, Marwan was networking with the police and the Human Relations Commission of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to establish an Arab American "control center" made up of volunteers who called schools, mosques, and area leaders to console them and calm fears.

At 2 pm that same day, Marwan held a press conference with Tawfiq Barqawi to mourn the country's loss and call on residents of Philadelphia to avoid hate-related violence against the Arab community. He met with the FBI and Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher to offer assistance and gain assurance that Arab Americans would not be targeted in backlash after the attacks. To increase awareness and understanding, Marwan organized a community forum at a Philadelphia mosque which was attended by many local government officials.

Since September 11, Marwan has turned his attention to long-term outreach and education. He distributes action alerts about Arabs and Islam to public school teachers, and recently received over \$100,000 in grant money from the Samuel S. Fels Fund and the William Penn Foundation to expand his educational program. He is planning to develop a permanent curriculum guide for public schools on Arab and Muslim culture.



CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES IN THE WAKE OF SEPT. 11

Arab American groups have been in the vanguard of those fighting to balance the nation's need for security with protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Many actions taken since September 11 in the name of the "war on terrorism" have far-reaching implications not just for those of Arab or Muslim descent, but for all Americans.

The USA PATRIOT Act and Civil Liberties

When the USA PATRIOT ("Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism") Act passed by an overwhelming majority in Congress and was signed by President Bush in October, it provided a legal framework for much of the Administration's war on terrorism and raised immediate alarms within the civil rights and civil liberties communities. This act gave the government broad new investigative powers as well as the power to detain and deport, based on little or no information, those who are believed to pose a special threat.

While recognizing some merits of the new legislation, a number of groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Council of La Raza, the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC), the Sikh Coalition, and major Arab American and Muslim American organizations, raised concern about the "guilt by association" the Act promulgates as well as the tenuous terms used to define groups supporting terror. The ACLU's Timothy Edgar warned of the "measures that would allow for detention of immigrants on the basis of lawful political associations and suspicion for a potentially

indefinite period of time; expand the ability of the government to conduct secret searches; minimize judicial supervision of federal telephone and Internet surveillance by law enforcement authorities." (26)

Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) cast the sole vote against the Act in the Senate, saying that it did "not strike the right balance between empowering law enforcement and protecting civil liberties." (27) Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) echoed this sentiment by saying that "the Bill of Rights, civil rights and civil liberties must not be the 'other victim' of terrorism. As the domestic war against terrorism continues, my concern is that increased police power will encroach on our liberties." (28)

Executive Branch Orders (29)

The USA PATRIOT Act was the launching pad for a series of Department of Justice initiatives and executive orders that gave the government even more investigative power and changed immigration rules to make them more restrictive to those coming from Middle Eastern countries.

A growing number of ethnic and religious groups, immigrant advocates, and supporters of civil liberties have coalesced to raise awareness to the serious threats to American rights and interests posed by these initiatives. These groups have worked to ensure that the requirements of security are reconciled with the demands of liberty, and have warned against enacting proposals in the mistaken belief that anything that may be called anti-terrorist will necessarily provide greater security.

These coalitions have stood by their Arab and Muslim American partners in defending constitutional liberties and working to ensure that the United States does not

repeat historical mistakes of the Japanese internment camps or of the McCarthy era. Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, warned that "History has shown us that, in past times of national calamity, civil rights and civil liberties fall victim to the crisis just as surely as the human victims whose loss we all grieve. We must not compound this tragedy by infringing on the rights of Americans or persons guaranteed protections under the Constitution."

The detention of hundreds of men of Middle Eastern origin shortly after the attacks was another source of serious concern. The Department of Justice justified the detentions through the use of often questionable legal tactics. On September 20, 2001, the Department published an interim regulation allowing the detention without charge for 48 hours or "an additional reasonable period of time" in the event of an "emergency or other extraordinary circumstance." This led to the detention and often rough treatment of over 1,100 individuals in the wake of September 11, some of whom are still held to this day, unable to gain regular access to their attorneys or families.

The day after this detention ruling, Chief Immigration Judge Michael Creppy added another level of secrecy when he issued a memo stating that "the Attorney General has implemented additional security procedures for certain cases in the Immigration Court." These procedures "require" immigration judges "to close the hearing to the public...."

The Arab American community continues to work diligently as advocates for the civil rights of those who

have been held in indefinite detention since September 11. Working with the ACLU and other civil rights advocacy groups, Arab Americans are closely monitoring the activities of the federal government regarding the welfare of the several hundred individuals still being held.

In addition, the questioning by the FBI of many thousands of individuals due to their country of origin caused much unease.

On November 9, 2001, the

Many actions taken since September 11 have far-reaching implications not just for those of Arab or Muslim descent, but for all Americans.

Attorney General issued a memo authorizing interviews with a list of 5,000 men, ages 18-33, who entered the United States legally on nonimmigrant visas since January 2000, and who came from countries where al-Qaeda has a "terrorist presence or activity."

Said one of those who received the letter requesting a meeting with the FBI, a Lebanese chemistry student at the University of Michigan, "I was shocked. I was asking myself, 'Why?' There's no reason to have this letter." AAI President James Zogby expressed concerns that "the kind of broad net-casting that was done right after September 11 may have been excusable, but at this point there has to be a better way of conducting this investigation...I don't want to give up our freedoms."

From the outset, some local law enforcement agencies took issue with the mass questioning. According to Chief Richard Williams of the Madison,

Wisconsin Police Department, the force "will not engage in random interviews of any person solely based on their country of origin, race, religion, or any other characteristics unless there is specific evidence linked to that person for a criminal act." (30) Many police departments, who have since been asked to also track down visa violators, object to the strain those functions place on relations of trust they have built with immigrant communities.

Uncomfortable comparisons have been made to the treatment of Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) has pointed out that the "solidarity between communities identified as 'the enemy' has in some cases forged a new alliance between Japanese Americans and Arab Americans and Muslims." In the words of NAPALC President Karen Naranski, "Let us take to heart the lessons of WWII when ... Japanese-American families were herded behind barbed wire simply because they looked like the enemy...No one should be presumed to be any less loyal to our country just because of the color of their skin, their national origin, their immigration status or the religion that they follow." (31)

Investigation and Individual Rights

Arousing particular alarm in the legal profession was the October 31, 2001 Bureau of Prisons interim regulation that allowed eavesdropping on attorney/client conversations wherever there is "reasonable suspicion...to believe that a particular inmate may use communications with attorneys to further or facilitate acts of terrorism," with the

regulation requiring written notice to the inmate and attorney, "except in the case of prior court authorization." Further constitutional questions arose when President Bush issued an executive order in November authorizing the creation of military tribunals to try non-citizens alleged to be involved in international terrorism.

While the rights of foreign nationals remained of primary concern throughout this period, the treatment of American citizens and organizations added a new dimension to the impact on the community of the government's investigation. U.S. Muslim charities legally operating in Texas, Chicago and Michigan were the first to be targeted for scrutiny, resulting in freezing of assets, seizure of records and in some cases charges filed against officers accused of aiding, even indirectly, groups defined by the U.S. as terrorist.

In mid-March, the offices and homes of individuals related to fourteen U.S. Muslim organizations were raided. In the latter cases, none of the offices were closed, no arrests were made, and no assets were frozen. As victims of those raided are prominent members of their communities, the shock was severe. Federal officials entered homes at gunpoint, handcuffed residents during the raids, carted off boxes of materials, and destroyed some property, all the while using affidavits which were "secret and sealed," giving the victims no idea why these events happened, what was taken, and what

they were hoping to find.

An announcement in August 2002 that the FBI would target small businesses owned by persons of Arab or Muslim descent to search for money trails to terrorist groups was another chilling reminder of how widely the government's dragnet is being cast. The ramifications of this investigative strategy, both on the affected business communities

11, and that close to two-thirds are very or somewhat worried about the long-term effects of discrimination.

Airline passenger profiling has become a common complaint of Arab and Muslim Americans, ranging from extra security screening to removal from commercial flights. Among those removed from flights have been a U.S. Congressman and a U.S. Secret Service agent on the

President's detail, as well as others who have filed discrimination suits against the airlines. Community leaders continue to bring these concerns to the attention of the Department of Transportation and other agencies charged with protecting passenger rights. Leaders stress that while all Americans, including those of Arab and Muslim descent, support increased airline safety, profiling measures that rely on ethnic or religious attributes alone, rather than suspicious conduct, do not promote security.



Impact on Immigration Policy

and on the credibility of the anti-terror investigation, remain to be seen.

Although racial profiling against Arabs was a concern well before the terror attacks, its scope and impact have expanded dramatically. A May 2002 poll commissioned by the AAI Foundation found that 78 percent of Arab Americans surveyed think there has been more profiling of Arab Americans since September

Immigration has long been a contentious issue in the United States, and following September 11, some lawmakers began using immigration policy as a scapegoat for the terrorist attacks. Members of Congress introduced legislation that restricts admissions, particularly from Arab countries. The Administration has followed suit with a string of policies designed to screen and keep closer

tabs on those entering the country.

Among the more troubling changes to immigration policy is that visitors from certain countries or those designated "threats" for other reasons must register at the point of entry, thirty days after entry, and at one-year intervals thereafter. As of September 11, 2002, the government will begin to take fingerprints, photographs, and other information from selected nationals upon arrival in the U.S. These policies have a particular impact on those from Arab and Muslim countries.

Commenting on the potential repercussions of this regulation, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) said, "This is a troubling and poorly thought-out regulation. It was proposed without any consultation with Congress. It does little to provide real protection against terrorism. I fear this proposal will open a shameful chapter in our history that we as a nation will come to regret." (32)

Other measures against immigrants include the State Department's November 2001 decision to impose new security checks on visa applicants. Those applying for visas from such countries as Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Qatar, Tunisia, and Yemen among others received a statement saying: "Effective immediately, the State Department has introduced a 20-day waiting period for men from certain countries, ages 16-45, applying for visas into the United States." And in April 2002, the Immigration and Naturalization Service issued a proposed regulation establishing a presumptive limitation on visitors to the United States of 30 days, or a "fair and reasonable period" to accomplish the purpose of the visit.

Of all visa holders impacted by post-September 11 regulations, foreign students are on the front lines. As mentioned, the lion's share of

persons approached by the FBI for questioning in the fall of 2001 were Arab and Muslim students in American universities. Some students, particularly those from Gulf countries, were so intimidated in the weeks following the attacks that they returned home in the middle of the school year. It is expected that the strong preference by Arab elites for American higher education, a trend that has persisted since the 1960s, will be diminished by the current barriers and climate.

One of the procedures imposed by the Attorney General is a new student reporting system, SEVIS, which will require schools to report on foreign students such data as enrollment, start date of next term, failure to enroll, disciplinary action by the school, and early graduation. Schools are required to notify authorities if a foreign student drops under full-time status, at which time the student is deportable. Like many of the tracking measures proposed since September 11, those tasked with collecting the data are questioning its efficacy. Some college administrators recall a similar tracking system set up in the 1970s that was abandoned as cumbersome and unproductive.

Beyond the burden and questionable value of some of the visa-related restrictions was the highly publicized announcement in January that the INS would begin to locate the more than 300,000 persons who have overstayed their visas or otherwise qualify for deportation under existing law, under a new program known as the "Absconder Apprehension Initiative." The INS stated that the priority for location would be persons from "Al-Qaeda harboring countries" - estimated at about six thousand people - whose names would be entered first into the National Crime Information Center database.

Immigrant rights supporters have

been alarmed at the government's conflated message to the public that places all immigrants, especially those from the Middle East, under suspicion in the anti-terrorism campaign.

Dangerous Directions at the Department of Justice

The Attorney General's decision to lift guidelines on FBI operations, placed by Congress in the 1970s to curb widespread abuses by agents in the Hoover era, has been criticized by politicians and civil libertarians alike. Safeguards against the infiltration and harassment that characterized surveillance practices during the McCarthy era and against civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and others engaged in lawful political dissent are now being removed, and activists in the Muslim and Arab American communities are not alone in their alarm.

"These new guidelines say to the American people that you no longer have to be doing something wrong in order to get that FBI knock at your door," said Laura Murphy, director of the Washington national office of the ACLU. (33) The ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, John Conyers (D-MI), commenting on the plan to use the new guidelines to target mosques and Islamic organizations, said, "Threatening the private practice of religion constitutes a war on freedom, not a war on terror. I hope it is clear to all that taking it upon himself to institute new rules to wiretap religious organizations, including places of worship, the Attorney General will do little to help us battle terrorism. Instead it will simply further alienate the American Muslim community, a crucial ally in our efforts." (34)

Immigrants from the Arab and Muslim worlds are “the weakest link in the civil rights chain,” and that places them squarely on the front line in the defense of civil liberties.

Another initiative of the Attorney General is the Terrorism Information and Prevention System (TIPS) program, that would ask Americans with access to private property, such as mail carriers and utility workers, to become informers on “unusual events.” As envisioned, it would have opened up the door to “prying, racial profiling and subtle violations of the Fourth Amendment.” (35) TIPS has been scaled back to involve truckers, dock workers, bus drivers, and others who are in positions to monitor places and events that are obviously public.

In an even more blatant appeal to citizen vigilance, the FBI issued an advisory this spring that warned property owners, public housing officials and landlords to watch out for terrorists renting apartments. This warning has Arab Americans understandably worried about discrimination. In the words of Aslam Abdallah with the Islamic Center of Southern California, “I fear these terrorist warnings will only make matters worse, mostly for Middle Eastern people because of their appearance. The community is really scared. Today it’s apartments, tomorrow it’s the neighborhood where people won’t sell their houses to us.” (36)

Committed to Dialogue and Advocacy

In spite of grave civil liberties concerns and diminishing confidence of Arab Americans in the government’s commitment to protecting

their rights, community leaders are in regular contact with federal agencies, law enforcement, and civil rights commissions to keep open channels for dialogue and feedback. They are also informing their community members of expanding opportunities for participation, as linguists and analysts, in the unfolding investigation.

Whereas early deliberations with officials were dominated by issues of hate crimes and discrimination, the focus has since shifted primarily to the treatment of people of Arab descent by the government itself. One response to community concerns has been the Department of Justice’s decision to streamline complaints of civil rights violations by government entities via a hotline administered by the US Commission on Civil Rights.

Arab American and American Muslim groups worked with the Department of Justice to set up monthly meetings hosted by Ralph Boyd, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. The meetings sought to create a partnership between the major Arab and Muslim organizations in the United States and the federal government offices involved in the investigative aspects of the war on terror, primarily the Department of Justice and the FBI. Both agencies solicited community feedback on violation of rights that might occur in interviews and investigation practices. In several cases, local field offices of the FBI met regularly with community representatives who provided advice on cultural sensitivities and

how to minimize the intimidating aspects of the government’s information gathering.

While the concerns raised in this chapter illustrate how Arab and Muslim Americans have been deeply affected by government scrutiny since September 11, these matters threaten to fundamentally change the civil rights and freedoms of all Americans.

Recent immigrants to the United States from the Middle East have been especially vulnerable to security policies enacted by the federal government in the wake of the terror attacks.

Newly arrived immigrants from the Arab and Muslim worlds are, in the words of AAI President James Zogby, “the weakest link in the civil rights chain,” and that places them squarely on the front line in the defense of civil liberties and freedoms that have defined the United States for centuries. How the nation responds to this continuing struggle between security and constitutional rights will be a lasting legacy of September 11.

As Anthony Lake, former National Security Adviser to President Bill Clinton, observed, “If we are fighting for freedom - and we are - then we need to respect the freedom of all Americans to believe and live as they wish. As we are fighting for our civilized values, we need to be civil to all of our citizens. If we are fighting against those who live and act on their hatred, and we become like them - then we are losing the war.” (37) ♦

One year later, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are still at the forefront of the nation's mind as we continue to overcome grief, remember those who were lost, and fight to ensure the safety and well-being of the nation.

"Healing the Nation" is one small part of the history of this past year - a year that has been among the most difficult many Americans have experienced. This title was chosen because, from those first terrible moments of this tragedy, Americans stepped forward to help each other in any way they could. September 11 will forever be remembered not just as a tragedy, but as an example of how the country can pull together in a time of crisis.

Arab Americans not only joined in the rescue efforts, but have been able to start to heal some of the deeper wounds that became apparent in the days and weeks following the attacks. They have joined fellow Americans in developing bonds of education and understanding, combating stereotypes, and taking messages of cooperation into classrooms, community centers, and places of worship. And just as the response of the Arab American community was immediate and strong, the response of Americans of all backgrounds toward the community was, overwhelmingly, one of support.

One year later, as the nation continues its healing, we look back at the experiences of the Arab American community not just to honor their contributions to the recovery efforts and remember those who were lost, but also as a reminder that the strength of the United States lies in our ability, be it in personal interactions or government policy, to fight hatred and suspicion with understanding and inclusion. As the country continues to deal with the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, we must ensure that we fight for both the safety of the country as well as to protect the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans.

Notes

- (1) MSNBC, September 15, 2001
- (2) "Loyalty at La Shish: Owner of the Popular Restaurant Chain Expresses Concern for Terrorism's Victims and Love for His Adopted Homeland," by Sylvia Rector, Detroit Free Press, October 10, 2001
- (3) ABANA press release, March 6, 2002
- (4) *ibid*
- (5) American Muslim Council press release, September 12, 2001
- (6) mass e-mail from Ray Hanania
- (7) "Hail to The Flag," Arab American Business online, October 12, 2001
- (8) "Arab-Americans Use Language Skills in Terrorism War," by Judy Peet, The Star-Ledger online, September 18, 2001
- (9) "Arabic Speakers Answer FBI Call for Translators," Richard Willing, USA Today online, April 24, 2002
- (10) Department of Justice press release, Sept. 13, 2001
- (11) U.S. Department of Education News, Sept. 19, 2001
- (12) "Arab Heritage Month Salutes Community's Achievements," Arab News
- (13) The Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco, CA, press release, September 13, 2001
- (14) "Redford to Host Diversity Workshop," by Delores Patterson, The Detroit News, October 5, 2001
- (15) Report entitled "Positive Community Response to Bias Incidents Directed Toward The Middle Eastern and Muslim Community Since September 11"
- (16) "Peace: In Reaction to 9/11 People Are Reaching Out to Diverse Groups," by Scott Martelle, The Los Angeles Times, April 21, 2002
- (17) Arab American Institute press release, "AmeriDream Fights Hate with Arab American Rebuilding Effort," February 21, 2002
- (18) "Ephrata Rallies to Egyptians' Restaurant Hurt by Rumors," by Timothy D. May, the Associated Press, October 20, 2001
- (19) "For Muslims, Benevolence Is Prevailing Over Backlash," by Caryle Murphy, The Washington Post, October 6, 2001
- (20) *ibid*
- (21) *ibid*
- (22) "Support Buys City's Displaced Muslims," by Dave Ghose, The Arab-American News, January 19-26, 2002
- (23) "For Muslims, Benevolence Is Prevailing Over Backlash," by Caryle Murphy, The Washington Post, October 6, 2001
- (24) "America the Sensible: The Country is More Rock-Ribbed than Outsiders Think," the Economist, October 27, 2001
- (25) "Up in Arms Against Bigotry: Arab-American Marine Forms Group to Send Patriotic Message," by Jeannette Steele, San Diego Union-Tribune, July 4, 2002
- (26) <http://www.aclu.org/congress/l101201b.html>
- (27) See <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
- (28) See <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
- (29) Much of the information in this section comes from the American Immigration Lawyers Association; see www.aila.org
- (30) "Madison Cops Won't Screen Muslims," by Steven Elbow, The Capital Times (Madison, WI), December 12, 2001
- (31) "Asian Pacific Americans Display Support for Arab, Sikh Americans: Praise Bush, Others for Denouncing Profiling, Hate Crimes," by Rita M. Gerona-Adkins, Asian Fortune, October 2001
- (32) "100,000 Foreign Visitors to Face Fingerprinting," by Wayne Washington and Robert Schlesinger, the Boston Globe, June 6, 2002
- (33) "In Terror Fight, FBI Eases Domestic Spying Rules," by Don Van Natta Jr., the International Herald Tribune, May 31, 2002
- (34) See www.cair-net.org
- (35) "Just the Facts, Mr. Ashcroft," by Jean AbiNader and Kate Martin, The Washington Post, July 25
- (36) "Arab Americans Wary of Warnings," the Detroit News, May 28, 2002
- (37) "Bigotry's High Price," by Anthony Lake, USA Today, September 19, 2001

APPENDICES:

Resources on Arab Americans and the September 11 Aftermath

A. Submission to The United States Commission on Civil Rights, Testimony of Dr. James J. Zogby, October 12, 2001 (excerpt)

With an Appendix of Selected Hate-Based Incidents Sept. 11 to Oct. 10, 2001, October 12, 2001

B. Arab American Perspectives on the International War Against Terrorism (excerpt)

Remarks to the Secretary's Open Forum by Dr. James J. Zogby, December 5, 2001. United States Department of State

C. Commissioners Meeting Open Session, "Employment Discrimination in the Aftermath of September 11"

Remarks by AAI Managing Director Jean AbiNader, December 11, 2001. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

D. Arab American Institute Materials:

I. Select AAI Press Releases

II. AAI Publications and Reports

III. AAI Educational Packet

In light of the high demand for information after Sept. 11, AAI put together a resource packet on Arab Americans, Islam, and the Middle East. The packet is available in electronic format on the AAI website at www.aaiusa.org/educational_packet.htm, where there is also an order form to request print copies.

E. Other Resources

Links to information from the US Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, EEOC, and other sources

A. Submission to The United States Commission on Civil Rights, Testimony of James J. Zogby, October 12, 2001 (excerpt)

(With an Appendix of Selected Hate-Based Incidents September 11 - October 10, 2001)

Full transcript of this testimony, as well as the hate crimes appendix, is available on the Arab American Institute website at www.aaiusa.org/publications.htm

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (even before it became clear that the perpetrators were from Arab countries), Arab Americans found themselves the targets of incidents of hate and bias. It was something that we had come to expect.

For a number of decades now, Arab Americans have experienced similar "backlashes".

During the Iranian hostage crisis, for example, despite the fact that Iranians are not Arabs, Arab Americans were targeted. The same was true in the days following the terrorist bombing in Oklahoma City and the tragic explosion of TWA flight 800.

Part of the reason why Arab Americans have come to be scapegoated in times of crisis is because for many decades, my community has been defined by negative stereotypes propagated by the popular culture. Arab Americans are not known as the complex and diverse community that we are.

Compounding this is the fact that, in recent years, these destructive stereotypes have been fed by the outrageous and condemnable acts of terror committed against the United States by some extremist groups with roots in Arab countries.

The result of this confluence of preexisting negative stereotypes with actual terrorist acts has created, with each of these crises, a dangerous situation where, in the minds of some, blame was generalized and collective guilt was assigned to the entire Arab American community.

In just three days after the Oklahoma City bombing, for example, more than 200 serious hate crimes were committed against Arab Americans and American Muslims. The same was true in the days following September 11.

I have attached to this statement a selection of such instances of hate crimes and acts of bias that were reported to my organization and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) during the period of September 11 to October 10, 2001. The list is not complete, but represents a state-by-state selection, organized by type.

Let me review, for a moment, the types of cases we are reporting.

First, there have been assaults. Among them, there have been seven deaths which may be the result of hate crimes. We also list about 90 other physical assaults, either shooting, beatings, or stabbings that have been reported. Next we list over 85 incidents of vandalism to property. Special targets for vandalism include mosques and Arab-owned businesses that have Arab signage out front. Threats and harassment are next. These include death threats or personal threats. Although we list a large number of these types of incidents, I believe that the numbers must be much higher. While direct assaults and acts of vandalism are reported to law enforcement, most victim communities hesitate to report threats. They all too frequently accept this form of hate crime as expected behavior and are afraid to create more problems by reporting the offense and offenders.

We also have had a few job-related acts of discrimination, though not as many as I might have feared. So far, six cases have been reported to us where people have been fired and been told the specific reason for their dismissal was that their fellow employees didn't want "an Arab in the workplace." This is an area of concern that bears watching, since there are signs that it may grow in the future.

Another area of discrimination that is very troubling is the matter of airplane profiling. We've had 11 specific instances reported to us involving over 20 passengers where people have either been taken off a plane or not allowed to board a plane because of their ethnicity. Since there is no provision, in law, for a cooperating passenger who has passed security screening to be removed from a flight because "the pilot won't fly with someone named Mohammed", or "because other passengers are nervous to fly with you on board" (these were actual reasons given), we feel that there is a very dangerous form of vigilantism at work here. It must be stopped. We have raised this matter with the Secretary of Transportation and have pressed the Department of Transportation to issue a clear policy statement to the airlines.

The key to understanding the gravity of this entire situation for Arab Americans is that no segment of my community has been exempt.

An Arab American Congressman was excluded from a flight. Arab American churches as well as mosques were attacked. And, in many instances, bigots struck out at anyone whom they suspected was Arab, victimizing Sikhs, South Asians and Hispanics.

My own family, for example, has been dramatical-

ly impacted. The morning after September 11, I received a harrowing death threat at my office. The caller left this message: "Jim, you towelhead, all Arabs must die. We will slit your throats and kill your children." My daughter, a college student, received two threatening phone calls. My nephew, also a college student, was affected. My brother, John, received two bomb threats at his office.

The problem was widespread. A poll of Arab Americans we conducted from October 6 to October 8, 2001, showed that while 32% of Arab Americans reported having been subjected to some form of ethnic-based discrimination during their lifetimes, 20% reported having experienced an instance of ethnic-based discrimination since September 11. Most affected were the vulnerable parts of my community. Of special concern, for example, is the fact that 45% of students and 37% of Arab Americans of the Muslim faith report being targeted by discrimination since September 11.

Let me note here that however serious this period has been, I dread to think how much worse it might have been had our nation's leadership not acted as quickly and proactively as they did.

The President took the lead in cautioning against this backlash and was joined by the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Director of the FBI. Their repeated statements, I believe, helped to stem the wave of backlash.

Also worthy of note were the actions of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives who passed resolutions decrying hate crimes against Arab Americans and American Muslims. Individual Senators and Representatives also took immediate action to shine a light on this problem.

Equally impressive was the effort by the Ad Council which worked with us to produce public service radio and newspaper ads that focused on warning against anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate and bias.

The constant repetition of this positive message on TV and radio and in print media has helped restrain the hands of the bigots. The hate has not gone away, but the hate crimes have been greatly reduced. Now we must begin the long and difficult task of addressing the negative stereotypes. And in this area we have also been blessed by the support of several national organizations and parts of the Administration. The Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice has assisted us in reaching school districts that have asked for materials on Arab Americans, Arab culture, and Islam. The Department of Education and school boards across the U.S. have also been helpful, as have the nation's unions representing America's teachers.

While noting the role of the Department of Justice, I must single out, for special commendation, the Civil

Rights Division and the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Ralph Boyd. He has brought us together, early on and frequently, to discuss both the problem of backlash and our concern with various law enforcement agencies. Mr. Boyd has also made himself available to us in several important outreach efforts to the Arab American community.

Finally, I want to mention the support we received from the FBI. From the Director on down, the FBI has responded to each and every complaint of hate we have brought to them. They have met with our community's leadership in Washington and in several centers across the US.

While we still have some concerns with some reports we have received of overzealous investigative techniques used by some FBI agents, we have had the opportunity to raise each of these concerns with officials from the Bureau.

At the same time, we are gratified that the FBI has aggressively pursued our reports of hate crimes. At the time of this testimony, they have opened 130 investigations and actually brought 3 federal indictments against perpetrators. I understand that they have already identified the individual who made the death threat against my family.

I would like to close with a few recommendations. The first deals with the problem of reporting hate crimes. Immigrants, especially those from some Arab countries, have a fear of law enforcement. For example, if the FBI is investigating hate crimes, recent immigrant Arabs may fear reporting a hate incident because they are concerned that it may compromise their stay in the US. This fear is compounded by the fact that the past history of the FBI's relationship with our community has not always been the kind that encourages people to go to them and report a problem. I therefore believe that there is a need for not just an improved system for hate crime reporting but also for a mediating presence between victim communities and law enforcement so that victims can have more confidence in reporting problems.

Since this Civil Rights Commission is receiving reports of hate crimes, I recommend that you seek a role in suggesting how those hate crimes actually then become investigated. I have noted that while the FBI Director and the community relations side of the FBI have been very responsive, there still is a fear. And many people remain afraid to report hate crimes.

There have been recommendations that the U.S. Attorney's offices be involved, or that the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department be involved, or that the FBI set up a special Hate Crimes Unit that is only involved in hate crime investigations. These are only some suggestions, but I do urge you to look into this matter and help us address this concern.

B. "Arab American Perspectives on the International War Against Terrorism" (excerpt)
Remarks to the Secretary's Open Forum by James J. Zogby, December 5, 2001. United States Department of State

The first time I addressed the Open Forum was in 1978. I was a wee lad who was very concerned with how my message would be read, whether it would come through. It's funny, many years later, and after many years of this work, I'm just as concerned as I was the first time I spoke here. I appreciate this forum; it's an opportunity that I certainly know is a useful and important one. I hope to communicate to you as best I can the Arab American perspective on the international war on terror.

I'll begin with a personal note. September 11 and it's immediate aftermath produced complex emotions in me and I know in many in my community. First of all was the horror and the shock. There was something quite unique about what happened on September 11, possibly because of the magnitude, possibly that we saw it in real time, possibly that it happened in New York, as opposed to another American city. We don't know what it was exactly, but unlike other tragedies, both domestic and international, that we have seen and followed, this was really quite different because we didn't merely watch it, we lived it. We didn't just suffer for the victims, we suffered with the victims. It became our tragedy, it affected us all. There was not only horror and shock, as planes that we were so used to seeing in the sky all of a sudden became weapons of mass destruction. And the consequences of it, of the attack, left none of us untouched.

It affected us in very different ways, but we were all affected. There was grief, of course. Grief, as we watched, in the days after the attack, family members holding pictures of loved ones whom we knew in our heart of hearts they would never find. We were touched by that, and some of us even felt guilty because we had not lost anyone. My daughter, I'll never forget, cried one night because she was getting married in two weeks and felt a tremendous sense of guilt because she was feeling joy at a time when she was also really feeling enormous sadness and had just heard a young woman talking about losing her fiancé. Universes were lost and destroyed and would never be the same, not only those who lost families would never be the same but in a very real sense, none of us will. I still can't look up, see a plane, and think of it in quite the same way as I did before September 11.

But for Arab Americans, while all of this was true, something quite different also happened and happened within hours. I was in my office and we were

ordered to evacuate. Because our office is a block away from the White House, they closed our building down. I said we couldn't leave because we were receiving phone calls from people around the country and I didn't want to leave. Then the first death threat came and was followed by others. By the next morning they had reached a rather frightening pitch. Actually it had become quite gruesome and frightening. Even before the perpetrators of the terror attacks were identified as Arabs, we were pulled away from the collective mourning. This was very similar to what happened to us after Oklahoma City. In effect, we were told that we couldn't suffer with the rest of America because there was an assumption of collective guilt.

This backlash intensified as it became clear that it was in fact Arabs who perpetrated these acts. But then as the expected hate came, something quite surprising and extraordinarily gratifying also occurred and that was statements of compassion and concern. I used the word gratuitous at one point to describe these statements of support. I used it in a theological sense, as an act of grace, an unearned benefit. So it was surprising and quite stunning when [Senator Edward] Teddy Kennedy called me within 36 hours of the attack to ask what can he do to help. And then [Senator Joseph] Joe Lieberman called, then [former Congressman] Jack Kemp called and became quite emotional over the phone and told me if my wife and I needed protection that we could stay with his family. Then Senator Feingold and Senator Edwards and others called... By 48 hours after the terrorists attacks more than a dozen members of the U.S. Senate had called. Governor Jeb Bush of Florida also called and the President issued a very strong message followed by Attorney General Ashcroft and the director of the FBI. Extraordinary as they were, those statements of protection, those statements of concern, were, in fact, very American.

I said to myself at one point, only in America does that kind of immediate and almost spontaneous protection and support come at that kind of time. It actually reminded me of the story that one hears in grade school of the barn that blows down and the neighbors come over with potluck dishes. My office had police protection because of the death threats we received, neighbors in the building started making us lunches. A woman came by the very first day after the attacks with brownies and said, "I think I burnt

them but I hope they are okay." I was very touched and continued to be touched although I did gain some weight because Ben & Jerry's gave us a party and Mrs. Fields brought over a box of cookies. As I said it was gratuitous.

Then after the unexpected kindness and graciousness came the anger, our anger. We had been brought back into the fold, we were embraced by the President on down, told to come mourn with the rest of the country and it sunk in. It sunk in just as it became clear to us that the perpetrators were Arab. We shared not only the national outrage but felt anger in a very special way because they had come from Arab countries and taken advantage of the opportunities and the openness of America, taken advantage of the American people, and murdered our fellow Americans. In the process they created such enormous pain, such enormous loss, and created fear of Arab Americans. For that I will never forgive them. My daughter called me one day to tell me that I was quoted in Newsweek referring to them as 'those bastards who did this.' She said does that mean that we can say "bastard" now? I said in certain special instances you can, this is one of them.

By the time the President launched the war, the attack against al-Qaida we were in the field polling Arab Americans to find and get an accurate measure of their attitudes. When I give you the results you will see that my personal stories are not just anecdotal but actually are a measure of the way the community felt. But before I give you those results, let me give you a bit about the Arab American community, its demographics, which I think are important. It is an emerging community; it is of recent vintage. Arab Americans have been here for a hundred years but have only recently, within the last three decades, begun to organize on a national level. It is a very diverse community. Our members have roots in more than twenty countries. We are diverse not only based on country of origin, the first waves were Lebanese and Syrian but have been followed in the last fifty years by large groups of Palestinians, Egyptians, Iraqis, Lebanese, and now Gulf Arabs, North Africans and Jordanians, etc. The fact is that you can't go to a restaurant here in town without finding among the wait staff or valets very recent immigrants. The service trades are stepping-stones for many immigrants. We're continually being refreshed and revitalized by new immigrants who work their way very quickly into the economic mainstream of the country and have become involved in the activities of the community.

There is also diversity in political outlook. We have Democrats and Republicans, we have Social Conservatives and we have Social Liberals. We have the very assimilated and the not so assimilated.

There are differences based on generation. Eighty percent of Arab Americans are born here but even within the generation born here there are still differences, particularly between the children of very recent immigrants and the children of those who arrived from the 1920's. There's a difference based on religion. There are Arab Americans who are Christians and Arab Americans who are Muslim and different Christian denominations and Muslim varieties.

In polling, we say that if the answer to a question is in the range of 70%, we consider that a consensus, because if the numbers are that high then all the subgroups will also be in a majority. So what we see in the polling is that that a clear consensus exists on many issues. There are some issues on which consensus doesn't exist. For example, on the question of Iraq, there is no consensus among Arab Americans on what our policy should be. There's a split. On the question of Palestinian statehood, there is no split; the numbers are well over 90% supporting a state. It may be surprising to some but support for recognition of the right of Israel to exist is also over 90%. There is a consensus, in other words, on many key policy issues that shows the emergence of this community. Despite differences internally within the generations or the countries of origin or religion or political outlook, there are many things on which we agree. Just one day after the war was launched, we asked Arab Americans the question, "do you support an all out war against countries that harbor the terrorists who attacked America," and 69% agreed.

Now, to understand that number, on the same day, the national poll asking the very same question of the country as a whole showed 67% agreed. So the fact is that Arab Americans were slightly more supportive than the country as a whole. When asked the question did we support the President's handling of the war on terror, we got 88% support, 11% opposed -- again, identical to the country as a whole. When we asked if Arab American's were reassured by the President's support for Arab Americans and Muslim Americans, 90% said yes.

When we asked the question, had they experienced personally discrimination since the 11 of September (this was again done on the 10th of October just one month later), 20% said they had, 45% said they knew someone who'd experienced discrimination based on ethnicity since September 11. Of the 20% who experienced discrimination, 49% were between 18 and 29 and 37% of the Arab Americans were of Muslim faith. When we asked if they were proud of their Arab heritage, 88% said that they were. That number is identical to the number that existed before September 11.

C. Commissioners Meeting Open Session, "Employment Discrimination in the Aftermath of September 11"

Remarks by AAI Managing Director Jean AbiNader, December 11, 2001. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The Arab American Institute represents the political and civic aspirations of our community by promoting its full involvement in the electoral life of our country at all levels. AAI is also a key voice in the community for promoting domestic and international policies that we believe best serve America's interests at home and in our relationships abroad, particularly with the Arab world.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to present our perspectives on how the tragic events of September 11th have impacted the Arab American community. You will hear many cases from our colleagues that illustrate the kinds of challenges that we have encountered. Overall, we must state that the impact on the community has fallen most heavily upon those with the least experience and awareness needed to defend themselves.

One of the most interesting phenomena that I have experienced since the events of September 11th is the largely ignorant level of knowledge about Arab Americans in this country.

So I'd like to just briefly point out two things. One is that I've brought some materials that we've placed outside that talk about who the Arab American community is, our experience in this country since the immigration started in the 1880s in large numbers, and who we are today in terms of some of the personalities that many of you will recognize.

Some of the factors about the community that are interesting is that when you look at the stereotype of who Arab Americans are, the first two things you hear from people are that we're Muslims, we're immigrants, and we're largely from Palestine or Egypt. The reality is over 65 percent of us are Christians. We're mostly from Lebanon and Syria. And most of us are second and third generation Americans whose parents and grandparents and great-grandparents came to this country.

So it's extraordinary that people say to us, "Well, then, why do you bother? Why are you bothering with these immigrants? Why are you bothering with Muslims?" in terms of their issues, in terms of the workplace. Because they're part of who we are. They're part of the culture that we come from, and they're part of the legacy that we bring to this country and contribute to the diversity of this country.

Second and third generation Arab Americans have not noticed significant changes in their work environments. The taunts, jeers, inappropriate political and racial slurs, that some encountered have

largely disappeared, although we note that there is an upsurge in complaints immediately following each of the warnings issued by the Federal Government over the past five weeks.

Yet by and large, those who were born in this country have encountered fewer obstacles than those who are immigrants, some of whom have been in this country for more than 30 years.

The situation is also more difficult for Arab Americans who are immigrants or are Muslims and publicly affirm their faith through adherence to guidelines regarding dress, daily prayers, fasting, and similar responsibilities that impact the work environment. Just as the Commission has been instrumental in protecting the rights of Americans of the Jewish religion to dress, dietary restrictions, and observances of holy days, it is now time to act aggressively to obtain these same protections for Muslims.

It is ironic that Muslims are being singled out by their co-workers for practicing their religion faithfully, reminding me how it was when I first worked in an office and was kidded for having ashes on my forehead on Ash Wednesday.

If we could remember our own encounters with work discrimination, perhaps it might make us pause before we reach out to strike verbally at a fellow employee because we feel a need to personally remedy the horrors of September 11th.

The larger question, however, is dealing with the discrimination, bias, bigotry, and disrespect that have become more visible since September 11th. I say more visible because we must be honest and admit that there is the latent anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States that is reflected in the labels that co-workers use when they taunt Arab Americans and American Muslims.

Ranging from the innocuous "sandscratcher" and "raghead" to "terrorist," "freak," and "Christian-hater," this brand of anti-semitism is no more acceptable than its older sibling. We are Americans. And when it is acceptable for these jeers to dominate the workplace environment, then we are marginalized as members of this society.

Cases you will hear about today, whether the source is Arab American, American Muslim, Sikh American, or anyone else, are all concerned with eliminating the sense of intimidation and fear that is routinely felt whenever events in the Middle East or elsewhere raise the ire of the American public.

Although government leaders, specifically the

President and Secretary and the Attorney General, have cautioned against backlash. Conditions in the workplace where people are in daily contact with one another require a more forceful and long-term solution.

Respect for diversity must move beyond platitudes and formulas to a spirit of tolerance and understanding that recognizes that we are all from somewhere else, and that is the source of America's vitality.

Arab Americans are ready to be part of the solution. Through educational materials available on our websites, participation in panels and seminars, multi-ethnic and interfaith programs, volunteerism, meetings, and discussion groups, we have reached out in the workplace after workplace to raise the level of discourse beyond stereotypes and rancor.

The shop floor, trading floor, restaurant, Wal-mart, manufacturing plant, and service industries are aware the struggle is taking place, and we need allies in management, labor, on state commissions, and the federal level to ensure that we will, as a society, rise beyond the prejudice of the moment to

achieve a better understanding of ourselves and that which makes the United States so singular.

We encourage the Commission to reaffirm its longstanding policies against discrimination and bias, particularly toward Arab Americans, American Muslims, and others affected in the aftermath of September 11th.

By strengthening your database for collecting and collating complaints nationally, the Commission can help identify trends locally that should be dealt with forcefully. More extensive coordination with state and local commissions can help create outreach opportunities for training and information dissemination while gathering incidents of best practices that can be offered throughout the country.

While there is no short-term remedy to workplace discrimination toward Arab Americans and American Muslims, this hearing is an important indicator that Chair Dominguez is committed to ensuring that the Commission continues its vital role in defense of equal employment.

D. Arab American Institute Materials:

I. Select AAI Press Releases

available at www.aaiusa.org/pr/press_releases.htm

Arab American Statement on Terror Attacks.
September 11, 2001

Joint Arab-American, Muslim American Statement.
September 12, 2001

Justice Department Joins with Arab Americans to
Combat Hate Crimes. September 13, 2001

Arab Americans Support President Bush's
Approach. September 25, 2001

Arab American and American Muslim Leaders Meet
with President Bush. September 26, 2001

Media Campaign Encourages Tolerance in
Response to American Tragedy: "Hate is Our
Enemy." October 1, 2001

AAI Issues Statement in Support of Administration's
Focused Anti-Terrorism Campaign. October 8, 2001

James Zogby Testifies Before the U.S. Commission
on Civil Rights. October 12, 2001

Support Grows for Civil Rights: AAI Addresses State
Dept., EEOC, Rainbow-Push and State Legislators.
December 11, 2001

AmeriDream Fights Hate with Arab American
Rebuilding Effort. February 21, 2002

Sikh and Arab American Communities Fight Bias
and Celebrate American Diversity. May 21, 2002

II. AAI Publications and Reports

available on the AAI website at www.aaiusa.org/publications.htm

“Profiling and Pride: Arab American Attitudes and Behavior Since September 11.”

A report based on a May 2002 poll commissioned by the Arab American Institute Foundation. The survey found that Arab Americans are concerned about ethnic profiling and the long-term effects of discrimination, but that the aftermath of Sept. 11 did not affect their sense of ethnic pride.

“Arab American Attitudes and the September 11 Attacks,” by Dr. James J. Zogby, President, Arab American Institute; October 15, 2001

A survey conducted one month following the terrorist attacks, examining how Arab Americans perceive Pres. Bush's actions following the Sept. 11 attacks, their attitudes toward law enforcement policies following the attacks, and their concerns about personal discrimination and backlash.

III. AAI Educational Packet

In light of the high demand for information after Sept. 11, AAI put together a resource packet on Arab Americans, Islam, and the Middle East. The packet is available in electronic format at www.aaiusa.org/educational_packet.htm, where there is also an order form to request print copies.

Contents:

American Leaders Speak Out Against Backlash in Wake of September 11 Tragedy
(Excerpts of speeches by President Bush, members of Congress, and national organizations) (4pg)

Arab Americans: Making a Difference
by Casey Kasem (12 pg brochure)

Quick Facts About Arab Americans and Arab American Population Highlights (2pp)

Demographic Chart on Country of Origin and Religious Affiliation (1p)

Who Are Arab Americans? (from Groliers Multimedia Encyclopedia)(4pp)

Arab Americans: A Century of Political and Cultural Achievement (4pp)

Notes on Anti-Arab Racism (2pp)

Select Bibliography on Arab Americans (2pp)

Select Websites on Arab Americans, the Middle East and Islam (1p)

"Are Arab Americans: People Like Us?" Foreign Service Journal (May 2000) by James J. Zogby
"Arab Americans Attitudes and the September 11 Attacks," by James J. Zogby

"Arab Stereotypes and American Educators," by

Marvin Wingfield and Bushra Karaman, from Social Studies for the Young Learner (Mar/Apr 1995), courtesy of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (4pp)

"Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom" by the Council on Islamic Education (1995) (10pp)

"Discover Islam" color brochure

AMIDEAST 2001 Educational Resources information card

AWAIR 2002 Catalog, from Arab World and Islamic Resources and School Services

"Who are the Arabs?" Center for Contemporary Arab Studies Teaching Module No. 5, 1999 (12 pg booklet)

"Arab Contributions to Civilization" from The Arab World Studies Notebook, reprinted by permission of Audrey Shabbas, ed.

Cobblestone children's magazine, May 2002, "Arab Americans"

E. Other Resources

Links to the following US government agency resources are also available on the AAI website at <http://www.aaiusa.org/aftermath.htm>, in the section titled "Information about Discrimination and Tolerance."

"Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination: Questions And Answers"

<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html>

From The United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division:

- How to File a Complaint
- Statements of Federal Agencies
- Your Rights and What You Can Do to Prevent or Respond to Discrimination
- Other Post-9/11 Information,

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/nordwg.html>

Advice to Travelers of Middle Eastern Descent,
From the United States Department of Transportation. November 19, 2001

The Immigration and Naturalization Service's Detention Operations Manual, which contains

information about the rights of INS detainees:
<http://www.ins.gov/graphics/lawsregs/guidance.htm>.

The Pro Bono (For Free) Program in the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR)

works to link volunteer legal representatives with INS detainees who lack legal representation:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/probono/probono.htm>.

Brochure on federal protections against national origin discrimination:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/natlorg-eng.htm>

Information about the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, which administers and enforces terrorism sanctions: <http://www.treas.gov/ofac>.

Links of Interest

selections from a list which is available on the AAI website at <http://www.aaiusa.org/links.htm>

Arab Americans

100 Questions and Answers About Arab Americans: Journalist's guide from the Detroit Free Press. Contains background on Arab American culture, language, and religion.
<http://www.freep.com/jobspage/arabs.htm>

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee: Civil rights organization committed to defending the rights of people of Arab descent and promoting their rich cultural heritage.
<http://www.adc.org/>

Arab American Business Journal: A magazine for Arab American businesses.
<http://www.arabamericanbusiness.com/>

Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS): Includes cultural arts, employment and training, public health, and education.
<http://www.accesscommunity.org>

Cafe Arabica: A place for Arab Americans to discuss issues of common interest and find out about resources and services available to them.
<http://www.cafearabica.com>

The Middle East

Planet Arabia - Arab directory of news, entertainment and women of Arabia, in the Middle East and Arabic world.
<http://www.planetarabia.com/>

Arab Culture & Identity: Articles and links relating to Arab culture and the Arab people. Covers history, language, art, music and literature.
<http://www.suite101.com>

Arabji: Pan-Arab Internet guide covering 22 Arab countries. Arabic portal, search engine and directory, searchable in Arabic and English.
<http://www.arabji.com/>

Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University - Devoted to the study of the modern Arab world. <http://www.ccasonline.org/>

Middle East Policy Council: Non-profit organization whose purpose is to contribute to an understanding of current issues in U.S.-Middle East relations.
<http://www.mepc.org/>

Middle East Institute - Founded in 1946, the Middle East Institute's principal objective is to increase Americans' knowledge and understanding of the region. <http://www.mideasti.org/>



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