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Identity in Question: Middle Eastern Americans in Dearborn, Michigan

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ABSTRACT

In the 2020 United States Census, fifty-four percent of the population of Dearborn, Michigan, identified as being of Middle Eastern or North African descent. The story of how a small Detroit suburb became the American city with the largest proportion of Middle Eastern citizens is one of transnational relations between the U.S., its ally Israel, and the Middle East. The city's Arab American community grew out of continuous wars that pushed people out of their homelands throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as well as the rise of the American auto industry. What makes Dearborn unique is that its established Arab American community acts as a centripetal force, both because living in a place with many people of similar ethnic heritage softens the dislocation of immigration, and because strong ties between Dearborn and the Middle East help new immigrants find jobs and settle into their new lives. These extended kin networks existing within Dearborn and between Dearborn and the Middle East have created a feeling that all the Arab communities in Dearborn—primarily Lebanese, Palestinian, Iraqi, and Yemeni—are a single transnational pan-Arab people under attack by the U.S. and Israel, in their host country and homeland. The strong cultural heritage present in Dearborn has influenced the way its Middle Eastern residents choose to assimilate into the dominant white Christian culture—often in an attempt to avoid Islamophobic discrimination—or to assert their cultural and religious heritage and celebrate differences.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE BEGINNINGS OF DEARBORN

On its way to the Detroit River, the Rouge River runs through a city called Dearborn, Michigan. In the early twentieth century, on the banks of the Rouge, Henry Ford built his motor company's Rouge River Complex. In 1914, Ford doubled his workers' wages to an unheard-of five dollars per day. Soon, workers began streaming to Dearborn in search of work. By the 1930s, the Rouge plant produced four thousand vehicles a day and had over 100,000 employees. It was a company town, but a pluralistic one: By one account, Dearbornites spoke over fifty languages. Slowly, though, one group became an increasingly large portion of the city's population: Middle Eastern Americans.[1]

A century after Ford built the Rouge plant, Dearborn's Middle Eastern population has become an American anomaly. In the 2020 United States Census, over fifty-four percent of the population reported that they were of Middle Eastern or North African descent; the vast majority of those were Arab. The story of the Arab American's rise in Dearborn, Michigan, cannot be told only within the confines of Michigan, nor of the United States. This is a story of wave after wave of civilians in Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen emigrating from their homelands to escape war after war; of the ways a community of similar people can help recent immigrants adjust to the dislocation of life in a new country; of sustained religious, cultural, economic, technological, and physical connections between immigrants and their families back home; and of a struggle between Americanization and Arabization, between assimilation and multiculturalism. This is how Dearborn, Michigan, became the Arab capital of America.[2]

II. CENTRIFUGAL FORCES

When the state of Israel was created, from 1947–1949, 600,000–700,000 Palestinians were evicted from or fled their homes. Many of them moved just north, to Lebanon. In 1951, Lebanon was housing over 100,000 Palestinian refugees, and the number kept climbing. In 1967, during the Six-Day War, another 400,000 Palestinians were displaced. By 2022, Palestinian refugees in

[1] Society for the History of Technology, "Brief History of Dearborn," 13 May 2013; The Henry Ford, "Henry Ford's Rouge," accessed 11 January 2024; The Henry Ford, "History and Timeline," accessed 11 January 2024; Karen Rignall, "Building an Arab-American Community in Dearborn," *The Journal of the International Institute* 5, no. 1 (1997); The Henry Ford, "Ford's Five-Dollar Day," 3 January 2014.

[2] The exact number of Dearbornites who identified as Middle Eastern or North African in 2020 was 59,983. The estimate of those who were Arab was 48,520, with a margin of error of ±2272. Dearborn's total population in 2020 was 109,976. Statistics throughout this section are taken from the 2020 United States Census, accessed through the U.S. Census Bureau and the State of Michigan.

Lebanon numbered some 488,000. Some displaced Palestinians formed guerrillas, which, in the first half of the 1970s, began struggling increasingly intensely with right-wing Christian Phalangists in Lebanon. On 13 April 1975, it reached a tipping point, and civil war broke out. A year and a half later, by October 1976, some two percent of Lebanon's population had been killed and five percent injured.[3]

In June 1982, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded Lebanon to drive out the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and turn the tide of the civil war toward the Phalangists, with whom Israel was allied. The IDF encircled West Beirut, where the PLO was headquartered, bombarding the area for ten weeks. By August, when the PLO surrendered, more than seventeen thousand people had been killed and twice as many injured. In September, Israel occupied West Beirut and allowed right-wing Lebanese militias to enter two refugee camps, where they slaughtered more than three thousand Palestinian refugees.[4]

The Lebanese Civil War lasted until 1990, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 120,000 people. By one estimate, 600,000–900,000 people fled the country during the war. Because Lebanese immigrants had established a small community in Dearborn by at least the turn of the twentieth century, many of those emigrating from Lebanon settled in Dearborn.[5]

The First Lebanon War seems to have been a turning point in Lebanese citizens' perception of the conflict's severity, and a strong push for increased emigration from Lebanon. In "Speedoman," by Ghassan Zeineddine, from his collection of ten short stories about Lebanese Dearbornites, the protagonists are driven out of their homeland in the 1980s by Israeli fighter jets

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[3] Simha Flapan, "The Palestinian Exodus of 1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 4 (1987): 3; BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, "From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa," *BADIL Occasional Bulletin* 18 (2004); Nathan Citino, Ana Martín Gil, and Kelsey P. Norman, "Generations of Palestinian Refugees Face Protracted Displacement and Dispossession," *Migration Policy Institute*, 3 May 2023; Elaine C. Hagopian, "Redrawing the Map in the Middle East: Phalangist Lebanon and Zionist Israel," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (1983): 323; Joseph Chamie, "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation Into the Causes," *World Affairs* 139, no. 3 (1976–1977): 175–177.

[4] James Paul and Joe Stark, "The War in Lebanon," *Middle East Research and Information Project* 108 (1982); Michael Fischbach, "Lebanon War, 1982," *Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question*, accessed 13 January 2024.

[5] United Nations Human Rights Council, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1," 23 November 2006, 18; Kara Murphy, "The Lebanese Crisis and Its Impact on Immigrants and Refugees," *Migration Policy Institute*, 1 September 2006; Patrick Belton, "In the Way of the Prophet: Ideologies and Institutions in Dearborn, Michigan, America's Muslim Capital," *The Next American City* no. 3 (2003): 17; Nadine Naber, "Transnational Families Under Siege: Lebanese Shi'a in Dearborn, Michigan, and the 2006 War on Lebanon," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2009): 148–149; Wayne Baker et al., *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit After 9/11* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 5.

that "bombed our land and decimated our houses, schools, and mosques, killing our loved ones"; the protagonists leave "with thousands of others" and move to Dearborn.[6]

From 1983–1990, more than thirty thousand Lebanese people immigrated to the U.S., almost four thousand of which immediately settled in greater Detroit. Lebanese Shi'a Muslims are largely from Bint Jbeil, the second-largest city in South Lebanon. From the beginning of the civil war until the beginning of the twenty-first century, Bint Jbeil's population decreased from forty thousand to three thousand; fifteen thousand of those emigrants moved to Dearborn.[7]

The end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990 brought the Middle East no respite. That same year, the First Gulf War began, and Iraqis began flooding to Dearborn. When the rebellion against Saddam Hussein failed in 1991, Iraqi Shi'a, many of whom had taken part in or at least supported the uprising, fled the country to escape the executions that befell those who remained. In 2003, the U.S. began the Second Gulf War to oust Hussein under the pretense of destroying Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. In 2006, the IDF attacked Hezbollah—a Lebanese political and militant group that rose during the civil war—at the start of the Second Lebanon War, sparking a fresh surge of Lebanese immigrants to Dearborn. This time, though, something had changed. Dearborn teemed with Lebanese flags; between five hundred and ten thousand Dearbornites participated in vigils, town hall meetings, political protests, and demonstrations against the war. The city was no longer a small enclave: It had become America's Arab capital.[8]

III. THE ARAB CAPITAL OF AMERICA

In the 1950s, Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard began a campaign to evict the residents of Dearborn's "blighted"[9] Southend neighborhood—the location of Dearborn's Arab community—and give the properties to the Ford Motor Company and an asphalt producer. In the

[6] Ghassan Zeineddine, "Speedoman," in *Dearborn* (Portland, OR: Tin House, 2023), 27.
[7] Barbara C. Aswad, "The Southeast Dearborn Arab Community Struggles for Survival Against Urban 'Renewal,'" in *Arabic Speaking Communities in American Cities*, ed. Barbara C. Aswad (New York, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1974), 63; Baker et al., *Citizenship and Crisis*, 5; Naber, "Transnational Families," 149; Sally Howell and Andrew Shryock, "Cracking Down on Diaspora: Arab Detroit and America's 'War on Terror,'" *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2003): 446.
[8] Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 17; Faleh A. Jabar, "Why the Uprisings Failed," *Middle East Research and Information Project* 176 (1992); Council on Foreign Relations, "The Iraq War," accessed 19 January 2024; Russell W. Glenn, *All Glory Is Fleeting: Insights from the Second Lebanon War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation 2012), 2–4; Naber, "Transnational Families," 146, 149.
[9] Urban blight describes an urban area that has depreciated to the point that "its existing condition or use is unacceptable to the community" (Breger 1967, 372). In practice, blight is often used in reference to low-income, majority-minority areas. An area's physical ugliness is then used as a pretext for destruction and redevelopment, thereby pushing minorities out of their communities and into worse conditions (Mock 2017).

1960s, the city of Dearborn destroyed, block by block, more than three hundred fifty homes and evicted the families living therein; in that decade, the Southend's number of dwellings was reduced by twenty-five percent. At the time, Dearborn had the most polluted air in the Detroit region. In the early 1970s, the Wayne County Health Department's Anti-Pollution Division found that the Rouge plant emitted two hundred twenty tons of suspended particulate matter per square mile per year.[10] The effects of the pollution were eminently visible:

> Fly ash from the factory slowly ate away the paint on neighborhood cars. Houses were filthy on the outside, and difficult to keep clean inside as well. Drying laundry while keeping it free of soot and ash was an endless battle in the era of the clothesline … [T]he roof of the local elementary school began to collapse from the heavy weight of accumulated pollutants.[11]

In response to the demolition, the community mobilized, creating the Southeast Dearborn Community Council to act as an organized force that could stand up to the city and the Ford company. They formed pickets and assembled hundreds of community members to attend city council meetings in protest. In 1973, a class-action lawsuit won an injunction that forced the city to stop the urban renewal campaign. For the first time, the Arab American community of Dearborn had advocated for itself, and it had won.[12]

As Arab American Dearbornites learned to organize, the migrants kept coming. In 1974—a year before the civil war began—one scholar had already dubbed Dearborn "probably the largest concentrated Arab Muslim community in the U.S."[13] Thirty years later, estimates put the number of Arab Americans in Dearborn at around forty thousand, or thirty-nine percent of the total population; by 2013, it was forty-two percent.[14] One scholar has written that Dearborn is "the second largest concentration of both Arabs and Muslims outside the Middle East, behind only Paris."[15]

Dearborn's growing Arab American community is a positive feedback loop: The more Arab immigrants move there, the larger the community becomes, and the more likely it is for future immigrants to make their homes in the same place, which grows increasingly well-known

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[10] Aswad, "Survival," 53–54; Sally Howell, "Southend Struggles: Converging Narratives of an Arab/Muslim American Enslave," *Mashriq and Mahjar* 3, no. 1 (2015): 41.
[11] Howell, "Southend Struggles," 46.
[12] Howell, "Southend Struggles," 47–48; Aswad, "Survival," 71–73, 75.
[13] Aswad, "Survival," 53.
[14] Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 15; Naber, "Transnational Families," 146; Howell, "Southend Struggles," 42.
[15] Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 15.

for being a vibrant and welcoming Arab community. For those who have recently left their homelands, Dearborn is "a cultural milieu that dulls the edges of the experience of dislocation and adjustment."[16]

Even as it became a "mini Lebanon," Dearborn's Arab community struggled.[17] In 1974, the Southend made up five percent of Dearborn's population but fourteen percent of all families living below the poverty line and thirteen percent of the city's unemployed. In 1997, unemployment rates among Dearborn's Arab American community ran as high as forty percent; job prospects were scarce for poor, unskilled immigrants with little English proficiency and frequent Arabic illiteracy. When the first Arab immigrants arrived in the United States in the late nineteenth century, they struggled alone, having little to no contact with relatives until they had made enough money to sponsor their immigration. As Dearborn's Arab population grew, immigrants not only found a welcoming community the moment they arrived but kept their community back home, too.[18]

IV. CROSS-BORDER EXTENDED KIN NETWORKS

That over fifty percent of Dearborn's population is of Middle Eastern or North African descent—and that all but ten thousand of those identify as Arab—is only half of Dearborn's unique position as America's Middle Eastern capital. That immigrants arriving in Dearborn find a community of 110,000 that has fifteen mosques is only significant because people in the Middle East know about Dearborn *before they leave* their homelands. Dearborn's Lebanese population, in particular, is not isolated from their relatives who remain in Lebanon. They maintain contact with their villages of origin; travel back and forth between Dearborn and the homeland; send remittances; and participate in Lebanon's social, cultural, and political life. Each of these transnational interactions has its own effect on the creation of cross-border extended kin networks in which those in Dearborn and the Middle East remain intimately connected and influence one another's lifeways.[19]

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[16] Rignall, "Building an Arab-American Community." Aswad described Dearborn similarly: "The area functions as one of acculturation, adjustment and socialization for new members as well as an area of permanent residence for many and a home base to return to for others" (1974, 63).
[17] Zeineddine, "The Actors of Dearborn," 17.
[18] Aswad, "Survival," 58; Rignall, "Building an Arab-American Community."
[19] Naber, "Transnational Families," 148.

Frequent trips between the United States and villages of origin ensure that information networks remain open and that those wishing to move to America know where to find their kin. In the early 1970s, one researcher found that ninety percent of the first-generation Arab Dearbornites they interviewed had some kind of kinship ties with residents of the Southend before they arrived in the United States; eighty percent said that such ties had helped them secure work. When Yemeni immigrants began arriving in Dearborn in the 1970s, they were largely men who left their families back home. Instead of settling down, they participated in "recurrent migration": They would work in the United States for several years, return to their families in Yemen for a time, and then travel back to the United States for work. In many cases, the well-being of their villages depended on this cash flow, and, due to remittances, the lives of some Yemenis have improved since recurrent migration to Dearborn began. Capitalizing on their poor English and inexperience with labor organization, factory owners frequently gave Yemeni men the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs. They were made easy targets by their isolation from their peers whose families had been in Dearborn for generations, their desperation for work, and the fact that even the lowest American wages were well above Yemeni standards.[20]

Dearborn provides a unique mix of America and the Middle East. In Zeineddine's stories, even while characters wax nostalgic about their homelands, they understand that it is not a place they can return to; they have become too entrenched, too assimilated, too American. This phenomenon is especially seen in first-generation Dearbornites. Zeineddine uses the lens of the second generation to analyze the first generation's relationship with the homeland. A woman in her twenties sees that her parents and their friends "reminisced about a country they longed for but was irretrievably lost to them"; a teenager understands that his mother is "trying to preserve the illusion of her past, an illusion that was richer and more meaningful than reality."[21]

Dearborn's sustained connection with its community's homelands also contributes to Arab Americans' perception of the United States, as well as the United States' perception of Arab Americans. As the Cold War intensified throughout the latter twentieth century, it became increasingly clear to Arab Americans—both those who had lived in the United States for

[20] Aswad, "Survival," 61–62; Laurel D. Wigle, "An Arab Muslim Community in Michigan," in *Arabic Speaking Communities in American Cities*, ed. Barbara C. Aswad (New York, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1974), 157–158; Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 17; Barbara C. Aswad, "Yemeni and Lebanese Muslim Immigrant Women in Southeast Dearborn, Michigan," in *Muslim Families in North America*, ed. Earle H. Waugh, Sharon McIrvin Abu-Laban, and Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (Edmonton, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 1991), 261, 263; Howell, "Southend Struggles," 50.

[21] Zeineddine, "In Memoriam," 155; Zeineddine, "Rabbit Stew," 210.

generations and brand-new migrants—that their being perceived as full U.S. citizens was dependent on the U.S. government and military's imperial policies in the Middle East.[22]

Much of the activism in Dearborn's Arab American community is directed toward its various homelands. This is especially due to the fact that the largest Arab communities in Dearborn—Lebanese, Palestinian, Yemeni, and Iraqi—come from the countries most targeted by the U.S. and Israel. In the late 1960s, left-wing student activists and community members were already in complete consensus about support for Palestinian liberation, which only continued to grow as Lebanese refugees began arriving in large numbers in Dearborn in the mid-1970s.[23]

The most recent conflict involving Israel and Palestine broke out on 7 October 2023, when members of the Palestinian political and militant movement Hamas killed over one thousand two hundred Israelis and took over two hundred fifty hostages. In retaliation, the IDF began an aerial, maritime, and ground campaign to eradicate Hamas from Palestine and retrieve all Israeli hostages from Gaza. As of 1 April 2024, the Palestinian Health Ministry has reported the killing of nearly thirty-three thousand Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children. More than seventy-five thousand have been wounded.[24]

As the death toll in Palestine has continued to soar, the international community has increasingly condemned the IDF's slaughtering of civilians. In December 2023, South Africa filed suit in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinian people in violation of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which defines genocide as "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group," by, among other actions, killing members; causing them serious bodily or mental harm; or deliberately inflicting unlivable life conditions. In January 2024, the ICJ found that, in addition to tens of thousands of deaths, Israel had caused "massive destruction of homes, the forcible displacement of the vast majority of the population, and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure" in the Gaza Strip, as well as that

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[22] The United States has been intimately involved in Middle Eastern political affairs since at least the mid-1950s. In 1953, the CIA enacted a *coup d'état* against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, both out of fear of a communist takeover of Iran (which shared a long border with the Soviet Union) and to end Mossadegh's nationalization of the Iranian oil industry, of which Great Britain's government owned fifty percent of the stock (Gasiorowski 1987, 261–263; Blum 2004, 64–67). The coup established the U.S. government's willingness to engage in illegal militant action to engineer Middle Eastern affairs and fomented anti-U.S. sentiment in the region.

[23] Naber, "Transnational Families," 158–159; Howell, "Southend Struggles," 49–50; Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 16.

[24] Julia Frankel, "As Israel-Hamas war reaches 100-day mark, here's the conflict by numbers," *Associated Press*, 14 January 2024; AJLabs, "Israel-Gaza war in maps and charts: Live tracker," *Al Jazeera*, last modified 1 April 2024.

ninety-three percent of Gaza's population was facing crisis-level hunger. The ICJ did not find outright that Israel had violated the Genocide Convention but ordered that the country take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of genocidal acts. Additionally, it ordered Israel to take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to Gazans and take effective measures to ensure the protection of evidence related to allegations of Genocide Convention violations.[25]

As Dearborn has watched the IDF's slaughter and displacement of the Palestinian people, the Arab American community has been completely unified in support of Palestine. For Arab American Dearbornites, this is not an anomalous conflict: Many of the Lebanese and Palestinian Americans in Dearborn were originally pushed out of their homelands by the IDF. The newest conflict is another link in the ever-growing chain. As with every conflict in the Levant since the 1970s, Dearborn's Arab American constituency has been vocal in support of its homelands. As early as 21 November 2023, the Detroit City Council passed a resolution supporting a ceasefire in Gaza and the immediate release of all hostages in the conflict. The most important activism, however, has come from Dearborn.[26]

An important element of the relationship between Arab Americans and Middle Eastern conflicts is the U.S. government's relationship with Israel. Adjusting for inflation, the U.S. government gave Israel two hundred billion dollars from 1946–2021. Almost all of it was military aid explicitly designed so that Israel could keep a "qualitative military edge" over its neighbors. In some cases, when selling military equipment to countries near Israel, the U.S. has given Israel comparable or superior equipment to "offset" the original deal. The U.S. thus has a role in, and is often associated with, the Israeli occupations of Palestine and Lebanon that have pushed so many out of their homelands and into Dearborn.[27]

U.S. President Joe Biden has long openly approved of the close U.S.–Israeli military and economic ties. In a Senate session from 1986 discussing an arms deal with Saudi Arabia, then-Senator Biden said that the U.S. needed to stop apologizing for its support for Israel.

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[25] International Court of Justice, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, 26 January 2024, 2, 15–16; United Nations, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," 9 December 1948, 1.

[26] Kurt Streeter, "'This Is Personal': Dearborn's Arab Americans Endure the Agony of War," *New York Times*, 1 December 2023; Sarah Rahal, "Detroit City Council passes resolution supporting ceasefire in Gaza, release of hostages," *Detroit News*, 21 November 2023.

[27] Howell, "Southend Struggles," 42; Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, 18 February 2022, 2, 5–6.

"There's no apology to be made," said Biden. "Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region."[28]

On 26 January 2024, ten to fifteen Arab American community organizers in Dearborn declined to meet with President Biden's campaign manager because of the president's unwavering support for Israel despite international recrimination and findings like those of the ICJ. In a critical swing state like Michigan where Biden will need strong Democratic support, Dearborn's Middle Eastern constituency wields considerable power. One executive from Wayne County, which includes Detroit, Dearborn, and the surrounding areas, told the *Associated Press*, "I don't believe that the Biden administration, at the senior top level, understands how big of a problem this is and how upset and angry the community is." An imam at the Islamic Center of Detroit said that Biden had lost the Muslim and Arab vote.[29]

Slowly, Biden does seem to be realizing how detrimental his support for Israel is becoming to his chances of reelection. On 8 February 2024, Biden called the IDF's operations in Gaza "over the top." On 9 February, the *New York Times* reported that one of Biden's top foreign policy aides told Dearbornite Arab American leaders that he had no confidence Israel was willing to make meaningful movement toward Palestinian statehood and acknowledged that the U.S. had made mistakes regarding the Israel–Hamas conflict. In Michigan's 2024 Democratic primary, Biden won over eighty-one percent of the vote, but over thirteen percent voted uncommitted. Michiganders' anger with Biden, while not enough to make him lose a primary, may be enough to make him lose an election—in the state's Republican primary, former President Donald Trump won over 100,000 more votes than Biden.[30]

For Arab Dearbornites, the continuing conflicts in the Middle East have never been an issue only of ethnic solidarity. Almost all Arab Dearbornites did not just leave their homes and heritage when they emigrated—they left their relatives. When people begin to die, nothing is abstract: Palestinian Dearbornites live in constant fear that one of the rare WhatsApp, Facebook, or text message notifications from Gaza will be news of family members' deaths. Some have lost as many as fifty extended family members to the IDF. On 20 February 2024, Dearborn's mayor,

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[28] C-SPAN, "Senate Session," 5 June 1986, 1:27:00.

[29] Joey Cappalleti and Will Weissert, "Biden reelection campaign team gets shunned by some Arab American leaders while visiting Michigan," *Associated Press*, 26 January 2024.

[30] Peter Baker, "Biden sharpens criticism of Israel, calling its Gaza response 'over the top,'" *New York Times*, 8 February 2024; Reid J. Epstein and Erica L. Green, "In Private Remarks to Arab Americans, Biden Aide Expresses Regrets on Gaza," *New York Times*, 9 February 2024; Associated Press, "Michigan Presidential Primary Results," last modified 8 March 2024.

Abdullah Hammoud, wrote in the *New York Times*, "Life seems heavily veiled in a haze of shared grief, fear, helplessness and even guilt as we try to understand how our tax dollars could be used by those we elected to slaughter our relatives overseas." This is a uniquely excruciating position to be in: Dearborn's Arab American community (and, indeed, all Arab Americans) are forced to actively fund the systematic slaughter of their own relatives, then watch helplessly from relative safety as their families are hit with air strikes from American weapons.[31]

"What compounds the constant fear and mourning," wrote Hammoud, "is a visceral sense of betrayal." Arab American Michiganders have been a crucial voting bloc for the Democratic Party in the past three presidential elections. This unwavering support for Democrats seems to have built a complacent feeling in the party that Arab Americans will *always* be on their side, even while "selling the very bombs that Benjamin Netanyahu's military is dropping on our family and friends." Even if a top foreign policy aide can do it, Biden seems so far incapable of acknowledging the extent to which his policy in the Levant may be devastating for him in November 2024.[32]

For Dearborn's Arab American community, the concept of extended kin networks—not only one's biological family, but a community of up to six hundred family members, neighbors, and friends—is essential. Extended kin is explicitly defined as those one turns to in times of joy as well as hardship; in times of hardship, especially, these networks act as the primary, and sometimes only, mode of emotional, social, economic, and political security. These kin networks are not only within the Dearborn community; crucially, Dearbornites describe their extended kin networks as existing *between* the U.S. and their country of origin. These social relationships "link Dearborn's [Middle Eastern citizens] to [the Middle East] and bring events in [the Middle East] to Dearborn in profoundly intimate ways."[33]

In contrast, because of Yemeni men's recurrent migration, Dearbornite Yemeni women do not have the same established, transnational, multi-generational kin networks that Lebanese

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[31] Niraj Warikoo, "Michigan families mourn relatives killed in Gaza: 'It's horrific,'" *Detroit Free Press*, 10 November 2023; Abdullah Hammoud, "I'm the Mayor of Dearborn, Mich., and My City Feels Betrayed," *New York Times*, 20 February 2024.

[32] Hammoud, "My City."

[33] Naber, "Transnational Families," 150–151. Naber's article focuses only on Lebanese Dearbornites, but the concept of extended kin networks can be seen in Palestinian, Iraqi, and, to a lesser extent, Yemeni Dearbornites too. Because of its wider application, the words "Lebanese" and "Lebanon" in this quote have been replaced with "Middle Eastern citizens" and "Middle East."

Dearbornites have. Yemeni women's extended kin networks are almost exclusively made up of other Yemeni women with whom they have close friendships but no biological ties.[34]

Dearbornites' extended kin networks have created a feeling of transnational solidarity between Lebanese, Palestinians, Yemenis, and Iraqis within Dearborn and with the Middle East. Political organizations of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants reflect not only local religious and political problems but those across the Atlantic too. Continued conflicts throughout the Middle East for over seventy years have created in Dearborn a "sense of belonging to a transnational pan-Arab nation under siege."[35] There is a tacit understanding across Dearborn that the trials of Arab people are not unique and isolated but the fault of a single enemy: the United States government.[36]

For instance: The U.S. State Department estimated that when the Second Lebanon War broke out, on 13 July 2006, there were about fifty thousand Americans in Lebanon. The first large group of Americans did not depart until 19 July. In Dearborn, the U.S. government's delay in evacuations, as well as its support for Israel, was strongly criticized. In an interview with *National Public Radio* in August 2006, one Dearbonite said, "The terrorist here is the Bush administration." (A lawsuit filed shortly following the outbreak of the Israel–Hamas war against the U.S. State and Defense Departments alleged discrimination against Palestinian Americans trapped in Gaza by failing to help them escape the war—a practically identical claim to that against the U.S. government during the 2006 Second Lebanon War.)[37]

Exile is an "unhealable rift" between an individual and their true home that brings about a "condition of terminal loss."[38] When wars force people out of their homelands, they enter a tenuous existence in which they have no physical homeland but hold onto remembrance and nostalgia, which allows them to retain some element of their past identity. Upon arrival in Dearborn, refugees have found safety and a new identity—Arab American—but they must

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[34] Wigle, "Community in Michigan," 157; Aswad, "Immigrant Women," 264.
[35] Naber, "Transnational Families," 158.
[36] Aswad, "Immigrant Women," 262; Naber, "Transnational Families," 158, 162.
[37] Jess T. Ford, "State Department: The July 2006 Evacuation of American Citizens from Lebanon," *United States Government Accountability Office*, 7 June 2007, 2–3; Guy Raz, "Lebanese-Americans Are Angry and Anxious," *National Public Radio*, 8 August 2006; Niraj Warikoo, "Michigan couple stuck in Gaza escapes to Egypt, family says," *Detroit Free Press*, 3 November 2023. During the Lebanese Civil War, Christian Phalangists also felt that overt support from Israel was by proxy also overt support from the United States. In 1983, one scholar characterized the Phalangist position: "Israel and the United States are saving us from Islam and the Palestinians" (Hagopian 1983, 326).
[38] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London, UK: Granta Books, 2013), 180.

decide the balance between Arab and American. Full integration into a host country's culture is seen as letting go of one's past.[39] Yet Dearborn remains distinctly separate. Zeineddine describes one immigrant who fled the 1982 Israeli invasion as happy in Dearborn because she "can live without the fear of fighter jets and still speak Arabic on the streets."[40] This line exemplifies a conflict that many of those face who immigrate to the U.S. to escape U.S.-inflicted conflict in their homelands: "the painful irony of migrating to a country that many [see] as responsible for the suffering" they have experienced.[41]

Arab Dearbornites are not only drawn together out of a feeling of being under siege in the Middle East. The siege follows them to the United States, where being Arab or Muslim—singular identities irrespective of particular nationality—is one of the worst things a person can be.

V. THE BURDEN OF PROOF

Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard, who served from 1942–1978 and waged the urban renewal campaign against the Southend, was a notorious segregationist. His racism was often directed toward Arab Americans, whom he once called "worse than the n-----s." His slogan, "Keep Dearborn Clean," was often seen as a euphemism for "Keep Dearborn White." Mayor Michael Guido, who served from 1986–2006, had a flyer during his first campaign, in 1985, that read, "Let's talk about the Arab problem." A survey conducted after the flyer's distribution listed Arabs as one of Dearbornites' biggest concerns, and Guido's plan to fix that "problem" was instrumental in his initial electoral success. Throughout his tenure, Guido maintained his anti-Arab rhetoric. At a council meeting in 1999, when a citizen critiqued the city for neglecting the Southend and its people, Guido responded that newly-arrived Arab immigrants needed training on personal hygiene and habits of cleanliness.[42]

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[39] Maraw Shoeb, Harvey M. Weinstein, and Jodi Halpern, "Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (2007): 444.
[40] Zeineddine, "Yusra," 185.
[41] Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 80.
[42] Niraj Warikoo, "Statue of former Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard taken down," *Detroit Free Press*, 5 June 2020; Howell, "Southend Struggles," 52; Joseph Borrajo, "OPINION: Racist efforts in the 1980s didn't stop Arab Americans from Revitalizing East Dearborn," *Yemeni American News*, 27 March 2021; Niraj Warikoo, "On Sept. 11, a historic run for Dearborn mayor that impacted Arab Americans," *Detroit Free Press*, 11 September 2021.

Distrust of Arab Americans was widespread in the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1997, Samuel P. Huntington, an American political scientist and Harvard University professor, juxtaposed immigrants from Soviet nations during the Cold War and then-current-day immigrants to the U.S.:

> During the Cold War, immigrants and refugees from communist countries usually vigorously opposed, for political and ideological reasons, the governments of their home countries and actively supported American anticommunist policies against them. Now, diasporas in the United States support their home governments.[43]

Sometimes, wrote Huntington, immigrants went further, working undercover for their countries of origin. He pointed to "[r]ecent cases in the United States" in which immigrants had acted as "a source of spies used to gather information for their homeland governments."[44] He did not name any specific instances—of anticommunist immigrants, pro–home government diasporas, or immigrant spies. Others similarly distinguished the new waves of Arab immigrants from previous ones. Two scholars wrote, "In its long history of immigration, the United States has never encountered so violent-prone and radicalized a community as the Muslims who have arrived since 1965."[45]

Then came 11 September 2001. In a single morning, all of the white Dearborn community's anti-Arab rhetoric increased by many orders of magnitude. Nationwide, the USA PATRIOT Act gave the U.S. government license to treat Muslims—individually and as a group—as though they were presumptively guilty of being terrorists. Under the Act, the government could "monitor, investigate, detain, and deport Muslims legally in the name of security, without rudimentary due process of the law and in gross violation of their rights."[46] Organizations like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, and Council on American–Islamic Relations reported severe upticks in anti-Muslim hate crimes and backlash discrimination. Estimates ranged from around five hundred to well over

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[43] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Erosion of American National Interests," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (1997): 39.
[44] Huntington, "Erosion," 39.
[45] Daniel Pipes and Khalid Durán, "Muslim Immigrants in the United States," *Center for Immigration Studies*, 1 August 2002, 6.
[46] Kam C. Wong, "The USA Patriot Act: A Policy of Alienation," *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 12, no. 161 (2006): 165.

one thousand cases. Two scholars quoted Arab Detroiters as saying, "The 9/11 attacks set us back a hundred years."[47]

Dearborn's reputation as America's Arab capital made it a special target of anti-Muslim hatred. As early as 12 September 2001, rumors surfaced and spread that Arab Americans had been seen in Dearborn's restaurants and cafés cheering at TV footage of the Twin Towers burning. The Islamic Center of America—purported to be the largest mosque in North America—faced repeated attacks. Arab American Dearbornites began flying American flags outside their homes; some cut their beards, stopped wearing *hijabs*, or Americanized their names to appear less Middle Eastern. Some stopped sending remittances to family members in the homeland out of fear of being accused of supporting terrorist organizations.[48]

In the fall of 2001, Adel Hammoud, campaigning against the incumbent Guido, was mounting the first serious campaign for Dearborn mayor by an Arab American Muslim. 11 September was the day of the mayoral primaries. Some of Hammoud's poll workers faced anger from white residents who said they wouldn't be voting for a Muslim on a day like that; some Arab Americans feared leaving their homes to vote. Guido was reelected. One of the most severe attacks came on 18 September 2001, when a Yemeni Muslim man, Ali Almansoop, was murdered in Dearborn by Brent Seever, who told police that he was motivated by "all this terroristic activity." (Seever is now serving a life sentence.)[49]

The attacks did not let up in the following years. In 2012, members of the Christian evangelist Bible Believers held a demonstration at the Arab International Festival in Dearborn—the largest annual outdoor gathering of Arab Americans in the United States—carrying signs and wearing shirts that said, among other things, "Islam Is A Religion of Blood and Murder," "Turn or Burn," and "Jesus Is the Way, the Truth and the Life. All Others Are Thieves and Robbers." One of the members carried a severed pig's head on a spike, believing that such a grievous insult to Islam would keep Muslims from approaching. The next year, due to safety concerns, Dearborn Mayor John O'Reilly moved the festival from an

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[47] Human Rights Watch, "The September 11 Backlash," accessed 17 January 2024; Sarah Rahal, "How 9/11 attacks galvanized Michigan's Arab American, Muslim residents," *Detroit News*, 7 September 2021; Howell and Shryock, "Cracking Down," 444.

[48] Janet L. Langlois, "'Celebrating Arabs': Tracing Legend and Rumor Labyrinths in Post-9/11 Detroit," *The Journal of American Folklore* 118, no. 468 (2005): 219–224; Streeter, "'This Is Personal'"; Rahal, "9/11 attacks"; Detroit Historical Society, "Islamic Center of America," Encyclopedia of Detroit, accessed 12 January 2024.

[49] Warikoo, "Historic run for Dearborn mayor"; Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 18; Michigan Department of Corrections, "Brent David Seever," accessed 1 February 2024.

open-access street to a public park where access could be restricted. In the years following, the festival became too much of a costly liability, with the constant fear of protests by Christian proselytizers, and was shut down. In 2013, an article by the satirical *National Report* mocked right-wing paranoia of Islam by claiming that Dearborn had implemented sharia law.[50] The story spread among outraged conservatives to the point that O'Reilly released a statement clarifying that the city was, in fact, still governed by the federal and Michigan constitutions.[51]

In October 2015, Fox News aired a segment in which host Jesse Watters interviewed Arab Dearbornites. Toward the end of the segment, one man—one of two white interviewees—said a woman had been stoned in the city a year prior, and that he had read of an honor killing because a girl had purchased condoms. Both claims were false but went unquestioned in the report. The same month, a protest against "the evils of radical Islam" by open-carriage gun advocates was outnumbered by counter-protesters. A month later, FactCheck.org, a project of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, dispelled rumors of a pro-ISIS rally in Dearborn. The rally was real but was *anti*-ISIS, including a sign reading "99.9% of ISIS victims are Muslims" and a chant calling for "No more ISIS in the world." In 2016, a Pew Research Center survey found that roughly half of the American public felt that "at least some" Muslim Americans were anti-American and twenty-five percent felt either that "almost all" or "about half" were. The poll also found that about half of the American public thought Islam was more likely to cause violence than other religions; a similar amount were "very concerned" about the rise of Islamic extremism in the U.S.[52]

As the Israel–Hamas war has continued and Dearbornite protests have increased, Islamophobic attacks have once again surged. On 2 February 2024, Steven Stalinsky, the executive director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, published an opinion piece in the

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[50] Sharia—"the correct path" in Arabic—is the divine path that Muslims follow to lead a moral life close to God. It is derived from the Quran—believed to be the direct revealed word of God—and *hadith*, thousands of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammed. Islamic law is distinct from sharia: Sharia is the perfect, immutable law understood only by God; Islamic law is an imperfect interpretation (Robinson 2021).

[51] Robert Snell, "Anti-Muslim group wins appeal in Arab fest case," *Detroit News*, 28 October 2015; Niraj Warikoo, "Mich. Arab festival being moved after religious tensions," *USA Today*, 29 April 2013; Hassan Khalifeh, "Arab festivals are popular everywhere, when will Dearborn's return?" *Arab American News*, 13 September 2018; David Neiwert, "Dearborn, Mich.: We Are Not Under Shariah Law!" *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 5 November 2013.

[52] Fox News, "Watters' World: Dearborn edition," *YouTube*, 5 October 2015, 2:55; CBS Detroit, "Armed Protesters To Rally Against 'Evils Of Radical Islam' Saturday In Dearborn," *CBS News*, 9 October 2015; Niraj Warikoo, "Rally against Islam outnumbered by counterprotesters," *Detroit Free Press*, 10 October 2015; Raymond McCormack, "Dearborn's Anti-ISIS Rally," *FactCheck.org*, 1 December 2015; Pew Research Center, "Republicans Prefer Blunt Talk About Islamic Extremism, Democrats Favor Caution," 3 February 2016.

Wall Street Journal with a title harkening back to the reputation Dearborn earned in the wake of 11 September 2001: "Welcome to Dearborn, America's Jihad Capital." In the article, Stalinsky wrote that "[t]housands" of Dearbornites "march[ed] in support of Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran." He mentioned possible terrorist sleeper cells in Dearborn and called "[w]hat's happening in Dearborn" "potentially a national-security issue affecting all Americans." In reaction to the wave of online Islamophobia that followed, Mayor Hammoud increased police presence in places of worship and major infrastructure points, fearing physical backlash of the sort that has plagued the city for decades. On X, he told his constituents to "stay vigilant."[53]

The continued proliferation of widespread American Islamophobia has put Arab and Muslim Americans in a unique position wherein they are presumptively guilty of terrorism and must constantly prove that they are "moderate Muslims who are good American citizens" and not the "extremists" in the "main institutions of American Islam."[54] Arab American identity is "an identity in question" that "must continually prove itself" of being loyal to the United States above all else.[55] The burden of proof falls to them.[56]

As early as 2003, one scholar predicted that "greater Muslim and Arab influence in local governance is a demographic inevitability."[57] In recent years, as Dearborn's Arab population has continued to grow, this prediction has come to fruition. In 2008, Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian American, became the first Muslim to serve in the Michigan Legislature. In 2019, Tlaib became one of the first Muslim women elected to the U.S. Congress, alongside Minnesota's Ilhan Omar. Tlaib currently represents Michigan's twelfth district in the U.S. House of Representatives, which includes Detroit, Dearborn, and its neighboring municipalities. Mustapha Hammoud, the son of the erstwhile mayoral candidate Adel Hammoud, now sits on Dearborn's city council. In 2022, the thirty-three-year-old Abdullah Hammoud, the son of Lebanese immigrants, became

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[53] Steven Stalinsky, "Welcome to Dearborn, America's Jihad Capital," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 February 2024; Amelia Benavides-Colón, "Dearborn mayor calls for increased police in response to Wall Street Journal opinion piece," *Detroit Free Press*, 3 February 2024; Abdullah Hammoud, "Effective immediately - Dearborn police will ramp up its presence across all places of worship and major infrastructure points," *X*, 3 February 2024.
[54] Pipes and Durán, "Muslim Immigrants," 6.
[55] Baker et al., *Citizenship and Crisis*, 13–14.
[56] Hassan Hosseini, "Dearborn-Detroit Michigan: Ethnography of Faith and the U.S. Domestic and Foreign Policy Axis," *Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 81.
[57] Belton, "Way of the Prophet," 18.

Dearborn's first Muslim mayor. (Abdullah Hammoud has no relation to either Adel or Mustapha Hammoud.)[58]

"I think we've come quite a way as America, but something happens where you realize we actually haven't made much progress," Abdullah Hammoud said in a 2021 interview with *Detroit News*, during his mayoral campaign. "Every time I feel like we've made steps forward as a society, there's an event that unfolds, a new group is under the microscope and they're being attacked all over again."[59]

VI. AMERICANIZATION, ARABIZATION, AND THE GOOD IMMIGRANT STORY

Arab immigrants to the United States face a host of inner questions upon arrival: Should one assimilate into American culture, or assert one's cultural and religious heritage as a means of preserving it? Does Americanization make one *more* American, or is the point of being American that one can be explicitly multicultural? These questions do not subside as immigrants settle into American life, and different generations have answered these questions in different ways for different reasons. As Dearborn's Arab American population becomes increasingly established, subsequent generations seem to have a stronger perception of themselves as inherently American and feel less need to prove themselves as such. What "inherently American," means, however, has various answers.

In the past, the general feeling has been that immigrants should assimilate into the prevailing (white) American culture; it is from this idea that the famous "melting pot" analogy was born. In 1924, the Lebanese American scholar Philip Hitti argued, in reference to Middle Eastern immigrants, that Christianity's ability to inculcate in all its adherents the same beliefs made it a tool of national unification. "The more the immigrants enter into the religious life of America," he wrote, "the better and quicker they become Americans."[60] In 1997, Huntington feared that nascent ideas of multiculturalism were threatening this cohesive Christian American culture. "The ideologies of multiculturalism and diversity," he wrote, "deny the existence of a

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[58] Rashida Tlaib, "About Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib," *U.S. House of Representatives*, accessed 18 January 2024; Courtney Connley, "Meet Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, the first Muslim women elected to Congress," *CNBC*, 7 November 2018; City of Dearborn, "City Council Members," accessed 18 January 2024; Liz Crampton, "Finally, the largest Muslim population in the nation has an Arab American mayor. And he has big plans," *Politico*, 20 September 2023; Streeter, "'This is Personal.'"

[59] Rahal, "9/11 attacks."

[60] Philip Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1924), 121.

common culture in the United States, denounce assimilation, and promote the primacy of racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings."[61] Huntington's theory ignores that for refugees, participation in their homeland culture is impossible and yet simultaneously the only connection to their heritage; one can neither fully embrace nor fully let go of their homeland.[62]

The liberal–conservative distinction is particularly prominent. Scholarship often asserts that immigrants who arrived earlier (the "first wave," which landed in America before the 1990s) are more conservative than those who arrived later (the "second wave," which arrived in the twenty-first century). By the 1970s, researchers were already seeing that the second generation was not as strict in its observance of Muslim traditions like Ramadan, praying five times daily, and attending mosque on Fridays. One essay argued the opposite: The dislocation of immigration made people long for the religious rituals' familiarity, pushing new immigrants to participate more strongly in Islam. A 2015 study in Dearborn found that second-wave Iraqi Shi'a attended mosque less frequently than the first wave, which the author hypothesized might have been due both to the second wave's further assimilation into secular society and the first wave's longing for the homeland, which mosque attendance helped abate. However, second-wave immigrants donated more heavily to mosques, which the author attributed to guilt for lack of attendance that betrayed cultural and religious heritage's continued influence.[63]

While the pressures of Islamophobia and the constant requirement to prove one's loyalty to America pushed earlier generations to Americanize, later generations, which feel more embedded in the United States, have done the opposite. In the face of attempts to erase their culture, younger Arab Americans have publicly embraced cultural differences as a way to combat discrimination. In some cases, the result has been a marked conservatism that shocks American liberals. In recent years, conservative Muslims have been at the center of attempts to ban books discussing LGBTQ+ content in Dearborn public schools. Amer Ghalib, the mayor of Hamtramck, a city near Dearborn, banned flying LGBTQ+, ethnic, and political flags on government property. (A federal lawsuit was filed alleging that the ban violates the First Amendment's right to free speech and the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. It

[61] Huntington, "Erosion," 33.
[62] Shoeb, Weinstein, and Halpern, "Religious Time and Space," 449–450.
[63] Wigle, "Community in Michigan," 160; Pipes and Durán, "Muslim Immigrants," 4; John Cappucci, "Wandering Worshippers: Mosque Attendance Patterns among First- and Second-Wave Iraqi-Shi'a Muslims in Dearborn, Michigan, USA," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 4 (2015): 575–576.

argued that the ban was content-based because prisoner-of-war and national flags have been flown.)[64]

One of Zeineddine's stories deals with the widespread transphobia in Dearborn's Muslim community. The protagonist, a man experiencing gender dysphoria, lives in fear of being found out. If he is, he could be beaten or killed, he would lose his friends and successful butchering business, and his family would reject him. However, the Muslim American constituency remains, as a whole, liberal. In 2022, forty-six percent of Muslim Americans identified as Democrats, forty percent as Independents, and ten percent as Republicans.[65]

Arab Americans who have fled U.S.- and Israeli-incited conflicts must balance perceptions of both a Good and Bad United States. The U.S. destroyed their homelands, but also provided a place to escape to, allowing them an opportunity at a new life. The U.S. paints them as terrorists and spies but also allows them to express themselves in a relatively pluralistic, democratic society. The U.S. forced them to leave their relatives, but also provides an extended kin network of relatives and friends, in both their host country and their homeland.[66]

For some, however, the harm that the U.S. has dealt cannot be compared to the benefits American life provides. In the face of such constant discrimination, some have taken roads previously forged by socialist, pan-Arab, and pan-African ideologies. These Arab Americans further the sentiment of being a singular transnational pan-Arab people under siege by the U.S. government, in the U.S. and the Middle East. They have disidentified with the prevailing Christian American culture, instead identifying with a counter-hegemonic United States of the oppressed, the Global South, and people of color who share a commitment to racial justice and ending U.S. imperialism.[67]

VII. CONCLUSION: CONTINUED DISLOCATION

If there is any through line in the story of the Arab capital of America, it is a history of displacement throughout the Middle East that has pushed wave after wave of desperate migrants

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[64] Rignall, "Building an Arab-American Community"; Steve Neavling, "How some Michigan Muslims united with extremist Republicans against LGBTQ+ rights," *Michigan Advance*, 3 October 2023; Niraj Warikoo, "Lawsuit alleges LGBTQ+ flag ban on Hamtramck city property is unconstitutional," *Detroit Free Press*, 7 November 2023.
[65] Zeineddine, "Yusra," 185–187; Dalia Mogahed, Erum Ikramullah, and Youssef Chouhoud, "American Muslim Poll 2022: A Politics and Pandemic Status Report," *Institute for Social Policy and Understanding*, 25 August 2022.
[66] Shoeb, Weinstein, and Halpern, "Religious Time and Space," 451–452.
[67] Naber, "Transnational Families," 163.

out of homelands shattered by war and into the unwelcome arms of the very enemy that destroyed their homes. The waves came when Lebanon erupted in a civil war sparked by Israel's displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians; when Israel occupied Palestine; when Israel invaded Lebanon; when the U.S. invaded Iraq; when the U.S. invaded Iraq again; and when Israel invaded Lebanon again. Now, Israel is once again occupying Palestine, and, once again, Dearborn is intimately connected. Palestinian Dearbornites watch, helpless, as their homeland is destroyed and their people are slaughtered by the same weapons that have done so before, and have done the same to their friends and neighbors. As Arab American Dearbornites have watched assault after brutal assault on their homelands, they have simultaneously dealt with continued attacks on their identities as Americans. They have been forced to continuously balance Americanization and their heritage, as well as reckon with what it means to live in a country that has caused so much of their suffering. In the *New York Times*, Hammoud spoke about the history of Middle Eastern conflicts pushing immigrants to Dearborn, chasing the American dream and "the promise that their voices would be heard and valued." To see the U.S. government have such little regard for Middle Eastern Americans, wrote Hammoud, is a "betrayal [that] feels uniquely *un*-American."[68]

On 11 January 2024, the American and British militaries bombed more than sixty targets used by the Yemeni Houthi rebels, responding to Houthi attacks against international maritime vessels in the Red Sea since the start of the Israel–Hamas war. The Houthis have been fighting the Yemeni Civil War since 2014, a conflict in which the U.S. military has had a significant hand, but, until the recent resurgence of bombings, had nearly left. On 18 January, the U.S. military conducted the fifth strike on Houthis in the week since the first bombing; Biden acknowledged that so far American efforts had not stopped the Houthi attacks on maritime vessels, but said unequivocally that the efforts would continue.[69] One thing seems clear: Both sides are bent on continuing, inevitably leading to a larger-scale conflict in the region that will create more death, more displacement, and more refugees. As in 1948, 1975, 1982, 1991, 2003, 2006, and 2023, many of those refugees will make their way to Dearborn, Michigan.

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[68] Hammoud, "My City."

[69] Lolita C. Baldor and Tara Copp, "US, British militaries launch massive retaliatory strike against Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen," *Associated Press*, 11 January 2024; Luke Hartig and Oona A. Hathaway, "Still at War: The United States in Yemen," *Just Security*, 24 March 2022.

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