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

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

Palestine is absolutely central to this disconcerting situation. Beginning in the 1960s, groups long silenced by white supremacy fought bitter struggles for the establishment of race and ethnic studies programs in the academy. They demanded an end to their communities' neglect and misrepresentation in university curricula and advanced claims for a decolonized academy that not only recognized but lifted up their communities. Yet more than fifty years later, we find that scholars of Palestinians, and Arabs more broadly, in the United States have largely been denied a seat at the race and ethnic studies table. Minus a few notable exceptions, it is still difficult to major in or even find courses in Arab American studies, let alone Palestinian diaspora studies, at most universities and colleges in the United States. Access to grant funding for humanities or social science research on these communities is little better than it was fifty years ago. (It is notable, but I think no accident, that today research on American Muslims⁵ is gaining in visibility and seems to be facing fewer obstacles to recognition, especially if its contextual framework evidences historical amnesia, is detached from U.S. empire, and evokes liberal multicultural frameworks of religious difference.⁶) This predicament of obscurity results in large part from the decades-long marginalization and silencing of a body of scholarship that gives Palestinians and Arab Americans voice in the United States, scholarship that rightly

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

Anthropologist Nabeel Abraham noted in 1994 that while the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed little interest in investigating hate crimes against Arab Americans, it was actively surveilling and harassing them as potential terror threats, even though there had not been a single act of Arab terrorism in the United States.¹⁷ (The “Muslim ban” was similarly based on fabricated threat allegations.¹⁸) Equally important but far less studied were the organized efforts to thwart Arab American mobilizations against such repression and representation

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

jobs, and dissuaded from studying topics of our choosing if they were about Arab Americans. Until the post-9/11 era, there were few places we could publish scholarly research on Arab Americans, except in books on Arab Americans, published by Arab Americans, that were mainly read by Arab Americans and scholars of Arab America. We were sidelined, siloed, and institutionally silenced. We had no home. We were not part of Middle East studies, were rejected by race and ethnic studies, and fought for decades for inclusion in the programs of our professional associations.³⁰ There were almost no places we could teach Arab American studies or obtain research grants to doq 1 0 0 1catest

and repression. They were, as I wrote in a 2002 piece for

means it will face fewer internal challenges. She identifies the “main task at hand” for PYM as learning how to function at multiple scales—local, national, transnational, and in the context

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

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

Whether considering Qutami’s call for rebuilding grassroots organizations, once the hallmark of the PLO in North America, or Desai’s invitation to promote more complex understandings of the bases for solidarity, all of this is work that must be done locally if we want to create strong and enduring movements that are interconnected nationally and transnationally. I thus conclude this journey through Arab American and Palestinian diaspora studies, which sought to explain why over the course of fifty years we have only a handful of studies of Palestinian

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

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

The Arab American Action Networks [*sic*] vision is for a strong Arab American community, whose members have power to make decisions about actions and policies that affect their lives; and have access to a range of social, political, cultural, and economic opportunities in a context of equity and social justice. Formed in 1995 by community activists, organizers, academics, professionals, and non-Arab allies, the AAAN became one of the very first non-profit organizations providing services and adv (h)2.8 (a)187 (a, n)4.3 irganizeraea, nrnity, v

impactful work.”⁵² Resuturing the activism of the PLO era with the present, and indeed pointing out the line of continuity between them, the AAAN was able to secure financial

Endnotes

1. For example, Jen'nan Ghazal Read and Kristine J. Ajrouch, "Executive Summary, Pilot Census Study Report, Arab American Research Initiative" (unpublished report, Dearborn, MI: Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services [ACCESS], 2017). The data from this report were used to produce ACCESS, *Arab Americans: A Community Portrait*, n.d., <https://insight.livestories.com/s/v2/arab-american-heritage-v2/0adb9fd-937c-4f57-9dca-80b81ee46b9f/>.
2. Abdul Jalil Al-Tahir, "The Arab Community in the Chicago Area: A Comparative Study of the Christian-Syrians and the Muslim-Palestinians" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1952); Ali Shteiwi Zaghel, "Changing Patterns of Identification among Arab-Americans: The Palestinian Ramallites and the Christian Syrian-Lebanese" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, Evanston, 1976); Lawrence Oschinsky, "Islam in Chicago: Being a Study of the Acculturation of a Muslim-Palestinian Community in that City" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1947). While not a community study, the following article highlighted the impacts of remittances from Palestinians in the United States on a Palestinian village: Marisa Escibano and Nazmi El-Joubeh, "Migration and Change in a West Bank Village: The Case of Deir Dibwan," *JPS* 11, no. 1 (Autumn 1981): pp. 150–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536052>.
3. Randa Serhan, "Palestinian Weddings: Inventing Palestine in New Jersey," *JPS* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2008): pp. 21–37, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2008.37.4.21>

13. Alixa Na , “ e Early Arab Immigrant Experience” in *e Development of Arab American Identit* , ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 23–35, quote at p. 35.
14. M. C. Bassiouni, ed., *e Civil Rights of Arab-Americans: e Special Measures*,_ information paper no. 10 (North Dartmouth, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1974); Michael R. Fischbach, “Government Pressures against Arabs in the United States,” *JPS* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1985): pp. 87–100, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536955>; and “Palestinian O ces in the United States: Microcosms of the Palestinian Experience,” *JPS* 48, no. 1 (Autumn 2018): pp. 104–18, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2018.48.1.104>. For explorations of Arab American activism at the time, see also Pamela E. Pennock, *e Rise of the Arab American Le : Activists, Allies, and eir Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Sally Howell, “Southend Struggles: Converging Narratives of an Arab/Muslim American Enclave,” *Mashriq and Mahjar* 3, no. 1 (2015): pp. 41–64, <https://doi.org/10.24847/33i2015.63>; and Suraya Khan, “Transnational Alliances: e AAUG’s Advocacy for Palestine and the ird World,” *Arab Studies Quarterl* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2018): pp. 53–72, <https://doi.org/10.13169/arabstudquar.40.1.0053>; and Qutami in this issue.
15. See Jack G. Shaheen, *e TV Arab* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984); “ e Comic Book Arab,” *e Link* 24, no. 5 (Nov–Dec. 1991); “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vili es a People,” *Annals of the American Academ of Political and Social Science*, no. 588 (July 2003): pp. 171–93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1049860>; *Reel Bad Arabs: How Holl wood Vili es a People* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2009); Laurence Michalak, *Cruel and Unusual: Negative Images of Arabs in American Popular Culture*, issue paper no. 15 (Washington, DC: Arab American Anti-discrimination Committee, 1988); Ronald Stockton, “Ethnic Archetypes and the Arab Image,” in *e Development of Arab-American Identit* , ed. Ernest McCarus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) pp. 119–54. Equally negative was the portrayal of Arabs in school textbooks: see Ayad Al-Qazzaz, “Images of the Arab in American Social Science Textbooks,” in *Arabs in America: M ths and Realities*, ed. Baha Abu-Laban and Faith T. Zeade (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975); Elizabeth Barlow, *Evaluation of Secondar -Level Textbooks for Coverage of the Middle East and North Africa*

21. Helen Samhan referred to this exclusion as “political racism.” See Helen Hatab Samhan, “Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab-American Experience,” in *Arabs in America* 10.11: QNO  

(AAAN, 1998), quote at p. 12, <https://aaan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AAANneedsassessment.pdf>.

48. See AAAN, *Meeting Community Needs*; and Cainkar, *The Arab American Action Network*.

49. We addressed the fact that Palestinians largely worked as shopkeepers in African American communities, that some Palestinian community poverty stemmed from employment as underpaid clerks working long hours, and that Palestinian shopkeepers had responded to pressure from Black leadership to hire African American clerks. We also noted that welfare reform would have negative impacts on Black communities and therein also affect Arab Americans. What we did not address was anti-Blackness, which was a concern of Markaz leadership, but by no means a community-wide concern.

50. Teresa Puente, "Arabs Built Solid Base in Chicago, Study Says," *Chicago Tribune*, 18 June 1998, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-06-18-9806180251-story.html>. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights sponsored our press conference.

51. See the grantee page for AAAN, CCT, <https://www.cct.org/what-we-offer/grants/arab-american-action-network/>. We later received a \$10,000 matching grant from the Chicago Department of Human Services.

52. Alinskyists are activists that deploy a well-known style of community organizing (hichicuiui/Actu ay o (t)6 (