Citizenship and Crisis

Arab Detroit After 9/11

Detroit Arab American Study Team

Citizenship and Crisis is a timely and important book. Based on a landmark survey of Arab Americans in the Detroit metropolitan area, it looks beyond community-held stereotypes of Arab-Americans to uncover the complex realities of their religious practices, cultural values, political views, and identities and provides a fascinating analysis of the many contradictions involved in being Arab-American today. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding Arab Americans in the United States. — NANCY FONER, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York

“It is an American nightmare to be Arab-American.”—NANCY FONER

“(continued from front flap) Detroit, but even when Arab Americans oppose U.S. policies, they express more confidence in U.S. institutions than do non-Arabs in the general population. The Arabs of greater Detroit, whether native- or foreign-born, or permanent residents are part of a part of a heterogeneous and complex population. They are part of a historical and cultural landscape that bonds them, when, and to what extent they can call themselves American. When examined against the complex backdrop, the results of the Detroit Arab American Study demonstrate that the narrative, current in American society that Arabs are not like “us” is simply inaccurate. Consequently and Given the high stakes of the sweeping and impetuous argument for putting to rest this exhausted cultural argument for putting to rest this exhausted cultural and political misconception.

The Detroit Arab American Study is a collaboration between the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research and holds the Jack D. Sparks Whirlpool Corporation Research Professorship. It is the focus of this book, Arabs express pride in being American at rates higher than the general population. In nine wide-ranging essays, the authors reveal that, despite an ever-shifting definition of Arab-American citizenship and identity have been shaped by the chronic tension between social inclusion and exclusion that has been central to this population’s experience. According to the landmark Detroit Arab American Study, which surveyed more than 1,000 Arab Americans, these questions took on new urgency after 9/11. The city’s Arabs are now receiving more mainstream institutional, educational, and political support than Detroit, nor did it alter the identities that prevail there. The contradictions and dangers of being Arab and American are keenly felt in the current political and historical landscape that limits how, and to what extent Arabs can call themselves American, and is the focus of this book. Arabs express pride in being American at rates higher than the general population. In nine wide-ranging essays, the authors reveal that, despite an ever-shifting definition of Arab-American citizenship and identity have been shaped by the chronic tension between social inclusion and exclusion that has been central to this population’s experience.

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— RICHARD ALBA, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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Detroit, but even when Arab Americans oppose U.S. policies, they express more confidence in U.S. institutions than do non-Arabs in the general population. The Arabs of greater Detroit, whether native-born, naturalized, or permanent residents are part of a political and historical landscape that limits how, when, and to what extent they can call themselves American. When analyzed against the complex backdrop of the results of the Detroit Arab American Study demonstrates that the survey, carried out in American society that Arabs are not like “us” is simply macabre.

Conclusion and Critique make a specific and important argument for putting to rest this exhausted cultural and political misrepresentation. The Detroit Arab American Study is a collaboration between the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan—Dearborn, and an advisory panel of community representatives from more than twenty social, religious, and social-service organizations. Wayne Baker is professor of management and organization and head of the Center for Arab American Studies at the University of Michigan. He is also a faculty associate at the Institute for Social Research and holds the Jack D. Sparks Whitcomb Corporation Research Professorship. Sally Bowell is assistant professor of history at the University of Michigan—Dearborn. Ann Abad is associate professor of political science at Princeton University. Ann Crisi Lin is associate professor of public policy and political science at the University of Michigan. Andrew Sirovich is Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. Ronald N. Stockton is professor of political science at the University of Michigan—Dearborn, and was formerly head of the Center for Arab American Studies. Mark Tessler is Senior J. F. Kellow Distinguished Professor of Political Science, vice president for International Affairs, and director of the Inter-University Institute at the University of Michigan.

"Covering a timely and important book. Based on a landmark survey of Arab Americans in the Detroit metropolitan area, the authors of these interdisciplinary articles have collaborated closely, greatly enhancing the significance and impact of their work. Meticulous statistical and ethnographic information informs each piece, and the theoretical focus throughout is on different discourses of citizenship. "The chapters all contribute to an extraordinarily compelling yet nuanced argument that, for America's Arab immigrants, their particular and unique history problematizes their attainment of full citizenship in the nation."

—KAREN E. LEONARD, professor of anthropology, University of California—Irvine

"In the most noble tradition of empirically grounded social science, Citizenship and Crisis lifts the veil of misinformation created by post-9/11 anxiety and xenophobia to reveal an Arab American community that is committed to American ideals and to U.S. society and struggling to gain acceptance here—its group, that bears little resemblance to the terrorists and fundamentalists branding American nightmares."—RICHARD ALBA, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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It is citizenship simply a legal status or does it describe a sense of belonging to a national community? For Arab Americans, these questions took on new urgency after 9/11, as the cultural context that has stigmatized and charted their community came to a head. Citizenship and Crisis argues that contemporary Arab-American citizenship and identity have been shaped by the chronic tension between social inclusion and exclusion that has been central to the population's experience. According to the landmark Detroit Arab American Study, which involved more than 1,000 Arab Americans and is the focus of this book, Arabs express pride in being American at rates higher than the general population. In nine wide-ranging essays, the authors of Citizenship and Crisis argue that the 9/11 backlash did not substantially transform the Arab community in Detroit, nor did it alter the identities that prevailed there. They are now receiving more mainstream institutional, educational, and political support than ever before, but they remain a constituency defined as essentially foreign. This paper analyzes the role of religion in cultural integration and identity formation, showing that Arab Americans' faith is not from the mainstream Arab Christians do. Arabs Americans adhere more strongly to traditional values than do other Detroit residents, regardless of religion. Active participation in the religious and cultural life of the Arab-American community can help defuse the tensions of education and income, yet assimilation to the American mainstream remains important for achieving broader social and political gains. The contradictions and dangers of being Arab and American are keenly felt in

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