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REBEL MUSIC

Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture

HISHAM D. AIDI

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For Randy Weston
and
Maurice El Medioni

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if changing, role. The truth is that the new generation of Gnawa musicians—the Gnawa reggae artists—are more concerned with explaining the political than with mediating the metaphysical. And when they cry, "*Dawina, dawina*—heal us, God," it is more a reference to the region's tortured politics than to spirit possession. As such, the *sintir,* whether daubed with henna or embroidered in red, yellow, and green, now represents memory and consciousness. In France and Belgium, the Gnawi is becoming a symbol of a new diaspora consciousness, an Africa-centered brand of European Muslim internationalism; in North Africa, the Gnawi stands for all that's been ignored and suppressed by the nation-state and dominant nationalism. On both sides of the Mediterranean, it's the music of postcolonial disaffection. In May 2011, Randy Weston and his longtime partner Abdellah El Gourd were honored in Manhattan by the Moroccan government. In front of hundreds of music aficionados, diplomats, women in caftans, and members of the Moorish Science Temple (in three-piece suits and tall fez hats), the Moroccan general consul in New York placed medals around the musicians' necks and congratulated them for their contribution to Moroccan culture. "I've been with the Gnawa for forty-five years," said Weston tearfully. "This music is the history of a people, songs about God and saints which enriched my life. I laid the music on the piano, but the real thing is in Morocco. And you can only absorb the Gnawa ancestors if you think of yourself not as Congolese or Senegalese or Moroccan, but as an African."

The new generation, for all its tinkering with tradition, shares the humanist vision of their Caribbean forebears—McKay, Weston—who brought Gnawa to Western attention. With a moral geography anchored in North Africa but extending east, south, and west toward the Caribbean, the new Gnawa generation see themselves as creators of what Claude McKay called an "Afro-Oriental" world.

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"We Ain't White"

Hours after explosions struck the Boston Marathon, speculation began about the identity and appearance of the bomber(s). Muslims prayed the perpetrator of the heinous act would not be a member of their community. Liberal commentators openly hoped the bomber would not be a dark-skinned individual, as that would trigger a backlash against minorities. If the perpetrator turned out to be a "white" American, they explained, he would be seen as another gun-obsessed "lone wolf," and the crime would remain in the domain of law enforcement. If the act was committed by a darker-hued person, that would be perceived as part of a larger, ideological, existential threat, drawing in the military and national security establishment; the political fallout would include more profiling and civil rights infringements, possibly even military operations and a foreign-policy shift. On April 18, three days after the tragedy, John King of CNN declared, based on a police tip, that the bombers were "dark-skinned." The frenzy of speculation over skin tone continued for days, reaching ridiculous proportions. When the younger Tsarnaev brother was found hiding in a boat in someone's backyard, one observer tweeted, "But is it a dark-skinned boat?"

Yet when it emerged that the perpetrators were white Chechens from the Caucasus—and quite literally Caucasian—commentators insisted, despite the brothers' phenotype and geographic origin, that they were not white. That the older brother was a permanent resident

and the younger brother was a U.S. citizen, and a weed-smoking hip-hop head and high-school wrestler, made no difference: "The perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing are not 'white Americans,'" stated *Commentary* magazine. For its special cover story on radicalization, *The Week* magazine actually darkened the skin of the two brothers. Meanwhile, liberal journalists, like Joan Walsh of *Salon* magazine, would ponder and lament "the determination to define the Tsarnaevs as non-white, no matter what the Census Bureau says."

The Boston tragedy brought to the mainstream a contradiction that Muslims in the U.S. have long been aware of: and that is just because the Census Bureau classifies Americans with roots in North Africa, the Middle East, and swaths of Central Asia as legally "white" does not mean they are considered white by society and public discourse or by other government agencies. Young Muslim activists of Iranian, Turkish, and Arab background have in the last decade been lobbying to have the American government recognize North African and Middle Eastern Americans as a minority. The push toward legal minority status is occurring beyond America's borders. Muslim communities across Europe and North America have been mobilizing around the national censuses in their respective countries, lobbying for a separate check box, and contesting the maps and geographic lines that underpin official racial and ethnic categories.

Dearborn is often described as "the Arab capital of America." Roughly one in every three Dearborn residents is Arab—generally of Yemeni, Lebanese, or Iraqi descent—part of an estimated 490,000 Arabs living in the greater Detroit area. Dearborn is home to the country's first halal McDonald's and KFC. Young, newly minted American diplomats are often sent here to achieve "cultural competency" before heading to the Middle East; delegations of European policymakers are given State Department–sponsored tours of the city to see how integrated American Muslims are. American presidential candidates visit during election season in search of the Arab-American vote. Dearborn also boasts the first largely Muslim public high school in America. Fordson High, in the city's blue-collar eastern section, is itself a fas-

cinating mixture of Islam and Americana. The cafeteria serves halal food. Cheerleaders wear head scarves. Parents chaperone students to the end-of-year prom.

In early October 2009, the National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC) held its annual conference in Dearborn, bringing together leaders from around the country to discuss issues affecting the community. But between panels and in the hallways of the conference center, people were chatting not about the census but about "the amazing Rima." Two weeks earlier, Rima Fakih, a girl from Dearborn, born in southern Lebanon, qualified to represent Michigan at the Miss USA 2010 competition. Her victory was the topic of discussion at restaurants along Warren Avenue and on Detroit's Arabic radio station. At the conference, community leaders were pondering the meaning of her victory for Muslim women: Would having an Arab Muslim girl at a Miss USA pageant help mainstream American Muslim identity? Would it help counter negative images of Muslim women? Opinion was split: one camp cautioned not to place too much importance on beauty pageants ("Having women strut in evening gowns and swimsuits is *not* a sign of progress"), while others argued that beauty pageants can shape impressions, recalling how in 1927 Hannah Joseph, a Syrian-American, was selected as the first runner-up at the International Pageant of Pulchritude in Galveston, Texas—and how that helped the Syrian community's struggles for legal white status.

The subject of this year's NNAAC conference is the 2010 census and "minority status" for Arab-Americans, and that is the topic foremost on the mind of Helen Samhan as she paces down the hallway. Dressed in a white shirt, her brown hair in a ponytail, this sixty-year-old sociologist is rushing to address a group of census volunteers and community organizers (Egyptians, Palestinians, Somalis, Sudanese, Syrians) from around the country. A longtime activist, Samhan—deputy director of the Arab American Institute—is leading the 2010 census awareness campaign, and is asking the attendees to get their communities counted. "We have to get counted. Race and ethnic data is used to enforce civil rights law," she pleads to a roomful of organizers. "Data gathered from the survey helps disburse nearly 400

billion dollars in federal funding—we could use some of that funding. We *have* to get counted." Pointing to an image of the new census form projected on a wall, she circles the different categories and boxes: "Please check 'Other' and write in 'Arab.'" Helen cautions the attendants not to write down their national origin as, say, Egyptian, Mauritanian, or Syrian, as that would be coded "White" by the Census Bureau.

"We have teams of volunteers who can explain this in detail to you," says Helen. "The 2010 census form has also been translated into Arabic. Please tell your constituencies they have nothing to fear—the information is confidential. We believe the last census, which estimated the Arab-American community to be at 1.2 million, missed two-thirds of our community. We don't want that to happen again."

The activism around the national census in the U.S. is being undertaken by younger Muslim Americans who came of age during the Bush era, under the Patriot Act, who witnessed the impact of policies of deportation, rendition, profiling, and wiretapping on relatives and neighbors. These young activists, mostly lawyers and graduate students, draw on the work of Howard Winant, the eminent race sociologist at UC Santa Barbara, who two decades ago with his colleague Michael Omi made a powerful case for minority status, arguing that the ability of racially based movements—first of African-Americans, then of Latinos and Asians—to gain political recognition and minority status "permitted the entry of millions of racial minority group members into the political process." In an often-cited passage from their pioneering book *Racial Formation in the United States,* Winant explained the importance of racial classification: "How one is categorized is far from a merely academic or even personal matter. Such matters as access to employment, housing, or other publically or privately valued goods; social program design and the disbursement of local, state, and federal funds; or the organization of elections (among many other issues) are directly affected by racial classification and the recognition of 'legitimate' groups. The determination of racial categories is thus an intensely political process."

How Muslims in America are "racialized" has emerged as a hot topic debated by scholars, activists, and policymakers. The French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that state policy has been critical to the racialization of the world; for centuries, nation-states created and re-created differences (what he called "caesuras") within human populations at the national and global scale so as to be able to manage these populations. Racialization, in this perspective, is a very fluid process; race and racial categories are not fixed, but constructed through politics, and groups can experience "racial shifts." Thus, in the American experience, groups not categorized as "white" can attain legal "white" status and claim a range of benefits accorded to whites, as happened with the Irish in 1878 and then Arab immigrants in 1943; likewise, groups previously considered white can become a "nonwhite" racial minority, as happened with Hispanics, and then with Pakistani and Indian Americans in 1978. But racialization is not only a top-down process driven by state power. There is also "racialization from below," wherein social movements lobby for new categories and the expansion or elimination of old ones.

Scholars have recently argued that a transition of sorts—a "racial shift"—is taking place among North Africans and Middle Easterners in America, who although legally classified as white by the census are treated by government agencies and society as a nonwhite minority. John Tehranian, a Los Angeles–based law professor and activist, has repeatedly called on Iranians, Turks, Afghans, and Arabs in the U.S. to form a pan-ethnic Middle Eastern American identity movement and lobby for a separate check-off box on the census. In a series of articles published in law journals after 9/11, Tehranian described how while discrimination against Middle Eastern Americans had risen precipitously as a result of hate crimes and policies associated with the War on Terror, Middle Eastern Americans could do little about this, since they are not considered a minority in official government data. In his book *Whitewashed,* released in the lead-up to the 2010 census, Tehranian speaks directly to the dilemma of "compulsory whiteness."

But no pan-Islamic or Middle Eastern movement has emerged in the U.S. This is partly due to political and cultural differences among Muslim Americans and Middle Easterners. What has emerged is a

host of interrelated campaigns—a Lebanese-American campaign, a Nubian and Sudanese campaign, an Iranian-American campaign—all calling for *racial* minority status at either the federal or the state level. These small but intense campaigns, led by young lawyers and students and mostly clustered around the University of California campuses, are trying to expand the country's labels of ethnic identification. To evade discriminatory immigration and naturalization laws, the early Arab immigrants to America—largely Christians who came from Syria in the early 1900s—tried to show that they were of the same (Caucasian) stock and civilization as other Americans, and struggled to demonstrate "sameness." Today's generation is loudly claiming difference and lobbying to *not* be counted as white.

The contested, shifting racial status of North African and Middle Easterners in America is a product of a number of factors: the U.S.'s complex and changing relationship with the Middle East; the particular mapping and labeling of Muslim regions by American cartographers at the State Department and Census Bureau (whereby, for instance, Chechnya is labeled "white" but Azerbaijan is "Some Other Race"); and, finally, the changing significance of minority status and criteria for membership in that category in post–civil rights America.

Jim Crow Arabia

In his six-hundred-page epic novel, *Cities of Salt,* the Saudi author Abdelrahman Munif traces the history of the Arabian peninsula from the 1930s onward, starting with the arrival of American oil prospectors. The novel begins at the oasis of Wadi al-Uyun, a lush, abundant area that has long nourished the local Bedouins. The image of a paradise on earth is suddenly disrupted by the arrival of Arabic-speaking American oil prospectors. The Americans soon return with their bulldozers ("yellow iron hulks") and begin tearing up the oasis groves, sweeping away the oasis dwellers and their families. The story then shifts from the oasis to the coastal town of Harran, where the oilmen are building a port and a pipeline linking the town to the

wells they have drilled. The Americans build a small city, with an area called "American Harran," where they live, and a district called "Arab Harran," to house Arab workers and the large number of foreign laborers who are brought in.

One often-quoted passage from *Cities of Salt* involves Munif's description of the newly built city of Harran and the segregated living quarters of American Harran and Arab Harran: "The people of Harran looked at their faces and then at each other . . . Why did they have to live like this, while the Americans lived so differently? Why were they barred from going near an American house, even from looking at the swimming pool or standing for a moment in the shade of one of their trees? . . . Juma never hesitated to lash out with his whip when he found the workers in 'restricted areas.' The Americans had erected signposts warning them against loitering or going near most of the places, and they had even put barbed wire in the sea to keep them at a distance." Munif's references to barbed wires and "restricted areas" were long thought to be allegorical, symbols of separation in a metaphor-laden work of fiction. But recent research has shown that the novelist was not engaging in magical realism.

In *America's Kingdom,* political scientist Robert Vitalis set out to write a history of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), set up in Saudi Arabia after World War II, and to show how this company—which at its founding was the U.S.'s largest overseas private enterprise—was critical to the American-Saudi relationship. As he researched Aramco's operations in the oil town of Dhahran in the 1940s and 1950s, Vitalis found that social arrangements in that town rested on a set of exclusionary practices and norms imported from the American West and Southwest, and his book soon turned out to be "an account of building a Jim Crow enclave on the eastern shore of Saudi Arabia at the end of World War II." Aramco's compounds were, Vitalis notes, a microcosm of the American racial order adapted to an Arabian context (not unlike American oil operations in Venezuela, Colombia, and Indonesia). Housing barracks were segregated; Americans who had contact with nearby Arab families were deported; Saudi workers were prohibited from living with their families and denied entry into the Aramco company cinema. Similarly, Chevron, which

discovered oil in Bahrain in 1932, built up camps "divided into separate reservations, in this case, for Anglo-Saxons, Bahrainis, Iraqis, and Indians respectively." As described in *Cities of Salt*, the compounds were seething cauldrons of worker protest, stoppages, and confrontations at the management level between Arab, Italian, or Asian managers, and their bosses, often from Texas. Protests against Aramco's Jim Crow system started almost immediately, with a strike in 1944, and continued sporadically until June 14, 1956, when Saudi workers rose up and stormed the camp—the incident that inspired Munif's novel and led the Saudi government to ban strikes.

This history of Jim Crow practices in Arabia is today being closely studied by the Muslim-minority-status advocates, since the current policy debate over Middle Eastern racial classification in America has roots in the U.S.'s early expansion into the Middle East.

When the 1910 census was undertaken, Syrians, Palestinians, Armenians, Turks, and others from the Eastern Mediterranean were categorized as "Asiatic," or nonwhite, and were denied the right to naturalize. Chinese, Burmese, Japanese, South Asian, Hawaiian, and Filipino applicants all went to court to demonstrate their racial eligibility to naturalize, but Syrians were disproportionately represented in the racial prerequisites cases heard in U.S. federal courts between 1909 and 1923. And they were largely successful in making their case, highlighting their economic affluence and using their Christian background to make religious and civilizational arguments in favor of pseudoscientific as well as unpopular understandings of whiteness.

The early Syrian migrants were so successful in demonstrating their whiteness that Arabs (and Iranians) would be unaffected by the Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, whereby Congress designated a geographical area demarcating the boundaries of western Asia and specifying areas from which the U.S. would accept immigrants. Fragments of the modern-day Arab world were included in the "barred zone"—slivers of modern-day Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen—but North Africa and the Levant, the vast part of the Arab world, along with Iran, were left out. "Arabs,"

as sociologist Louise Cainkar has written, "were purposely excluded from immigration legislation that established the racial barrier of the Asia Barred Zone." This was because in the 1910s the U.S. was more worried about East Asian immigration (the "yellow peril") than Arab immigration, but also due to effective lobbying by the Syrian community. The Syrians successfully demonstrated that they did not come from "Turkey in Asia," so that by the early teens, Syrians in America were, in the eyes of the census, officially considered white. The Syrians underscored their Christian identity and stressed that their land of birth was closer to Europe than to either Africa or Asia. The insistence on Syria's geographic detachment from Asia and Africa had local aims as well—to prevent their being subject to any of the exclusionary laws directed at Asians and blacks in America, a strategy that would create tensions between the Arabs and these other communities.

As Muslim Arabs began to trickle into the country, the racial status of Arabs in America grew complicated. The Muslim newcomers could not use their faith to make religious arguments for whiteness. One of the first Muslims to petition for citizenship was Ahmed Hassan, who in 1942 appeared in front of a court in Detroit, a city that was slowly becoming home to a large community of Arab migrants who arrived to work in the auto industry. The presiding judge, Arthur Tittle, argued that Hassan, "an Arab," was "indisputably dark brown in color," and "a strong burden of proof devolves upon him to establish that he is a white person within the meaning of the [naturalization] act." Although Hassan's attorney argued that the plaintiff was born in the southwestern part of the Arabian peninsula—which fell outside the Asiatic Barred Zone—his petition was denied. Judge Tittle found that argument beside the point, though he did consider geography—Yemen's distance from a European border, as compared with Syria's—and religion when he denied the applicant. "Apart from the dark skin of the Arabs," wrote Tittle, "it is well known that they are a part of the Mohammedan world and that a wide gulf separates their culture from that of the predominately Christian peoples of Europe."

As more legal court battles arose around the naturalization of Arab Muslims, the Immigration and Naturalization Service undertook a review of the question of Arab Muslim classification. In 1943,

less then a year after Hassan's case, the government issued a strongly worded statement affirming the eligibility of Arab Muslims to naturalize. Contravening the Hassan court ruling, the INS statement declared "a person of Arabian race *is eligible to naturalization.*" The INS declared that Arabs—of whatever religious background—were white and fully eligible for immigration and naturalization because of "shared civilization" between the Near East and the West. When Mohamed Mohriez, described as "an Arab born in Sanhy, Badan, Arabia," petitioned for citizenship in 1944, the court allowed him to naturalize. In contrast to earlier rulings that had accented the vast distance separating Arabs from European culture, Charles Wyzanski, the presiding judge, argued that the Arabs could be considered white because they had absorbed enough European culture through their role as transmitters of European civilization: "The Arab people stand as one of the chief channels by which the traditions of white Europeans, especially the ancient Greek traditions, have been carried into the present," and therefore, "the Arab passes muster as white."

The Arab Muslim's rapid "racial shift" from nonwhite to white was largely due to postwar politics and the emergence of the U.S. as a superpower with a presence in the Middle East. Before the war was over, geopolitical considerations had prompted state officials to remove racial requisites to immigration. On October 11, 1943, President Roosevelt appealed to Congress to rescind the Chinese Exclusion Act (introduced in 1882) in recognition of China's partnership in the war; Chinese immigrants were finally eligible for citizenship. In July 1946, a series of presidential proclamations and statutes granted the Philippines independence and allowed for limited Filipino and Indian immigration. In the early years of the Cold War, as it became evident that race would be used as an ideological cudgel by China and the Soviet Union, immigration policy went from being the domestic domain of Congress to a "focus of the executive branch as a tool of foreign policy." Foreign-policy elites saw treating Arabs as legally white as a way to build relations with Arab states already being wooed by the Soviet Union. As Judge Wyzanski wrote, "We as a country have learned that policies of rigid exclusion are not only false to our profession of democratic liberalism but repugnant to our vital interests as

a world power"; his decision to grant Arabs in America legal status as whites was necessary "to promote friendlier relations between the United States and other nations." The U.S. government would thus shift Muslim Arabs to the "white" category on the census; but it did not, perhaps could not, prevent American oil firms from implementing segregation in Arabia.

In 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act finally repealed all racial barriers to naturalization, and established immigration preferences for certain occupations. The overhaul of U.S. immigration policy codified in the 1965 Immigration Act led to the abolition of the national-origins quotas introduced in 1924. These new policies fundamentally changed the character of immigration to the U.S. The majority of immigrants now came not from Europe but from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Check It Right (Not Quite White)!

In the lead-up to the 2010 census, Arab-American and Iranian-American comedians launched a nationwide campaign called "Check It Right!"—explaining to their community in humorous online videos and radio segments why they're not exactly white and should check "Other." These young activists are invariably inspired by the Arab American Institute's Helen Samhan. On the eve of the 2000 census, she published an article titled "Not Quite White" that helped launch the movement for minority status and has become a manifesto for young Middle Eastern Americans. In the paper, she noted the "identity disconnect" that many young Arab-Americans feel: they are classified as white, but they have an affinity for people of color, "meaning every other non-European national origin group." The existing classification system, she wrote, "which places Arabs and other persons with origins in the Middle East and North Africa in the same white category that identifies the European majority, has been a source of confusion and a challenge." And most poignantly, in light of the growing monitoring of Arab and Muslim communities in the late

1990s, Helen argued that certain branches of the government, particularly law enforcement—the FBI and the INS—were *already* treating North African and Middle Eastern Americans as an identifiable group that was to be tracked and monitored, but the census continued to regard Arabs as the same as other white ethnics.

The community workers who Helen Samhan was addressing at the 2009 Dearborn conference are particularly supportive of the minority-status campaign. They work with and represent an immigrant community, increasingly made up of refugees resettled from Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia, that needs social services and government assistance in the areas of education and health care; but there is no data to demonstrate this need. As the minority-status advocates explain, Arab, Iranian, and Turkish Americans find themselves in a rather absurd situation: to get official minority status and a new check-off box on the census, they need to show that they suffer from systematic discrimination, and that is difficult to do, because data is not available separately for Middle Easterners. "When a police officer stops a car in Orland Park, for example, he has to mark whether that person is black, white, Hispanic or Asian," says Ray Hanania, a Chicago-based activist. "If Arabs are continually getting stopped and discriminated against, which happens, we can't access that data, because they'll be counted as white . . . It's the Achilles' heel: How can we be discriminated against when we're white?"

In the U.S., racial categories were initially used to support policies of exclusion, but after World War II, and following the enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, racial and ethnic data have been used to monitor discrimination against racial minority groups and their access to equal opportunity. From the standpoint of the federal law, minority status comes not from a specific race or ethnicity but from the historic use of race and ethnicity to confer privilege or disadvantage to a particular group. Minority status has often been conferred on racial and ethnic groups—namely American Indians, Asian-Americans, blacks, and Hispanics—who have historically been victims of exclusion; but it is not contingent on ancestry or physical characteristics; even whites may be granted minority status, as is argued in reverse discrimination cases. And this is a source of great

confusion: what is thought of as "race" in everyday talk—i.e., how one looks—is not how the Census Bureau defines race and minority status.

When the current census categories were created by the White House–based Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1977, special attention was given to disparities between Black, Latino, American Indian, and Asian-American populations in comparison with the white population based on existing data (from the 1970 census). In 2000 the OMB, in response to community activism, reformed the classification system and introduced the now famous "racial pentagon": five categories were instituted—American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. The OMB also introduced two boxes for data on ethnicity: "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." But the directive continued to define as white "a person having origins in the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa."

In late 2009, the minority-status campaigns stirred again. Arab- and Iranian-American students and activists agitated nationwide for a separate racial box. Their parents recoiled at the campaign's race-based language. The older Arab-American leadership tentatively supported a Middle East/North Africa (MENA) check-off box, but under the category White, and were opposed to a separate race box, as that would be perceived as separatist and anti-integration. The young activists felt they had to be "race activists" because their parents "sat out" the civil rights movement, when different groups lobbied and got minority status. This is not entirely accurate: there were Middle Eastern activists involved in the civil rights movement, but Arab- and Iranian-Americans did not make demands for minority status or set-asides for their community in the 1960s because they were not yet experiencing systematic defamation or discrimination. Moreover, the large influx of Middle Eastern immigrants came after the civil rights movement; it was, in fact, civil rights legislation that allowed for the ending of national-origin quotas and granted visas to immigrants.

Arab-Americans became active in civil rights after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which most scholars concur was a watershed moment that sparked a pan-ethnic Arab-American identity. The media coverage,

public discourse, and harsh rhetoric surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict prompted a group of scholars and activists to set up the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), an early precursor to the Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the largest Arab advocacy group in the U.S. today. This post-'67 crisis led to the "ethnicization" of the Arab-American community, galvanizing Arabic speakers—Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians, Iraqis—and their children into a quintessentially American kind of pan-ethnic politics. But it did not prompt calls for a separate box on the census.

The discontent with white status began in the late 1980s, as Arab- and Iranian-American activists increasingly began to express their identity in racial terms. As the American presence in the Middle East deepened—the Iranian revolution, the marine bombing of 1983, and the first Gulf War—and media depiction and public perception grew more negative, Arab-Americans began to reconsider their racial status as whites. The Arab-American campaign for minority status is today particularly vocal because of the Arabic-speaking world's location across Africa and the Middle East, which means that black African populations get coded white as well. After 9/11, a new wave of activism would start; this time Lebanese-American activists would be joined by the children of Nubian and Sudanese immigrants, who are challenging the classification of North Africans as white.

Blue Nile Washington

In the last twenty years, Arab migration to the U.S. has changed dramatically due to the Diversity Visa (DV) Program (known as the Green Card Lottery), which the State Department introduced in 1995. This program provides an annual fifty thousand permanent-resident visas to individuals from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. Over the last century most Arab immigrants came from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. To promote diversity and rectify this "historic imbalance," the DV Program has granted the lion's share of "Arab region" visas to underrepresented North African countries like Morocco, Algeria, and Sudan. The DV Lottery's geographically determined quota policy has meant that since the late 1990s tens of thousands of Sudanese, Nubians, Berbers, and Arabic-speaking Somalis have poured into the U.S., leading to a rapid growth of Arabic-speaking communities from northern Africa (according to Arab American Institute reports, the Moroccan community grew 96.5 percent between 1990 and 2000) and pushing the debate over Arab racial classification in a new direction. If the Lebanese- and Syrian-American activists are asking "Are Arabs white?" the young Nubian and Sudanese activists are asking "Are we Arab or black—or both?"

The immigrants of Nubian ancestry are of particular interest from the point of view of the census. Nubia, the region along the Nile River Valley, often described as a corridor between tropical Africa and the Mediterranean, starts at the city of Aswan in upper Egypt, at the Nile's First Cataract, and extends south to the confluence of the White and Blue Nile in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, just above the Sixth Cataract. After centuries of Ottoman rule, Nubia was colonized by the British, and since independence in 1956, the region has been divided by a border between Egypt and Sudan. The Nubian community in the U.S., largely concentrated around the Washington, DC, area, has grown rapidly since the mid-1980s, when immigrants from upper Egypt and Sudan first began arriving, setting up hot-dog stands and driving taxis.

Nubia's location, straddling the Egyptian-Sudanese frontier, is a reason for much of the census activism; Nubians from the Egyptian part of Nubia are counted as white (if they write their country of origin), while Nubians from Sudan are "Some Other Race." The Census Bureau's exact parameters of "North Africa" versus "sub-Saharan Africa" are ambiguous; drawing on United Nations Development Program maps and country lists of the region, the census considers Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Mauritania as North Africa (and hence white), but places Sudan in both the North Africa and sub-Saharan zones. Sudan was long classified white as well, until it was recently relabeled "Some Other Race." ("Pashtunistan" is another ethnic region that bestrides a state border and gets different census labels; Pashtuns in the U.S., sometimes members of the same family,

will be considered Asian if born in Pakistan, but white if they write in "Afghanistan.") For the Nubian-American activists, the census categories pose a challenge. The parents who migrated from upper Egypt and Sudan will write in "Egyptian" or "Sudanese" or "Arab" in the "Other" box, not knowing or caring that they will then be considered white. The younger American-born activists, don't want to be counted as white, but are unsure what box to check.

"When I told my dad to check off 'Black' on the census, he gave me a weird look," laughs Aya Ibrahim, the daughter of Redwan, one of the founders of the Nubian Benevolence Society, a DC-based organization. Aya Ibrahim, a college junior, is one of the younger activists—she runs a group called WakeUp Somalia, which sends books to Somalia—who are contesting the classification of black North Africans as white. "The truth is I have more identities than there are boxes," says this articulate nineteen-year-old. "I'm African-American, Nubian, and Arab. When I filled out the form—I could have written 'Arab' or 'Egyptian,' but I checked off the 'Black' box."

The civil rights lawyers at ADC's national headquarters in Washington, DC, travel regularly between Dearborn—where they offer support to recent refugees from Iraq—and Minneapolis, which boasts the largest Somali population in the U.S., mostly refugees from their homeland's conflict, and Washington, DC, which today is home to tens of thousands of Arabic-speaking immigrants from upper Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. A running joke among Arab-American activists is that if Dearborn is the Arab capital of America, then Washington, DC, is the "black capital of Arab-America"—the irony being that while the Arabs in Dearborn are legally white, they are rarely treated as such by law enforcement or perceived as such on the street, while many of the Arabic-speaking Africans in the nation's capital are legally classified as Arab and white but generally seen as black.

"The government is not consistent when dealing with African Arabs. The Somalis who speak Arabic may identify as African or just Somali, but they have problems with detention and law enforcement that other Arab and Muslim communities have—which is why they reach out to us," says Abed Ayoub, the legal director of ADC Washington. "And the Census Bureau may not count Somalis as Arab, but

the Department of Commerce does—when we ask for minority business loans for the Arab community, they'll ask us about economic need in the Somali community. So it's confusing for everyone."

At a societal level, the "black Arab," like the "Caucasian Muslim," sounds like a contradiction in terms, and unsettles not just legal categories but cultural preconceptions. But the question of how to classify and label people from the Nile Valley and the Saharan borderlands will become more pressing in the coming years as American foreign policy turns its attention to the Sahara and Sahel region. In October 2007, the United States African Command (AFRICOM) was established, with a base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, to oversee U.S. military operations all over Africa (except Egypt), and engage the "arc of instability" starting in Somalia, going through south Sudan and Darfur, cutting across the Sahelian countries of Chad, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, and curving up toward the Maghreb. The flow of immigrants from Iraq and Somalia into the U.S. grew rapidly following American interventions in those countries in 1990 and 1993; American involvement in the Sahara—combined with the Green Card Lottery—will trigger greater migration from the Sahel-Saharan states to the U.S., making the question of Afro-Arab classification even more urgent. Not surprisingly, a campaign is currently under way, led by Egyptian-born activist Mustafa Hefny, who filed a lawsuit against the U.S. government's classification of Afro-Arabs as "Caucasian"—specifically, the OMB's Directive No. 15 geographic designations, which define whites as "having origins in the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa" and blacks "as having origins with the Black racial groups."

A Ramadan to Remember

Late one Sunday night in the middle of May 2010, ululations echoed from cafés and hookah lounges in Dearborn and Detroit. After tripping in her evening gown and answering a question about birth control and health insurance, Rima Fakih was crowned Miss USA. ("She

dazzled judges when she took the stage in a skimpy red and orange bikini," gushed New York's *Daily News.*) Her supporters at La Pita restaurant in Dearborn—a banquet hall decorated in red, blue, and white—cheered; a woman cried. Teenage girls sported T-shirts with Rima's face, and a quote from her on the back: "It's beauty that captures your attention, personality which captures your heart." Activists hailed the local girl turned beauty queen. The mayor of Dearborn offered her a key to the city. And congratulatory messages poured in from the Middle East. The president of Lebanon, Rima's birthplace, issued a statement: "Congratulations to Rima Fakih for showing the beautiful image of Lebanon to the world." Talking heads noted how this could help integrate Muslims in America.

But before the night was over, the attacks on the beauty queen had started. Tea Party activists and right-wing commentators dubbed her "Miss Hizbullah" and "the new face of Islamic terrorism," reminding everyone that she was born to a Shia family in southern Lebanon. Others resented this "politically correct Miss USA," saying she won because of a liberal bias, part of a larger diplomatic effort to show the U.S. is accepting of its Muslim population. Things got worse. On Monday morning, pictures surfaced of Rima dancing in a stripper contest in Detroit, a competition she had won handily, taking home jewelry, gift certificates, adult toys, and "a stripper pole for home use." Soon after, it emerged that she had played the role of a police-woman in a risqué short called *Throbbing Justice* ("A film about the penal system!"). Following Donald Trump's orders, pageant officials asked to see the photos and the film, but decided not to strip the beauty queen of her crown. The snapshots of this Muslim girl in tiny red shorts and pumps, straddling a pole, dollar bills stuffed into her bra, went viral and drew criticism from within the Muslim community. Islamist journalists denounced her "un-Islamic behavior." (Hassan Fadlalah, Hizbullah's representative in the Lebanese parliament, issued a very subdued statement regarding Rima's victory: "The criteria through which we evaluate women are different from those of the West.") Meanwhile, comedians and bloggers were having unfettered fun. "Putting the ASS in 'assimilation'!" stated comedian Bill Maher, displaying a photo of Rima in a bikini. "What the Fakih?" asked one

blogger. As different Arab organizations and student groups mobilized to defend the beauty queen against her attackers, Rima responded to her Muslim critics: "My family has an abundance of faith, but I'm very liberal—I'm destroying stereotypes of Islam in America." (About the photos, she said they were from an "aerobics morning event with females" and were "taken out of context.")

Rima's victory came at a low point for the minority-status activists. Seven months after their Dearborn conference, the counting had started, but the Census Bureau announced that Arabs and Iranians in America would be counted as racially white despite their write-in campaign—that is, even if they checked the "Other" box and wrote in "Arab" or "Iranian" on the questionnaire. Activists leading the campaign were finding that many within the Muslim community were not warm to the idea of minority status, saying that the political exposure that a new classification would bring far outweighed the benefits—and that there were advantages to racial ambiguity. To gain minority status, Arab-Americans would have to demonstrate that they were victims of "past racial wrongs," a process that would entail unearthing and publicizing past injustices, from Jim Crow practices in Arabia to wiretapping to negative media depictions, all of which would alienate public opinion.

These political tussles over how to self-identify and what category to adopt are also playing out in other Muslim communities. The policies derived from the Patriot Act as well as the war rhetoric from politicians about "Islamo-fascism" and "Islamic terrorism"—all of which have been shown to trigger hate crimes—have galvanized young Muslims to lobby against being categorized as white. (Maz Jobrani, an Iranian-American comedian, tries to make light of the charade of being legally white and experiencing racial harassment: "I took all the insults growing up—camel jockey, towelhead, all this other stuff—and all I had to say was, 'Dude, I'm white?!' ")

The activists pushing for minority status are American-born citizens, civil rights lawyers and doctoral students steeped in critical race theory (they speak of "racial constructs" and "sympathy gaps"), and often cannot identify with the reticence and fear of the foreign-born Muslims who live in ethnic enclaves, are either undocumented

or noncitizen residents, and are reluctant to get counted or involved in any public campaign. The Census Bureau has struggled, since the early 1990s, to build trust with Muslim-American communities. In 2009, at town hall meetings, in media announcements, and in door-to-door visits, census representatives assured Muslim audiences that data gathered by the census will not be shared with the FBI, the CIA, Homeland Security, or any other state agency.

But Muslim Americans were skeptical. They knew such assurances did not stop the Census Bureau from sharing its demographic data with the Bush administration. In 2002, the Department of Homeland Security submitted a request to the Census Bureau asking for tabulated Arab ancestry data organized by zip code. (At the time such a request was not illegal, as the Census Act then only prohibited the disclosure of individually identifiable information.) In July 2004, the data sharing between Homeland Security and the Census Bureau was uncovered by a Freedom of Information Act request submitted by the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), a research center focused on civil liberties. The disclosure stunned even watchdog groups: The Census Bureau had shared statistical data with Homeland Security not long after it had issued a formal apology (in 2000) for allowing its "block-by-block" statistical data to be used to round up Japanese-Americans for internment during World War II. According to the EPIC report, the tabulations that the Census Bureau had shared showed cities—as well as zip codes—where a thousand or more, or ten thousand or more, respondents who had indicated their Arab ancestry in the census's long form resided. The Decennial Census Advisory Committee publicly denounced this sharing of demographic data, calling it "the modern-day equivalent of the pinpointing of Japanese-American communities when internment camps were opened during World War II." The Census Bureau subsequently altered its policy on sharing statistical information about "sensitive populations" with law-enforcement or intelligence agencies. A spokeswoman for Homeland Security in turn explained that the agency had requested the data to identify the airports at which to post signs and pamphlets in Arabic.

But the damage was done. When the story broke in July 2004,

Jim Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, observed, "As this gets out, any effort to encourage people to full compliance with the census is down the tubes," adding, "How can you get people to comply when they believe that by complying they put at risk their personal and family security?" In spring 2010, as census volunteers and activists fanned out across Arab neighborhoods, encouraging people to fill out the census forms, stating that getting counted would bring more state money, services, and civil liberties protections, people on the street responded that being counted would only bring more scrutiny and informants. (In mid-2011, these fears proved true when the Associated Press revealed that the NYPD had been surveilling Muslim communities and student groups for several years and, by Attorney General Michael Mukasey's own admission, used census data to map different ethnic neighborhoods.)

Observers of the minority-status campaign were warning of a political backlash in early spring, months before the "Ground Zero" mosque controversy became a nationwide issue in August 2010. In May a pipe bomb exploded at a mosque in northern Florida. Dan Fanelli, a Republican candidate in Florida, released a political ad calling for the profiling of Middle Eastern men. Interestingly, the anti-mosque movement took off just as the census campaign began. Opposition to the construction of mosques began spreading across the South to Tennessee, Kentucky, Kansas, Texas, and Florida. After President Obama spoke in support of the construction of an Islamic center in Lower Manhattan, the anti-mosque campaign turned into a furor, reaching northern states. Soon "Leaving Islam" ads began appearing on buses and taxis in major American cities ("Fatwa on your head? Is your family threatening you? Leaving Islam? Got Questions? Get Answers"). The anti-mosque protests had familiar themes: members of a local Tea Party chapter would appear at Friday congregational prayers with picket signs that read "No Sharia in America," bringing dogs along and blaring "Born in the USA" by Bruce Springsteen. The fever-pitch rhetoric turned violent. Pipe bombs were tossed at mosques in Tennessee and upstate New York; worshippers had pork thrown at them; women had their head scarves yanked off.

The outpouring of rancor and violence against Muslims in the

summer of 2010 was worse than what followed 9/11, when President Bush had stated that "Islam is a religion of peace," publicly embraced Muslim leaders, and cautioned against scapegoating "our Muslim neighbors." The Republican Party's sudden and overtly harsh stance on Islam was essentially an electoral strategy. As GOP candidates across the country geared up for midterm elections, they sought to inject the mosque issue into local races against Democrats, and largely abandoned Bush's "post–Sept. 11 rhetorical embrace of American Muslims, and his insistence—always controversial inside the party—that Islam is a religion of peace." The GOP's new policy toward American Islam was also a delayed reaction to the election of Obama, who upon gaining office had shifted the rhetorical framework of American diplomacy, speaking of "countering violent extremism" instead of the "War on Terror," "Muslim-majority states" instead of "the Islamic world," and making overtures that infuriated the Republican base.

Whatever the reasons behind it, the Republican and Tea Party movement's campaign against mosques polarized the minority-status movement. The younger activists saw the mosque and Quran-burning controversy as an opportunity to publicly make the case for minority status; the campaign was, after all, part of the GOP's "southern strategy," which exploited racial anxieties, targeting blacks, Hispanic immigrants, and now Muslims to turn out votes. Also, they argued, the Tea Party movement—the most dynamic segment of the Republican base—represented a resurgent white nationalism that was targeting Muslims, so this was the perfect time to sound off loud and clear on why Iranian- and Arab-Americans don't want to be considered white. But more seasoned activists and leaders warned that this was the worst moment for political protest: racial agitation would only lead to a sharp increase in rhetoric and hate crimes against Muslims. The months-long anti-mosque campaign had also made Muslims even more fearful and suspicious of the census.

Ironically, the anti-mosque movement also had a strong anti-census component. Aside from undocumented workers and resident aliens, the other segment of American society that was intensely distrustful of the census was the Tea Party. And while pressing for anti-

sharia legislation and zoning laws to ban the construction of mosques, Tea Party activists were also—under the slogan "Stand Up, Don't Be Counted"—lobbying to withdraw funding for the American Community Survey form, which they saw as intrusive and would only give proof to the fact that whites were becoming a minority.

Late one summer afternoon in July 2010, Helen Samhan was sitting in her office in Washington, DC, overlooking K Street. The census was under way. Surrounded by boxes and stacks of paper, she counts off the headaches. "No more ancestry question, we'll be counted as white even if we write in 'Arab,' mosques being firebombed . . ." She sighs, smiling. "I'm retiring in a few weeks." Helen has been pushing for legal-minority status—a check-off box for Middle Eastern Americans—and for better census measurements for over two decades; she's become a bit of a folk hero among young Arab- and Muslim-American activists. Because of her efforts, the Census Bureau in 1995 designated a seat on the 2000 census advisory committee for Arab-Americans, the only nonminority group to get minority representation.

"I know, ideally, minority status should really be just for African-Americans and Native Americans, who have known historic discrimination. What I resist is the fact that virtually all immigrant populations outside Europe except us are considered minorities—Asians, Africans, Latin Americans are considered nonwhite, and can compete for set-asides intended for African-Americans. The South Asians, the Pakistanis—whose experience is so close to that of Arabs economically and geographically—have minority status. A Pakistani-American can compete for a small-business loan, because he's from Asia, but an Iraqi-American can't? Who decided Iraq is not western Asia?" (Minority-status campaigners in the U.S. often note how the Canadian census considers Arabs, Afghans, and Iranians as peoples of "West Asia" and classifies them as a "visible minority.")

She went on. "The complexion of Arab immigration into the U.S. has changed literally and figuratively—today we have more refugee populations, we have more Arabs who are Muslim, more

Arabs who are black. You have Nubians and Sudanese Arabs who are being counted as white—that shows the stupidity, rigidity of our system of racial classification. If they were born here, they'd be African-Americans." She pulls out a spreadsheet showing disaggregated figures from the (now extant) ancestry form. "We have a big-tent definition of Arab here at AAI—we count people from all the Arab League states—Somalis, Sudanese, people from Mauritania, Djibouti, Eritrea, and even the Comoros Islands. We count people from African states who write 'Arab' on their ancestry form, people who identify as 'Arab' whose countries of origin fall outside the Census Bureau's map of North Africa. And I'm fully aware that about one-fifth of the people here from the Arab world don't identify as Arab. Many Arab Christians don't want to be put in the Arab-American category—Chaldeans, Maronites, Assyrians." She prints out an irate letter she received from Maronite leaders in Detroit after she referred to Maronites as Arab-Americans on AAI's website. "My aunts thought like this—they spoke Arabic but didn't want to be identified with the Arab community."

Helen's family history in some ways encapsulates the changes that have occurred in the Arab-American community in the last century. Her grandfather, Salloum Mokarzel, was a prominent Maronite leader in the Little Syria enclave that emerged in Lower Manhattan in the 1900s, and founder of the *Syrian World*, the Arab-American community's first English-language journal. Mokarzel's editorials in the New York press were critical in persuading the census to see Syrians as Caucasians and not as Turkic or Asiatic. "My grandfather's generation petitioned to be considered white because it was a survival issue, but the political situation today is completely different." Helen is prepared to pass the torch to a new generation. "I'm retiring." She smiles. "I wish these kids all the best in finding allies in these campaigns. We're not the only group facing these contradictions."

Having achieved little success with the Census Bureau or their community elders, the Arab and Iranian race activists have now turned their attention to gaining minority status at the local and state levels. In early 2009, several student groups at UCLA—Iranians, Arabs, Afghans, and Armenians—launched a campaign to add a

"Southwest Asian and North African" (SWANA) box, with various subgroups, to the University of California admissions application, so as not to be identified as "White/Caucasian." They deliberately chose the category "Southwest Asian" instead of "Middle Eastern," which they saw as a Eurocentric label. This campaign also underscores the need for statistics. ("If we don't have statistics, how do we even know if we are underrepresented?" says Ghassan, a Syrian-American student at UCLA, adding, "But the point right now is to get the hell out of the 'White' box.") The effort is modeled on the Asian Pacific Coalition's "Count Me In" campaign, which in November 2007 successfully lobbied for the inclusion of twenty-three ethnic categories on the UC application, including Hmong, Pakistani, Native Hawaiian, and Samoan. The campus campaigns for minority status are also a response to police surveillance of Muslim student associations. The university administration is still deliberating, claiming that a new category for Middle Easterners could produce a sudden drop in white applicants in enrollment statistics (if those who in the past would have checked "White" were to start checking another category) and draw right-wing protest.

But this student campaign has already made national headlines. Shortly after the Boston bombing, in April 2013, amid calls by congressmen for profiling of Muslims and restrictions on student visas, the movement for a SWANA box got going again. "They may not have the direct means to successfully challenge the legal and cultural aggressions perpetrated against them, but the box schema provides a way for them to deal with their marginality and build urgent political solidarities," writes Maryam Griffin, an attorney and doctoral student at UC Santa Barbara, advising this campaign. At the national level, the minority-status advocates have now shifted their efforts from lobbying the government to building ties with other communities of color.

Jinn 'n' Juice

Arab and Pakistani Muslims have a significant presence as owners of gas stations and convenience stores in America's inner cities, particularly in the midwestern cities of Detroit, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Syrian immigrants began setting up grocery stores in Detroit in the early twentieth century; with the white flight that followed the city's riots in 1967, Syrian and Iraqi store ownership increased. At one point in the mid-1990s, 80 to 90 percent of the gas stations and grocery stores in metropolitan Detroit were owned by Chaldeans—a community of Iraqi Catholics (who as Christians were permitted to sell alcohol back in Iraq, and brought that specialization to the U.S.), but as more Muslims migrated from Iraq and Lebanon to the Motor City, the stores passed to the hands of Muslim entrepreneurs. A body of sociological literature has emerged, trying to understand the phenomenon of the "middle-man minority," wherein an immigrant minority, using its transnational ties, creates a niche in a particular business (grocery stores, gas stations, fast food), and ends up standing in between the majority population, which dominates the economy, and their customers, who are nonwhite but of a different ethnicity than their own. Yet having Muslims selling liquor in the American inner city brings a new dimension to this question.

Rola Nashef's award-winning film *Detroit Unleaded,* a love story about two youngsters who are forced to spend hours in their parents' gas station—"the cage," as they call it—subtly captures the tense relations between Middle Eastern gas station owners and their African-American customers. Lodged in impoverished, high-crime urban areas, the gas station owner will view every patron as a potential threat, selling goods and receiving money through an opening in a sunken portion of the counter, protected by a sheath of bulletproof glass. Neighborhood residents see the bulletproof glass as a symbol of the separation and distance that Muslim entrepreneurs wish to put between themselves and their customers, while the store owners see

the two-inch glass as a virtual prison in which they're held for long hours every day. The film has no villains, depicting the humanity of blacks and Latinos who live in these urban wastelands, showing how the daily interactions between store owners and customers take place within the racialized and restrictive confines of the ghetto, and capturing young Arab-Americans' racial in-betweenness. The Lebanese and Iraqi kids hate working at the gas station and having to mediate between their parents and African-American and Latino clients. "I see 'the cage' as a metaphor," says Nashef. "The liquor store where these kids find themselves working under their parents' orders is a metaphor for the generational divide, the multiple restrictions facing Arab youth, and the Arab community's place between black and white."

The troubled relations between immigrant entrepreneurs and the often black and Latino majority communities around them have at times erupted into violence, as in the Los Angeles riots of 1992. This hasn't happened in Detroit, but this situation where the immigrant Muslim store owner feels threatened by his customers, and the customers see the merchant as a "bloodsucker" extracting wealth from their community, has resulted in tension and random acts of violence.

"It's not surprising that the store owners' relations with the surrounding community are tense," says Khaled Beydoun, a Dearborn native and Fordson High graduate, who is now a professor at UCLA. "You have refugees from rural parts of Iraq resettled in completely dilapidated parts of Dearborn and Detroit. The store owners often speak little English, have no sense of racial nuance. Add to that Detroit is a hyper-segregated city, and you have the current situation. Dealing with the gas station owner or liquor store owner is critical for Muslim Americans' finding a place in people-of-color coalitions."

The minority-status activists—some of whom are children of Yemeni and Lebanese grocers—see the store owner's economic "middle man" position as an obstacle to Arab- and Iranian-Americans' attaining minority status or support from communities of color. The racial status of North Africans and Middle Easterners is the result not only of the Census Bureau's legal classification, but also of society's perception of them. And minority status will require gaining the support of African-Americans and Latinos, who will sign petitions submitted

to the Census Bureau and the OMB. But the Muslim grocer's highly visible presence—along with that of other immigrant merchants—engaged in aggressive profiteering, reinforces the image of Muslim immigrants as strategically aloof from and exploitative of other minorities. Like Nashef, the minority-status campaigners underline the connection between the Middle Eastern grocer's middle-man role and the Middle Eastern community's broader racial in-betweenness; the link between the "cage" and the restrictive "White" box on the census is more than metaphorical.

The presence of Muslim entrepreneurs selling liquor in inner-city areas where there are strong African-American Muslim organizations also generates intra-Muslim conflict. As May Alhassen, a doctoral student at USC and one of the activists working on this issue in the Bay Area, says, the presence of Muslim entrepreneurs selling pork, alcohol, and junk food poses a direct challenge to the authority of African-American Muslim organizations, who have historically been "the guardians of the African-American community's values and social upliftment" and find themselves in an uncomfortable situation because of their shared religious affiliation with the Muslim liquor store owners. Since the 1930s, African-American Muslim groups have stressed healthy living and a halal diet; and according to local food activists in the Bay Area and Detroit, the liquor store owner's presence has contributed to a health crisis and strained race relations.

Muslim "food justice" activists have now launched a campaign to provide Muslim store owners with financial incentives to get out of the liquor business or shift to green products. In Chicago, the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), a social services group headquartered in the working-class enclave of Chicago Lawn, has launched a food-justice program called Muslim Run that aims to bring healthy food to black and Latino communities on the South Side. These Muslim Run green campaigns are explicitly modeled on decades-old Nation of Islam and Black Power initiatives aimed at building up neighborhoods with small businesses, many of which supplied healthy halal food. Relying on University of Chicago studies of "food deserts"—districts on the South Side that have little access to fresh produce—community organizers from IMAN will walk the streets,

conducting surveys of Muslim store owners and their customers, and then help the grocers get state money earmarked for fresh food. In Flint, Michigan, Mona Sahouri, a community organizer, has launched a similar initiative and drafted a "memorandum of understanding" on how immigrant grocers should treat their customers. At the forefront of these campaigns to "quench food deserts" and bring fresh produce to low-income urban areas are coalitions of young Arab-, Iranian-, Pakistani-, and African-American Muslims. Art and music play critical roles in these initiatives. Whether it's IMAN holding a concert at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, or Beats, Rhymes & Relief—a recently formed NGO in Washington, DC—organizing live concerts in underprivileged neighborhoods while delivering free lunches and book bags, music is used to build community and raise awareness of the long history of interaction between African-American and immigrant Muslims.

These "green-*deen*" coalitions also reveal profound generational differences. The activists believe that reducing the social distance between Middle Eastern store owners and their neighbors is critical for the integration of Muslims into communities of color; the minority-status activists will argue that blurring racial borders on the ground can help shake up racial classification on the federal census. Their parents, who fled conservative societies with stifling social norms and authoritarian regimes, often dreamed of owning a small business—selling halal or non-halal products—and cannot understand the effort, led by their own children, to enforce Islamic norms in an American neighborhood. When asked why he sells alcohol, Yasser Salam told Chicago Public Radio, "It's not illegal. It's against my religion; that's in the Judgment Day." This is a common response: "Selling alcohol is not against the law in America," or "This is not a sharia state." Moreover, store owners wonder why they do not face similar halal campaigns in Latino neighborhoods. For African-American Muslim leaders, on the other hand, the enforcement of Islamic norms, including proscriptions against the consumption and sale of alcohol, is critical to bringing order and security to blighted urban areas, and to rehabilitating young men. As Imam Zayed Shaker of the Zaytuna Institute, who is spearheading a campaign in Oakland,

California, says, "Why can't we connect the high rates of [liquor] stores in the community with the high dropout rates, drug addiction rates, and high incarceration rates?"

Among the young activists there is disagreement on the best way to approach the liquor store owners: the more cautious warn that campaigns to embarrass Arab and Pakistani store owners to go green or halal rarely work. (Sometimes these young agitators organize protests where they stand outside Muslim-owned liquor stores holding placards that read, "Prophet not Profit," and chanting, "1-2-3-4, we don't want your liquor stores!") Moreover, any effort to enforce Islamic norms in a public space in an American city can inflame public opinion nationwide. This occurred in late 2006 when, citing freedom of religion, Somali cabdrivers at St. Paul International Airport in Minneapolis began refusing to drive alcohol-carrying passengers. A more effective strategy, say the activists, is to stress how "food deserts" contribute to poor health and to offer financial incentives for a change in behavior. The Muslim race activists of immigrant background—from the Iranian-American minority status activists to the Pakistani-American eco-halal workers—seem to have arrived at the conclusion that in the face of punitive state policies and organized hostility, the political incorporation of Muslim Americans is more likely to occur through the margins of American society.

Mighty in the Margins

In 2005, Sherman Jackson, a legal scholar at USC and an eminent figure in American Islam, published *Islam and the Blackamerican*, an examination of religious authority in America, and the relations between "indigenous" African-American Muslims and "immigrant" Muslims. The author argued that before 1965, Islam in America was dominated by an "indigenous black presence," but after the repeal of the National Origins Act, the influx of Muslims from Asia and the Middle East led to the marginalization of African-American Muslims, as they lacked the language commands or training in classical texts

to lead American Muslim organizations. Moreover, argued Jackson, "immigrant Islam" did not understand the particular circumstances of African-Americans, the historic reasons for their "collective conversion," and the heterodox forms of Islam that had appeared in urban America. Jackson concluded by exhorting African-American Muslims to develop a mastery over the classical Sunni tradition and to build their own religious authority.

Jackson's book resonated with the so-called second generation, because in the years after 9/11, they were asking questions about race and belonging, but also because a significant political shift had taken place among American Muslims. The South Asian and Middle Eastern professionals who arrived in America after 1965 were often economic conservatives and, once naturalized, emerged as a reliable base for the Republican Party. American Muslims of immigrant background voted overwhelmingly Republican until 2004, and that's when a political convergence with African-American Muslims—who have voted for Democrats for decades—began. The GOP's pro-business policies, emphasis on family values, and Bush senior's (relatively) hard-line stance on Israel's settlement policy in 1992 made the younger Bush's candidacy in 2000 attractive to many older Arab- and Pakistani-Americans; but the Patriot Act and the invasion of Iraq, among other policies introduced by Bush, would in 2004 push American Muslims en masse toward the Democratic Party. In 2008, 90 percent of the country's Muslims voted for Obama (even though his campaign kept Muslims at arm's length), and by the time the anti-mosque and anti-sharia campaign of 2010 erupted, the exodus of Muslim Americans from the Republican Party was nearly complete.

Yet in addition to the electoral shift, a racial shift was occurring, with younger activists questioning whether the Democratic Party could deliver, claiming that the incorporation of Muslims is more likely to occur through the back channel of the civil rights movement; they argue that race is not just a legal category, but a political tool for empowerment, a site for struggle, and that activism in the ghetto can bring some kind of political belonging and protection. In one of Jackson's more intriguing passages, he states that African-American—what he terms "Blackamerican"—Muslims were not rounded up

en masse like "immigrant" Muslims after 9/11 because "American blackness confers upon Blackamerican Muslims a layer of insulation beyond that of the First Amendment." He writes, "This insulation is conferred, however, as long as Blackamericans themselves are seen as embracing—and certainly not opposing—the American Constitutional order. If, on the basis of Islam or any other source, they cease to identify with that order, so, too, will American blackness cease to be a source of added insulation for Blackamerican Muslims." It's not clear where the African-American Muslims' "added insulation" comes from, their "indigeneity" or loyalty to the constitutional order; but the young Muslims' post-9/11 attraction to African-American Islam and black politics more broadly is precisely for the "added insulation" it can provide; and the belief that with state protection failing and white nationalist movements rising, joining civil rights coalitions and gaining acceptance in black movements could bring greater freedom.

Yet the questions facing young Muslim-American activists—like their counterparts everywhere—are how to balance loyalty to the "American constitutional order" with a critique of empire, and what's the tradeoff between patriotism with global Muslim solidarity. Young Muslims are drawn to African-American Islam because of its linking of the local with the global, and Noble Drew Ali's and Malcolm X's solidarity with the downtrodden worldwide, a universalism that appeals to American youth with kin in Kashmir, Somalia, and Gaza. And here was Jackson arguing that rights came by identifying strictly with the nation-state, and telling young Muslims to "embrace America" and not judge the country by its foreign policies. How, then, to—or should one—talk about race and foreign policy? The green activists and minority-status campaigners walking the streets of Oakland, Washington, Chicago, Brooklyn, and Detroit realize that they are wading into local relationships (between "indigenous" and "immigrant" Muslims) that have a complex transnational history behind them, and they are split on this question. On the one hand, there are the race activists who want to revive the solidarity and anti-imperial history of the 1960s; and on the other are those who believe that a more local, state-based patriotism is the most effective way to protect the rights of American Muslims. This wrangling—

between Muslim-American "statists" and "internationalists"—echoes and builds on the debate within the civil rights movement during the early years of the Cold War between African-American leaders who wanted to link the country's racial quagmire to the process of decolonization and those who defined the African-American situation as a domestic issue. There were figures like Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Malcolm X, who thought the civil rights struggle had, as Martin Luther King would state in his Riverside speech in April 1967, to go "beyond national allegiance." In that vein, Malcolm X appealed to the UN and the newly created Organization of African Unity to protect black rights. And on the other side were leaders like diplomat Ralph Bunche, Bayard Rustin, and Adam Clayton Powell who thought the radical internationalism of the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers, and Malcolm X simply set back the civil rights struggle. Rustin, unhappy with the way Paul Robeson criticized the U.S. while in Europe, observed, "There's sort of an unwritten rule that if you want to criticize the United States you do it at home . . . we have to prove that we're patriotic."

This debate is now taking place among Muslim race activists, with the more state-oriented arguing that given surveillance practices and laws like "material support" that punish speech critical of U.S. foreign policy, the best political strategy is one of activism on issues of racial inequality. By embracing race, the "immigrant" Muslim can become "indigenous." These Muslim-American statists will note that it was Bayard Rustin and Adam Clayton Powell's strategic patriotism and patient coalition-building that extracted important policy concessions. Radical stances on foreign policy issues only drive away allies and cast doubt on a community's patriotism. They argue that it was through careful local politicking and alliance building with Sikh and Hindu organizations that the Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, in June 2013, was able to get the Department of Justice to recognize Arabs as a race—instead of white—on the FBI's 1-699 Hate Crimes Form. Citing the spike in hate crimes after the Boston bombing, the Department of Justice would agree to list Arabs as a race over the strenuous opposition of the OMB, which wanted the FBI to use census categories.

Their critics retort that not all speech or activism must be policy- or state-oriented; truth telling has a higher purpose, and Muslims should have the same freedom of expression that other Americans have. The question of whether to talk about foreign policy also raises complex theological issues for Muslim activists. The activists with a religious bent, in particular, argue that it is a Muslim's duty to speak out against injustice—especially when Muslims are under attack. Moreover, argue the radical internationalists, another way, beyond urban renewal, to integrate Muslims into people-of-color coalitions and to bridge the distance between "immigrant" and African-American communities is by reminding people of the connections between the civil rights movement and anticolonial struggles. But these efforts to mobilize the history of the 1960s are also fraught. Many Americans don't want to be reminded of black nationalist or Third World radicalism; anti-imperial talk could alienate important domestic allies. Some organizations—like South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) and the Sikh Coalition—will split the difference, talking about race, but not touching foreign policy.

The older Muslim-American leadership can understand the political shift away from the Republican Party, but not the race-based identity politics or the efforts to "stir up" the sixties. In the Arab-American community the revolts of 2011, the tumult in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, and the subsequent out-migration of tens of thousands of Arab Christians from the Middle East have made the older generation even more suspicious of this largely Muslim-led campaign for minority status; the more established assimilated Arab Christian families (who constitute the backbone of organizations like the Arab American Institute) feel racial agitation will only alienate sympathizers that Arab Christians may have in the U.S. But other institutions, like the Arab American Museum, are quietly responding to the demographic shifts and the younger generation's demands. The Dearborn-based museum's main exhibit on the Arab-American story begins with West African Muslim slaves like Omar ibn Said of North Carolina, who wrote a narrative in Arabic script; spotlights the political work of civil rights activist Alia

Hassan, who worked closely with Malcolm X; and concludes with a section titled "Beginning Communities" that highlights the most recent Arab arrivals, Sudanese and Somalis, who have been coming in greater numbers since the mid-1990s.

Even outside the U.S., campaigns have emerged around the issue of data security, questioning the ethnic categories and maps that underpin national census forms. In Canada in 2006, activists called for a boycott of the national census, when the government decided to outsource data processing to Lockheed Martin. Protesters in Canada and to a lesser extent the UK (where the Office for National Statistics also hired Lockheed Martin) feared the American armament company would—bound by the Patriot Act—share data with Homeland Security. The revelations in June 2013 that the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand had formed a surveillance program called the Five Eyes Alliance, whereby different spy agencies exchanged vast amounts of meta-data, only fueled more suspicion.

European state officials are debating how to respond to census activism and how to count and categorize their growing Muslim communities. The National Association of British Arabs in recent years launched a campaign contesting being placed in the category "white," citing the familiar reasons that their "exclusion from official statistics" makes it difficult to track incidents of profiling and harassment, and to include undercounted communities such as Somalis and Sudanese. They called for a separate box—and unlike their American counterparts, secured a "tick-box" just in time for the 2011 census. If British Arabs were protesting "compulsory whiteness," South Asian activists and scholars have long argued that the British census is *too* race-centered; that the black-white binary was imported from the U.S. in the mid-1960s, along with various racial equality laws, by American-educated Britons, and produced a classification system that cannot conceive of discrimination that is not color-based. In the 1990s, Pakistani and Bangladeshi activists argued that they were "misplaced" into race categories when they were facing discrimination on religious grounds. In July 2000, the British Parliament passed the Census Amendment Act, permitting a "religion question" on the 2001 census; people could indicate their religious identity on

the questionnaire, and official statistics were finally available on Britain's faith communities.

In France, where ethnic and religious statistics are forbidden by law, the debate over minority status is particularly acrimonious. If the American census asks about race and ethnicity, but not religion, the French census is prohibited from asking about all three; and the African, Arab, and Roma activists who are demanding that the republic relax this law, introduce "postcolonial categories" on the census, and begin collecting racial and ethnic statistics—to better monitor discrimination and profiling, and allow minorities to build support for affirmative action—are told that such counting runs against France's ideology of color-blindness and will lead to *communautarisme,* a divisive American-style identity politics. And the efforts of the American embassy in Paris to promote *statistiques ethniques,* bringing French Muslim activists to Washington for workshops with Census Bureau experts, have only inflamed French opinion. President François Hollande, in May 2013, moved to ban the term "race" altogether from the French constitution and the country's laws, saying it has no scientific basis. Minority-status campaigns across Europe are drawing opposition from societies at large. When Danish Muslims, at the height of the cartoon controversy, said that as a minority, they should be protected by law from hate speech, their critics stated that Muslims are not a minority but part of a "global majority."

The challenge over how to count and label Muslim communities in Europe and North America is creating political rifts within these communities. At root is a fundamental disagreement on how to respond to organized hostility, with younger advocates claiming that race frames political issues and determines allocation of resourses, and that Muslims should mobilize accordingly; and their elders, who along with recent immigrants fear the consequences of racial agitation, prefer to blend into the majority, and have no desire to be counted, mapped, or classified.

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In May 2010, Bill O'Reilly invited British journalist Imogen Lloyd Webber onto his show, *The O'Reilly Factor,* to discuss France's law banning the face veil. When Lloyd Webber cited France's secular tradition as a reason for the law, O'Reilly disagreed, saying the real reason was fear of "Muslim ghettos." "The French are very worried about these ghettos, these Muslim ghettos, particularly outside of Paris, where the Muslims come to France—and they do this in England as well—and they don't integrate into society." He went on: "The same thing's going on in London. You have neighborhoods in London, they're totally Muslim, they speak Arabic. You walk in those neighborhoods, you're not in England—you're in Kuwait." Lloyd Webber looked bewildered. "I can't actually think of one in London." "Clapham Common!" bellowed O'Reilly. Lloyd Webber shot back: "Clapham Common is full of posh people with push-chairs!" O'Reilly froze. "Polish people?"

Europeans don't like it when Americans—scholars, diplomats, Fox News shouters—speak of "ghettos" on the old continent. For conservatives, ghettos are a thing of the past in Europe, and "race" is an American obsession. Left-leaning intellectuals, in turn, are irked by American chatter about Europe's failure to integrate its Muslims when it is U.S. foreign policy that inflames Muslim opinion; and they particularly resent efforts to impose American "racecraft" on Europe. In his book *Urban Outcasts,* Loïc Wacquant, a Berkeley-based French

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