A Century of Civic and Cultural Achievement

Resources Available Online at aaiusa.org

Demographics of Arab Americans in the US
aaiusa.org/demographics

Roster of Arab Americans in Political Life
aaiusa.org/arab-american-roster

Famous Arab Americans
aaiusa.org/famous-arab-americans

Opinion Polls on Arabs, Arab Americans, and the Middle East
aaiusa.org/opinion-polls

Issue Briefs on Domestic and International Issues Impacting Arab Americans
aaiusa.org/issues

Scholarships to Study in the Arab World and for Arab Students to Study in the US
aaiusa.org/scholarships

Additional Suggested Websites

On Arab Americans
Arab American National Museum
arabamericanmuseum.org
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
adc.org
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services
accesscommunity.org
National Network for Arab American Communities
nnaac.org

On Islam
Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding (GU)
cmcu.georgetown.edu
Institute for Social Policy & Understanding
ispu.org
Institute on Religious and Civic Values
ircv.org
Islamic Society of North America
isna.net
Muslim Public Affairs Council
mpac.org

On Arabs and the Middle East
AMIDEAST
amideast.org
Center for Contemporary Arab Studies
ccas.georgetown.edu
Middle East Institute
mideasti.org
Middle East Policy Council
mepc.org
Middle East Studies Association
mesa.arizona.edu
Saudi Aramco World Magazine
saudiaramcoworld.com
We are a diverse community of immigrants and the descendants of immigrants, three and one-half million strong, who have come from throughout the Arab world. We are Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Jordanians, and Yemenis—from North Africa to Southwest Asia. We are Christians and Muslims.

Arab Americans’ history illustrates how the immigrant experience has shaped the United States. We are part of the American success story, showing what can be achieved when an ethnic constituency becomes fully engaged in the political and economic life of this country.

We have helped build communities and institutions in most of this country’s major cities, from Massachusetts to Michigan, from California to Texas. We are leaders in industry, and we are small business owners. We are doctors and scientists, lawyers and teachers. We are autoworkers in Detroit, grocers in Chicago, investment bankers in New York, and entertainers in Hollywood.

Since the first wave of immigrants arrived here more than a century ago, Arab Americans have assimilated into mainstream U.S. life. We share the same economic and social diversity as all Americans, but we also share treasures brought with us from our native lands—a rich heritage and culture, a strong extended family network, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a drive for excellence. These are gifts we brought to our new home, gifts that have enriched American culture and the American economy, that have played a role in scientific achievements that define this nation—from creating the first artificial heart to sending the first shuttle into space.

Today, Arab Americans are forging a new path in American politics, bringing our spirit, our talents, and our commitment to a forum that will shape not just our nation but our world for centuries to come. We want to lead the discussion of civil and political rights in America, from the perspective of a constituency that cherishes these hallmarks of American freedom, and believes it is our duty to safeguard them for ourselves, for our nation, and for those who come after us.

We want to present proposals on economic priorities and education policy, from the vantage point of an ethnic community that has benefited from the American system. We are willing and able to enhance programs already in place, to the benefit of our fellow citizens as well as future immigrants.

And Arab Americans want to continue participating in the debate on U.S. foreign policy. We want to serve as a bridge between the U.S. and the Middle East. Like our leaders, we want to strengthen the burgeoning democracies that are beginning to flourish throughout the region. We want to help forge new relationships based on mutual respect, concern for human rights and self-determination, and the establishment of normalized productive ties in all areas—political, economic, and cultural.

We are keenly aware of profound challenges facing this country at home and abroad. America faces new responsibilities and burdens. At the individual and national levels, we struggle to respect autonomy and independence while fostering a peaceful and just society.

Arab Americans are ready to play a key role in the national debate on these issues. We have felt and overcome the sting of political exclusion, with Arab American organizations—including the Arab American Institute—helping our community achieve its full political and cultural potential.

In the political arena, the path to empowerment has been long and arduous, but decades of work have established Arab Americans as a solid political constituency.

The Arab American Leadership Council, established by AAI in 1989, now includes more than 500 Arab American elected or appointed political officials from the state, local, and national levels. John Baldacci (ME), Mitch Daniels (IN), and John H. Sununu (NH) all served as Governors of their states. Representing our community and their districts in the House of Representatives are Justin Amash (R-MI), Charles Boustany, Jr. (R-LA), Richard Hanna (R-NY), Darrell Issa (R-CA), and Nick J. Rahall (D-WV).

They join distinguished predecessors in the House and Senate, Chris John (D-LA), Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME), and John E. Sununu (R-NH). Ray LaHood, the former Illinois Representative, left the House and became Secretary of Transportation under President Barack Obama, joining the ranks of other proud Arab Americans serving in presidential administrations, from former Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham to former HHS Secretary Donna Shalala, as well as Ambassadors Ed Gabriel, Ted Kattouf, Selwa Roosevelt, and Tom Nassif.

More than a century after Arab immigrants first arrived in this country, hoping to realize the American Dream—to raise their families, run their businesses, and attend their churches and mosques in a free country—we, as a community, have arrived. We are proud of our heritage and proud of our achievements. And we are committed to putting our talents to work in helping this country—our country—to realize its strengths, its vision, and its potential.

While some still try to raise the specter of discrimination and political exclusion, Americans across the land—from every culture and country, of every economic background and political party—are working to ensure that political participation is open to all. The Arab American community has worked hard to achieve its successes, accomplishments reached because we worked in concert with those whose open hearts and minds recognized that political participation is a basic right and responsibility of all Americans.