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ALIYA HASSEN: TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS,  
ECUMENISM AND AMERICAN ISLAM

**Abstract**

This article explores activist Aliya Hassen's life to identify local, regional, national, and international networks cultivated by early MENA Muslims in the United States. The United States was a hub of mid-twentieth-century transnational Arab and Muslim organizing, where many activists promoted an ecumenical understanding of Islam that tackled pressing American concerns like feminism, anti-imperialism, as well as social and racial justice. Because this organizing engaged both Arab and non-Arab American groups, including the Federation of Islamic Associations, Islamic Center of DC, the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, the Nation of Islam, Muslim Mosque, Inc., Ahmadiyya missionaries, and the Muslim World League, it challenges the salience of American racial formations and even national frames as meaningful analytical categories. Spanning the historic marginalization of MENA peoples and post-World War II consolidation of Islamophobia in the United States, Hassen's biography demonstrates the ways historical forces surface different ways of "reading" and understanding her life.



On 5 July 1916, sixty members of the “Syrian Lodge of Bedr-el-Moneer,” a Muslim community group, organized a parade and performance of “old country” dances in downtown Sioux Falls, South Dakota.<sup>2</sup> The local *Argus-Leader* reported, “Inspired by the enthusiasm of the recent preparedness parade and the celebration of the Fourth of July by American Citizens,” the marchers carried Syrian and American flags and were led by the club’s president “Hossine Abu-Deeb” and “Hohammed Yusif” [sic], who performed sword fighting.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not the *Argus-Leader* imagined these Syrian Americans in its cohort of “American citizens,” this episode on the eve of U.S. entry into World War I offers a bookend for a Muslim American life on the prairie, since one of the parade’s likely observers was six-year-old Aliya Ogdie.<sup>4</sup> Hassen’s life would include national publication, travel as a guest of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, as well as intimate engagement with Malcolm X and a coterie

of multiracial Muslims across the twentieth century. Using her married name Aliya Hassen, she would even spend “retirement” as founding director of Detroit’s Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and enjoy local, if not national, renown as the “Mother of the Arabs.”<sup>5</sup>

This article examines episodes in Hassen’s life with an eye to the political and cultural work of Arab and Muslim community activists. However, Hassen’s life spans events often privileged as watersheds within Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) and Muslim American history, including the end of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the creation of Israel after World War II, and twilight of the Cold War. In particular, the vibrancy of this midcentury American Islam and ethnic organizing overturns declensionist narratives that imagine MENA and Muslim identities as absorbed within normative, “white” identities—that these peoples “passed” until crises brought their non-whiteness into focus. Hassen demonstrates that many American Muslims neither lost their religion nor connections to broader networks of faith, kith, and kin. This biographical approach thus sidesteps retrofitted periodization and the spatial bounds scholars often impose on the past.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Hassen’s writing and biography center the United States as a hub of Arab and Muslim organizing in the postwar period, intimately connected to both foreign and domestic civil rights struggles.<sup>7</sup> By foregrounding religion, Hassen produced solidarities among White, Black, Arab, and Asian Muslims, thereby challenging American racial formations and even national boundaries as salient categories of analysis and affiliation.<sup>8</sup> Hassen’s activism thus characterizes Islam as a vibrant and internally contested *American* religion, an insight Hassen’s former colleague Sally Howell illuminates. However, far from conforming to hegemonic norms, Hassen linked the economic, political, and epistemic exploitation of the Middle East to Western mythmaking, and voiced this critique through an antiracist and feminist lens squarely situated within Islamic *and* American ideals.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Hassen’s writings suggest what would later be called Third World feminism, and augments our understandings of how MENA women contributed to and shaped this discourse during the Cold War. Finally, this project’s scattered local, federal, institutional, and personal archives doubles the rhetorical and epistemic invisibility of MENA Americans, since many of these archives survival has been challenged by anti-Arab and Islamophobic violence.

## SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Originally from Qaraoun in the Ottoman province of Syria, Hassen's family shared many characteristics with other early migrants from the Mashriq, particularly by participating in nascent transnational Arab and Muslim networks.<sup>10</sup> According to Hassen, her father Ali Ahmed Ogdie first came to the United States in the 1870s or '80s, where he and his brothers reiterated common migratory circuits by passing through New York City, Boston, and then Brazil, where at least one of his brothers settled permanently.<sup>11</sup> As with many other Ottoman subjects in the Americas, Ali (also known as "Alex," "Alec" or "Ollie") seems to have slipped through several epistemic constructs of identity, skirting both the Ottoman prohibition on Muslim emigration by traveling through khedival Egypt and increasingly restrictive American bans on "Asiatic" immigrants.<sup>12</sup>

Likely lured by the prospect of gold and cheap land, Ali returned from Brazil, and traveled westward to South Dakota.<sup>13</sup> As the opening citation suggests, late nineteenth-century South Dakota territory was surprisingly diverse, and home to substantial Native American, European, African American, and MENA populations.<sup>14</sup> While many Arab immigrants on the prairie married into white, Native American, or *métis* communities, Ogdie returned to Qaraoun around 1890 to marry Fatima Juma (Karawi), with whom he had several children before returning to the United States.<sup>15</sup> Fatima and their children later joined Ali on his homestead in Kadoka a decade later, although their eldest son spent his childhood with uncles in Brazil after being turned away at Ellis Island and the US-Mexico border.<sup>16</sup> By the time Hassen was born in 1910, the family had moved to the larger Sioux Falls, where her parents gave her Arabic and anglicized names "to please . . . English and Scottish neighbors." Her siblings similarly utilized Arabic and English names interchangeably, so that the family included Ahmed "Emilio," Mohamet "Alex," Hussein "Sam," Hassan "Albert," Abdulkareem "Abraham" or "Abe," and Zainab (as well as Said, Khalid, Zaina and Yemami who died as infants).<sup>17</sup>

Nicknames aside, rather than disappear in a foreign land in which they were a tiny sliver of the population, these prairie Muslims organized, and Hassen was raised in a time and place in which her family's racial and religious background was alternately scrutinized and overlooked, but less frequently stigmatized. Nor did her family or neighbors see Islam as anathema to American identities, or disconnected from broader Muslim communities – convictions Hassen

would hold throughout her life. The local *Argus-Leader* published nearly fifteen hundred articles on “Mohammedans,” “Mohamedans” and “Muslims” from 1874–1946, with appreciable awareness of the diversity of Muslims in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.<sup>18</sup> The paper also included dozens of articles on Syrian immigration, acknowledging Sioux Falls’ own Syrian colony, its religious pluralism, and cordial relations with other racial groups (with the exception of less integrated Native Americans). While Sioux Falls wouldn’t have a dedicated mosque until nearly a hundred years after its first Muslims, the Ogdie family remembered Ali’s home as a place of socializing and worship—with Hassen even presiding over her brother Mohamet’s funeral there in 1966.<sup>19</sup>

In the same period, there were several hundred articles mentioning the Ogdies, their Syrian and “Mohammedan” identities, as well as varied commercial interests.<sup>20</sup> Just a few years after the Syrian parade, for example, “Aley Ogdey” showed up on a list of eighty-six other “Syrian Citizens” who raised \$539.50 for the Red Cross war relief in 1918.<sup>21</sup> Other articles covered Hassen’s brothers Sam, Mohamet, and Emilio’s arrests for the seemingly un-Islamic offenses of possession of alcohol and inebriation, lending credence to their children’s recollections that the brothers bootlegged.<sup>22</sup> For her part, Hassen remembered sleeping under buffalo blankets, entertaining other Arab Muslims and Ahmadiyya missionaries, as well as substantive Arabic language and religious study, as her writing would attest.<sup>23</sup>

#### DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

Hassen faced both identitarian affirmations and challenges when she left Sioux Falls as a teenager to live with her aunt and uncle, Fatima and Mohammed Okdie in Dearborn, Michigan. There, Hassen joined many former Ottoman subjects who had settled in Detroit’s working class neighborhoods, especially in Dearborn’s South End where they could walk to work at the Ford River Rouge Plant.<sup>24</sup> Although Hassen enrolled in the Briggs School for Girls, her mother seems to have had other plans, and in 1925 arranged Hassen’s marriage to Nigabe Kadoura, a Syrian Muslim immigrant living in the large Arab community in Toledo.<sup>25</sup> This marriage would produce Hassen’s only child, Amina “Amelia” Kadoura, but does not appear to have been a happy one. As such, this union would precipitate a break with more prescriptive community norms since Hassen quickly left her husband and moved back in with family in Dearborn and Sioux Falls. Hassen later described Kadoura as controlling, and flexed her independence

by divorcing him in American court in 1932, citing “extreme cruelty.”<sup>26</sup> Hassen kept more specific details of this marriage murky, even though she publicly discussed its failure many times later in life and described herself as a “rebel” for breaking with her parents’ and community’s expectations.<sup>27</sup>

Hassen may have further scandalized her community by marrying Ernest Weldon, a white Christian from Buffalo, Alabama, less than a month after her divorce.<sup>28</sup> This marriage would not last long either, and Hassen and Weldon separated after a car accident on their honeymoon. By 1938, Weldon, a World War I veteran, had moved to a sanitarium in Outwood, Kentucky, while Hassen supported herself and Amelia in Detroit as an inspector for Nash Kelvinator and then claims investigator at Trans-Oceanic Packing and Shipping Company.<sup>29</sup> After Weldon passed away in his sleep in 1948, Hassen kept details of this marriage even closer to the vest, sometimes omitting Weldon from her autobiography entirely. Her grandson Ismael Ahmed speculates that she may have wanted to disavow this interfaith union—consecrated by a priest—after she became a *hajjah* in the 1970s, just as she may have hoped to bypass the fact that she and Weldon likely met through their shared love of gambling.<sup>30</sup>

Hassen remained invested in her religion, however, and around the time of Amelia’s birth, began the sprawling, 76,000-word work, “The Crescent and the Cross” or “The Torch of Islam” (1928).<sup>31</sup> Although she never published this piece in its entirety, Hassen continued to rework the manuscript until at least 1945, and would publish many excerpts as pamphlets or essays. The early date of Hassen’s writing situates her within a growing cohort of lay Muslims in the Middle East and around the world who were writing about religion and society—in Hassen’s case, perhaps consolidating a more eclectic immigrant Islam in favor of an orthodox practice that could meaningfully participate in the pantheon of American religions.<sup>32</sup>

The text substantively engages with both Euro-American Christian and Qur’anic material, but rather than kowtow to Christian societal norms, Hassen is *deeply* critical of Islamophobia and even Christianity itself.<sup>33</sup> In the introduction, Hassen offers a critique of the widespread misinformation and circular citational practices that typify Western discourse on Islam, beginning with Reformation thinkers Hugo Grotius and Johannes Andreas. In the subsequent section, Hassen provides a summary of pre-Islamic Arabia and waxes rhapsodic on the “Principal Events in the Life of Mohammed,” “Principles of Islam,” and “Islamic Contributions to the World.”<sup>34</sup> The

next section scrutinizes the authenticity of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, though Hassen also summarizes “Persian,” “Hindu,” and “Chinese” scriptures. Significantly, Hassen emphasizes the dubious provenance or outright fraudulence of many parts of the Christian New Testament, while simultaneously affirming the Hebrew *Torah* and importance of Jesus as a prophet. Although Hassen uses “Jesus” rather than “Issa,” suggesting that she imagined an audience of Anglophone non-Muslims, she frames Judaism and Christianity as simply two of many religions that preceded the final revelation of Islam. After citing parallels among the lives and teachings of Zoroaster, Krishna, Confucius, Buddha and Jesus, the work ends with comparative theology, exploring differing conceptions of “God,” messianism, monotheism, slavery, polygamy, war, and divorce.

#### BROOKLYN HEIGHTS, NEW YORK

Hassen truly began to expand her public profile once she and Amelia left the Midwest for New York City in the 1940’s. By the end of the decade, much of the Little Syria her father had encountered had moved from Washington Street in lower Manhattan to Brooklyn Heights, where Hassen and Amelia lived in a series of apartments near the cluster of Arab businesses on Atlantic Avenue.<sup>35</sup> Although there is no evidence she worshiped here, Hassen almost certainly visited the Islamic Mission of America founded by Sheikh Daoud [Dawood] Ahmed Faisal, a Muslim convert from Grenada, just down the street from her apartment on State Street. In her multi-ethnic neighborhood that included newly-minted “Syrians” and “Lebanese” following the end of the French mandate, Hassen took on many civic responsibilities: auxiliary police woman (1950–1951), assistant supervisor (1951–1952) and then outright supervisor in the 82<sup>nd</sup> precinct’s civil defense (1952–1965).<sup>36</sup>

Hassen also remarried, this third time to Egyptian merchant mariner Ali Hassen. Around the same time, her daughter Amelia also married an Egyptian immigrant, Ismael Ahmed—with whom she would have a child of the same name. Hassen went into business with Ahmed, working as manager of Cairo Film Company, a Brooklyn-based business that imported Egyptian movies.<sup>37</sup> Hassen concurrently worked as manager at Saudi Arabian Export Company and after securing her professional private investigator’s license in 1955, as detective or security officer at department stores Abraham & Strauss in Brooklyn, A. DePinna Co., and W. & J. Sloane, Inc. in Manhattan.<sup>38</sup>

Hassen also connected with MENA and Muslim communities through activism. In 1947, the Hassens participated in protests at the United Nations objecting to Britain's refusal to remove troops from the Suez Canal Zone and thereby end its occupation of Egypt and Sudan. A *New York Times* article cited the protests' leadership as Mustafa Momen, who claimed he was a member of the executive committee of the Muslim Brotherhood; Ahmed Kamel Kotb, president of the Egyptian Socialist Farmers Party; "Aliya Hassan" [*sic*], who described herself as a "Moslem religious teacher of 203 Clinton Street, Brooklyn"; and Sam Leviton, who told the press he represented the National Maritime Union (and somewhat dubiously, that all protesters were union members). The crowd carried American and Egyptian flags, alongside banners that read "The Security Council's Injustice Means Death to World Peace," "Down with Imperialism, Freedom for the Whole World," and "Liberty or Withdrawal from the United Nations."<sup>39</sup> Here, the Hassens were part of a broad coalition who simultaneously embraced American, Arab, and Muslim identities – if not other ethnic, progressive and labor affiliations as well.

In a similar vein, Ali and Aliya cofounded the Egyptian Arab American Seaman's Society the next year, an organization devoted to the labor rights and religious needs of "Eastern Muslims."<sup>40</sup> The organization's 1948 charter established Aliya as its vice president and Ali as treasurer, alongside goals to disseminate information on both "Americanism for future citizens" and Islam for converts (presumably, American wives). The charter affirmed it would serve Aliya's "hobby" of "the propagation of Islam" through articles, including "There Is No Superstition in Islam," "The Qiblah of Islam," "We Are Not Muhammadans," "Eed ul-Adha" [*sic*], "Islam for Beginners," and "Questions on Islam." The charter also explained that the society would fulfill burial needs for "any Eastern Muslim," regardless of union membership, sect, country of origin, or cost. Nonetheless, the union claimed to eschew an overtly religious agenda (as well as a presumably non-Muslim member): "We repeat, although we are not primarily a religious society our membership is 99% Muslim and we are 100% interested in all Islamic affairs and 99% willing to serve Islam in any capacity we're able to in the United States."<sup>41</sup>

Hassen simultaneously laid the groundwork for another, religious rather than ethno-religious organization: the Islamic Sorority, which aimed to provide a complementary forum for women and their children. Although the scale of the sorority's membership is unclear, its constitution similarly affirmed the primacy of religious identity, and

“work for the general good of all Muslim women and their children.”<sup>42</sup> Hassen would later refer to the many Muslim Columbia students who “would come to my apartment to read, reread and discuss with me various Suras of the Quran,” so it’s possible she leveraged this organizational imprimatur to convene Muslim students, wives, and children at her Brooklyn apartment.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the sorority and Seaman’s Society charter explicitly emphasized collaboration with other Muslim organizations, including the Islamic Center in Washington, DC, which was then building its expansive facility in the Kalorama neighborhood.<sup>44</sup> Hassen would come to serve as assistant to the Center’s director Dr. Mahmoud Hoballah from 1959–1966, and her affiliation would continue over several decades.<sup>45</sup> Although much of Hassen’s work with the center involved research and writing, including a pamphlet on ritual washing of the dead, she also cultivated contacts among domestic and foreign Muslims striving for influence among American co-religionists.<sup>46</sup> For instance, though their connection is unclear, Hassen was invited to call on Saudi prince Talal bin Abdulaziz at the Shoreham Hotel in 1948, care of Khalil Ibrahim al-Rawaf, sometimes credited as the first Saudi immigrant to the United States.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Hassen became chairperson of social services for the Islamic Center of New York, then on Manhattan’s Upper West Side and supported by a clique of Muslim ambassadors to the United Nations.<sup>48</sup> Complementing this commitment, Hassen published a range of articles through the *Islamic Information Series (Ansar al-Islam)*, supported by African-American jazz pianist and convert Ahmad Jamal.<sup>49</sup> Finally, just a few days before the passage of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 in December 1948, Hassen acted in *The Tragedy of Palestine*, as part of an “Evening of Music and Entertainment for the Benefit of the American Middle East Relief” at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Organized by the Syrian Junior League, this event aided Arab American George Barakat’s American Middle East Relief, though the event’s special guest was Bayard Dodge, former president of the American University of Beirut and son of Near East Relief founder Cleveland Hoadley Dodge.<sup>50</sup>

Hassen subsequently connected with another Muslim organization with similarly expansive ambitions: the Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada (FIA).<sup>51</sup> Originally one of many vibrant Syrian-Lebanese clubs in the Midwest, the FIA provided an important avenue for Hassen’s writing, while reiterating her vision of an ecumenical Islam that minimized



differences among American and foreign Muslims.<sup>52</sup> Hassen served as second vice president of the FIA from 1959 to 1961, for which she traveled to Egypt as a guest of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who hosted the Federation's annual convention in 1961.<sup>53</sup> Hassen captioned a press photo with Nasser "my hero," and for his part, Nasser thanked Hassen for her "sincere patriatic [*sic*] feelings."<sup>54</sup> Though Hassen seems particularly taken with pan-Arabism in this moment, the FIA affirmed a non-ethnic or partisan mission, and Hassen also began corresponding with the rival Saudi Muslim World League. These diverse engagements suggest that Hassen's location in the United States enabled her to sidestep (or even parlay) tensions among Arab states during the "Arab Cold War," to deepen the FIA's "non-aligned" engagement with several competing regimes.<sup>55</sup> Through this activism, Hassen traced Muslim connections that had expanded beyond ethno-religious roots to take on national if not global dimensions.

Similarly, the reach of the FIA had grown dramatically when the organization began publishing *The Moslem Life* (later known as *The Muslim Life* and *Muslim Life*) in 1949, and later the *F.I.A. Journal*.<sup>56</sup> This quarterly publication literally integrated several Muslim communities within its fold, since it was the result of collaboration between the FIA and the existing *Albanian Muslim Life*.<sup>57</sup> Even after changing its name and distribution, the journal retained its Albanian editor Imam Vehbi Ismail, with layout and printing taken on by Lebanese American Mike Karoub, who would later be an editor and imam in his own right.<sup>58</sup> In addition to this diverse leadership, the journal featured an eclectic mix of contributors, including Sunni and Shi'a Arabs, Pakistanis, American converts, Ahmadiyya leaders, and even American Christian theologians and academics.

Hassen became a regular contributor to FIA publications, and as "Aliya al-Ogdie," published articles from the late 1950s to mid-1960s, including "The Qibla of Islam" (1959), "Takbir al-Id/The Id Prayers" [*sic*] (1959), "There Is No Superstition in Islam" (1960), "In Memoriam" (a poem commemorating JFK's death), and "Feminine Participation in Islamic Affairs" (1965).<sup>59</sup> Hassen's ecumenical commitments were manifest in both the multiethnic context of the *Muslim Life* and the content of her work, which emphasized solidarity with not only other Muslims but Americans of all stripes, especially women.

Hassen made the place of women in Islam and the United States a particular priority, especially in the three-part "Feminine Participation in Islamic Affairs" culled from a full-length work

alternately titled "Wives of the Prophet," or "First Ladies of Islam," begun in 1959.<sup>60</sup> For Hassen, Islam and its feminisms were discourses of choice that countered American misconceptions of Islamic chauvinism and offered alternatives to Western patriarchy. In this series, Hassen references Qur'anic verses related to equality of the sexes and nobility of women, imagining herself along a continuum of pre-Islamic and Islamic women she understands as Arab, including Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba; the Palmyrene Queen Zenobia and Assyrian Semiramis; Omm Ammarah; the poetess al-Khansa; the wife of Habib ibn Muslima; and Salma, the wife of Saad ibn Waqqas.<sup>61</sup> Hassen declares, "According to the standards of this day, I am a modern woman, yet I am often quite amazed at the tolerance and freedom accorded to the women of Islam in the seventh century," since "Muhammad and Islam and they alone are responsible for the emancipation of womankind. . . . It fell to Islam to give women almost equal rights with men under the Law and make known to men that women were their spiritual equals."<sup>62</sup>

Throughout this flexible genealogy and reference to the life and times of the Prophet, Hassen confronts distinctly midcentury challenges, like immodest dress, sexism, and relegation to the home. She continues, "My stand is that Moslem women not only share equal rights with men under Islamic law, but are absolutely free to participate in every field of human endeavor beneficial to humanity, as well as those which can be compensational to themselves." Crucially, Hassen ends her series not by praising American women, but by lauding emancipated Egyptian women for having assumed their rightful places in society and state. Inverting normative assumptions about women's liberation as a Western prerogative, Hassen urges American Muslim women to seek fulfillment through marriage, children, a career, religion, or secular service, with the knowledge that "the spirit of Islam's 'First Ladies' will lovingly shadow you and cheer you onward towards your goal."<sup>63</sup> Although Hassen does not reference specific second-wave feminists, she suggests the expansive possibilities of urban life, while maintaining respectability by framing her life decisions within the grammar of Islamic precepts.

Hassen also explored Islamic correctives to midcentury America in "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims." A portion of this lengthy text was published in the *Islamic Information Series* #32 (1957), but the working document grew to 158 questions over the next two decades. In addition to the core tenets of Islam, Hassen tackles a range of topics: major schools of Sunni jurisprudence, American

stereotypes about sexism in Islam, the perceived backwardness of Islamic countries, and even Qur'anic attitudes toward space travel.<sup>64</sup> As she had in "Feminist Participation in Islamic Affairs," Hassen argues that Islam, unlike other monotheistic faiths, established meaningful gender equality, which had in fact inspired European Crusaders and set the West on a more egalitarian path. Moreover, she attributes the diminished status of women (and veiling) in many Islamic countries to cultural rather than religious practices after the First Caliphate:

Women became the petted, pampered, playmate instead of the friend, patron and helpmate. . . . Soon, when inactivity atrophied their zeal, like kittens waiting to be fed, pampered and petted, they began to slowly revert to the subservient role of pagan Arab times. . . . it came to pass that the helpmate, the amazon, the educator, the business woman, the social service worker, the spirited companion, became the decreptive [*sic*], but spineless hothouse flower relegated [*sic*] to obscurity behind veils and barred doors.<sup>65</sup>

Although she takes a swipe at Babylonian and "Persian sophistry," Hassen expresses disdain not for sexual difference articulated in Sunnah and Hadith, but rather societal practices that denied women agency by restricting them to the home or mindless subservience.

Elsewhere in the text, Hassen emphasizes the importance of knowledge in Islam, pointing to the prominence of historic Muslim thinkers and "Qur'anic" exhortation that "the ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr." Furthermore, she advances the critique that illiteracy in Muslim lands is not due to Islamic shortcomings, but rather *colonial* depredation that has discouraged education and "systematically relegated Muslims to illiteracy." Although the destruction of indigenous educational institutions has rendered colonized peoples "clods" and "robots" who were "easier to manage," Hassen locates hope since "today having cast off the strangling yoke, with the rebirth of freedom, Muslims again are fanning [*sic*] the flame which their ancestors lit to guide them to betterment through knowledge."<sup>66</sup>

Hassen also devotes substantial space in "101 Questions" to solidarity and sameness within Islam both obviating racial and gender inequality, as well as doctrinal splits that she considered irrelevant. She

suggests that among the many reasons the Prophet had for taking eleven wives was “to remove the color barrier,” “to show by his example that the divorced woman was as worthy of marriage as another woman,” “to uplift the status of the woman war captive,” and “to show by his example that marriage was permissible [sic] with women who believed in God. (Jews and Christians).” Hassen asserts,

The fullest meaning of the spirit and essence of the terms fraternity and equality are exemplified in Islam. . . linking together the peoples of the earth into one human family, regardless of race, nationality, or stations in life. These bonds unite all Muslims into one brotherhood and sisterhood in the Islamic family and Islamic way of life.<sup>67</sup>

Even addressing her works to a largely non-Muslim audience, she made no bones about the supremacy of Islam as the definitive and fullest revelation of divine law, explicitly *because* it had established categorical equality and peace.

This anti-colonial, feminist critique of the West and religious ecumenism parallels and sometimes surpasses the critical positions of members of the multinational network of religious and scholarly authorities Hassen consulted for her pieces. For instance, Abdul Rahman Azzam, first secretary-general of the Arab League and author of *Eternal Message of Mohamed*, reviewed and recommended “101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims,” as well as “Religious Stories for Young Muslims,” reworked from 1954–1980. This latter text’s acknowledgments also thank Dr. Abdulmunim Shakir, head of the Department of Muslim World Studies at Wayne County Community College; Hoballah, who encouraged Hassen to write the book and advised revisions; Kamil Abdulrahim, former Egyptian ambassador to the United States; Mohammad Hussien Haekal [sic], former Egyptian minister of education; and Kathleen Kalil, a PhD candidate in psychology, later in practice in Dearborn.<sup>68</sup>

#### HARLEM, NEW YORK `

Despite its broad horizons, Hassen’s universalism had significant limits, particularly around what she saw as “un-Islamic” practices that in her mind, misrepresented her faith.<sup>69</sup> Although chapter 25 of another work, “What Is an Orthodox Muslim,” painstakingly explicates

similarities among the Abrahamic faiths through the Torah, Christian Bible, and Qur'an, the work begins with a serious indictment:

The most amazing phenomina [*sic*] in the past century, occurring in the United States, has been the birth of at least three very un-Islamic religious sects, who have used the name of Islam for their self agrandisement [*sic*]. . . . The press, the radio and the television, have given at least one of these sects so much publicity that the average American no longer knows the difference between a "Green Muslim," a "White Muslim," a "Black Muslim," a "Heretical Muslim," or an "Orthodox Muslim."<sup>70</sup>

Hassen's target was obvious. In fact, part of her research with Hoballah had explicitly been to investigate "spurious Islamic Organizations in the eastern part of the USA," including the Nation of Islam and Talib Dawud's Muslim Brotherhood, USA. Hassen's correspondence with Hoballah in 1960–1961 confirms the negative opinions the Islamic Center and FIA held of Elijah Muhammad, and this is one of the few contexts in which Hassen deploys the language of "orthodoxy" to disparage alternate beliefs.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Hassen recounted that the *Islamic Information Series* pamphlets, perhaps in part because they were supported by the Ahmad Jamal Foundation, were especially "distributed in Harlem convert groups to help people . . . learn the difference between Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslims and Orthodox Muslims."<sup>72</sup>

However, Hassen does not seem to have dismissed Black Muslims out of hand, nor was her critique grounded in anti-blackness. In fact, Hassen's scrutiny of the Nation of Islam ultimately led to a friendship with Malcolm X, a decade after she became a grandmother. Hassen frequently cited this friendship as one of the most important of her life, even though she is otherwise largely absent within ballooning academic and popular interest in Malcolm X. Although the archival evidence for their relationship is often faint, it challenges racialized, gendered, and ageist assumptions about Civil Rights activism—and establishes solidarities and moral geographies essential to Hassen's, if not Malcolm's, work.<sup>73</sup>

In a letter to Elijah Muhammad's son Imam Wallace, who later took the name Warith Deen Mohammed as leader of the American Society of Muslims, Hassen describes first meeting Malcolm and

Mohammed when they ushered her into an otherwise sold-out lecture in Harlem. In Hassen's notes, she indicates that she was denied entrance because of her race, but that Malcolm personally intervened to get her inside because of her faith.<sup>74</sup> Malcolm X's own papers call Hassen a "friend" in 1961, gleefully recounting her upbraiding Talib Dawud and Dakota Staton at the *Amsterdam News* offices for not being [real] Muslims.<sup>75</sup> Hassen's grandson Ismael Ahmed also remembers attending events with Malcolm X and Ahmad Jamal, and Hassen recalled not only attending Nation of Islam lectures, but also teaching classes at Muslim Mosque, Inc., and interacting with African American converts at the Islamic Mission of America and the Islamic Cultural Center.<sup>76</sup>

At other moments, Hassen seems to have acted as a conduit for Malcolm X's correspondence within a shared global network of Muslim leaders, as he cultivated eclectic patronage in his own right. In an undated note between "Brother Malcolm" and Hassen, for instance, Malcolm X apologizes for not having responded sooner and asks for contact information for Sheikh Abdullah Balkhair, the first Saudi information minister. Hassen's archive also holds Malcolm's correspondence with Said Ramadan, director of the Islamic Center of Geneva and son-in-law of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, as well as one of Malcolm's last interviews in the Islamic Center's 1965 *Al-Muslimoon* newsletter.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Hassen reported that she helped plan Malcolm's hajj, a contention supported by the many contacts the activists shared. For instance, Malcolm credits Egyptian Mahmoud Shawarbi with facilitating his rupture with the Nation of Islam around the same time Shawarbi became president of the Islamic Center of New York and director of the FIA in 1964.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the same Abdul Rahman Azzam who reviewed and recommended Hassen's manuscripts also hosted Malcolm X in Jeddah. Finally, although Hassen would only complete her own hajj in 1975 when she led a group of African-American Muslims, Betty Shabazz sent Hassen a postcard from Mecca thanking her for help and introductions during Betty's hajj in 1965, just after Malcolm X's assassination.<sup>79</sup>

However, it is Hassen's *invisibility* within civil rights scholarship that sheds most light on the recurrent erasure of MENA American Muslims and their uneasy incorporation within ethnic and religious studies.<sup>80</sup> This invisibility comes in part from the preeminence of Malcolm X and Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which misremembers or reimagines chronology at the expense of MENA

Americans like Hassen.<sup>81</sup> In the *Autobiography* and other citations, Malcolm X emphasizes slights from “white” Muslims who ostensibly focused their conversion efforts on “white” Americans, ignoring that the FIA, *Islamic Information Series*, Ahmadiyya missionaries, and the Islamic Centers of DC and New York paid particular attention to African American conversions.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Malcolm’s own 1957 address book (the year of his first trip to the Middle East) includes contacts for the Egyptian delegation to the UN, the Institute of Islam (Dawud Mosque on State Street), and The Moslem World and the USA. In his 1958 address book, he writes “Thank Allah for . . . Islam Center in DC,” alongside contact information for “Dr. Muhammad [*sic*] Bisar, Director of Islamic Institute in DC.”<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Manning Marable’s *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* notes that Nation of Islam Temple No. 7 hosted a “Feast of the Followers of Messenger Muhammad” at Harlem’s Park Palace in 1957, attended by Rafik Asha, leader of the Syrian mission to the UN, and Ahmad Zaki el-Barail, the Egyptian attaché. Marable also notes that Shawarbi met Malcolm at the Nation of Islam Event Afro-Asian Bazaar in 1960.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, it is often in relation to Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and anti-racist activism that MENA and other “Eastern Muslims” are most harshly judged, even though Nation of Islam members often offered more sophisticated theorization of MENA racialization.<sup>85</sup> Admittedly, although some frequently cited correspondence by Arabs (American and foreign) *does* establish anti-black racism, Hassen and her colleagues’ long engagement with African American converts debunks the assumption that MENA Americans were singularly invested in American racism or even racial categories.<sup>86</sup> Instead, Hassen and figures like her expose the prevalence of these assumptions around authenticity, normative immigrant narratives, and particularly the way race has been superimposed over and above religious identity, effacing extensive solidarities among MENA, European, Asian, and African American Muslims.

#### DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

By the time Hassen returned to Detroit to retire in 1972, the city and especially the position(s) of MENA and Muslim Americans within it had changed dramatically. In spite of the faltering auto industry and racial revolts that gripped the city in 1943 and 1967, Dearborn’s Arab community had continued to grow, with increasing diversity in terms of countries of origin, religion, class, and racial interpellation.<sup>87</sup> As Sally Howell, Pamela Pennock and others have shown, this diversity made

for contestations within religious and civic organizations that strained to accommodate multiple and competing views of Islam, as well as differing political allegiances. In part, these doctrinal debates may have contributed to Hassen's relative silence in Muslim contexts, since as cleavages between the FIA and Muslim Students Association/Islamic Society of North America attest, older activists like Hassen were often very harshly judged by a younger generation who did not embrace them as religious authorities.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, broader popular, legal, and academic shifts privileged secular Arab identity, distanced from Islam for practical and political reasons. Arab American contemporaries like Alixa Naff, Nabeel Abraham, Philip Kayal, and Gregory Orfalea joined earlier voices like Philip Hitti and Albert Hourani in chronicling the community's struggles and successes, while analogizing difference with other American ethnic or racial communities.<sup>89</sup> And although class, immigration status and religion might inflect MENA American vulnerability to various forms of violence, many articulated intensifying MENA "othering" through racial logics, even when this framing rendered MENA Americans juridically white, and actuarially or symbolically of color.<sup>90</sup>

Not surprisingly though perhaps not causally, by the 1950s, the disproportionately Muslim and Arab South End had been slated for conversion into an industrial park, and a multiethnic group of residents formed the South East Dearborn Community Council (SEDCC) to save the neighborhood.<sup>91</sup> One of the SEDCC's leaders was Helen Atwell (née Helen Mohammed Okdie), Hassen's cousin and daughter of Fatima and Mohammed Okdie. Like Hassen, Atwell was active in a range of organizations serving her neighborhood as well as ethno-religious community, including the American Moslem Society and its Women's Auxiliary, rival American Moslem Bekka Center, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Lebanese Club, Arab American Political Committee, Arab Democratic Club, and Arab World Festival.<sup>92</sup> In addition to joining the SEDCC, Hassen was also connected to the nascent ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services) grandson Ismael, for which Hassen would serve as director/administrator (1973–1982), president (1982–1983), vice president (1983–1985), and vice president/English-language secretary (1985–1988).<sup>93</sup>

As ACCESS grew, it found itself simultaneously supported and targeted, although it had committed to service to the entire Detroit community by 1975.<sup>94</sup> On the one hand, increased visibility around Arab identity allowed for service organizations like ACCESS to gain



traction and receive state funding not available to religious nonprofits. On the other, the city refused to recognize the SEDCC or ACCESS as community representatives as required by federal housing grants, in part because ACCESS faced charges of having engaged in political activities (around Palestine) and discrimination (against foreign-born and putatively darker Yemenis).<sup>95</sup> At the same time, ACCESS and Hassen found themselves subject to state surveillance, exposed by ACCESS lawyer Abdeen Jabara who litigated against the federal government's illegal monitoring of American Arabs and/or Muslims.<sup>96</sup> ACCESS received virulent anti-Arab *and* anti-Muslim hate mail, and its offices were consumed by suspicious fires in 1971, 1983, 1987, and 1991. During his 1980 campaign, future Mayor Michael A. Guido even circulated flyers entitled, "Let's Talk about City Parks and the 'Arab Problem.'" <sup>97</sup> Thus, Arab identity often superseded religion as an organizing category, in part as a result of external pressures that might simultaneously recognize Arab traditions as a part of Michigan's multiculturalism, and expose MENA and Muslim peoples to discrimination and violence.

Although Hassen seems to have written less in the last decades of her life, she was frequently called on to represent her "race," religion, and ACCESS (as well as frequent confusions among the three).<sup>98</sup> In frequent published statements on Dearborn, the "Mecca of the Midwest," and growing Islamophobia, Hassen emphasizes both an "Arab past and American future," without parsing the ethnic diversity within Islam or Arab identity—or mentioning the global Arab and Muslim connections ACCESS enjoyed.<sup>99</sup> If anything, Hassen's vision became more, not less inclusive as she aged, even as she became more normatively religiously observant.<sup>100</sup> In the unpublished "Ethnic Muslim Cookbook," Hassen compiled recipes from across Detroit's many communities that insinuate an even broader Muslim world (though not singular Muslim identity), through regional chapters: "Middle East; North Africa; Balkans and Turkey; Caucasus [*sic*] to Mongolia; China and Japan; India to Indochina; Indonesia, Malay, Thailand and Burma."<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in "Religious Stories for Young Muslims," Hassen expresses this universalist sentiment and uses religion to transcend current iterations of racial and geopolitical difference: "It does not matter to God in the least what your color or nationality is. Your parents may be Africans, Arabs, Chinese, Russians, Americans, or they may be of any race. . . . He created you white, brown, yellow, red or Black and loves you just as you are."<sup>102</sup> Even as U.S. rhetorical and practical attempts to exclude MENA and Muslim

peoples sharpened, Hassen's public and private statements emphasize continuities, alongside a compelling and painful rendering of the increasing tensions among her identities.<sup>103</sup>

That said, frustration with American racism still did not obviate engagement with the American state or broader community. In fact, a letter to the editor written just before her death in May 1990 makes the case for women's inclusion in the US armed forces, mobilizing Arab and Islamic history to offer a romanticized and perhaps intentionally provocative rationale:

In pre-Islamic times when a decisive [*sic*] battle took place, breasts bared, hair flowing, mounted upon her war horse or camel, [women] led the warriors into battle. . . In early Islamic war, women, wives, mothers, sister[s], daughters etc., accompanied their man at the rear of the army. . . [and] picked up the swords or spears of the fallen they found and died bravely besides their men. . .<sup>104</sup>

By the time of her death, MENA, Arab, and Muslim lifeworlds had changed dramatically, especially once the Middle East became the linchpin of American foreign policy and popular othering. Prairie, feminist, anti-racist, and elderly Muslim activists like Hassen had come to differ so substantially from the Muslims portrayed in American popular culture, as well as ethnic, area and religious studies, as to be almost inconceivable.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, this article's microhistorical methodology traces the expanding and contracting possibilities for Arabs and Muslims in twentieth-century American life, rejecting a narrowing of imaginaries around "Arab" and "Muslim" that dramatically oversimplify or efface the complexity of Hassen's upbringing, affiliations, and political work. Viewed through an intersectional lens, Hassen's life demonstrates the complicated dynamics in which race, religion, gender, and nationality are subject to radically contingent interpellation, emphasizing the aspects of identity that are uplifted and repressed in different contexts.<sup>106</sup> However, rather than propose a normative heuristic about Islam or inclusion, re-centering MENA and Muslim Americans like Hassen restores a history of multifaceted global activism and solidarity, resisting the "epistemic violence of omission" that otherwise treats MENA Americans as racial and religious marginalia.<sup>107</sup> While this corrective may not rescind the Muslim Ban or globalization of Islamophobia, it helps us remember

other ways of being and a richer – if not more hopeful – understanding of the many American pasts.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> A note on transliteration and reproduction of Arabic terms: I have reproduced proper nouns and concepts as they appear in the original English-language works.

<sup>3</sup> One wonders which “Syrian flag” the article means – perhaps the flag of the Arab Revolt. “Mohammedans Celebrate: Sioux Falls Witnesses a Novel Parade by the Syrian Lodge of Bedr-el-Moneer,” *Daily Argus-Leader*, 5 July 1916, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/229411353/>.

<sup>4</sup> South Dakota’s Arab Americans also include Senators James Abourezk and James Abdnor, though unlike Hassen, both were Christian.

<sup>5</sup> Although Aliya used various permutations of her names, husbands’ names (sometimes rendered “Hassan”), and often published under the name “Aliya al-Ogdie,” I use “Aliya Hassen” or “Hassen” since this is the name she most frequently used professionally.

<sup>6</sup> Fred M. Donner, “Periodization as a Tool of the Historian with Special Reference to Islamic History,” *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 20–36.

<sup>7</sup> Though this article foregrounds Islam, it heeds Sarah Gualtieri’s call to understand the United States as an important site of midcentury, transnational Arab organizing. Sarah Gualtieri, “Edward Said, the AAUG, and Arab American Archival Methods,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 1 (May 2018): 21–29.

<sup>8</sup> This insight complements the work of Moustafa Bayoumi and Edward E. Curtis IV on Asian and African American Muslims by including MENA Americans within transnational and multiethnic Muslim networks, and particularly the important role of women in global Muslim consciousness. Bayoumi’s work allows us to situate Hassen within an ecumenical tradition that includes the Moorish Science Temple’s Noble Drew Ali, Ahmadi mufti Muhammad Sadiq, “the ecumenical sound of Islam” in John Coltrane’s work, and Malcolm X’s strategic deployment of “Asiatic,” “black,” and “Muslim” identities. Similarly, Curtis situates African American Muslims in

the important Arab American networks of which Hassen was a part. Moustafa Bayoumi, "East of the Sun (West of the Moon): Islam, the Ahmadis, and African America," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4, no. 3 (October 2001): 251–63; Edward E. Curtis IV, "Islamism and Its African American Muslim Critics: Black Muslims in the Era of the Arab Cold War," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 2007), *Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States*.

<sup>9</sup> Sally Howell's archival and ethnographic work undercuts assumptions that earlier generations of MENA and Muslim immigrants were apolitical or solely focused on socioeconomic advancement and accommodationism, as in Naber for instance. Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21. Nadine Naber, *Arab America: Gender Cultural Politics and Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). As Howell, Pamela Pennock, Yvonne Haddad, Philip M. Kayal, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, and others have demonstrated, Elkholy has deeply influenced the field of Arab American and Muslim American studies, because many scholars have accepted his conclusions that midcentury American Muslims were non-practicing or inauthentic - to the detriment of figures like Hassen. Abdo A. Elkholy, "Religion and Assimilation in Two Muslim Communities in America" (PhD diss., ProQuest via University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960); Yvonne Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Philip K. Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York: George H. Doran, 1924); Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Pamela Pennock, *The Rise of The Arab American Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Family lore placed the al-Ogdie family in Qaraoun by the end of the eighteenth century, after fleeing inter-clan disputes and arrests in the Hejaz and Nejd. Over time, the family name al-Akkad morphed into al-Ogdie (later Ogdie, Okdie, Okdi, or Okdé in the Americas).

<sup>11</sup> "Family History," n.d., Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, Michigan (hereafter cited as AANM); "Aliya Hassen relatives family stories, history of the Arabic people, and folk tales," box 2, folder 6, Aliya Hassen Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (hereafter cited as BHL).

<sup>12</sup> Many Ottoman immigrants took advantage of their ambiguous racialization to circumvent exclusionary immigration regimes, often claiming Christian identities or being documented as such. For that reason, Gildas Brégain, Jeffrey Lesser, Ignacio Klich, Darcy Zabel, Steven Hyland – and Hassen herself – suggest that earlier scholarship may have underestimated Muslim immigration. In a speech given at the Kiwanis Club, Hassen alleged that 75–80 percent of Syrian-Lebanese in the West were Muslim. "History of Arab Immigration," Hassen Speech at Kiwanis Club No. 1, "Taking the Time to Care" Award, 4 May 1982, undated notes in Aliya Hassen Papers

[unprocessed], AANM. See also Gildas Brégain, *Syriens et Libanais d'Amérique du Sud (1918–1945)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Steven Hyland, Jr., *More Argentine Than You: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants in Argentina* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017); Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, *Rethinking Jewish-Latin Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); Darcy A. Zabel, "Introduction," *Arabs in the Americas* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Census, draft registration, and other government documents mark Ogdie (and his children) as white, Arab, Syrian, Mohammedans, Muslims, or "members of the Islamic church." Though beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that the Ogdies benefited from the dispossession of Native Americans, which allowed them to homestead just a few miles from Wounded Knee and the [Lakota] Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

<sup>14</sup> M. Lee Billington and R. D. Hardaway, eds., *African Americans on the Western Frontier* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1998); Brian Q. Cannon, *Reopening the Frontier: Homesteading in the Modern West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Oscar Micheaux, *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1913); Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> By 1900, "Alack Ogda" was living in a boarding house with forty other Syrian men, of whom nearly half have names suggesting Muslim identities. United States Census, 1900, database with images, FamilySearch, accessed 27 May 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MMR8-CJR>; Alack Ogda in household of Hisot Shamel, Sioux Falls Township Sioux Falls city, ward 2, Minnehaha, South Dakota, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 261, sheet 16A, family 300, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972), FHL microfilm 1,241,553.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed "Emilio" would only reunite with his parents and siblings in 1921 when he finally crossed into the United States, at Eagle Pass, Texas. "Ahmid Ogdie aka Emilio Ogdie Border Crossing," National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; Nonstatistical manifests and statistical index cards of aliens arriving at Eagle Pass, Texas, June 1905–November 1929; NAI: 2843448; record group title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787–2004.; record group number: 85, microfilm roll number: 17; Aliya Hassen relatives family stories, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL. See also Theresa Alfaro-Velkamp. *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Aliya Hassen relatives family stories, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>18</sup> I have chosen this date because Hassen was permanently in Brooklyn by 1946. News coverage of Muslims in the *Argus-Leader* was broad: "The Tariff

Does Good," *Argus-Leader*, 16 August 1897, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/228981340>;"Mohammedan Slaveholders," 29 July 1903, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229410378>;"Lucky Baldwin a Mohammedan," 23 December 1910, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229670532>;"Chinese Mohammedans Are Not Aiding Turkey," 4 February 1915, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/243580865>; John P. Finley, "Famous Moro Datu is Found Dead," 1 February 1919, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229001950>; Paul Dibble, "Paul Dibble, Former South Dakotan Now in India Writes About Gandhi," 13 March 1926, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229791318>.

<sup>19</sup> Muslim immigrants to the Midwest did build some of the earliest US mosques: Highland Park, Michigan (1921); Ross, North Dakota (1929); Cedar Rapids, Iowa (1934). Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit*.

<sup>20</sup> These included Abraham Ogdie Company [Construction], Ogdie Trucking Company, Albert Ogdie Company [Sand and Gravel], [Emilio's] Service Café, [Mohamet's] Shooter's Supply and Hardware, and Alex Ogdie's Gas Station. "City Briefs," *Argus-Leader*, 30 July 1907 (Kolel and Ollie Ogdie Naturalization), <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229236170>.

<sup>21</sup> A dozen donor names are variants of "Mohammed," but the proportion of Muslims is likely higher (in addition to a lone Armenian). "Syrian Citizens Raise Big R. C. Fund," *Argus-Leader*, 24 June 1918, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229207846/>.

<sup>22</sup> Owning bars also became the primary business of the Arab Muslim community in Toledo, Ohio, though this community was ostensibly more abstemious. See Elkholly, "Religion and Assimilation." As for inebriation and crime: Sam Ogdie (junior) interview with the author, 3 May 2018. It is also worth noting that several press notices reference the Ogdies and their "Negro" or "Indian" companions, suggesting a pluralist social sphere. "Here's News: Man Asks to Be Jailed," *Argus-Leader*, 27 December 1929, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229693506>;"Sam Ogdie Pardoned on Larceny Charge," *Argus-Leader*, 9 December 1930, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229705503>;"Robbery Victim Tells Story of Attack to Jury," *Argus-Leader*, 30 May 1931, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/230119148>; Ogdie Jailed When He Admits Liquor Count, *Argus-Leader*, 4 April 1932, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/230140919>.

Aliya's only appearances in the press were for winning a high school music memorization contest, taking ill from "headache pills," and sustaining minor injuries in an unrelated car crash "Records Given for Prizes in Music Contest," *Argus-Leader*, 12 May 1924, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/230132714>;"Headache Medicine Poisons Woman; Officers Bring Aid," *Argus-Leader*, 21 July 1930, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229705938>;"Accidents Cause

Injuries to Two on S. F. Streets," *Argus-Leader*, 5 August 1937, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/229824829>. For her recollections, see Aliya Hassen relatives' family stories, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>23</sup>Without more substantive archival evidence, it is unclear whether the Ogdies's religious practices are best encapsulated by what John Grehan calls "agrarian religion" that gleaned elements from other religions traditions, or what Howell calls "communal or "vernacular" Islam, based as much on ethnolinguistic practices as rigid orthodoxy. James Grehan, *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6; Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> These included both Muslim and Christian groups: Syrian-Lebanese, Turks, Armenians, Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Romanians.

<sup>25</sup> Aliya Ella Elaine Ogdie birth certificate, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>26</sup> Ella Kadoura divorce record (1932), Michigan Department of Community Health, Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics; Lansing, Michigan; Ancestry.com, *Michigan, Divorce Records, 1897-1952* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Linda Jones, "Byrne Community Center Was Focus of Volunteer's Life: Sets \$1000 Reward for Arsonists," *Detroit News*, 19 October 1987, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM; Jocelyne Zablit, "Arab Women Are as Varied as Their Cultures," *Detroit Free Press*, 18 April 1985, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/99570577/>.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Veterans Administration Hospital, Outwood, Kentucky, to Mrs. Weldon, 18 November 1948, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM: [in her hand] "We were married September 9, 1932 – Detroit Michigan, by a Rev. Black."

<sup>29</sup> Hassen's papers do not include official record of divorce from Weldon, as they do for marriages to Ali Hassen (in Juarez), and Kadoura. It is possible they remained married until Weldon's death, but Hassen is listed as single in the 1940 census.

<sup>30</sup> Though his occupation was officially listed as "salesman" on their marriage license, Hassen and family members acknowledged that he made his living as a professional gambler. Ismael Ahmed, interview with the author, 29 March 2018; Allan Jalon, "Dearborn's Aliya Hassen: She Has Energy to Share," *Detroit Free Press*, 23 December 1983, Downriver Edition, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/99174749>.

<sup>31</sup> "The Crescent and the Cross," box 1, folders 2-6, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>32</sup> Unlike the first generation of largely illiterate Muslim immigrants, Hassen seems invested in codifying her religion even from an early age. Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit*, chap. 3.



<sup>33</sup> In *Old Islam in Detroit*, 108, Howell suggests that some Muslims took an ecumenical view of Christianity in part because they lacked other resources for religious or moral instruction. Though Hassen would later participate in multifaith events, she appears to have generally taken a more oppositional position.

<sup>34</sup> Both chapters would later be published with the *Islamic Information Series* in New York, and incorporated into the unpublished "Religious Stories for Young Muslims," and "101 Questions Most Frequently Asked of Muslims." "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims" (unpublished), box 1, folder 8, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL; "Religious Stories for Young Muslims," 11, box 1, folders 9-11, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>35</sup> Linda K. Jacobs, *Strangers in the West: The Syrian Colony of New York, 1880–1900* (New York: Kalimah Press, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> In her writing from the time, Hassen proposed an Islamic rationale for service: "Charity [zakat] begins in the home. The family comes first, then your 'IMMEDIATE' neighbor who is in need, regardless of whether they be of your religion, race, or nationality." "What Is an Orthodox Muslim," 4, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmed subsequently owned a consignment store in Chinatown. In the following article, Hassen repeats her views on Islam as liberating and protecting women, and interestingly, the agency trademark was "a composite picture of the Sphinx and Statue of Liberty." Margaret Mara, "Egypt Competes with Hollywood," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 3 August 1949, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/52998149>.

<sup>38</sup> "Background Aliya E. Ogdie-Hassen," ACCESS Institutional Archive Collection [uncatalogued]. AANM

<sup>39</sup> A. M. Rosenthal, "Egyptians NMU Sailors Dispersed in Demonstration at United Nations," *New York Times*, 29 August 1947, <https://www.nytimes.com/1947/08/29/archives/egyptians-nmu-sailors-dispersed-in-demonstration-at-united-nations.html>

<sup>40</sup> "Egyptian Arab American Seaman's Society," box 1, folder 21. By "Eastern Muslims," Hassen likely intended to differentiate from "Black Muslims" or converts, though this term might also be a proxy for orthodoxy. South Asian Muslims founded the separate Pakistan League of America. Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> It is unclear who constituted that outlying one percent. "Egyptian Arab American Seaman's Society," box 1, folder 27, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>42</sup> "Islamic Sorority Charter," box 1, folder 27, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>43</sup> "Religious Stories for Young Muslims," box 1, folders 9–11, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.



<sup>44</sup> One of the center's early concerns echoed the need for proper burial, after Turkish ambassador Mehmet Munir Ertegun died in Washington in 1944. Ruth Montgomery, "D.C. Wash," *New York Daily News*, 1 September 1952, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/450885218>.

<sup>45</sup> Hoballah, a former professor at al-Azhar, maintained a broad network, including both Arab peers and Pakistani diplomats from an earlier deployment in Lahore. A collection of his writing can be found at a site maintained by his children: Dr. Mahmoud F. Hoballah, *His Life and His Work; The Solution to a Troubled World*, 2008, <http://www.dr-hoballah.com/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Islamic Funeral Rites and Shrouding Instructions," box 1, folder 25, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>47</sup> The connection here is tenuous, but it seems plausible both Jordanian prince Talal bin Abdullah and the Saudi Talal were in town just before passage of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 in December 1948. However, the telegram is sent c/o "Rawaf," lending credence to an Al-Saud/Al-Rawaf association. Western Union telegram, 16 November 1947, box 1, folder 20, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL. "Wife Shuns Sheik's Name: Tells Court That Al-Rawaf Is No Name for Her and Son," *New York Times*, 3 July 1951, <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/07/03/archives/wife-shuns-sheiks-name-tells-court-that-alrawaf-is-no-name-for-her.html>; "A Camel Herder in Hollywood," *Majalla*, 22 August 2013, <https://eng.majalla.com/2013/08/article55244904/a-camel-herder-in-hollywood>.

<sup>48</sup> Although the center had no stand-alone mosque until the 1990s, its establishment demonstrated extensive cooperation among the Kuwaiti, Saudi, Libyan, and Malaysian governments. Mohamad A. Abulhasan, "A Brief History of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York," 2019, <http://icc-ny.us/history/>.

<sup>49</sup> Also cited as Islamic Information Services, (title page, "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims," 1959); *F.I.A. Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1964) cites Ahmad Jamal giving gift of \$100. Box 1, folder 1, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL. See also Maytha Maha Yassine Zia Alhassen, "To Tell What the Eye Beholds: A Post 1945 Transnational History of Afro-Arab 'Solidarity Politics'" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2017). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>50</sup> The religiously mixed Syrian Junior League was founded in 1929, replacing the Syrian Women's Union (1896). "Syrian Junior League," box 1, folder 32, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>51</sup> The federation was founded in 1952 by World War II U.S. Army veteran Abdullah Igram, who was shocked to learn that "Muslim" was not a religious identity available on military dog tags, unlike "Catholic," "Protestant," and "Hebrew" [Jewish]. Igram successfully petitioned

President Eisenhower to have Islam included as an American faith after the war and simultaneously founded the FIA in Cedar Rapids. See Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sally Howell, "Federation of Islamic Associations," *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*, ed. Edward E. Curtis IV (New York: Facts on File, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> The largest remains Danny Thomas's American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities, founded in 1957 to raise awareness and funds for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

<sup>53</sup> "Itinerary of FIA Trip," box 1, folder 22, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL. As much as Hassen advocated Islamic feminism, I have found no connection to Egyptian feminists Dora Shafik, Zainab al-Ghazali, Huda Sha'arawi, or the Bint al-Nil Union in her writings. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Nasser telegram, 19 Oct 1961, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>55</sup> The FIA also maintained relations with the Muslim World League and Egyptian Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs (and Ministry of al-Waqf) — preferring statist rather than oppositional actors like the Muslim Brotherhood.

<sup>56</sup> In addition, the FIA published the *Muslim Star* on behalf of its Islamic Youth Association.

<sup>57</sup> A more complete record of FIA publications can be found in the Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri Papers, BHL, University of Michigan.

<sup>58</sup> Imam Vehbi Ismail was born in Shkoder and trained at Al-Azhar before becoming director of the Albanian American Islamic Center in Harper Woods, Michigan. Sally Howell writes that Karoub's Islamic credentials were far weaker than Vehbi's (as well as other local Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri) and would precipitate rival factions in the Sunni Arab American Moslem Society. Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit*, chap. 6, "Homegrown Muslim Leaders."

<sup>59</sup> These also appear in Islamic Information Series, box 1, folder 1, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL; *Muslim Life* 7, no. 2 (Apr.–Jun. 1959); *Muslim Life* 7, no. 3 (Jul.–Sep. 1959); *Muslim Life* 8, no. 1 (Jan.–Apr. 1960); *Muslim Life* 11, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1964); *F.I.A. Journal* 1, no. 3 (April–Jun 1965) (first installment, rewritten 1960).

<sup>60</sup> "Wives of the Prophet," or "First Ladies of Islam" (unpublished), box 1, folder 12, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>61</sup> The "First Ladies of Islam," (1959) and "Feminine Participation in Islamic Affairs" (1960) seem contemporaneous with widespread English availability of Syed Sulaiman Nadwi's *Heroic Deeds of Muslim Women*, which Edward E. Curtis IV notes as available in the Muhammad Speaks bookstore. Although Hassen's text covers some overlapping figures like the poet Khansa, the Qur'anic translations and prose are distinct. Hassen also mentions these

additional women: "Rabiaha, Shuhda, Zubaida, Velda, Aisha, Labana and Algaznaia" [sic]. Edward E. Curtis IV, "Islamism and Its African American Muslim Critics: Black Muslims in the Era of the Arab Cold War, *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3, *Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States* (Sep. 2007); "Feminine Participation in Islamic Affairs" is also reproduced in *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*, 584–88.

<sup>62</sup> "Wives of the Prophet," or "First Ladies of Islam," box 1, folder 12, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>63</sup> "Feminine Participation in Islamic Affairs," *F.I.A. Journal* 1, no. 4, box 1, folder 1, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>64</sup> "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims" (unpublished), box 1, folder 8, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL. See Sunni jurisprudence (No. 70), Sexism (No. 114–15), backwardness (No. 134), and space travel (No. 143).

<sup>65</sup> "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims" (No. 115).

<sup>66</sup> "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims" (No. 134).

<sup>67</sup> "101 Questions Frequently Asked of Muslims" (No.107) See No.68 for sameness of all Muslims, since they rely on the same Qur'an and traditions.

<sup>68</sup> Religious Stories for Young Muslims," 11, box 1, folders 9–11, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>69</sup> Attentive to what Sherman Jackson rightfully impugns as the performative "racial agnosia" among MENA Muslims, I affirm that "race is integral to the enterprise of American identity formation." However, as he and others have noted, we would do well to consider American Islam as an important anti-racist and organizing technology across the twentieth century. Sherman Jackson, "Muslims, Islam(s), Race and American Islamophobia," in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 95.; Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Maytha Alhassen, "Islam in America by Mahmoud Yousef Shawarbi," *Comparative American Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 2015): 254–64; Maytha Alhassen, "The 'Three Circles' Construction: Reading Black Atlantic Islam through Malcolm X's Words and Friendships," in "The Meaning of Malcolm X for Africana Religions: Fifty Years On," special issue, *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 1 (2015): 1–17. Edward E. Curtis IV, "'My Heart is in Cairo': Malcolm X, the Arab Cold War, and the Making of Islamic Liberation Ethics," *Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>70</sup> "What is an Orthodox Muslim 1" (n.d., but almost the same language occurs in Islamic Information Series #24, "Eed ul-Adha" [1954]). Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>71</sup> Correspondence with Hoballah from 1960 and 6 January mentions "spurious beliefs of Elijah Muhammad," though it is unclear whether this investigation was directed by the Islamic Center and/or the FIA. Box 1, folder 14, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>72</sup> *Islamic Information Series* Box 1, folder 14, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>73</sup> Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books Edition, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Letter to Imam Wallace Muhammad, 23 August 1988, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>75</sup> "Letter from Malcolm X to Elijah Muhammad, November 3, 1959," microfilm, reel 13, Malcolm X Collection: Papers, 1948–1965, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York.

<sup>76</sup> Linda Jones, "Byrne Community Center was Focus of Volunteer's Life: Sets \$1000 Reward for Arsonists."

<sup>77</sup> Malcolm X (articles and correspondence), 1959–1965; *Al-Muslimoon* newsletter, Box 1, folder 14, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>78</sup> Malcolm's autobiography avers, "These orthodox Muslims . . . urged me to meet and talk with Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi." *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 326. The popular press covered the meeting as well: Jesse W. Lewis Jr., "Man Who Tamed Malcolm Is Hopeful" / "Skepticism among Other Arab Muslims about Malcolm's Sincerity," *Washington Post*, 18 May 1964.

<sup>79</sup> Alhassen also cites this postcard, but misattributes it to Malcolm, when in fact he was already deceased. Alhassen, "To Tell What the Eye Beholds." The postcard is dated "15 April 1965" (or "12/14/84" in the Islamic calendar) when Betty Shabazz made the Hajj after Malcolm's assassination on 21 February 1965. "Postcard from Betty Shabazz to Aliya Hassen," box 1, folder 14, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>80</sup> Among the explanations for Hassen's absence in Malcolm's papers and her own, Ahmed laments that an overzealous professor never returned physical copies of Hassen-Malcolm correspondence in the late 1960s. Interview with the author, 29 March 2018. Malcolm contradicted himself many times over on the whiteness or non-whiteness of Arabs, stating both that Arabs were unequivocally white and not at all white. See for instance, Malcolm on Azzam in Mecca, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 327, 338.

<sup>81</sup> In addition to Hassen, there are recurring traces of a Palestinian Jamil Diab (often Daib) hired to teach Arabic to Nation of Islam members, including W. D. Mohammed. See Algernon Austin, "Rethinking Race and the Nation of Islam, 1930–1975," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 52–69. Fraser-Muhammad Rahim, "Imam W. D. Mohammed, the Patron Saint of American Islam: Personality, Intellectual Teachings and Reformation," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2018).

<sup>82</sup> In correspondence with Said Ramadan, Malcolm emphasized, "Most Muslims who come here from the Muslim World have concentrated more effort in trying to convert white Americans than Black Americans." Louis A. DeCaro, Jr. reproduces this conclusion, emphasizing that Malcolm was

“completely misunderstood, if not disliked, because he insisted on pressing the issue of white racism and the struggle of African Americans” within Muslim circles. Similarly, in response to Shawarbi admitting that a *single* colleague had expressed racist views: “It seems, then that the Muslim world’s outreach to the West had generally fallen into the same racial rut that European Christians had so deeply engraved in the religious landscape of the United States.” Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 256. For another work focused on Black Muslims at the expense of more expansive connections, see Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

<sup>83</sup> Presumably, this refers to the Islamic Center, with which Bisar was then affiliated, before becoming imam of Al-Azhar. “Address Book 1957,” “Address Book 1958,” “Diary 6,” microfilm, reel 1, reel 9, Malcolm X Collection: Papers, 1948–1965, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York.

<sup>84</sup> Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2010). Alhassen also notes that Shawarbi invited Malcolm to join the global “ummah,” a fact covered in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Amsterdam News*, and *Chicago New Crusader*. Alhassen, “To Tell What the Eye Beholds,” 115.

<sup>85</sup> In the series “The Woman in Islam,” published in *Muhammad Speaks* and the *New Crusader*, Elijah Muhammad secretary and partner Tynetta Deaner suggested that whitewashing Arabs was the convergence of American racism and divide-and-conquer imperialism.

Tynetta Deaner, “Women in Islam,” *New Crusader*, 19 October 1963. As to Deaner’s identity, see Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 125; Dawn-Marie Gibson and Jamilah Karim, *Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 2014). Howell also convincingly makes this point in her chapter “Raising the Bar” in *Old Islam in Detroit*.

<sup>86</sup> Nor was Hassen the first MENA woman obscured by Malcolm X’s autobiography, since his long-term partner “Sophia,” was actually second-generation Boston Armenian Bea Caragulian. Caragulian’s “white husband” was Mehran Bazarian, an Armenian refugee from Marash who naturalized through his service in the U.S. Army. Marable does note Bea and her accomplices Joyce Caragulian [her sister] and Kora Marderosian as “white” and “ethnic white,” but misspells Mehran’s name. Marable *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, 67. See also Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (New York: Station Hill, 1992), 75. Scholars have similarly effaced Arab Africans or “Afro-Arabs, like Sudanese Ahmed Osman, a Dartmouth student credited with introducing Malcolm to the Islamic Center of Geneva, and fellow Sudanese Sheikh Ahmad Hassoun, who taught at

Muslim Mosque, Inc., and prepared Malcolm's body for burial. See, however, Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Keith Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> In particular, immigrants from Palestine, Jordan, Yemen, and Iraq, and Lebanese Shi'a fleeing the civil war joined what had previously been a predominantly Syrian-Lebanese community. Curiously, although Detroit and Dearborn garner substantial attention in urban studies, little attention has been paid to their varied racial field, which included MENA, Latino, and Asian communities. See David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); John Hartigan Jr., *Racial Situations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas J. Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) and *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2009).

<sup>88</sup> As Howell recounts in *Old Islam in Detroit*, cleavages within numerous Sunni and Shi'a places of worship in Detroit occurred alongside this influx of immigrants, leading to the dissolution or restructuring of several social organizations and mosques. See Howell, chap. 7.

<sup>89</sup> See Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham, eds., *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, Center for Urban Studies, 1983). For the well-documented history of the South End, SEDCC and ACCESS, see also Barbara C. Aswad, "The Southeast Dearborn Arab Community Struggles for Survival Against Urban 'Renewal,'" in Aswad, ed., *Arabic Speaking Communities in American Cities* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1974), 53–84; and Barbara C. Aswad, "How a Dearborn Community Gained the ACCESS It Needed," *Dearborn Historian* 51, no. 1 (2014): 9–18.

<sup>90</sup> Melani McAlister underscores that MENA peoples increasingly experienced discrimination echoing that directed against by communities of color, even as these same people of color might participate in Islamophobia. See Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> The SEDCC's leadership in 1961 included Darrell Donaldson (from Kentucky), Helen Atwell, and Joe Borrajo, and its next three presidents had Italian, Greek, and Cherokee roots.

Sally Howell, "SouthEnd Struggles: Converging Narratives of an Arab/Muslim American Enclave," *Mahriq & Mahjar* 3, no. 1 (2015): 47. Similarly, the SEDCC's own flyers advertised: "We are Italians, Greeks, Roumanians [sic], Armenians, Syrians, Lebanese, Yemeni, Southern, Northern, In-Between, and Many More!" SEDCC flyer, box 1, Helen Atwell

Papers; see also Barbara Aswad, “Results of Study on South East Dearborn,” first series, 17 November 1971, Wayne State University Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>92</sup> Atwell also married young – to non-Arab John Atwell – refuting the assumption that Muslim women would be lost to the community if they married American Christians (or converts).

<sup>93</sup> Although the details of ACCESS’ founding remain contested – in part because of repeated arson – Howell profiles several narratives that alternately attribute seminal influence to Ismael Ahmed, who brought together radical black workers, Arab leftists (e.g., the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine); Abdeen Jabara and Barbara Aswad, who helped integrate the AAUG; and other early officers George Khoury, Helen Atwell, and Charles Albert. In contrast, Pennock summarizes divergent creation myths gleaned from oral interviews: George Khoury who prioritizes Palestinian student activists, SEDCC activities, and Ahmed who suggests it was Jabara who linked activists and the AAUG. On the other hand, Aswad suggests that it was the inclusion of people of color and women in the construction of the community center on Dix Avenue which may have provoked *Arabs* in the neighborhood, making them another suspect in ACCESS’ first arson. Sally Howell, “SouthEnd Struggles”; Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left*, 270. See also Karen Rignall, “Building the Infrastructure of Arab American Identity in Detroit: A Short History of ACCESS and the Community It Serves,” in *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*, ed. Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 49–59.

<sup>94</sup> As Salim Yaqub has documented, Arab Americans enjoyed a spike in visibility and legibility, rendering them both subject to intensified violence and inclusion within American multicultural efforts. Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.–Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016). For local recognition, see City of Dearborn Resolution “Palestine Week” Observance, 8–15 May 1977; County of Wayne Palestine Day Resolution, 15 May 1977; City of Detroit Proclamation, Palestine Day, 15 May 1977; and State of Michigan Executive Declaration in Observance of Arabic Culture Week, 11–17 February 1979. Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>95</sup> For example, some of ACCESS’ early funds included a life-saving \$50,000 from the United Presbyterian Church, as well as grants from the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit, Marion Labs, and National Endowment for the Arts. Charges of discrimination were lodged by the Yemeni Men’s Society but publicly refuted by a range of Arab and Muslim groups.

<sup>96</sup> Evoking Operation Boulder (1972), Ahmed recounts that he and his grandmother were surveilled. Interview with Pennock (*The Rise of the Arab American Left*, 151). Jabara’s work later led to passage of Michigan House Bill 5237 to stop financial institutions from sharing clients’ personal information.

See Ronald Kessler, "FBI Admits Monitoring Mich. Lawyer," *Washington Post*, 5 Feb 1975 In Abdeen Jabara Papers, BHL, University of Michigan.

<sup>97</sup> Such anti-Arab sentiment has a long genealogy, as Howell traces. See Robert C. Ruark, "The Arab Poses a Problem," *Detroit Free Press*, 22 September 1953, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/97703488>; Donna Britt, "Grocery Stores Targeted for Boycott," *Detroit Free Press*, 19 September 1980, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/98511448>. Furthermore, in a robbery and arson at ACCESS after Hassen's death, the center's long-time cleaning lady Graciela Flores was murdered.

<sup>98</sup> The spate of articles in this vein include Douglas Ilka, "How Arab Throngs Vie for New Mecca in Dearborn Homes," *Detroit News*, 24 April 1977; Warren Brown, "Detroit: Arabs' Mecca in the Midwest," *Washington Post*, 30 October 1978; Susan Forrest, "The Middle East in Our Midst," *Detroit Free Press*, 4 February 1979; "Arabs & Islam: Detroit Is the American Mecca," *Monthly Detroit* (February 1980), in Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>99</sup> ACCESS cultivated diverse patronage, ultimately including the Saudi, Yemeni, Syrian, and Iraqi governments. ACCESS Institutional Archive Collection [uncatalogued]. AANM

<sup>100</sup> Ismael Ahmed, interview with the author, 29 March 2018.

<sup>101</sup> "Good Eating with Muslims Around the World," box 1, folder 7, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>102</sup> "Religious Stories for Young Muslims," 11, box 1, folders 9-11, Aliya Hassen Papers, BHL.

<sup>103</sup> See Nabeel Abraham, "Arab-American Marginality: Mythos and Praxis," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 2/3, *Arab Americans: Continuity and Change* (Spring/Summer 1989): 17-43.

<sup>104</sup> Untitled letter to the editor, 16 January 1990, Aliya Hassen Papers [unprocessed], AANM.

<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Ogdie descendants include an award-winning comic book writer, Spanish professor at Augustana University, former director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, and Muslims, Lutherans and Baha'is across the country.

<sup>106</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, art. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (New York: Verso, 2004).