

*Ashley Johnson Bavery*

## LIFETIMES OF INSTABILITY: THE CONSEQUENCES OF EXCLUDING SYRIAN BOYS ON THE PROGRESSIVE ERA US-MEXICAN BORDER

### Abstract

In the first decade of the twentieth century, United States immigration inspectors at the US-Mexico border excluded hundreds of young Syrians, turning many toward unstable lives as unauthorized migrants in North America. Inspectors combined Progressive Era concerns about child labor with orientalist and racist views of migrants from the Ottoman Empire to conclude that unaccompanied young Syrians posed a threat to the American family and workplace and should be sent back across the Atlantic. And while some excluded boys did return to Syria, the majority found ways to enter the United States without authorization. Some sought the help of smugglers and others obtained falsified papers that claimed uncles, brothers, and family friends as their fathers and accompanied them across the border. While these tactics worked, illicit border crossing launched young migrants into an unauthorized life marked by precarity and fear. In fact, oral histories conducted by the author have revealed that young boys who entered the United States without authorization often ended up in unstable professions connected to urban underworlds. Ultimately, this article seeks to demonstrate the ways hardline immigration policies of the early twentieth century targeting young boys set them on paths toward precarity as they navigated lives in the United States.

### خلاصة

في العقد الأول من القرن العشرين، استبعد مفتشو الهجرة الأمريكية على الحدود بين الولايات المتحدة والمكسيك مئات الشباب السوريين، مما حول العديد منهم نحو حياة غير مستقرة كمهاجرين غير مُصرّحين في أمريكا الشمالية. جمع المفتشون بين مخاوف العصر التقدمي بشأن عمالة الأطفال مع وجهات النظر الاستشراقية والعنصرية للمهاجرين من الإمبراطورية العثمانية، وخلصوا إلى أن الشباب السوريين غير المصحوبين بذويهم يشكلون تهديداً للأسرة الأمريكية ومكان العمل ويجب إعادتهم عبر المحيط الأطلسي. وبينما عاد بعض الأولاد المستبعدين إلى سوريا، وجدت الأغلبية طرقاً لدخول الولايات المتحدة دون تصريح. طلب البعض المساعدة من المهربين وحصل آخرون على أوراق مزورة تدعي أن أعمامهم وأخوالهم، وإخوتهم وأصدقاء العائلة هم آبائهم ورافقوهم عبر الحدود. وبينما نجحت هذه التكتيكات فإن عبور الحدود بشكل غير قانوني دفع المهاجرين الشباب إلى حياة غير مصرح بها تتسم بعدم الاستقرار والخوف. في الواقع، كشفت الروايات الشفهية التي أجرتها المؤلفة أن الأولاد الصغار الذين دخلوا الولايات المتحدة دون تصريح غالباً ما ينتهي بهم الأمر في مهن غير مستقرة مرتبطة بالمنظمات الإجرامية في المدن. في نهاية المطاف، يسعى هذا المقال إلى توضيح الطرق التي أدت

بها سياسات الهجرة المتشددة في أوائل القرن العشرين والتي استهدفت الأولاد الصغار إلى وضعهم على مسارات غير مستقرة أثناء حياتهم في الولايات المتحدة.



## INTRODUCTION

In the first decade of the twentieth century, United States immigration inspectors began excluding unaccompanied Syrian boys from crossing the US-Mexico border in an effort to crack down on migration from the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, fifteen-year-old Essa Nasser left a village in the Ottoman province of Greater Syria for the United States, where he hoped to join his mother and uncles in Terra Haute, Indiana. While we do not know the exact route Nasser took, his journey would have been terrifying for a young boy who had lived most of his life caring for village livestock in the tiny mud and thatch home of his ailing father. To avoid Ottoman laws set in place to curb emigration, Nasser likely paid a *sarraf* (smuggler) to take him by steamboat to Beirut, where he faced several ways to enter the United States.<sup>2</sup> While most migrants bought tickets to New York and crowded into inspection lines at Ellis Island, rumors of strict entry requirements and a growing network of Syrians in Mexico prompted Nasser to purchase a ticket for the port of Veracruz. Once in Mexico, he traveled to Mexico City, where he stayed with uncles for several weeks before heading to the border at Ciudad Juarez. When Nasser tried to cross into the United States, an inspector at El Paso rejected him on the grounds that he had trachoma, an eye disease that, if uncured, could lead to blindness. Instead of returning to Mexico City or Syria, Nasser, who desperately wanted to join his mother in Indiana, paid a Ciudad Juarez Syrian named Guirguis Attiee \$200 to board him for two weeks and treat his eyes, an arrangement that was likely a scam concocted between Attiee and corrupt US immigration inspectors. Despite this setback, young Nasser believed that if he could prove his mother was a peddler in Indiana who made enough to support him, inspectors would let him cross. Nasser, however, underestimated the inspectors' racialized and gendered biases that made them associate all Syrians with disease, transient peddling networks, and loose family values. When Nasser reported that he planned to join his mother, the inspector snapped, "Are you going to bum on the streets or are you going to work?" Nasser replied quickly, "Of course I will work," to which the inspector countered, "So you do not plan to go to school? You're being imported as a laborer for

the peddlers?" Nasser fell silent and the inspector stamped "excluded" in angry red letters across his petition. Consequently, instead of allowing Nasser to join his mother, US immigration officials sent the fifteen-year-old boy back to Mexico alone, where he either returned to Syria or, more likely, found a way to enter the United States without authorization.<sup>3</sup>

This article draws on the stories of Nasser and dozens of other Syrian children to shed light on how racialized exclusion along the US-Mexico border directed many Syrian boys toward unauthorized entry, pushing them toward unstable lives in underpaid work and crime. Histories of Syrian immigration tend to follow the pathbreaking work of Alixa Naff and emphasize an assimilationist narrative that uncovers how early Christian and Muslim Syrians settled across the Northeast and American Midwest at the turn of the twentieth century, won the right to become citizens in the 1915 Circuit Court case *Dow v. U.S.*, and continued to represent the United States through patriotic service in two world wars.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in the face of contemporary orientalism and Islamophobia, emphasizing the patriotism and Americanness of early Syrians has proved important for scholars of Arab American studies. Such works, however, obscure the ways such racism presented legal barriers to Syrian migrants that followed them throughout their lives and drove them toward illicit labor. This article examines the short- and long-term consequences of US immigration inspectors' exclusion of Syrian boys at the border, which resulted from Progressive Era anxieties over race, family, and child labor. First of all, upon exclusion, many young boys turned toward unauthorized entry through smuggling networks or by falsifying their papers and crossing the border legally. While false papers worked, the illegality of this initial act followed young Syrians throughout their lives. The last section of the article follows several young Syrians into the 1920s and 1930s to explore the ways unauthorized status steered them toward lives in bootlegging, crime, and other illicit forms of employment. This section in particular challenges assimilationist narratives in Arab American historiography by emphasizing how young Syrians engaged in illicit work that kept them on the edges of American society. Ultimately, the article charts the ways hardline US border policies established pathways to precarity for hundreds of Syrian boys in the first decade of the twentieth century.

To access policy decisions and the lives of individual migrants, the article draws on a combination of government records and oral histories. I first noticed the exclusion of Syrian boys while combing through the vast deportation files of the Immigration and

Naturalization Service in the United States National Archives. These documents provide the names and personal information on deported immigrants, an interview with the immigrant in question, and in many cases a report drawn up by the immigration inspector that reveals their personal thoughts and prejudices on the immigrant in question. To understand the perspective of young migrants, the article draws on oral histories conducted in the 1980s by Alixa Naff, which are now held in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, as well as interviews I conducted with second- and third-generation migrants. My own interviews come from a larger project on Muslim immigrants in the industrial Midwest. As I searched for patterns in my interviews, I noticed details about how deportations and lives without legal papers affected migrants personally in ways that do not appear in official government documents. Taken together, this combination of personal narratives and official documents reveals both the reasons inspectors implemented hardline policies and the consequences these policies had on migrants across their lifetimes.

#### EXCLUDING SYRIAN BOYS

US immigration inspectors' alarm at the influx of Syrian children on the US-Mexico border reflected broader Progressive Era concerns about child welfare and labor.<sup>5</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, a loose coalition of middle-class reformers banded together to bring order and reform to newly industrialized cities packed with migrants working in deplorable conditions.<sup>6</sup> While many Progressives addressed workplace conditions, labor laws, alcohol consumption, and tenement conditions, children soon became a key focus of reformers. These reformers, most of whom were women, drew on the new field of developmental psychology to define childhood as a key life stage in need of protection. They advocated ending child labor and implementing mandatory schooling, and they built settlement houses and playgrounds to address the needs of children.<sup>7</sup> Immigration inspectors, therefore, became alarmed when young Syrians began crossing the border in larger numbers with the intention of working. Unlike in Greater Syria, where children were expected to work and contribute to their families on farms and in factory jobs, reformers in the United States popularized the idea that children should attend school.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, it was Progressive reformers in Washington, DC, who created immigration inspectors and border checkpoints in the first place, and these border bureaucrats relied on a series of new laws to justify excluding Syrians. Restrictionists at the national level secured

the passage of the 1891 Immigration Act, which created a new superintendent of immigration within the Treasury Department and established permanent inspection stations at land and sea borders. Beyond centralizing immigration restriction within the federal government, the 1891 law expanded the list of excludable aliens to felons, polygamists, “all idiots, insane persons, paupers, or persons likely to become a public charge,” and those carrying an infectious disease.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, while Progressive Era child labor reforms shaped immigration inspectors’ ideas about Syrian boys, they could turn to a list of reasons when it came to denying specific boys entry into the United States.

Disease soon became one of the most popular reasons for barring Syrians at ports of entry. Inspectors at the border developed a racialized conception of which immigrants carried diseases that was informed by the Eugenics movement, a pseudoscientific effort to rank races and ethnicities based on perceived characteristics.<sup>10</sup> Syrians and other immigrants from the Middle East, China, and Mexico soon became associated with trachoma. Inspectors at Ellis Island, Angel Island, and on land borders tested for the eye disease by using a buttonhook to turn back migrants’ eyelids, consequently excluding any immigrant with even the slightest indication of an eye infection or abnormality.<sup>11</sup> Trachoma became particularly associated with Syrians and inspectors diagnosed the disease liberally, sometimes because trachoma treatment clinics in Mexico offered them kickbacks.<sup>12</sup>

Restriction for polygamy, which reformers originally devised to curb Mormon migration, soon became another reason for restricting immigrants from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>13</sup> Most of the one hundred thousand Arabic-speaking immigrants from the Ottoman Empire were Christians, and the Muslim minority who joined them were not practicing polygamists. When Mufti Sadiq, a Muslim scholar from India, traveled to the United States in 1921, he attempted in vain to argue there was a difference between behaviors *required* of Muslims, like prayer, and those *permitted*, like polygamy.<sup>14</sup> But nativist organizations like the San Francisco-based Asiatic Exclusion League latched onto the polygamy law, insisting that barring all Asians, Turks, and Syrians represented an obvious way to protect American women and preserve the integrity of American families.<sup>15</sup>

The uneven enforcement of restrictions at Ellis Island prompted thousands of Syrians like Essa Nasser to travel to Mexico, where they could cross into the United States across the southern border. Scholars have documented the ways Mexico served as a “back door” to the United States for Syrian migrants hoping to evade US inspectors.<sup>16</sup> In

reality, many Syrians traveled to Mexico because they had friends and family there and hoped to settle in the robust Arabic-speaking neighborhoods of Mexico City or Veracruz.<sup>17</sup> But US immigration inspectors and the press paid little attention to the finer nuances of Syrian migrant networks and instead circulated reports exaggerating the threat of Syrians crossing the US-Mexico border. In 1906, the *El Paso Times* warned that a “question of infinitely more importance than that of Chinese immigration” was the “invasion of diseased Syrians” into El Paso and cities across America.<sup>18</sup> By linking Syrians to the Chinese, a group that nativists had maligned for decades as both diseased and a threat to American labor markets, the newspaper tapped into longstanding fears about foreigners to portray Syrians as dangerous outsiders.<sup>19</sup>

While most Syrian migrants were young men, in the 1910s immigration inspectors became preoccupied with an increase of Syrian children, particularly boys, who had begun to cross the US-Mexico border. Under the 1882 Immigration Act, inspectors could exclude any unaccompanied immigrant under the age of sixteen “likely to become a public charge,” but could let these children pass if they produced proof of family support in the United States.<sup>20</sup> As the early generation of Syrian migrants began making money in the United States, they sent for their children, particularly sons, to join them in the United States. Consequently, unaccompanied boys like fifteen-year-old Gabriel Jorge Matook showed up in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, where inspectors expressed concern about their age. To reach the border, Matook had left his home in Akkar, Syria, over three months earlier and endured an exhausting journey via Tripoli, Marseilles, and Veracruz before stopping in Mexico City for a month and a half to visit with cousins. While in Mexico City, Matook peddled alongside his family and wrote to his father in Ashland, Kentucky, to ask for the funds to complete his journey. When he received money and a letter from his father promising to support him in the United States, Matook headed for the border, certain that he would soon be helping his parents, who both worked peddling goods between the mining camps in the lush Kentucky hills. Once at the Laredo border, however, the US immigration inspector investigated Matook’s eyes, questioned him about his parents’ peddling, and, despite the letter from his father, debarred his entry on the grounds that the young Syrian was “likely to become a public charge.”<sup>21</sup> Matook’s case represented one of the nearly two hundred fifty young Syrian boys who were debarred at the US-Mexico border between 1911 and 1913, a number that may appear small considering the thousands of immigrants categorized as “Syrian” crossing at El Paso, Laredo, or Tucson each day.<sup>22</sup> Despite small

numbers, immigration inspectors expressed grave concern about young Syrian border crossers, who, they claimed, “had increased dramatically along the border,” demanding “an inquiry be made into the cause” of their rising numbers.<sup>23</sup> In other words, immigration authorities refused to believe that Syrians who had made enough money in the United States simply wanted to be reunited with their children. Instead, inspectors relied on orientalist views of Syrian sneakiness and backwardness to craft a narrative that Middle Eastern families sent for young sons because they wanted to exploit their unpaid labor, thereby justifying their decisions to leave hundreds of young boys stranded along the Mexican border.

This narrative developed in part because many Americans had come to view the peddling work undertaken by Syrians like the Matooks as unsavory labor. In the early twentieth century, peddling became a popular occupation for Ashkenazi Jews, Bengali Muslims, and Syrians because it required little capital and anyone could sell goods regardless of English ability.<sup>24</sup> Syrian peddlers would buy household dry goods from a local wholesale merchant (who was usually also Syrian) and pack them across cities and through the countryside, bringing everything from bags of flour to needles and rosaries directly to American housewives. Charlotte Karem Albrecht has demonstrated that male peddlers, who brought “exotic difference to the doorsteps of aspiring-middle-class Americans,” posed a “sexual threat to the women who purchased their goods.”<sup>25</sup> Peddlers soon became associated with sneaky and exploitative tactics, interpreted as figures who made money not through hard work but by selling fake holy water and overpriced goods to vulnerable women. Soon a reputation for peddling became enough to get young boys excluded. For instance, when fifteen-year-old Sarey Hanna El Baba told an inspector he wanted to join a cousin in Detroit, the US official concluded, “The alleged cousin is probably a peddler, this being the usual means of this race getting a livelihood.” In fact, most Syrians in the Detroit area worked in automobile factories, but El Baba’s examiner relied on stereotypes about these immigrants to conclude that excluding El Baba represented the only way to keep the young boy from “following a similar occupation.”<sup>26</sup>

News of Syrian women peddlers further called into question their family values and led state officials to conclude that separating children from these families was in their best interest. Most women who peddled were Christians and tended to sell goods in pairs, walking together through a nearby town and along nearby city streets. Occasionally, a woman might accompany her husband, brother, or

father on a longer route, helping him hold lighter wares and making him appear less threatening to farming housewives. For instance, Elizabeth Beshara remembered that her father took her peddling as a child because farmers were more likely to offer a man with his daughter food and a warm bed for the night than a foreign man traveling on his own.<sup>27</sup> Despite the prevalence of Syrian women with packs selling across towns in the United States, those who worked outside the home, particularly in peddling, faced criticism from both within and outside their community that questioned their fitness as mothers.<sup>28</sup> At the border, immigration officials used this discourse to justify separating children from peddling mothers. Essa Nasser, the fifteen-year-old whose story opened this article, wanted to join his peddling mother in Terre Haute, Indiana, but immigration officials barred his entry because they reasoned that his mother's line of work "prevents her from providing adequately for this child."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, when inspectors learned that fifteen-year-old Gabriel Matook's stepmother peddled goods between mining towns in West Virginia, they debated whether he would have a proper home and caregiver in the United States. Inspectors ultimately admitted Matook, but news of a peddling maternal figure kept him detained at the border for four weeks.<sup>30</sup> In sum, immigration officials drew on orientalist conclusions to deem Syrian families unstable, leading to the detention and exclusion of hundreds of young boys along the US-Mexico border. Such decisions, which were made at the discretion of local inspectors, ensured that hundreds of Syrian teenagers were stranded on the border, forced to navigate the dangerous boarding houses of Nuevo Laredo and Ciudad Juarez alone.

Growing fears about immigrant contract labor within the US Bureau of Immigration also prompted inspectors to scrutinize Syrian children, and boys in particular. Responding to lurid tales from the penny press and Horatio Alger that depicted padrones who bought and sold Italian children for factory work in Philadelphia and New York, Congress passed a resolution against "Italian children" in 1874, followed by the Foran Act in 1885. While the previous legislation focused on immigrant children living within the continental United States, the Foran Act prohibited the "importation and migration of foreigners and aliens under contract or agreement to perform labor in the United States."<sup>31</sup> Port and border officials soon realized that the Foran Act proved difficult to enact and at times, it directly contradicted the "public charge" laws enacted by Congress in 1875 and 1882. By proving they had work waiting for them in American cities and would not become "public charges," immigrants faced scrutiny over whether they had received this work through a contract or a padrone.<sup>32</sup>



Inspectors along the US-Mexico border became particularly preoccupied with contract labor laws because many Mexicans began signing contracts with *padrones* to work in the United States. In El Paso, Roman Gonzalez became a skilled and notorious labor boss who searched for workers across the Mexican countryside. Gonzalez sent such workers by the thousands to jobs as track workers on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in Kansas and Oklahoma, where they worked to upgrade rail tracks from narrow to standard gauge.<sup>33</sup> Many Mexican workers were familiar with contract systems and for decades had signed contracts with *hacendarios* that bound them to haciendas as unfree laborers.<sup>34</sup> Soon thousands of Mexican workers traded exploitative contracts to haciendas for ones to Gonzalez and American companies, finding work on railroads and sugar beet fields across the American West and Midwest. The surge of Mexicans crossing the border worried inspectors; in fact, between 1886 and 1890, 52 of the 175 federal cases to investigate Foran Act violations originated in El Paso.<sup>35</sup> Thus, inspectors in El Paso and Laredo were attuned to the intricacies of the Foran Act and quick to investigate violations when Syrians began crossing the border.

The labor demands of agrobusiness in the American South and Southwest established loopholes in the Foran Act that would actually facilitate Mexican contract labor. Overwhelmed by the thousands of Mexicans seeking work across the border, officials in the Bureau of Immigration devised provisions that allowed for controlled contracts between companies and immigrants.<sup>36</sup> By World War I, the federal government exploited a loophole in the Foran Act to establish America's first Mexican guestworker program, importing thousands of workers and their families on contracts to work in American railroads, coal mines, and agriculture.<sup>37</sup>

As Mexican contract labor became codified into law, anxieties about *padrones* shifted toward the exploitation of children, particularly young boys. The connection between *padrones* and children emerged after a 1907 report from Andre Seraphic, a Greek immigrant from Turkey and investigator for the Bureau of Immigration. Seraphic inspected New York City's Greek shoe shining industry, interviewing dozens of young boys to conclude that Greek boys were being sold by their parents to powerful *padrones* who gave the boys their own last names and sponsored their immigration. Once in New York, the *padrones*, or "pseudofathers," made their "sons" work in ghastly conditions. Upon further scrutiny, it turned out that most of the "boys" Seraphic interviewed were over twenty-one, with some even in their thirties and married. Regardless of these pesky facts,

his conclusions struck a chord with middle-class reformers. Indeed, Seraphic's research would produce a report for the Dillingham Commission entitled *The Greek Padrone System in the United States*.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Seraphic linked contract labor to Mediterranean children in an immigration study that would inform restrictive immigration policies for decades to come.<sup>39</sup>

Given the growing concern over padrones and young boys, inspectors on the US-Mexico border naturally assumed Syrian boys must be employed by peddling rings that mirrored the Greek bootblacks in New York City. When Hussein Ali, a thirteen-year-old boy from Mehaite, Syria, arrived at the foot bridge in Laredo, Texas, with plans to reunite with his father in Fort Smith, Arkansas, Inspector A. J. Hotzon pulled him aside for further questioning. After a brief interrogation, the young boy admitted that his parents were both still in Syria and in truth he would live with his uncle, Maziad Abou Ali, who ran a small dry goods store in Fort Smith. Ali's initial lie about his father led inspectors to question whether he had an uncle in Arkansas or if he were being contracted by the elder Ali, who went by Boo Wolly, to peddle goods from his store. When Inspector Hotzon refused to believe Ali's story, his uncle made the trip south to Fort Worth, testifying that he would care for the boy and "put him in a United States school until he becomes a man." Instead of evidence of family bonds and devotion, Inspector Hotzon used the uncle's journey and the considerable expense and time it took to reason that "this man does not want to lose his investment." And though he could not prove a violation of the Foran Act, its link to child labor informed Inspector Hotzon's view of young Ali, so he stamped the boy's card "likely to become a public charge" and turned the child back toward Nuevo Laredo.<sup>40</sup>

Immigration inspectors' efforts to curb Syrian child labor, whether for family or padrones, reflected the growing influence of a nationwide campaign against children's employment championed by Progressive reformers. Responding to the appalling conditions of child workers in mills, factories, and mines across the United States, middle-class reformers banded together under the leadership of Florence Kelley to form the National Consumers League and the National Child Labor Committee in 1904.<sup>41</sup> Though reformers struggled to pass federal child labor laws, bills to prevent children from working in factories and mines received national coverage and enjoyed popular support.<sup>42</sup> Thus, even if it were perfectly legal for Syrian children to peddle or work in factories, inspectors echoed the morals of Progressive reformers as they questioned migrants like Hussein Ali about their plans to attend

school.<sup>43</sup> It is telling that young boys who told inspectors they planned to join fathers and pursue schooling in America had an easier time gaining entry. In 1911, the same year inspectors denied hundreds of other young boys and queried them about their plans to work, they admitted Jamel Abou Saad, a fifteen-year-old boy from Rashaya, Syria, who expressed his desire to join his brother and attend an American school. Though Saad possessed no more money or promise than other boys from Greater Syria, Inspector Benjamin Sojourner, remarked that he was “unusually bright” and “wants to learn,” and admitted him without further question.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, it became clear that inspectors were more likely to admit migrants who conformed to their own middle-class values.

#### UNAUTHORIZED CHILDREN

Once excluded, a smuggling industry that specialized in bringing Syrians across the border became the only option for young boys to reunite with their families. Smuggling rings developed on the US-Mexico border in the wake of Chinese exclusion laws and early smugglers brought Chinese nationals across the border by the hundreds. As smuggling rings grew, their operations soon expanded to cater to southern and eastern Europeans and migrants from across the Ottoman Empire who had been excluded as “likely to become a public charge,” diseased, or illiterate in the 1910s.<sup>45</sup> Soon, smugglers such as Khalil Koury, a Syrian in El Paso, began to specialize in helping Syrians cross the border by waiting at the edges of border lines in Juaréz, Mexico, searching for migrants rejected under trachoma or “likely to become a public charge” restrictions. When he saw a man or woman rejected by inspectors, he reassured the migrant in Arabic and guided the person to his boarding house, where he charged twenty-five cents a day for room and board and had a doctor on call who claimed to treat trachoma for \$10. Once fed and treated, Koury charged his boarders an extra \$70 to \$80 to guide them into the United States through a network of paid border guards and interpreters.<sup>46</sup>

As news of restrictions against young boys circulated within the Syrian diaspora, families fabricated new relationships meant to legally evade US immigration laws. For instance, when Ali Hassan came to the United States in 1912 at the age of twelve to join his father in Michigan City, Indiana, his father arranged for him to travel with several cousins. When inspectors at Ellis Island questioned him, he named the eldest-looking cousin as his father. Similarly, when Fares Abud Shahir boarded an ocean liner in Beirut by himself, he claimed a kindly older Syrian woman as his mother and inspectors never questioned him

again.<sup>47</sup> When questioned in El Paso, fourteen-year-old Ali Hassan broke down and conceded that the man who he claimed as his father was actually a distant cousin. "I called him my father," he admitted, "because my friends in my village told me I would not be allowed to come in on my own. Everyone said you have to have a father in the United States."<sup>48</sup> Hassan's testimony demonstrates that young Syrians began fabricating a paper trail that would allow them entry into the United States, a tactic that allowed them to circumvent border restrictions and enter the United States without authorization. Unauthorized entry, however, would have lasting consequences for Syrian children as they attempted to establish their lives in the United States.

Young Syrians who entered without legal papers would go on to lead lives in the shadows of American life, facing difficulty becoming citizens and haunted by the specter of immigration authorities whom they imagined might deport them at any moment. Sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of ethnic studies have explored how unauthorized status shapes the lives of Latinx immigrants and their families, instilling fear in entire families for generations in ways that make immigration authorities loom large thousands of miles from the US-Mexico border.<sup>49</sup> Beth Lew Williams has analyzed what this instability meant for migrants in America's past by investigating how Chinese migrants who claimed "paper fathers" to enter the United States legally under an assumed identity could live as US citizens yet experience constant insecurity about their status.<sup>50</sup> Such was the case for young Syrians, who traveled to Iowa, South Dakota, and New York City as the "sons" of Syrian families with the knowledge that if immigration authorities scrutinized their credentials, they might face deportation.

#### LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY

As mentioned above, the insecurity that followed the lives of Syrian "paper sons" has been overlooked in many histories of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) peoples in the United States.<sup>51</sup> A scholarly narrative emphasizing Americanization and Arab American whiteness, however, obscures the real fact that unauthorized entry left many young Syrians with a fear of deportation throughout their lives that prevented them from fully participating in American citizenship. These migrants learned that speaking out in any way might draw unwanted attention from American officials. For instance, when Ali Habhab spoke out against the American government in his brother's Fort Dodge, Iowa, dry goods store, immigration authorities picked him

up for questioning. Like dozens of other young Syrian boys, Habhab had entered the United States in the early 1910s by claiming his father, Abbass Habhab, lived and worked as a peddler in Iowa and had sent for him. While Abbass did work as a peddler in Iowa and Ali gained admission, Abbass was actually Ali's elder brother, which rendered Ali's entrance papers invalid. No one noticed as Ali settled into Midwestern life, helping his brothers in their store until the outbreak of World War I, when young Ali began to discuss the war in public. After enlisting as a soldier, Ali Habhab began criticizing the Allied forces in his brothers' store. Like all shopkeepers in the 1910s, Ali chatted with clients about political events as he retrieved bolts of cloth from behind the shop's counter. Several of these outbursts became heated enough to appear in the *Fort Dodge Messenger*, where local Iowans could read of Ali's fears that Britain and France would soon seize Greater Syria and "divide the spoils."<sup>52</sup> Habhab's opinions reflected the rise of pan-Syrian unity that swept across the Americas as immigrants learned that an Allied blockade of Ottoman Syria had caused a devastating famine in their homelands.<sup>53</sup> This news, which swept through the Arab press in North and South America, led many diasporic immigrants to hope Syria would emerge from World War I independent from Britain and France, or perhaps even under an American mandate.<sup>54</sup> But for Ali and his brothers, the blockade also felt personal. As news spread that even elites in Beirut and Mount Lebanon had resorted to eating barley bread, the Habhab brothers envisioned their parents, sisters, and cousins bartering their last possessions for meager handfuls of lentils and chickpeas. When local farmers strolled into the store, blissfully unaware of their family's struggles abroad, Ali likely snapped, taking it upon himself to inform them that the American forces and their allies had innocent blood on their hands. Within several months, Ali faced deportation. And while no official record of his deportation remains, it is likely that his public views on the war drew the attention of police and immigration authorities who were predisposed to viewing Syrians as enemies of the United States.<sup>55</sup> Ali's deportation signaled to Syrians across Iowa and the Midwest that anyone with an unstable immigration status should keep their heads down and work quietly; and his unfortunate story would be passed down to the next generation of Habhabs, who recounted it in oral history interviews.<sup>56</sup>

Exclusion and insecurity pushed other Syrians toward bootlegging and organized crime. In 1913, Hussein Hamode Sobh entered the United States with his aunt Zinab at Ellis Island with plans to join his two half-brothers in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Because he was only thirteen years old, however, he told immigration inspectors

that Zinab was his mother, setting him up for a life marked by insecurity. Always afraid he might be caught and reported to immigration authorities for deportation, he Americanized his name to Sam and bounced between jobs. He started out as a farm hand in Iowa, then worked on the killing floor of a grisly meatpacking house, and finally settled in Michigan City, Indiana, where he constructed railway cars alongside hundreds of other Syrians, always sending money home to his parents and promising to bring his brothers to the United States as soon as he established himself.<sup>57</sup> On a return visit to Sioux Falls in 1922, he got into a heated argument with a local man at his brothers' dry goods store and shot the man twice in the leg, an incident that landed him in jail for a month.<sup>58</sup> For Sam, the combination of an insecure immigration status, family pressure, and a hot temper formed him into an impulsive young man, quick to demand the respect that he thought he deserved.

Sam finally settled in Gary, Indiana, where a sprawling steel factory dominated the city's skyline, providing jobs and a booming underground economy. The Eighteenth Amendment's prohibition on the transport and sale of alcohol pushed its distribution underground and in Gary government regulations bred widespread disrespect for the law. Bars and speakeasies made little effort to hide their alcohol, and the liquor smuggling business became a lucrative industry in the city.<sup>59</sup> In fact, Sam saved the money to buy his grocery store and hotel by smuggling liquor for the mafia between Detroit, Gary, and Chicago. Bootlegging was a dangerous business; when his pickup truck broke down outside Detroit, Sam was so afraid the police would catch him and confiscate his cargo that he carried four cases of liquor over two miles, sputtering sweat and blood when he finally reached his destination.<sup>60</sup> While Sam proudly recounted this tale to his son to demonstrate his own grit and strength, his experience underscores the profound instability of a life in which a few cases of whiskey meant the difference between financial security and a debt to a mafia ring that he could never hope to repay.

Nativism surged in the 1920s and employers began requiring proof of citizenship or legal status for all but the most menial jobs. Throughout the decade, members of a revived Ku Klux Klan crowded the streets of America's cities, disparaging African Americans, Catholics, and new immigrants in public picnics and parades.<sup>61</sup> Public xenophobia shaped policy in 1924 when President Coolidge signed the landmark Johnson-Reed Act, which established quotas for immigrants that curbed southern and eastern European immigration and essentially halted it from MENA nations.<sup>62</sup> The new law also

established the US Border Patrol, extending the policing of immigrants beyond US ports of entry and stoking widespread fears that unauthorized immigrants proliferated throughout foreign neighborhoods across the United States.<sup>63</sup> Increased scrutiny and immigration raids on the shop floors of largescale employers like Henry Ford in Detroit meant that many immigrants with unstable legal statuses shied away from traditional factory employment and turned toward America's underground economy.<sup>64</sup>

Sam was one of the many Syrians whose unstable immigration statuses pushed them toward vice when they came of age. Soon young Syrian men ran pool halls and gambling businesses across the United States, presiding over pre-dominantly male spaces where the click of billiard balls masked the sound of money passing across smooth green felt tables. Across the Northeast and into the Midwest, Syrians and their neighborhoods became associated with bootlegged liquor in the 1920s.<sup>65</sup> By the next decade, many Syrians ran establishments that trafficked in liquor. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, Said Zehra, Assad Dabaky, and Haddad Maloley all operated pool halls that sold bootlegged liquor to locals.<sup>66</sup> In Sioux City, Iowa, German and Italian immigrants owned the majority of the city's pool halls, but Syrians soon became managers of these establishments, inviting exhausted meatpackers to have a sip of whiskey and perhaps triple the money they had earned dismembering hogs in a quick game of blackjack.<sup>67</sup> From 1932 to 1934, the Sioux City vice squad—the arm of the police department tasked with enforcing prohibition laws—constantly raided local pool halls, charging into smoky rooms, eager to overturn chairs and disrupt quiet card games with handcuffs and a trip to the local station.<sup>68</sup> And while Sam Hamod bootlegged liquor in Gary, a friend from the Jezzine Valley known as Neffew Sam teamed up with “reputed vice and liquor lord” John Nahas to open the Green Lantern, a restaurant and resort that offered free-flowing liquor and dances every Friday and Saturday night to Prohibition-weary residents of Bloomington, Indiana.<sup>69</sup> Beyond bars, Syrians also dabbled in gambling rings; for example, Ahmed “William” Abbas and Kamel Osman ran informal lottery gambling rings in Dearborn that eventually came to the attention of officials at Ford Motor Company.<sup>70</sup> For these young men, many of whom had unstable immigration statuses, the world of vice provided their only opportunity to make enough money to send back to relatives suffering in the midst of a global Depression.

When President Franklin Roosevelt ended Prohibition with the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933, the same Syrians who had bootlegged in their twenties took over the bar business in urban centers

across the United States. In Detroit and Michigan City, a handful of enterprising men opened taverns, finding the sale of alcohol much more lucrative than running a small dry goods or grocery store.<sup>71</sup> In Toledo, Ohio, where a dozen Syrian families had moved from Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the 1930s, any Muslim family with the means bought a bar. By the end of the Depression, Manira Sallock remembered, "All of them bought bars. It was everyone in the community who had some sort of tavern." Her father Mohammed Sayed reasoned that after several of his grocery stores went bankrupt, opening a bar marked the only logical step for his family. "I know it's against our faith," Manira, a Muslim and founder of the Toledo Mosque, remarked with a note of defensiveness in her tone, "but it's called survival. This was how our fathers fed their families."<sup>72</sup>

In many cases, young Syrian men turned to business in alcohol and vice because their uncertain immigration status offered few options. While the vast majority of Syrians entered legally alongside Italian, Polish, and German immigrants, border restrictions meant that many young Syrians hired smugglers or claimed parents who were not their own, a split-second decision that meant these migrants' youths in the United States would be marked by an uncertain immigration status. US inspectors argued that barring Syrian boys at the border saved them from lives as contract laborers to peddling "padrones," but as these migrants found ways into the United States, it was their unauthorized status that kept them from full participation in American life. Barred from stable jobs and living in constant fear of deportation, many young boys took up bootlegging and gambling as they reached manhood. Thus, unauthorized statuses launched them into a world of vice. When US authorities began using the growth of Syrian liquor smuggling as evidence that they should continue barring "a people inherently predisposed to crime and degeneracy," they failed to note that it was their own restrictive policies that had driven many Syrians toward this illicit work.<sup>73</sup> Ultimately, by separating young Syrians from their families at the border, US immigration officials set up these children for lives marked by instability that would associate entire communities with unauthorized entry and crime.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Most of the migrants in this study come from modern day Lebanon or Syria and today would consider themselves Lebanese or Syrian. This article adopts the term Syrian to encompass migrants from the Arabic-speaking region of



the Ottoman Empire because it is how the migrants identified themselves throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>2</sup> For more on common migration patterns and the rise of *sarraf* smugglers, see Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 55.

<sup>3</sup> For the record of the interview and dialogue, see Essa Nasser File, 29 September 1911, file 53303/20, RG 85, Immigration and Naturalization Service Files, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter INS Records).

<sup>4</sup> *Dow v. United States*, 226 F. 145 (4th Cir. 1915). For scholars who emphasize Arab assimilation, see Edward Curtis, *Muslims of the Heartland: How Syrian Immigrants Made a Home in the American Midwest* (New York: New York University Press, 2021); Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent examination on how social welfare reformers linked Syrian women and their children to deviance, see Charlotte Karem Albrecht, “An Archive of Difference: Syrian Women, the Peddling Economy and US Social Welfare, 1880–1935,” *Gender & History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 127–49.

<sup>6</sup> Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> John Bodnar, *Workers’ World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900–1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880–1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

<sup>8</sup> For more on Syrian young people (particularly girls) and work, see Khater, *Inventing Home*, chap. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 223.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the Immigrant Menace* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public’s Health* (New York: Beacon Press, 1996); Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Howard Markel, *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

2014); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Ann R. Gabbert, "El Paso, a Sight for Sore Eyes: Medical and Legal Aspects of Syrian Immigration, 1906–1907," *Historian* 65, no. 1 (2002): 15–42, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6563.651015>; Diedre Moloney, *National Insecurities: Immigrants and U.S. Deportation Policy Since 1882* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 115.

<sup>12</sup> Randa Tawil, "A 'Flying Carpet to Doom': Retracing Gender and Orientalism through the Transnational Journeys of a Syrian Migrant Woman, 1912–1949," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 43, no. 1 (2022): 133.

<sup>13</sup> Julian Lim, "Mormons and Mohammedans: Race, Religion, and the Anti-Polygamy Bar in US Immigration Law," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 41, no. 1 (2021): 8.

<sup>14</sup> On the largely Christian population of Syrians in the US, see Naff, *Becoming American*, 3; on Muslims' efforts to distance themselves from polygamy, see Sally Howell, *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering America's Muslim Past* (New York: Oxford, 2014), 49.

<sup>15</sup> Lim, "Mormons and Mohammedans," 8–10.

<sup>16</sup> Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 55; Moloney, *National Insecurities*, 115; Naff, *Becoming American*, 102–3.

<sup>17</sup> Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Sarah Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> "Have Bad Eye Disease," *El Paso Times*, 17 April 1906.

<sup>19</sup> Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 201.

<sup>21</sup> Gabriel Jorge Matook File, 1911, file 53147/6, INS Records.

<sup>22</sup> This data was compiled using border crossing information on Ancestry.com for immigrants categorized as "Syrian" on the US-Mexico border from 1911–1913. U.S., Border Crossings from Mexico to U.S., 1895–1964, Ancestry.com.

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Jorge Matook File, 1911, file 53147/6, INS Records.

<sup>24</sup> Naff, *Becoming Arab American*, 150–51; Vivek Bald, *Bengali Harlem and the Lost History of South Asian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

- <sup>25</sup> Charlotte Karem Albrecht, *Possible Histories: Arab Americans and the Queer Knowledge of Peddling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023), 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Sarey Hanna El Baba File, 1911, file 53303/13, INS Records.
- <sup>27</sup> Alixa Naff Interview with Elizabeth Beshara, box 79, folder 6, Farris and Yamna Naff Collection, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC.
- <sup>28</sup> Albrecht, *Possible Histories*, 56.
- <sup>29</sup> Essa Nasser File, 29 September 1911, file 53303/20, INS Records.
- <sup>30</sup> Gabriel Jorge Matook File, 1911, file 53147/6, INS Records.
- <sup>31</sup> Gregory Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880–1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 84.
- <sup>32</sup> Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 87.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>34</sup> John Kenneth Turner, “Coercion, Culture, and Contracts: Labor and Debt on Henequen Haciendas in Yucatan, Mexico, 1870–1915,” *Journal of Economic History* 69, no. 1 (March 2009): 104–37.
- <sup>35</sup> Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 102.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Mireya Loza, “‘Let Them Bring Their Families’: The Experiences of the First Mexican Guest Workers, 1917–1922,” *Journal of American History* 109, no. 2 (2022): 310–23; Luis F. B. Plascencia, “‘Get Us Our Privilege of Bringing in Mexican Labor’: Recruitment and Desire for Mexican Labor in Arizona, 1917–2016,” in *Mexican Workers and the Making of Arizona*, eds. Louis F. B. Plascencia and Gloria H. Cuadraz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 128.
- <sup>38</sup> Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*, 96.
- <sup>39</sup> Katherine Benton Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).
- <sup>40</sup> Hussein Ali File, 25 July 1911, file 53303/4, INS Records.
- <sup>41</sup> Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970).
- <sup>42</sup> John Braeman, “Albert J. Beveridge and the First National Child Labor Bill,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, March 1964, 1–36.
- <sup>43</sup> Hussein Ali File, 25 July 1911, file 53303/4, INS Records.
- <sup>44</sup> Jamel Abou Saad File, 26 August 1911, file 53303/15, INS Records.
- <sup>45</sup> On Chinese smuggled across the border, see Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates*. For an examination of smuggling rings specializing in Europeans, particularly Jewish migrants, see Garland, *After They Closed the Gates*.

- <sup>46</sup> Khalil Koury File, 21 April 1907, file 51615/108, INS Records.
- <sup>47</sup> Abu Shahir File, 12 December 1911, file 53402/12, INS Records.
- <sup>48</sup> Ali Hassan File, 18 February 1911, file 53402/27, INS Records.
- <sup>49</sup> Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Nicholas De Genova, "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'Illegality'," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 2 (July 2004): 160-85; Angela S. Garcia, *Legal Passing: Navigating Undocumented life and Local Immigration Law* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).
- <sup>50</sup> Beth Lew-Williams, "Paper Lives of Chinese Migrants and the History of the Undocumented," *Modern American History* 4, no. 2 (2021): 112.
- <sup>51</sup> For scholars who have begun to move beyond this narrative and examine Arab American in less respectable trades and even illegality, see Albrecht, *Possible Histories*; Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Tawil "Flying Carpet to Doom."
- <sup>52</sup> "Local Talk," *Fort Dodge Messenger*, 24 December 1919; "Short Message," *Fort Dodge Messenger*, 17 January 1920.
- <sup>53</sup> Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: from Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 104.
- <sup>54</sup> Stacy Farenthold, *Between the Ottomans and Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- <sup>55</sup> David Habhab, phone interview by author, 16 March 2021.
- <sup>56</sup> Paul Habhab, interview by author, 27 February 2020, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; David Habhab, phone interview by author, 16 March 2021.
- <sup>57</sup> Sam Hamod, interview by author, 25 March 2021. On Michigan City's Muslim population, see Curtis, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 87.
- <sup>58</sup> "Hamod Held to Circuit Court," *Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, 27 October 1922.
- <sup>59</sup> Lane, *City of the Century*, 147.
- <sup>60</sup> "At the Broadway Lounge," Box: 1. Sam Hamod Papers, MsC1176. University of Iowa Special Collections; for evidence of Sam's liquor violations, see "Lake County Criminal Court," *Times* (Hammond, IN), 12 September 1930.
- <sup>61</sup> Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2017).
- <sup>62</sup> Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), chap. 2.
- <sup>63</sup> Ashley Johnson Bavery, "Militarizing the Northern Border: State Violence and the Formation of the U.S. Border Patrol," *Journal of American History* 109, no. 2 (September 2022): 362-74.

<sup>64</sup> Ashley Johnson Bavery, *Bootlegged Aliens: Immigration Politics on America's Northern Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), chap. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Local newspapers capture the rise of Syrian involvement in vice generally, which may have been a result of these individuals' unstable immigration status. For examples in Maine, see "Waterville Man Pleads Nolo in Sale of Intoxicants," *Kennebec Journal*, 20 January 1928; in Vermont, see "Syrian Fined in Liquor Case," *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 19 December 1931; in Philadelphia, see "Says Syrians Sold Liquor," *Morning Call*, 14 October 1922; in Ohio, see "Syrian to Face Liquor Count," *Evening Review* (East Liverpool), 28 July 1927; in Kansas, see "Lecture Bride in Ceremony of Local Syrians," *Wichita Eagle*, 3 January 1922.

<sup>66</sup> City Commission Proceedings Notes, 1896–1898, folder 46, box 3, collection 353, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>67</sup> Steeve Stavrou, Herman Younghdal, and Mike Sweeney – Greek, Swedish, and second-generation Irish, respectively – are listed as pool hall proprietors in the 1930 Sioux City census. Meanwhile, Syrians employees Abe Kaleb and Albert Bejan became managers while Fred Skaff labored in one of these pool halls. Another Syrian, James Abdouch, even owned his own pool hall. United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls, Ancestry.com.

<sup>68</sup> For examples of pool hall raids during the Great Depression, see "Women and Son Jailed in Pool Hall Raid," *Sioux City Journal*, 31 July 1932; "Eight Persons Arrested in Pool Hall Raid," *Sioux City Journal*, 13 May 1934.

<sup>69</sup> "Seeks to Close Nahas Resort," *Valparaiso-Vidette Messenger*, 26 March 1930.

<sup>70</sup> "3 Sentenced as Gamblers," *Detroit Free Press*, 11 April 1944; Curtis, *Muslims of the Heartland*, 182.

<sup>71</sup> While in Michigan City, George Dabaggia opened a tavern by the end of the Depression. Phillip and Maria Dabaggia, interview by author, 13 May 2021, Michigan City, Indiana.

<sup>72</sup> Manira Sallock, interview by author, 19 March 2021, Toledo, Ohio.

<sup>73</sup> Report on the El Paso Border, 13 April 1913, file 53607/296, INS Records.