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Ladies Aid as Labor History

Working-Class Formation in the Mahjar

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ABSTRACT In the Arabic-speaking mahjar (diaspora), the plight of the working poor was the focus of women's philanthropy. Scholarship on welfare relief in the interwar Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian diaspora currently situates it within a gendered politics of benevolence. This article reconsiders that frame and argues for a class-centered reassessment of "ladies aid" politics exploring the intersections of women's relief with proletarian mutual aid strategies. Founded in 1917, the Syrian Ladies Aid Society (SLAS) of Boston provided food, shelter, education, and employment to Syrian workers. SLAS volunteers understood their efforts as mitigating the precarities imposed on Syrian workers by the global capitalist labor system. Theirs was both a women's organization and a proletarian movement led by Syrian women. Drawing from SLAS records and the Syrian American press, the article centers Syrian American women within processes of working-class formation and concludes that labor history of the interwar mahjar requires focus on spaces of social reproduction beyond the factory floor.

KEYWORDS diaspora, migration, mutual aid, Arab American

Seated at an oak desk in Boston's South End, Hannah Sabbagh Shakir balanced the accounts of Arab American lace workers for her family's company, Sabbagh Brothers.[1] In the early 1930s Sabbagh Brothers employed a dozen lace workers on credit, granting them yardage of silk thread and raw cloth. Shakir's ledger was filled almost entirely with Syrian women workers; her largest single client was "W.R.," the women's work relief committee of the Syrian Ladies Aid Society (SLAS) of Boston.[2] Founded in 1917, the SLAS was a mutual aid society devoted to meeting the needs of Arabic-speaking proletarians in New England mill towns. Silk from the Sabbagh Brothers went to their clubhouse on Tyler Street, where SLAS members worked it into collars, cuffs, and other lace goods for sale. The club's founding members—Sabbagh

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Shakir among them—were lifelong textile workers, and they taught new members of the Syrian immigrant community how to stitch, weave, and sew garments. Money earned from the laces flowed back into SLAS coffers, where it was channeled into welfare relief works, a supper club, evening classes, and a boardinghouse for unemployed or transient immigrant workers. Running on the volunteer philanthropy of women workers, the society represented a pillar of working-class life in the Syrian communities of New England. Its services met the needs of Syrian migrants often marginalized as surplus labor within the textile industry.

Despite the club's proletarian preoccupations, what is usually remembered about the Syrian Ladies Aid Society (renamed the Lebanese Syrian Ladies Aid Society in 1962) is that it was a women's organization engaged in a gendered style of private philanthropy, hosting charity galas and other polite social gatherings to raise money for homeland relief or the needy. A gendered politics of benevolence is evident in SLAS club records, which document its works on behalf of young Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian women in matters of education, employment, divorce, and bereavement. What distinguishes the SLAS from other women's welfare organizations, however, was that its founders were themselves workers, laboring in textiles and volunteering after hours. Thus this article revisits "ladies aid" as a project steeped thoroughly in class politics. It queries the relationship between SLAS relief work and the maintenance of the Arab immigrant working classes in New England. Sabbagh Shakir and her contemporaries understood their mission as overcoming the systemic precarities built into the global capitalist labor system through mutual aid and self-help. In this corner of the Syrian mahjar (diaspora), I argue that "ladies aid" was simultaneously a feminist politics and a project in working-class formation.

Rethinking Class Formation: Ladies Aid as Labor History

To this point, studies of class formation among Syrians in the United States have focused primarily on the development of a transnational bourgeoisie. Several factors inform this historiographical emphasis, including availability of archives and hegemonic framing narratives that presuppose migration as driver of upward social mobility. The mahjar's documentary footprint is vast and variegated, especially in what it offers to women's histories. Overall, available archives grant a vision of the Arab Atlantic world as it was experienced by its urban, intellectual, and professional classes. The Syrian American working classes, however, remain underremarked in this diaspora's archives and the historiography arising from them. In US history, an early tendency to narrate the Arab American story as moving seamlessly from peddlers to proprietors long presided, a teleologic framing of upward social mobility that scholars now identify as reductive (Gualtieri 2009: 48–49; 2019; Khater 2001: 82–83; Naff 1987: 128–61; Shakir 1997: 38–41). The peddler stands at the center of this narrative arc, a romantic figure whose appeal derived from his (he is usually represented as male despite peddling also being women's work) untethering

from both the rootedness of peasant life and imposed precarity of wage labor (Gualtieri 2004: 71–74; Jacobs 2015: 283–90). Peddling was a common trade in the US mahjar, as common as factory work according to Evelyn Shakir (1997: 46–47) (see also *Social Survey* 1914: 40–41). In both popular memory and early scholarly studies, the peddler looms large, an exaggerated emblem of mahjari success, even as scholars critique his singular hegemony as the product of Orientalism (Albrecht 2016; Karam 2007: 10–13). When taken in context with the material meanness of Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian livelihoods in the heavy industries, the romance that follows the peddler suggests he represented an alternative destiny, a totem of economic freedom in a diaspora where living from paycheck to paycheck was often the norm.

In addition to the archival issues at play in retrieving workers' histories, a theoretical focus on class as a structural *location* rather than as a social *relation* also drifts into the historiography of immigrant communities (Camfield 2005). Definitions of class traditionally begin with an economic relationship to the means of production: proletarians are, for instance, "working class" if their labor is exploited for wages. Structural analyses therefore examine workplaces as central to defining who belongs to a class, but they do so at the expense of other spheres of activity that also uphold, maintain, and facilitate waged work: households, religious institutions, mutual aid societies, welfare organizations, and other sites of unpaid labor (Livingstone and Luxton 1996). Put another way, class formations extend far beyond the shop floor and should be analyzed as such. Often it is the spaces outside the factory that are most generative of class cultures. This is especially the case as it relates to women workers because in addition to their factory labor, they took on economic roles in their communities, households, and mutual aid societies. As textile workers, social workers, landladies, and wives, Syrian women's work was simultaneously waged and unwaged.

From the 1890s through the 1930s Arabic-speaking immigrants in the United States worked in a variety of manufacturing industries, particularly in textiles, leatherwork, and in the heavy industries (automotive and machining). In New York and New England, textiles formed the pillar of mahjar's economy through the Great Depression, employing both men and women in weaving, piecework, garment construction, and laces. Workers in this industry shared a common experience defined by three core challenges: the proletarian rhythms of industrial work; the political obstacles of being foreign-born; and systemic economic precarity. Although workers spent their days in textile mills, the true locus of Syrian working-class life was in associational culture. Dozens of Syrian American clubs established themselves in Boston, representing the community in everything from legal advocacy and naturalization to homeland nationalisms, literary pursuits, or spiritual affairs. The Syrian Ladies Aid Society was one of Boston's most successful associations, and it blended a class-conscious ethic of insuring workers against poverty with the gendered expectation of caretaking as uniquely women's work.

Precarity was built into the textile economy's basic foundations. The global textile industry drew Atlantic and Mediterranean labor economies nearer one another, fueling the mass migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, feeding migrant workers into factories to produce shirtwaists, robes, lace, shoes, and lingerie (Guglielmo 2010: 56–60; Moran 2002). In addition to these finished goods, however, the factories churned out excess labor, the unemployed human remainders of unregulated global capitalism. Some came to America only to be maimed by the looms; others worked long hours but nevertheless sank into a cycle of debt and poverty that rendered them dependent on private welfare. Inexpensive steamship passenger transit drove the mass migration of workers to the Americas, but it also casualized immigrant factory labor once they arrived. Employers maintained an ethnically segmented labor market, relying on immigration legislation to draw on labor migrants, compounding the precarity felt by immigrant textile communities (Chomsky 2008: 142–46). As a result, the ranks of the chronically unemployed multiplied in Syrian communities, an economic inevitability that groups like the SLAS anticipated and recognized.

When the SLAS was established in 1917, Boston hosted an estimated thirty-five hundred Arabic-speaking immigrants, making it the second largest Syrian colony in the state. Another five thousand Syrians lived in Lawrence, and smaller communities lived in other mill towns like Lowell, Fall River, Worcester, and Pittsfield (Moran 2002: 176; Shakir 1997: 38). Massachusetts also hosted a scattering of Arabic periodicals, most notably *Fatat Boston* in Boston and *al-Wafaʾ* in Lawrence. In a Syrian colony so rich in associational activity, why did Boston's sole women's society become the most important relief committee? It is tempting to begin with the SLAS's founders, women with extensive experience in industrial textile production like Hannah Sabbagh.

Sabbagh was born in Ayn al-Rummaneh, in Ottoman Mount Lebanon, in 1895 (Kaufman et al. 2006: 46), the only girl among six siblings. Her brothers, male cousins, and uncles all worked in Lebanon's textile sector as dyers, weavers, and wholesalers, work that eventually brought them all to America after 1900 (Hall 2000: 20). In 1907 Sabbagh and her mother joined them, and she took a job as a stitcher in a Fall River factory at fourteen years old.[3] Meanwhile her brothers founded Sabbagh Brothers, a wholesaling outfit that, because it expanded and contracted with the chaotic rhythms of the global markets, needed her income to stay in business. "I went to work in the factory. All my life I worked," she explained later in a 1983 oral history. "Alexander (her older brother) learned to weave, but he didn't work much. So I had to make money for us to live on."[4] As she grew older, she continued to work in textiles, creating gingham in the factory; after her marriage to Arab American printer Wadiʿ Shakir in 1931, she continued her work as a seamstress. In 1944 she opened Parkway Manufacturing, making women's skirts, suiting, and blazers and employing fifteen women.[5] Biographies offer her as an

example of the class mobility that Arab Americans enjoyed in metropolitan New England, a vision rooted in the affluence her generation experienced in the radically different economic conditions of the postwar era. In the 1920s and 1930s, by contrast, Sabbagh's subjectivity, work, and welfare activism reflected the mutualist, cooperative strategies of the class she was a part of: immigrant textile workers of industrial New England.

Sabbagh's wages, like those of most young women workers, belonged first to her family, providing an economic cushion and enabling her brothers' commercial ventures.[6] In 1910 virtually every unwed Syrian woman in Fall River worked in the city's cotton factory (Cadinot and Burkholder 2013: 177). In time Sabbagh acquired some machines and opened a smaller specialized apron firm in east Boston, employing "the neighbors, six or seven women; we taught them how to sew."[7] Her early experiences of work convinced her that technical training provided Syrian immigrants with a meaningful income source in an otherwise unpredictable commercial economy. Syrian traders, merchants, bankers, and peddlers came to America seeking their fortunes, but usually they quietly relied on the wages of women working in factories. Indeed, the peddling economy was itself densely linked with the textile industry, as peddlers sold sewing notions, lace yardage, and other materials to seamstresses and textile homeworkers across New England and the Midwest.[8]

At the same moment in 1907, a group of Syrian women in New York established the Syrian Ladies Aid Society of New York, the Boston SLAS's immediate predecessor. A mutual aid society that responded to the needs of working women and their families, the New York SLAS helped arriving immigrant women find housing, employment, and credit in the city's "little Syria" neighborhood on Washington Street.[9] The SLAS joined mutual aid strategies then popular among Italian workers that Syrian women worked alongside in New York City with the principles of scientific self-help (Guglielmo 2010: 35–41). Emerging from a radical tradition focused on worker liberation through education, self-help philosophies animated Arabophone liberal discourse and arrived in America by way of the prolific printing houses of Cairo, Beirut, and their mahjari syndicates in New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires (Khuri-Makdisi 2010: 30–36). In addition to mutual aid and self-help ideas, the New York SLAS also worked with US social workers, especially those linked to the settlement houses, a liberal poverty alleviation experiment where young immigrant women lived and worked closely with middle-class social workers (Albrecht 2016; Deutsch 1992). All three ideological wellsprings — mutual aid, self-help, and social work — influenced the SLAS's work. But in New York City, the organization's core functions were to provide direct assistance, job training, and language instruction to unemployed Arab workers, especially to women. When its sister organization opened in Boston in 1917, their club offered meals, childcare, and a boardinghouse, deepening the SLAS's commitment to self-help as a means of worker empowerment.

Figure 1. Syrian Ladies Aid Society at Boston's Armistice Day Parade, 1925. Hannah Sabbagh appears at left, in white. Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.

Meanwhile, the extant literature on the Syrian Ladies Aid Society's early years focuses on its front-facing cultural activities, framing the organization as a polite social club offering a refined set of activities for the diasporic elite and the broader US public. The society put on annual galas that drew Syrians from across the Americas, for instance, and they raised funds through ribbon drives, bake sales, and theater events (Shakir 1987: 133–43). The SLAS also participated in the 1925 Armistice Day parade, representing the Syrian colony to the city of Boston (135; see fig. 1). In 1933 they hosted a Sami Shawwa concert to benefit Middle Eastern orphans, and its clubhouse welcomed esteemed litterateurs like Gibran Khalil Gibran, Michel Maʿluf, Ibrahim al-Khuri, Samʿan Saliba, Shukri al-Khuri, Rashid ʿAbd al-Nur, Nimr Dalil Samia, and Hatem Amin al-Khuri.[10]

Such activities might lend the impression that the SLAS was a bourgeois institution, meeting the social needs of a comfortable immigrant community by serving up authentic food, fun, and culture. Behind these activities, however, lay the SLAS's core function: to raise money for redistribution and to working families experiencing poverty, illness, or injury. For all its social trappings, the SLAS was run by factory workers seeking economic betterment of working families. Thanks to Sabbagh Shakir's recordkeeping, it is also an ideal vantage point from which to examine this corner of the mahjar as experienced by its proletarian majority.

Helping Who? SLAS and the Mahjar's Politics of Relief

The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston formed its first relief committee in 1917. Sabbagh joined two dozen women with the goal of raising funds to assist Syrian immigrants struggling with poverty. America was mobilizing for World War I, and the government subjected Syrian migrants to intense pressure to demonstrate their loyalty to US war missions. The homeland, meanwhile, suffered a devastating famine, prompting Syrian and Lebanese committees across the Americas to raise humanitarian aid for the Middle East. Although the SLAS's founders had initially gathered for the cause of local poor relief, the crises in the homeland prompted an urgent question: Who was worthiest of immediate, lifesaving relief? Hungry and homeless Syrian workers in Boston or their starving and destitute brethren in Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine?

As the society's founding secretary, Sabbagh recorded the contradictory demands pulling the SLAS in these two directions. At twenty-two, with almost a decade of factory work already behind her, she was eager to focus SLAS efforts on the Syrians of Boston. The American Red Cross, the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, and dozens of Arab American political committees raised funds for the homeland (Bawardi 2014: 106). By contrast, Sabbagh's ambition was to soothe the suffering of the immigrant poor. The club volunteers were divided over this issue, and debate over which community to serve recurred in SLAS meetings. These debates reveal the evolved negotiation of philanthropic priorities of Syrian women workers, in relation to the politics of homeland nationalism.

In early 1918, for instance, the SLAS entertained a delegation from the Syrian Lebanese Liberation League, a nationalist organization visiting from New York City. The delegation—lawyer Faris Ma'luf, *al-Huda* correspondent Yusuf Touma, Hanna Shalhoub, Ibrahim al-Khuri, and Jabbour Mansur—was raising war relief, and they asked the SLAS to raise funds with them on behalf of the homeland. Touma argued that Syria's need was far greater than in America, and that the immigrant community's patriotic duties should come first. In sparse shorthand the SLAS meeting minutes capture the exchange where Sabbagh challenged the group: Why should the SLAS get caught up in what sounded like a political project? "This is not a political party," she told Touma, "it is a philanthropic organization with charitable aims." Next, "Rosa Faris spoke in precise manner about the society's purpose," Sabbagh's notes continue, "and she showed the benefits of women's charitable works, if the veil of fear of the people concerning their community stewardship were lifted off of her."[11] The assembled membership broke into applause. Touma shot back, "and what is your society's purpose if not that of Syria or Lebanon?"[12] It appears Touma's argument was persuasive: after some deliberation, the SLAS voted to raise relief for the homeland until the war's conclusion. The club raised funds exclusively for the homeland through 1919 but, unconvinced that Touma's project was "benevolent and charitable, not political," Sabbagh repeatedly raised the issue for renegotiation.[13] Rumors that the Liberation League's priorities were misplaced did not help things.

"No more than twenty-five percent goes to assist Syrians and Lebanese," claimed Muhammad Muhaisen on a 1918 visit sponsored by the Syrian American Club of Boston (Bawardi 2014: 95–98). "The rest will build the committee's statues in dedication to martyrs."[14]

During the war, then, the SLAS functioned as primarily as a homeland relief organization sending cash, clothing, bedding, and medical supplies to Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine through US channels. In 1920, however, Sabbagh introduced a resolution to revise the SLAS's mission toward help for Syrian workers in America: "those daughters of Syria, especially those far away from their families and who know no one in this place."[15] Reclaiming the organization and its self-help mission, Sabbagh oversaw the opening of a SLAS clubhouse on Tyler Street, in Boston's South End.[16] The clubhouse gave every Arab immigrant a place to call their own. It institutionalized the local ethos of care for the Syrian working poor in general, and women workers in particular, that guided SLAS relief work through the interwar period.

Workers Helping Workers: SLAS in the Interwar Period

Though they helped virtually any immigrant who requested it, the SLAS mostly targeted its relief projects at young women and men working in New England textile factories. Work in US textile production was highly variegated, and though Middle Eastern migrant workers filled every sector of the industry they encountered different levels of risk, wages, and job security. In New England, Syrian workers worked mostly in the manufacture of silks (stockings, laces, collars, and lingerie), cotton (weaving and garment making), and leathers (boots and shoes). These three materials—silk, cotton, leather—introduced a hierarchy within the migrant community based on wage scales and perceptions of prestige. Of the three industries, silk demanded a specific set of skills, and Syrian silk workers commanded the highest wages and best prospects for job security. Sought after by US employers, fully two-thirds of them had come to America after working in the silk factories of Mount Lebanon.[17]

Cotton weaving and garment making employed a much wider cross section of the Syrian working classes. Whereas silk workers came primarily from Mount Lebanon, those working in cotton came from all parts of Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine. Cotton workers also came overwhelmingly from agricultural backgrounds; the US Immigration Commission recorded that a scant 6 percent of them had any prior experience in textiles (or any proletarian work).[18] If cotton represented a middling working class, leatherworkers occupied the bottom of this hierarchy. Leatherworkers performed the most dangerous work; they were paid the least and were most vulnerable to summary employment interruptions. They, too, were nearly all first-time proletarians: 90.9 percent of Ottoman leatherworkers (Syrians and Turks together) had been landless tenant farmers in the Ottoman Empire.[19]

In all three types of factory labor, Syrian workers joined other Ottoman subjects—Turks, Armenians, and ethnic Greeks—as well as the Italians and Greek nationals whose neighborhoods they shared (Garrett and Purpura 2007: 14; Guglielmo 2010: 76). Among Ottoman immigrant working classes, Syrians were comparatively privileged, earning higher average wages than did their Turkish counterparts. Most Syrian men worked in silk or cotton, earning from $400 to $500 annually, compared to the paltry $260 average wage for Turkish leatherworkers.[20] Participation in trade unions may have bolstered Syrian wages: even in leatherworking, Syrian workers commanded higher wages as a result of union membership rates of 59 percent, compared to 10 percent of Turkish workers.[21]

US textile firms tended to hire Middle Eastern immigrants as needed, treating them as surplus labor and laying them off in times of recession. This practice created vulnerabilities for immigrant working communities and disproportionately affected unskilled labor. Because they were likelier to work in skilled sectors, 85.5 percent of Syrian workers achieved full employment (working twelve months a year) by 1910, compared to 36.6 percent for Turkish leatherworkers.[22] In other words, in a good year the textile industry contained systemic inequalities; it depended on a ready supply of underemployed workers who could be disabled or laid off without repercussion. The threat of a recession concerned everyone, but in an actual economic downturn, the suffering was unevenly distributed, usually concentrated to those already at the bottom of the labor market. Taken together, these tensions created urban Syrian immigrant communities governed by fluctuating phases of boom and bust, generating local migrations of migrants seeking work, and creating a permanent underclass of the unemployed.

The desire to insure families against these risks led Syrian immigrant households to expand in working-class neighborhoods. In a typical New England Syrian household, all adult members worked, as did older children. Though popular narratives about female factory work describe it as something done before a woman weds, the data reveal something different: married or unmarried, old or young, Syrian women of this class worked in factories at rates comparable to their male relatives (Shakir 1997: 48–49).[23] The household was also itself a space of economic production: Syrian women worked as seamstresses, in piecework or lace production at home in addition to working outside the home. Sabbagh, for instance, worked both in the gingham factory and at home, and she also sold her garments through the Sabbagh Brothers company. Blending economic strategies like this was common in Syrian families, and was done to meet the needs of young children or aging relatives.

Notions of kinship also flexed to interwar economic realities. In contrast to the nuclear households that typified this diaspora's emerging middle classes, Arab American workers maintained larger households defined by employment networks and the shared sense of proletarian precarity. "We lived in an extended family

neighborhood," reports Laurice Shagoury Maloley of her own childhood in Boston; "there were no strangers in the community, and the residents cared for each other, all of which served to nullify our economic condition."[24] The Shagourys lived next door to the Homsis, kin who emigrated from Syria together and who stayed on Tyler Street at the heart of the Syrian community. This pattern was typical: distant relatives cohabited in new ways, and Syrians from like villages grouped together in households focused around work rhythms (Jabbra 1991: 40–41). Working households also took on boarders who paid a share of the rent (Albrecht 2016: 136; Moran 2002: 179). In New England about half of all Syrian households rented rooms out, usually to men newly arrived from the homeland.[25] Male heads of household secured employment for their boarders, resulting in entire households employed by one firm. Syrian women also managed these complex systems as landladies, blending this income with intervals of factory labor, in-home textile production, childcare, and other responsibilities. When the companies they worked for prospered, the system worked; after the 1930s it even joined with a growing system of welfare protections, union organizing, and New Deal social legislation, and propelled some immigrant families into the middle class (Chomsky 2008: 144). Sabbagh Shakir is a case in point: she worked on the factory floor through her youth and early married years, but after the Great Depression she emerged with a garment business of her own, Parkway Manufacturing (Kaufman et al. 2006: 47).

Across the Americas, Syrian women played significant roles in migrant philanthropy, in rural and urban contexts and in industry and beyond (Balloffet 2017; Pastor 2017: 163–68). In both its structure and priorities, the SLAS mirrored institutions emerging elsewhere while evincing a specific understanding of what it meant to be Syrian and working-class in industrial New England. The SLAS was founded by Syrian women working in the textile industry, and textile workers formed the majority (60 percent) of the society's volunteers through the 1930s (Shakir 1987: 139). Some worked in factories owned by US garment companies, and others in the smaller factories opening under Syrian or Lebanese proprietorship. Volunteers Rose Homsi and Mary Shagoury, for instance, worked in an apron factory owned by Rose's husband, Albert Homsi.[26] The SLAS's leadership intimately understood the specific vulnerabilities Syrians faced in a labor market that systemically undervalued immigrant labor, and the organization's relief work targeted suffering caused by those vulnerabilities. It granted emergency cash stipends to the poor while offering job training to help the unemployed enhance their position in the longer term. The SLAS opened up a boardinghouse and soup kitchen, offered childcare, and provided a private welfare system to offset the structural inequities caused by the business of Syrian labor migration. Understanding SLAS relief works through the lens of a proletarian safety net is important because it reframes long-held assumptions that the club served as a site for "Americanization"-minded social work. To the

contrary, the SLAS focused on promoting better education and working conditions for Syrian women in America and the Middle East simultaneously.

SLAS's relief programs also drew directly on the skills of textile workers. Members donated items made from factory remainders: garments, aprons, and blankets sewn from fabric that might otherwise have gone to waste. During the war the SLAS sent coats and blankets to the homeland, clothing Syrian and Armenian orphans.[27] After 1920 the system transformed into a philanthropic putting out of garment work, with members contributing handmade garments, laces, and woolens for needy families. SLAS members worked their hands at weekly club meetings. They sold the better items through the Sabbagh Brothers store, earmarking the proceeds for poor relief.[28] The system was flexible, plugged easily into existing Arab American cloth economies, and when cash donations flagged in lean times, the club relied on in-kind donations. When the Syrian communities of Lowell and Lawrence experienced massive layoffs in the late 1920s, for instance, the SLAS put unemployed women to work in stitching sessions, producing garments for sale to fund other operations. Sabbagh and her partners turned the community's prime vulnerability—its unpredictable, fluctuating labor market—into a source of strength. By making work when there was none locally available, the society kept the mahjar's cloth economy intact, insured Syrian women against unemployment, created small-scale markets for relief goods, and, in doing so, protected migrant remittance cultures linking New England to the Middle East.

In addition to work programs, the SLAS engaged in direct relief, making cash grants for food, milk, heating coal, or medical costs. The club also hosted an array of events to feed the community at their Tyler Street clubhouse. Historians have remarked on the galas and *haflat* that the club put on through the 1920s, describing them as creating a shared social space centered on the preservation of ethnic culinary traditions (Shakir 1987). In addition to these celebrations, however, the club offered a weekly *sahra*, a quotidian supper club that combined food aid with general fundraising. Each Thursday the Tyler Street house was opened for supper; those who could do so paid one dollar for a hearty Syrian meal, and those who could not pay ate for free.[29] Providing baseline sustenance to Boston's Syrian community allowed the SLAS to observe its larger socioeconomic needs, especially those of its children, whom the relief committee specifically looked out for. Such services were crucial before the New Deal. Before groups like SLAS worked with children, "when parents could not afford to take care of their children, they became temporary wards of the state," reports Charles (Khalil) Shagoury in his memoirs. When his father was hospitalized with pneumonia and out of work for eighteen months, "my mother had no choice, but to give her three daughters up to foster care so that she could go out and work."[30] Rose (Shagoury) Homsi was one of those three sisters; she grew up to become one of the SLAS's child welfare committee volunteers by the mid-1920s, attending the weekly sahra to learn more about families or neighbors who could use

some help.[31] In addition to this informal soup kitchen, the SLAS routinely sent milk, heating coal, and shelf-stable groceries to Syrian homes across New England.

Rent subsidies comprised the largest direct assistance program in the late 1920s. Because Syrians rented larger homes than did other immigrants in New England, and formed large households of husbands, wives, adult children, and unrelated men who all worked together—sometimes in a single factory—Syrian households in mill towns were acutely vulnerable to sudden financial disaster. A 1926 case from SLAS's relief ledger illustrates why. That year, a factory in Lawrence laid off dozens of Syrian workers, citing competition from the US South (Garrett and Purpura 2007: 84–85). Several families in the city applied for emergency relief: among them, the Bustani* household reported a total loss of wages. Nine people lived in the Bustani home: three men, four female dependents, and two unrelated male boarders. All five men were summarily laid off; unable to make rent, the boarders moved out, and the Bustanis would have been evicted if the SLAS had not helped them. An SLAS delegation went to Lawrence to meet the family and assess their desperate situation. They granted the Bustanis rent relief and found two of the men temporary work.[32]

The SLAS treated cash relief as important but as a last resort, organizing as much of its relief as possible through material gifts, heating coal, meals, lodging, employment, or other sorts of self-help. Even so, the SLAS had a dozen families receiving stipends at any given time through the 1920s, but once these households stabilized, the relief committee redirected funds to new applicants.[33] The stipends represented an emergency safety net, a crucial privately managed unemployment insurance, but it was not an ongoing benefits program. The SLAS devoted most of its energies not to sending cash relief but in applying the principles of mutual aid through programming arranged in the Tyler Street clubhouse.

Teaching at Tyler Street: Worker Education as Relief

The opening of the SLAS clubhouse in 1920 made it the single most visible social institution in Boston's Arab American community. Originally planned as a meeting space, the SLAS quickly filled up the clubhouse's calendar with events planned by other Syrian clubs, who paid for use of the space. The SLAS offered language classes in English and Arabic, childcare, and job training for Syrian workers, especially women.[34] The club hosted legal advocacy, naturalization services, and social workers to address the wider Syrian community.

The SLAS's educational initiatives are often remembered as part of a larger interwar thrust to "Americanize" immigrants, especially because of its relationship to the Denison House (Shakir 1997: 59–60).[35] An examination of SLAS's own outreach priorities, however, reveals indifference to acculturation projects in favor of economic betterment and giving women workers meaningful skills to advance in industry. In the early 1920s, the SLAS hosted evening courses and workshops in

spooling, sewing, needlepoint, and lacework. A work committee created the curriculum, privileging skills sought by employers in area textile firms, contracting with instructors to come teach on Tyler Street, and hosting the courses free of charge.[36] Workshop attendance varied, but as many as two dozen women attended regularly, where they worked with materials secured through SLAS funds. Sometimes Sabbagh sold the finished pieces on consignment to fund relief projects.[37] The self-help orientation of these courses places them firmly in the settlement house tradition, and the SLAS promoted the idea that self-sufficiency should be the goal of the proper Syrian American household (Deutsch 1992: 398–400).

There were those who perceived these worker education programs (and the women who engaged with them) as radical elements. Debates over the social implications of women's factory work exploded in the pages of the Arab American press in the 1920s. On one hand, a second-wave Arab feminism emerged in the mahjar, where women elaborated on the "new woman" (*al-mar'a al-jadida*) liberated by enhanced access to education and the right to work. Interwar writers like ʿAfifa Karam and Victoria Tannous built on the work of feminists from across the Middle East, taking special interest in Arab American women in industry (Khater 2001: 146–78; Saylor 2019). Their editorials appeared in both the feminist press and its more mainstream counterpart, where they argued that working women provided the mahjar's economic foundations and challenged the patriotism of homeland nationalists who derided women's work as socially corrosive.

Despite ongoing feminist critique, however, the overall tenor of the major Arabic-language press was paternalist and patriarchal. In these uniformly male spaces, editors also represented women's industrial labor as part of a diasporic amalgam of social ills (*al-amrad al-ijtimaʿiyya*) that, together with divorce and prolonged bachelorhood, produced discontent in the hearts of men and crime on the streets (Rufa'il 1923: 3). The "factory girl" stereotype appeared in newspaper editorials to explain problems suffered in working-class neighborhoods (Khater 2001: 34–38). When New York City's "little Syria" neighborhood experienced dramatic increases in male unemployment, vagrancy, gangs, and violence in the mid-1920s, for instance, *al-Akhlaq* newspaper's editor Yaʿcub Rufa'il warned that the tendency to delay marriage among Syrian American women workers was a factor in that violence (*New York Times* 1927a, 1927b). Writing in 1923, Rufa'il relied on the conviction that "marriage has a civilizing effect in the Syrian man" and expressed anxieties over the impact of a factory women's employment on her marriageability as well as her propensity for divorce. Working women, he opined, were comparatively freer to obtain a divorce, a "larger assault on the family" that threatened the respectability the Syrian community otherwise enjoyed in American society.[38] Then secretary for the city's Lebanon League of Progress (*Jamʿiyyat al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya*), Rufa'il echoed a larger nationalist consensus in his remarks about the subversion of patriarchal gender norms: the nation depended on women's unpaid civilizational

labors, and toiling for wages was tolerable if it did not detract from a woman's household duties. Among his peers Rufa'il was understood as a progressive, having elsewhere critiqued the stigma attached to marrying a working woman because it fed a bride trade that he and his contemporaries found disreputable (Shakir 1997: 68–71).

Syrian women combated these stereotypes, sometimes by positioning factory women as contributors, and other times emasculating men who derided working women. Among feminists, the degraded aging bachelor emerged as a symbol in the press, a caricatured response to the joyless Syrian spinster stereotype. In 1924's "Do You Despise the Working Woman?," for instance, Victoria Tannous told the story of a fictional forty-one-year-old bachelor named Wadiʿ who approached a matchmaker for help finding a bride. The pair walked up and down Washington Street (at the center of Little Syria and also the hub for silk factories), and Wadiʿ was introduced to dozens of eligible women, each more educated and morally incorruptible than the last. Wadiʿ begged the matchmaker to find him the "most virtuous" wife, a subtext lost on the matchmaker until "he told me that he did not want to marry a woman who had worked for her means, whether she labored in the very best market, or toiled in the lowest of trades. He would not seriously consider a working woman as an option for himself, even if her morals and manners were undisputed" (Tannous 1923a: 18–19). Wadiʿ's "scorn for women who work" reduced him to elderly bachelorhood, Tannous argued. His chauvinism rendered him incapable of fulfilling his own honorable role as household head.

Tannous also challenged popular perceptions that working women made poor mothers. A 1923 debate in *al-Akhlaq* illustrates the curves of this debate. In "A Child Cries," Arab American social worker Amira al-Hilu dramatized an interaction with a Syrian street urchin on Washington Street. Approaching the young boy, around three years old, al-Hilu wiped a tear from his face and asked him why he was crying. "I'm hungry," he says, "the door [to my home] is locked, and my mother is at the textile factory working" (al-Hilu 1923). With this story al-Hilu warned Syrian American mothers not to let wages override their priorities from their primary responsibilities to their children. A lonely child in the street was a sign of failed womanhood.

Tannous accused al-Hilu of neglecting the other side of the boy's story. For she, too, had met this toddler, but their conversation went more like this:

> "Where is your mother?"
>
> "At the factory."
>
> "Well then, where is your father?"
>
> (Between sobs, the child exclaims,) "Why, he's at the café!" (Tannous 1923b: 12)

Far from shirking their responsibilities, Syrian mothers worked "seated over hot machines with none but God for company" before rushing home to prepare supper. Meanwhile, Tannous depicted their husbands as spending their day at the café playing

backgammon, carousing with male company, smoking narghile, and reciting *zajal*, coming home only to "complain that things in the homeland are not as they ought to be" (12). By locating the wayward husband in the café, Tannous mocked the political fraternities that inhabited these spaces, challenging the nationalist politics as well as the masculinity of their patrons.

Like all things, these discussions about women's industrial labor were class contingent. Hannah Sabbagh did not have the luxury of holding forth on the moral implications of wage labor: "We had to work—we had no one."[39] Indeed, records of Syrian working women's self-reported class consciousness have largely evaded the archives, as have most of the mutual aid societies of the mahjar.[40] What remains are the programs these activists maintained, and the commentary (and silences) that surround them. Though rooted in practicality, for example, the SLAS's job training courses and educational priorities clashed with the Arab American press's bourgeois expectations, where they were read as quietly transgressive. Periodicals like *Fatat Boston*, *al-Akhlaq*, *Mirat al-Gharb*, and *al-Huda* regularly lauded SLAS events like ribbon sales, galas, craft bazaars, and artistic performances, but they were less likely to celebrate SLAS's job training efforts. Worker education represented an important but unsung project, underappreciated in literary circles, which favored the high-society gloss of charity balls, but recorded elliptically in meeting minutes and SLAS account ledgers.

By contrast, the SLAS's ability to raise homeland relief won it high praise, and the club delivered annual gifts to Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese causes each December. A typical grant was between $150 and $200, and the relief committee elected recipients, directing funds to nondenominational schools or medical relief.[41] The society also raised extraordinary sums during periods of crisis. During the Great Syrian Revolt from 1925 to 1927, the club remitted thousands of dollars for civilians displaced by conflict. Wary of the partisan, sometimes sectarian character of other homeland relief drives, the SLAS sent equal sums to organizations in Beirut, Damascus, Hawran, Zahle, Marjayoon, Rashaya, and the Bekaa Valley, indicating that they benefited "everyone regardless of religion, and [we] asked them to let us know what they did with it."[42] Following Palestine's 1927 earthquake, the SLAS helped rebuild schools and orphanages.[43] The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 forced the SLAS to refocus on New England's unemployment crisis. At the trough of this catastrophic recession, the ladies aid coordinated the return migration of workers—not remittance of funds—to the Middle East.

Confronting Economic Recession: Worker Rehabilitation and Repatriation

The Great Depression devastated the New England garment industries. The textile industry had been struggling since the mid-1920s, when mill owners began to divest from New England and open shop in the southern US or in Latin America on a ceaseless search for cheaper labor (Chomsky 2008: 104; Moran 2002: 225–32). Facing sharp rises in the number of young unemployed men seeking rent relief, the

SLAS clubhouse became an impromptu boardinghouse, complete with provision of meals, bedding, clothing, and gatherings for the unemployed. Volunteers staffed the clubhouse at all hours alongside an appointed super (who was usually granted a relief stipend). To the extent possible they focused on worker rehabilitation and helping the unemployed find temporary work. The boardinghouse also took in individuals who could no longer work because of infirmity or disability, lifting the burden for such care from working families.[44] For the able-bodied, the search for work pushed the SLAS to coordinate with agencies beyond New England, and they helped Syrian workers find new livelihoods in New York, across the Americas, and, for the first time, in the Middle East. The SLAS usually reserved repatriation for compassionate cases, reimagining the homeland as a safety valve against the mahjar's harsh economic conditions.

As an unprecedented number of relief applications arrived at SLAS headquarters in the early 1930s, the relief committee opened a new conversation about the goals of direct cash assistance. The cash relief program had provided meaningful emergency help, but as chronic joblessness and poverty set in, SLAS volunteers no longer saw cash as an effective rehabilitative instrument. How could stipends be given in longer-term scenarios without incentivizing dependency? The SLAS's ethic remained that Syrian self-reliance was rendered possible through access to work; for that reason, the club put enormous effort into ensuring its grantees either had jobs, were seeking jobs, or were training in employable skills. The early 1930s tested this philosophy, as SLAS relief recipients struggled with unemployment, and boarders outstayed their contracts and applied for debt relief multiple times. Symptoms of chronic poverty hit Boston's Syrian colony: homelessness, malnutrition, alcoholism, and domestic violence. Volunteers struggled to meet the community's staggering needs, largely in the absence of public programs.

The society took on a new role as employment agent, connecting unemployed workers with jobs in local stores, in custodial work, or in peddling. Such arrangements were made on an ad hoc basis: when a young man sought three months' boarding at the Tyler Street house, the SLAS instead granted him a two-week stay and a weekly stipend and connected him with Yusuf Hanna al-Khouri, an employment agent in New Hampshire.[45] The relief committee was responsible for visiting relief recipients to check on their welfare and ensure funds were spent responsibly: in 1933 relief volunteers worked simultaneously in Boston, Worcester, Lowell, Brockton, Lawrence, Cambridge, and Hudson, Massachusetts.[46] Sabbagh Shakir also extended credit to unemployed workers, especially young women who had become the sole providers for their families. She married in 1931 and continued to work as a seamstress, running a four-machine operation out of her home to benefit the SLAS in conjunction with the Sabbagh Brothers company (Shakir 1997: 44).

Sometimes workers unable to find employment in Boston sought help leaving the city. In September 1933 a man laid off from his Lowell factory job asked for a

train ticket to New York. The SLAS granted him four dollars cash and paired him with another Syrian headed there.[47] Relief applicants also sought assistance in leaving the United States permanently, usually to return to the Middle East. These applications were always controversial. On the one hand, the men who applied for repatriation assistance usually cited compassionate motivations: a disability, a desire to rejoin children, a merciful end to a struggle with poverty at America's edges. On the other hand, many in the Arab American community feared these cases were actually self-deportations, undermining the community's right to remain in America (Halaby 1987: 55–56). The SLAS weighed each case carefully, assessing under what circumstances migrant repatriation could be considered philanthropic enough to enable their support.

The simplest cases were compassionate ones, where a terminal illness or disability made it unlikely that an individual would ever become self-sufficient. In 1933 the SLAS received a petition from an unemployed worker named Khalil*, who requested help returning to Lebanon. The relief committee initially denied his request, ruling "it has already been decided that such requests can no longer be considered unless there are very pressing circumstances," but on learning that Khalil had been disabled, they resolved to help him leave the United States.[48] Getting Khalil home required securing a passport from Boston's French Consulate and purchasing a steamship ticket through the Syrian company in New York City, A. K. Hitti and Sons. The French consulate initially rejected Khalil's repatriation application, requiring the SLAS to petition US immigration authorities and the American Beneficent Society of Boston to reason with French officials. Various Syrian societies across New England pooled cash donations to pay for Khalil's $85 steamship ticket (a discounted rate SLAS volunteer Emilia Khuri obtained by personally prevailing on Abraham K. Hitti in New York).[49] After four months of securing paperwork, raising funds, and demonstrating Khalil's likelihood of becoming a public charge if he remained in America, Khalil boarded a boat for home in March 1934.

Applications from unemployed Syrians wishing to go back to the Middle East flooded the relief committee in 1933 and 1934. Overwhelmed, the society tried to draw a line between compassionate cases like Khalil's and others who sought repatriation on purely economic grounds. In 1934 an unemployed textile worker named Salih* asked for help returning to Palestine. Salih had arrived in 1927 to work in the cotton mills; laid off in 1933, he was out of work for over a year. Salih exhausted resources at US agencies and the Salvation Army and then asked the SLAS for help; they granted him a room and a three-dollar weekly stipend for janitorial work.[50] The club secured Salih temporary contracts through Syrian networks, but it became clear that he was an alcoholic and unable to hold a job.[51] His repatriation request was, in essence, an admission of defeat: the mahjar had beaten him, and he wished to go home to his family. The SLAS attempted to find Salih's family in Palestine but were unsuccessful; painful conversations followed about whether

to support Salih's repatriation, a geographic solution for a man marginalized not by circumstance but by addiction. In August 1934 the SLAS secured another discounted ticket through A. K. Hitti, and Salih boarded a steamship for home.[52] Club ledgers record only a dozen repatriation cases in the early 1930s (all of them men), but the tensions surrounding them reveal that repatriation represented the final resort, the most distant extremity of the club's self-help ethic. Abandoning the mahjar was a philanthropic cause if—and only if—there remained no hope for rising above public charge status. At the depths of the Great Depression, the Middle East transformed into a place of comparative economic safety, a chance at extraction from a troubled diasporic milieu. The US mahjar, by contrast, offered bare existence at the knife's edge.

Conclusion

The rising tides of nativism and racism collided with the textile industry's intensifying fluctuations to change American public attitudes about immigrant labor. Restrictions on immigration ramped up, from quotas in the 1921 Emergency Act to the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which limited new immigration from Syria and Lebanon to one hundred persons a year (Gualtieri 2009: 79). The federal government concurrently expanded its deportation powers, pursuing deportation on economic grounds and targeting persons "likely to become public charges" due to poverty or physical impairment (*Report of Commissioner General* 1920: 338). Lawmakers sought to reverse the flow of migrant workers into US factories, even as more tried to come to America to answer the call of industries demanding—and dependent on—large pools of surplus, exploitable labor. As the SLAS scrambled to secure food, jobs, and housing for Syrian workers, the shifting juridical waters placed this work into sharper, more urgent relief. In taking on a progressively larger share of the costs of labor reproduction neglected by employers, the SLAS fought to preserve the Syrian working class's right to remain in America.

The Syrian Ladies Aid Society of Boston was, then, a productive center for proletarian life in the mahjar. Scholarship on working women in Arab American history rightly illustrates the ties women like Sabbagh Shakir had to the women's movement and the politics of American suffrage, women's rights, and labor organization. But as this article has argued, the SLAS also represented a locus for a working-class politics of welfare that was both conscious of the precarity Syrian working families experienced and responsible for ameliorating ills caused by that precarity. Women's wage work in textiles underpinned the entire Arab American economy, making possible the commercial endeavors traditionally celebrated by the historiography. The SLAS understood that the mahjar's success depended on a well-provisioned Arab American working class. In an era of mounting immigration restriction before the New Deal, that provisioning came from private sources and in networks encoded as women's spaces.

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Notes

1. Some names have been changed to respect the privacy of SLAS welfare recipients. This is in accordance with the organization's wishes. Pseudonyms are indicated with an asterisk in the first instance.
2. Arab American National Museum, Dearborn, MI, Evelyn Shakir Collection (hereafter AANM/ES), box 1, folder 6, Sabbagh Brothers accounting ledger (ca. 1930s).
3. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 4, Sabbagh family reunion book, 2–3; Kaufman et al. 2006: 47.
4. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 4, Hannah Sabbagh Shakir oral history with Evelyn Shakir, 5.
5. AANM/ES, box 3, personal artifact: two skirts sewn at Parkway Manufacturing.
6. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 4, Hannah Sabbagh Shakir oral history with Evelyn Shakir, 5–6.
7. AANM/ES, box, 1 folder 4, Hannah Sabbagh Shakir oral history with Evelyn Shakir, 7.
8. Charles Shagoury family history, private manuscript, 2. The author thanks Nolan Kane and Hazel Elmendorf for making this manuscript available.
9. "The Syrian Ladies Aid Society Celebrated Its Fiftieth Anniversary," *Caravan Weekly Pictorial*, November 6, 1958, Records of the Syrian Ladies Aid Society (Brooklyn, NY), Immigration History Research Center Archives, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
10. Lebanese Syrian Ladies' Aid Society Records, 1917–2005, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University (hereafter LSLAS/SL/RI), meeting minutes, October 23, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
11. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, March 5, 1918, MC 574, folder 1.
12. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, March 5, 1918, MC 574, folder 1.
13. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 2, undated petition letter in Sabbagh Shakir's hand to the Lajnat al-Tahrir Suriya wa-Lubnan (Syria–Mount Lebanon League of Liberation) of New York City.
14. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, June 18, 1918, MC 574, folder 1.
15. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, April 7, 1920, MC 574, folder 1.
16. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, May 25, 1920, MC 574, folder 1.
17. "Industrial Conditions of Foreign-Born Male Employees in Each Specified Occupation before Coming to the United States, by Race," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 3–4*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 72, 73.
18. "Industrial Conditions before Coming to the United States of Foreign-Born Males Who Were Sixteen Years of Age at Time of Coming, by Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 5–7*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 73, 31.

19. "Industrial Conditions before Coming to the United States of Foreign-Born Males Who Were Sixteen Years of Age or Over at Time of Coming, by Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 35.
20. "Yearly Earnings of Males Eighteen Years of Age or Over, by General Nativity and Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 50.
21. "Affiliation with Trade Unions of Males Twenty-One Years of Age or Over Who Are Working for Wages, by General Nativity and Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 62.
22. On Turks, see "Months Worked during the Past Year by Persons Sixteen Years of Age or Over Employed Away from Home, by Sex and by General Nativity and Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 147; on Syrians, see "Months Worked during the Past Year by Males Sixteen Years of Age or Over Employed Away from Home, by General Nativity and Race of Individual," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 271.
23. Rates of female industrial labor varied, but the trend was that about half of Arab women (44.3 percent) whose husbands worked in factories also worked. This represents a higher rate of female wage work than in other immigrant groups: 30.9 percent (all immigrants) to 44.3 percent (Syrian women): "Wives at Work, by General Nativity and Race of Head of family," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 3–4*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 72, 683.
24. Laurice Shagoury Maloley family history, private manuscript, 6–7. The author thanks Nolan Kane and Hazel Elmendorf for making this manuscript available.
25. "Number and Percent of Households Keeping Boarders or Lodgers, by General Nativity and Race of Head of Household," *Immigrants in Industries, Parts 8–10*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909–1910, Senate Documents, vol. 74, 279.
26. Laurice Shagoury Maloley family history, private manuscript, 13.
27. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, October 14, 1919, MC 574, folder 1.
28. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 3, Sabbagh Brothers accounting ledger, s.d.
29. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, January 5, 1922, MC 574, folder 1.
30. Charles Shagoury family history, private manuscript, 6.
31. Laurice Shagoury Maloley family history, private manuscript, 6–7.
32. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 15, SLAS meeting minutes, January 7, 1926, with Evelyn Shakir's index.
33. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 15, SLAS meeting minutes, November 4, 1926, with Evelyn Shakir's index.
34. The SLAS partnered with the Denison House to provide childcare services. The societies organized jointly under the auspices of the Society for the Care of Syrian Children. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, October 4, 1934, MC 574, folder 1.
35. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, May 19, 1921, MC 574, folder 1.
36. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, September 22, 1920, and October 1, 1920, MC 574, folder 1.
37. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, February 18, 1921, and March 3, 1921, MC 574, folder 1.
38. Rufa'il 1923: 3–4. His periodical also ran a serialized translation of Leonard McGee's "Nine Causes for Misery in Marriage" in *al-Akhlaq* through 1923.
39. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 4, Hannah Sabbagh Shakir oral history, 7.
40. The SLAS's records are completely preserved thanks to a century of family conservatorship, creating a chain of transmission from Hannah Sabbagh Shakir to Evelyn Shakir and George Ellenbogen in coordination with archivists at the Schlesinger Library and the Arab American National Museum.

41. For a sense of this value, a $200 gift in 1920 would be worth about $2,600 in 2018. A one-way transatlantic steamship ticket cost between $85 and $120.
42. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 15, SLAS meeting minutes, February 18, 1926.
43. AANM/ES, box 1, folder 15, SLAS meeting minutes, November 15, 1927.
44. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, March 23, 1934, MC 574, folder 1.
45. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, September 21, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
46. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, October 26, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
47. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, September 28, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
48. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, December 28, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
49. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, February 15, 1934, MC 574, folder 1.
50. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, October 26, 1933, MC 574, folder 1.
51. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, June 14, 1934, MC 574, folder 1.
52. LSLAS/SL/RI, meeting minutes, September 9, 1934, MC 574, folder 1.

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