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A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race, 1890-1930

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Sophia Armen

Committee in charge:

Professor Curtis Marez, Chair
Professor Yến Lê Espiritu
Professor Shelley Streeby
Professor Shaista Patel
Professor Babak Rahimi

2023

Sophia Armen, 2023

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University of California San Diego

2023

DEDICATION

To my mother and father

And to Taleene

EPIGRAPH

"And how do I scream, when I have no voice left?"
-Suheir Hammad

"For me, the greatest crime in the world is racism."
-Hrant Dink, assassinated 2007

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The year my PhD started Trump was elected. Then the "Muslim Ban," mass deportation and family separation, major recessions, the largest protests for Black Liberation in the streets in world history after the U.S. government murdered the beautiful life that was George Floyd, a terrible COVID catastrophe none of us saw coming, Kavanaugh getting the bench, the Beirut explosion, the outbreak of the Artsakh war and the military blockade, among many, many other events. It is ending with the fall of Roe, the end of affirmative action, and physical violence breaking out against queer people in my community as I finish writing this. As I try to finish, my people are being starved to death by a regime that seeks to erase them, as the world is looking on in silence. There are not enough words to describe how hoarse my voice is from screaming.

During each of these events I organized with many hundreds of people, you all know who you are, and I witnessed millions organizing. I want to say thank you. It has been a challenging couple decades, so to my generation, I just want to say, I see you. You are wonderful and powerful and brave, and let's work together and give them hell, until we win. Thank you to every young organizer who has said *enough is enough, I will try*. *I will try to make things better for generations to come, even with everyone's commentary and criticism. We have just got to do it.* Trying to make things better is living love as a verb. We will do it because we must.

Until, We win.

We will win.

VITA

2013 Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2018 Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies, University of California San Diego

2023 Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies, University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race, 1890-1930

by

Sophia Armen

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Curtis Marez, Chair

A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race, 1890-1930 recasts early racial classification of Middle Eastern peoples in the United States from the perspective of refugees and organizers. This dissertation compiles and analyzes the context of the "racial prerequisite cases," revealing a long history of non-whiteness, transnational systems of exclusion and violence, and high stakes in the fight for U.S. citizenship for these

communities. It argues that racial categories for Middle Eastern peoples were not only constructed by the State and from top-down sources, but also from below, where migrants and refugees were active agents in trying to shape their lives and classification and did so in an era characterized by crisis, mass displacement and dispossession, and racial terror. Through community formations, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees organized to change their material conditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including through the struggle for refuge via citizenship, at a time when U.S. naturalization was limited only to people who were either white or Black via the Naturalization Act of 1790 and its subsequent iterations, and the U.S. government was fighting Middle Eastern naturalization on the basis of race. This study examines everyday community perspectives through a critical ethnic studies, critical refugees studies, and feminist/queer approach, arguing that the Middle Eastern presence and experience in the prerequisite cases alongside other non-white communities demonstrates they were not "white upon arrival" like European immigrant groups and reveals the ways in which these communities became lodged in a solar system of colliding and orbiting white supremacist, anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, anti-Asian, anti-Black, settler colonial, and border politics, among other systems. Centering refugeehood in early Middle Eastern-American race, especially through the experiences of Ottoman Assyrian, Armenian, and Arab groups, this dissertation outlines histories of early racial regimes, watchlists, routinized racialized restrictions on movement and experiences at border checkpoints of exit and entry, domestic discrimination, displacement, and migration bans by both Western and eastern Empires looking to control those they deemed a "threat" and racialized other. Early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee lifeworlds reveal additional definitions for and dimensions of U.S. racial categories of "citizenship" "naturalization" and "whiteness," like

the *freedom to move, freedom to stay,* and *refuge*, or the *freedom from racialized violence,* especially for displaced peoples who were attempting to flee mass death during a genocide, before the concept of asylum was created as a legal framework by Western powers when it was later deemed necessary for European bodies in subsequent decades. Additionally, I propose the "Middle Eastern Christian figure," as a fundamental racial device used to build modern U.S. institutions, including the non-profit industrial complex, and forward challenges to such figures by revealing powerful anti-imperialist refugee resistance during the prerequisite era that critiqued multiple systems of oppression at once. Ultimately, I contend that analyzing the lives of early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees reveals larger truths of systems of race and power. Constructing a cross-community, pan-ethnic and transnational study and archive that unites existing literature across fields and grassroots perspectives beyond borders, this dissertation (re)stories the racial prerequisite era, arguing that early Middle Eastern migrants and refugee communities were "grouped and in groups;" they experienced race in pan-ethnic and relational ways, and they formed collective struggles, campaigns, and organizations to fight the violence they faced. This study uncovers that anti-Middle Eastern-American racism is not a contemporary phenomenon of the post 9/11 present but originates in the earliest displacements and migrations of Middle Eastern peoples to the United States.

INTRODUCTION

A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race, 1890-1930

What can an exiled son do for his
Starving people, and of what value
Unto them is the lamentation of an
Absent poet?"
-Kahlil Gibran,"Dead are my people"

"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark"
-Warsan Shire, "Home"

Baykar, baykar minchev verch
Struggle, struggle until the end
-Armenian revolutionary slogan

On June 11, 2017, eighty Iraqi Chaldeans in Michigan were abruptly ripped from their daily lives, some from their homes and some from Sunday communion, in a mass deportation raid by the United States government. "They waited until Sunday when our community would be going to church and gathering with their families," local lawyer and organizer Wisam Naoum told *Newsweek*.[1] On the summer Sunday, Chaldeans were forcefully rounded up and taken away in buses by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Sterling Heights, West Bloomfield and Dearborn starting as early as 7:00 am, when agents in SWAT-like gear grabbed men and women from pews and porches. These included elders, parents, and some individuals who had been in the United States for more than three decades. The events in Michigan came on the heels of similar raids in California, Texas, and Tennessee. They were given no prior warning. They were to be immediately displaced to Iraq. All official records stated was that they had violated the law, that they had not naturalized. Organizers commented to *Slate* magazine that for many "non-English-speaking refugees who come to the U.S. with little money or possessions,

the naturalization process, which can cost thousands of dollars and involves taking a test in English," is out of reach.[2] Naturalization was a racialized process that determined life and death.

In 2017, Michigan's Chaldean community was the largest in the world outside of Iraq, numbering approximately 121,000, many of whom had come to the United States as refugees, beginning with a wave of mass migration in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, more than two-thirds of Iraq's Christians had been displaced. When the mass deportation came to the communities' doors on June 11, 2017, Iraqi family members of those taken and other protesters gathered outside the federal building in Detroit and attempted to block the buses from entering and leaving the ICE detention centers with their bodies.[3] Families held pictures of their loved ones and signs in protest. One read "this is a death sentence."[4] After the buses disappeared, community members, mostly young people, gathered at local schools and centers to do rapid response crisis organizing. *Slate* reported one such scene:

> Later that night, a handful of volunteers, mostly in their 20s; pro bono lawyers; and dozens of relatives of those who had recently been detained descended upon the K–8 academy. In the CODE Legal Aid office and the school's adjacent library, volunteers compiled information into a Google spreadsheet until 4 in the morning while others comforted families amid the library's toys, children's books, and a treehouse-themed play area with branches painted on the wall by a refugee father.

Chaldean-led organizations, church leaders, and volunteers worked together into the night to do anything and everything they could. Meanwhile, Rebecca Adducci, ICE's Detroit field office director, described the raids as an effort "to address the very real public safety threat represented by the criminal aliens arrested."[5]



Figure 1: A young girl wears a T-shirt with her detained father's photo at a rally outside the Patrick V. McNamara Federal Building in Detroit in 2017, Source: *Slate*

The deportation raids and restrictions on Middle Eastern and North African peoples' movement during the Trump administration were part of heightened white nationalist policies unleashed on racialized communities from 2016-2020 that included an avalanche of attacks on people who were migrants and refugees. Executive Order 13679, commonly referred to as the "Muslim Ban," barred nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq on the basis of their origin. This was among the first executive actions by Donald Trump. Within the first three months, the administration released dozens of massive rollbacks of rights and anti-migrant and refugee policies. On February 21, 2016, the Department of Homeland Security issued a memo massively expanding the number of people subject to detention and deportation. On March 16, 2016, the Trump administration released a budget blueprint that included a proposal to spend $4.1 billion through 2018 on the construction of a wall through communities

on the U.S.-Mexico border. On August 2, 2016, Trump announced his support of Republican-backed legislation that would slash legal immigration in half over a decade.[6]

From 2017-2019, ICE identified over 1400 Iraqi Chaldeans to be deported to Iraq. Among the first wave targeted in 2017 was a young man named Jimmy Aldaoud from Detroit, Michigan. Aldaoud was a diabetic and had grown up in the United States since he was about one years old. In 2019 he was deported to Iraq. Aldaoud spoke no Arabic, had no family or friends in Iraq, and had never been to the country. In a video posted to Facebook of Jimmy from the streets of Baghdad he said, "I'm here now, and I don't understand the language, anything. I've been sleeping in the street. I'm diabetic, I take insulin shots. I've been throwing up, throwing up, sleeping in the streets, trying to find something to eat." A few months after his deportation, he died, likely due to a lack of insulin.[7] As in so many instances throughout history, the vibrant life of Jimmy Aldoud was taken by the U.S. immigration and naturalization systems, where deportation often means death.

It was later revealed thanks to the work of community organizers that the mass deportations raids in the Summer of 2017 were the result of a back-door deal between the Trump administration and the Iraqi government. Donald Trump had taken Iraq off of the so-called "Muslim Ban," Executive Order 13769, in exchange for the Iraqi government agreeing to accept these individuals who had fled Iraq years before. The deportations had been coordinated by the two governments, a deal to consolidate and maintain their state power.

Another such scene almost a hundred years earlier reveals a convergent moment in time, the collision of classification, refugeehood, naturalization, deportation, statelessness and the making of U.S. race for Middle Eastern peoples. On May 17, 1923, dozens of immigrants sat nervously in a crowded courtroom in Portland, Oregon waiting to be considered for citizenship

by a United States federal judge. Among them were two Ottomans; a “Syrian” Arab who, despite entering the courtroom with his family enthusiastically waving American flags, was dismissed due to illiteracy; and an Armenian from current-day Turkey named Tatos Cartozian, a carpet dealer who sold Oriental rugs in the United States.[8] The United States government challenged Cartozian on the basis that he and all Armenians were not white, and thus were excluded from U.S. citizenship on the basis of race.[9] In Oregon in the twenties, the stakes were high. Oregon was where the Ku Klux Klan was organizing some of its largest campaigns in the West as it swept through the Pacific Northwest.[10] Nativists were pushing legislation, like California's Alien Land Law which was tightened in 1920,[11] designed to target the livelihood of non-naturalized, non-citizen or “alien” communities. Nationally, Anti-Asian exclusion, anti-immigrant quotas and legislation meant that newly arrived migrants and refugees in desperate need of asylum would arrive in another country where they were denied rights because of their identity, a reality they were fleeing. Indeed, centrally and yet still largely underdiscussed, Middle Eastern peoples were shaped by conditions of mass displacement and refugeehood, while being prevented from securing safety in and facing deportation from the United States because of their origin, as their ability to naturalize was being debated in court. While scholars have, in recent history, begun focusing on the outcomes of these early racial prerequisite cases by the State, little scholarship has probed or centered the more complex reality of early naturalization cases involving people who would become Middle Eastern-Americans: their lives, what they faced transnationally, and what they did about it; and the era of mass dispossession, refugeehood and racial terror[12] from which the “racial prerequisite cases” spring.

Indeed, Tatos Cartozian was stateless. He was an Armenian refugee[13] from Sivas.[14] He was dis-placed in multiple ways, initially by decree through a racialized and routinized Ottoman-

American expatriation program resembling a current-day terrorist watchlist, that required he never return, and as a community, as Armenians experienced the systematic destruction of their homeland and were suffering a massive refugee crisis while the U.S. government was attacking their ability to naturalize. After being dispossessed of his homeland because of his identity and experience with racialized migration systems, he was now entering a U.S. federal court that claimed he was not white and could also not belong there. His family had experienced mass violence, his father was killed in the early Ottoman massacres,[15] and other members of his family would narrowly escape the same fate before they fled to the United States.[16] Once in the United States, the Cartozian family was thrown into another land of racial violence, deportation, and exclusion also rooted in debates on classification, personhood and the nation. Middle Eastern refugee and migrant communities faced mass deportation and bans from the United States while in the middle of a genocide. *The Fort Collins Courier* ran an Associated Press headline in 1921 that proclaimed "*Seventeen Armenians Killed After Being Deported from U.S.*" They had been denied entry to the United States based on their identity via national origin and then were killed in the Armenian Genocide. Armenians understood the stakes of the naturalization fight for them all and would collectively organize to come to Cartozian's aid, just as he would fight for the lives of his family and community. These were the stakes of the "racial prerequisite era." The life of Tatos Cartozian and his family is not a footnote, just like lives of the Iraqi Chaldean families of the Trump years, and by bringing their stories into the foreground, the history of larger systems of racial classification, immigration, refugeehood, and naturalization, are made, not the opposite.

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This dissertation complicates the story of Middle Eastern peoples and racial classification in the United States in the early twentieth century. It seeks to center community conditions,
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refugeehood, and organizing that continue to be erased as ways to understand early Middle Eastern racialization and classification as not merely a product of the law from above but also of community members from below, via their organizations, campaigns, cultural work, scholarship, transnational revolutionary activities, and their global kinship networks– in the face of, and in response to, anti-Middle Eastern-American racism since its dawn. Challenging dominant histories of record on the era, in this study I focus on and read the experiences of *refugees* and *organizers*, and particularly *refugee- organizers*, as producers of knowledge and tactics whose experiences reveal powerful mechanisms of race and its intersections. In doing so I chart the history of early anti-Middle Eastern American racism as a point of intersection for transnational systems of violence and dispossession, anti-Muslim racism, Orientalism, anti-refugee/immigrant racism, anti-Asian racism, anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity, among others. By analyzing systems of racialization through refugee and migrant lives from 1890-1930, I argue, the stakes of classification become more complex and definitions of racial categories like "citizenship," "whiteness," and "naturalized" are broadened. In this project, I show that analysis of Middle Eastern refugee and migrant lives reveals new definitions of U.S. citizenship during the prerequisite era: the guarantee of the freedom to live, the freedom to move, and refuge or safety from racialized violence which, like today, Middle Eastern refugees and migrants desperately sought. In the United States' genocidal system, these freedoms are argued and codified as only for those who are white, for those in power at the expense of the oppressed, both domestically and abroad.

As I outline the ways in which Middle Eastern peoples in the United States fought to change their material conditions, and at times, fought for their lives, I forward key claims and evidence to construct a Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and race. By analyzing

everyday lives of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, I intervene in dominant discourses and outline counter-histories of the naturalization era that reveal the mechanisms and workings of power. I also argue in the earliest era of mass Middle Eastern migration and displacement to the United States, early Middle Eastern communities were grouped and in groups. Through evidence and analysis, I forward that Middle Eastern-American race and racism has always happened relationally and comparatively, among such diasporic Middle Eastern ethnic groups and with other non-Middle Eastern groups, and they have always organized collectively– in associations, organizations, and other community formations– to fight back and shape their conditions. This project speaks to the longevity of that reality, that some inaccurately define as a new phenomenon, which actually characterized the communi(ties) since the earliest days of mass Middle Eastern presence in the United States. Ultimately, I forward a constellation of historical moments that outline early pan-ethnic racial classification, their material conditions, and their collective fights. While other studies have focused on the institutional outcomes of early race debates, this project centers refugee and migrant experiences; non-governmental organizations; and actors, campaigns and cultural work, which I call "community formations," that debated, responded to, reinscribed, and strategized around their own racial classification. Refugee-organizers navigated the broader fields of U.S. and global racial and settler colonial formations to intervene in the process of Middle Eastern-American racialization. They did so in an era of white supremacist racial terror, mass displacement, and crisis.

Dominant modes of history that both valorize the United States as a bastion of inclusion within a framework of the "nation of immigrants" myth, and research that either erases refugeehood from analysis or strips refugees and migrants from their agency in understanding and navigating race themselves, have dominated current studies of early Middle Eastern-

Americans. My study intervened in these dynamics. It also directly contradicts the dominant narrative that the West was a "savior" of these refugees, exposing, rather, that the West was not only complicit in genocide in the South West Asian and North African region, but then actively tried to bar refugees from asylum in the United States on the basis of their race especially via national origin. In this way I think about how refugeehood and organizing helped shape early Middle Eastern-American race. This project is a critical refugee studies and organizer "re-storying"[17] of early Middle Eastern communities in the United States. Building on the work of Chinua Achebe, who defines re-storying as the process of "taking back the narrative" of "peoples who had been knocked silent by all kinds of dispossession," Yen Le Espiritu et al., known as the Critical Refugee Studies (CRS) Collective, maintains that "in re-storying dominant narratives and visualizations, CRS infuses refugee stories–big and small, disturbing and touching, violent and loving–with an insurgent energy and purpose insisting that these stories 'are worthy of the power and dignity of literature,'" thus, writing refugees into life, rather than death.[18] For the purposes of this project, I here use "(re)story" to also name both forces of white supremacist *revisionism*, and *erasure*, evoking the lives of early Middle Eastern refugees and migrants in particular. The "(re)" as conditional, which at best, has existed, even if so has been largely uncritical or reproducing of State and eugenicist narratives, and at worst there has been absence, and silence, in scholarship on the lives of these early refugees at all. In other words, I am attempting to challenge the dominant discourses currently out there ("re-story"), or fill in the absences of Western scholarship on these communities when their experiences they aren't present at all ("story"). The erasure found in the physical lives of refugees, as in violent dispossession and removal in refugeehood, is paralleled if not replicated in the intellectual realm. I situate a (re)storying in ongoing transnational indigenous erasure, which I analyze is also why

U.S. History, American Studies and Middle East Studies, among other fields continues to marginalize refugee histories in studies of early naturalization of racialized immigrant groups.

Indeed, intervening into dominant histories and erasures, in this project I (re)story race, pan-classification, and early Middle Eastern lives at the turn of the twentieth century and its subsequent two decades. I do so with particular attention to *refugees* as the Critical Refugee Studies collective writes "refugee stories…illuminate Walter Benjamin's conception of history and memory and Jose Esteban Munoz's notion of queer futurity: the claim that there is no way to close off new understandings of the past and that it is precisely through the domain of storytelling–of the everyday in the here and now –that people remember, forge, and transform a past that is simultaneously suppressed yet based on potentiality for another world.'"[19] Through this (re)storying, I argue that Middle Eastern refugees and migrants have been subjected to anti-Middle Eastern American racism since the birth of the subjectivity "Middle Eastern-American" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and have resisted it in complex, multi-scalar, and multifarious ways. I document, archive, and analyze the earliest forms of anti-Middle Eastern-American discrimination, violence, surveillance, and deportation in the United States, and the invisibilized and understudied fighters and fights of these communities via notions of rights, refuge, and even, revolutionary self-determination. Through a bottom-up analysis, I forward that refugeehood was a major feature, influence, and driver in the fight for early Middle Eastern-American classification and naturalization at the turn of the twentieth century.

In understanding matrices of race, this project does not intend to be nor claims to be, a linear, comprehensive history. Instead, I present a constellation of vignettes that help challenge assumptions, provoke more questions, and center knowledge marginalized in dominant discourse: the lives of refugees and migrants navigating systems of oppression, the systems of

oppression they navigated, and the ways in which they organized via a wide range of community formations to change their material conditions. Indeed, by focusing on the lives of refugees and migrants themselves, who are experiencing these systems, one begins to understand the context in which the racial prerequisite case rulings were made, a fuller account of the history of naturalization and U.S. American citizenship, and who they were, where they were coming from, what they envisioned, and most importantly, *the stakes*.

Here, I use *the stakes* of such struggles not (only) because I am an organizer, but because in this dissertation I center early community organizing as another analytic through which I approach, and argue, one can understand these early histories. By *organizing* I mean the ways in which people identify, assess, strategize and struggle for who they are and what they and their loved ones or community need. I offer this definition based on years in the movement and inspired by community organizers, who are key theorizers and not only scholars of liberation but practitioners themselves. In this vein, from 1890 to 1930, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were not just subjects of systems, they were agents analyzing, understanding and shaping the world around them, in times of crisis and comfort, that challenged and reified systems of oppression. They were and are organizers, just as today. Ultimately, at the turn of the twentieth century, classification and citizenship proved a ground for the convergence of state power, nationalism and racial terror just as it does in the contemporary moment. Indeed, the earliest Middle Eastern migrants and refugees came to a land with its own mechanisms of genocide—constructions based on the domination of and in opposition to racist constructions of Black, Native, and East Asian people. My project investigates marginalized voices, figures, and events of an era that included landmark court cases like *Dow v. United States, In re Najour, United States v. Cartozian,* and others that set the racial prerequisites for naturalization for Arabs,

Afghans, Armenians, Iranians, Kurds, Turks and other Middle Eastern ethnic groups in the United States, allowing them to legally naturalize. Newly formed diasporan formations, organizations, and groups fought against racial violence transnationally, including to win naturalization efforts in an era of white supremacist racial terror and migration bans. These are incredible and unstudied moments where refugees with little access to financial or institutional power, community-sourced and crowdfunded extensive and strategic campaigns to come to the aid of new communities, and transnational revolutionary movements, that were largely dominated by the displaced.

Many academic fields and public discourses have largely utilized a top-down approach, prioritizing State records, court rulings, and other institutional records to understand central questions around race, classification, and community for these groups in the United States in the late 19th century and early 20th century. This has (re)produced many narratives of convenience and domination[20] including that the U.S. benevolently bestowed upon these migrants and refugees naturalization and thus, gleefully folded them into whiteness. Such discourse claims the United States did so and in similar ways, for example to that of Irish or Italian immigrants,[21] who faced social exclusion but did not receive the legal challenge at the highest level nor systemic legislative and judicial attempts at mass removal/deportation at the federal and state level that this study attempts to prove would-be Middle Eastern-Americans did. Instead, this project forwards marginalized histories through a critical ethnic studies, critical refugees studies, and feminist/queer approach that centers the everyday experiences and voices of early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees themselves revealing instead the ways in which these communities became lodged in a solar system of colliding and orbiting white supremacist, anti-

Asian, anti-Black, settler colonial, and border politics. I seek to expand this universe of theory and knowledge-making.

Thus, the conversations of Middle Eastern classification moves beyond words on a page in a Census record or Supreme Court ruling to the material conditions in which people were struggling[22] under white supremacy and Western and other forms of global hegemony. I study Middle Eastern communities, who are made up of and inhabit lifeworlds of refugees, migrants, revolutionaries and organizers, using several frameworks. First, I reconstruct refugee histories and stories through critical refugee studies because of the ways in which early organizing was dominated by people under the brunt of displacement, violence and immigration regimes and yet Western scholarship largely continues to obscure these realities *and* erase their world-making and agency underneath them. Second, I use comparative ethnic studies to think about "pan" categories, tracing the ways in which the pan-classification inherent in the racialization of these "Middle Eastern-American" communities is as old as the communities themselves. Lastly, feminist and queer theory and methods are imperative in understanding how marginalized formations and figures reveal complex systems, the routinized and everyday in which race, gender, nation, etc. is made, and the necessity to be attentive to interlocking and colliding matrices of power. For this work, I focus on communities and people from the Ottoman Empire and Persian Empire, with a particular emphasis on Assyrian, Armenian, Arab and related refugees. These communities were not only "migrants"[23] but also many were of indigenous and precarious positionings within their homeland, which significantly impacted and contoured their experiences with the United States settler colonial and imperial apparatus. The Armenian Genocide and Great Famine, however, has been glaringly absent from traditional studies that seek to understand early Middle Eastern race. This offers potentials but also limits of this project,

as this is not in place of an incomplete history the offering of a complete history but is rather a refugee organizer re-telling of what many are attempting to do now and a move to bring forward a pan-ethnic study.

Ultimately, Middle Eastern communities in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were made up of and defined by refugees, organizers and revolutionaries. These communities faced institutional and everyday racism that included physical violence, discrimination, mass deportation, criminalization and surveillance. But unlike hegemonic representations often described, they were not passive recipients of violence, nor were they gleefully looking to give up their ethnic heritage. They organized against these attacks, and built community, kinship, solidarity, and resistance together. They built belonging, even as they were being violently dislodged from belonging both in the U.S. and beyond. They also re-inscribed violence. I show that Middle Eastern-American racial experience has been defined by bans, exclusion and displacement from the nation since the birth of the very subjectivity "Middle Eastern-American" in the naturalization era. I argue their experiences also shaped modern institutional and systemic racism that continue to subjugate themselves and other groups today.

In sum, Middle Eastern peoples in the United States have been organizing to change their material conditions as long as they have been within the geography even when they are under siege. Dominant depictions and siloed studies of these groups which portray these peoples, in a time of a massive "awakening" of indigenous nationalisms in SWANA and the reality that sizeable majorities of communities migrating to the U.S. at the time were fleeing, as those who were looking to give up their identities and homelands in exchange for white U.S. power and the U.S. flag, prove inaccurate and cannot account for transnational organizing of these communities and why one sees anti-Middle Eastern American racism only expand in subsequent decades after

the era. And thus, why one sees anti-Middle Eastern-American racism today, especially that which deploys the refugee figure as a threat to "the nation," which did not appear out of nowhere but originates during this time. This study unites and compiles current ethnic-based scholarship into a pan-ethnic conversation and reveals marginalized histories to push forward analysis. This project centers community organizing and conditions as ways to understand early Middle Eastern racialization and classification, as not merely a product of the law from above but also by community members from below. This study also moves beyond "whiteness' " as neither a final destination for these early communities nor as an encompassing analytic, to instead build on emerging scholarship about in-betweenness, contradiction, and contestation in early Middle Eastern American racial classification. This project thinks about *the categories* and *the fights* during the naturalization era.

Interventions & Emerging Challenges: Beyond Whiteness Studies, Legal Frameworks, and State Archives on the Prerequisite Era

Recent scholarship has begun to unpack the many ways in which race and the law came together in early naturalization cases. But glaringly understudied continues to be the case of who would become Middle Eastern Americans and the contexts which produced the cases, much of which continues to live outside state and legal archives. I turn now to consider the limits of critical whiteness studies in making sense of early Middle Eastern-American race, even as the grounds of legal whiteness in the United States were being fought over. My work, instead, builds on the many emerging critical studies that are challenging the history of Middle Eastern race-ing from below, by scholars largely of Middle Eastern descent, who are thinking of "both/and" formations of how whiteness and non-whiteness characterized Middle Eastern American

experience during the earliest waves of migration and displacement to the United States. Critical whiteness studies does not capture the full breadth of early Middle Eastern American racialization and further comparative approaches are needed that prioritize everyday migrant and refugee lives.

The evidence in this work helps to reveal some of the limits of only understanding early Middle Eastern Americans in terms of legal whiteness. Critical whiteness studies seeks to understand whiteness, but doesn't seek to understand the groups who whiteness was hostile toward nor those who continually sit on or cross over its limit.[24] Additionally, I address the large elephant in the room, the *massive refugee crisis* at the time (that continues to be denied or obscured by both Middle Eastern racial supremacist and white supremacist discourse in Middle East Studies and U.S. History) and the ways in which white Americans interacted with it. From white nativism to empire, this project reveals that Middle Eastern migrants and refugees had to navigate complex global systems of race. Finally, at the same time as they encountered the racial formations of citizenship structured by white supremacy and anti-Black racism, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees also faced anti-Asian and anti-immigrant border politics. Through these compounded and multiscalar dynamics early Middle Eastern American race is complicated, especially when valuing histories outside of dominant historical records. Interrogating multiple systems at once, including transnationally, is made possible by a comparative Ethnic Studies approach that moves beyond the limits of whiteness studies.

The reliance on state archives in traditional studies has also reified a valuation of the expertise of white institutions over the voices of Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities themselves in the era of earliest migration(s). This fails to document and center the agency of these early migrants and refugees, and as I argue throughout this project, reinscribes

the mistaken notion of a benevolent United States that welcomed these migrants with open arms, into the United States and into whiteness. Ethnic Studies is the study of racial groups, which as Omi and Winant have revealed, always have (and go beyond) ethnic, national, and religious dimensions.[25] Indeed, the field of Ethnic Studies is one of racial categories, and much work up to this point has focused on specific ethnic communities of South West Asia and North Africa. In this project, I argue that the pan-ethnic racialization of Middle Eastern people in the United States with all of its messiness, collapses, and erasures, has always existed and can be traced to the earliest era of the mass immigration of Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities. I argue that the racialization of various Middle Eastern American communities was and has always been happening relationally: to non-Middle Eastern groups, within larger systems indeed, but this study also focuses on how they were similar, *to each other.* As in all racial categories, they were grouped together. And thus, pan-ethnic racial categories for Middle Eastern Americans are as old as the subjectivity itself and certainly do not emerge as a product of post-9/11 but in its earliest foundational migration moments.

Just as Middle Eastern migrant and refugee bodies straddle and defy borders, so too must our analysis. This is revealed in the constructions of U.S. citizenship. Enacted March 26, 1790, the Naturalization Act of 1790 was the first set of federal, standardized rules for naturalization in the United States. Over a hundred years before what is referred to as the "racial prerequisite cases," the act established whiteness as a condition for naturalization, and conferred citizenship to only two categories: white people and people of African descent. The construction of U.S. citizenship was a process that codified U.S. genocide, apartheid, and supremacy. In 1790 it declared naturalization limited to "any alien, being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years."[26] After the

Civil War, an act on July 14, 1870 extended naturalization to "aliens of African nativity" and "persons of African descent.[27] The 1790 system remained in place for over 160 years, from 1790 all the way until 1952.[28]

John Tehranian notes this proved to work smoothly for the white supremacist settler state of the U.S. for quite a while since "at that time, the ethnic makeup of the country lent itself to a strict division between white and Black" and so "during the early years of the Republic, no litigation resulted from these naturalization requirements."[29] But as a new wave of migrants (and refugees) began to come to the country in the second half of the century, "the law was forced to deal with an influx of individuals who did not fit so neatly into the constructed racial categories of the time" resulting in a "wave of litigation…over the naturalization law's racial prerequisite."[30] Similarly, Janice Okoomian, speaking specifically about Armenians in this context, concurs, arguing that the "law pertaining to the citizenship rights of Native Americans and African Americans had been part of the discursive formation of categories of race in the United States throughout the nineteenth century..(H)owever, the years of the greatest influx of Armenian immigrants coincided with the influxes of immigrants from other parts of Asia."[31] Ultimately, the racial prerequisite cases, though often framed otherwise in mainstream discussion, are all instances when the people in question's whiteness was challenged by the United States government, where their whiteness was *not assumed*; on the contrary, the government proclaimed them to be non-white and thus ineligible for U.S citizenship. Then petitioners sued to have their naturalization accepted. These groups, originally denied naturalization because they could not neatly fit into the Naturalization Act of 1790's designations, then fought back– they appealed, sued, or asked for rehearing.

The racial prerequisite cases debated what to do with migrants and refugees who, in the eyes of the State, were not assumed to be, or did not fit neatly into the poles of white and Black, the only two designations of U.S. citizenship of the time. Today many would categorize these groups largely as non-Black people of color, whose group status the State codified and then used to define larger racial systems, like whiteness and Blackness themselves. Up until now, scholars have used the prerequisite cases only to evidence Middle Eastern whiteness, but I argue the fact that they were even litigated, that Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were petitioners and were present in the prerequisite cases alongside East Asians, Latinx, and South Asians, among others reveals that their whiteness was not assumed by the State, they were not "white on arrival," but rather contested. Non-white racialization has always loomed for Middle Eastern Americans, and is not merely a product of our contemporary moment.

Indeed, in the racial prerequisite cases, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Arabs Armenians, South Asians, and Afghans, among others all fought to be naturalized as U.S. citizens. They all fought for U.S. naturalization via whiteness. They faced legal challenge to their naturalization on the basis that they were not white, as U.S. citizenship was defined by, and only limited to, whiteness, particularly for immigrant groups. Thus, in order to be naturalized and admitted into U.S. citizenship, they had to prove their whiteness in the courts. These cases drew great alarm and attention in these groups who each had their own stakes in U.S. citizenship. These communities organized vast campaigns to become naturalized. Some of these legal petitions were "successful" and some were not, and within each group their efforts were coordinated by formations, collectives and organizations in the community. And for those in the prerequisite cases who won, once naturalized, as scholars of Ethnic Studies have noted for non-Middle Eastern groups, racism still persisted legally, socially, and politically for these groups. For

example, Mexicans fought for legal whiteness in the late nineteenth century and won it in the landmark case *In re Rodriguez*, but despite the ruling, faced ongoing and persistent anti-Mexican/anti-Latinx racism. Arnoldo De León claims *In re Rodriguez* was an early struggle for civil rights, when the United States was seeking to denaturalize Mexicans.[32]



Figure 2: First LULAC Convention, Corpus Cristi, Texas, 1929

Organizations like League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC,) were active in trying to stop attacks on Mexican-American naturalization throughout this time and argued for U.S. Mexican whiteness. These efforts help reveal the way U.S. race was made. Targeted by the U.S. government and without institutional resources, all of the prerequisite groups formed their own organizations and campaigns to secure U.S. citizenship. Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were no different. Thus, this dissertation in the following sections argues that by

studying Middle Eastern refugee and migrant lifeworlds uniquely, other dimensions that define U.S. whiteness are revealed.

The racial prerequisite cases reveal how non-European migrant and refugee groups came to be placed within the larger U.S. racial schema. This schema was defined by the poles of White and Black, literally codified by the Naturalization Act of 1790, and triangulated against Indigenous and Asian classifications. Simply put, the fight to naturalize was and always is a racial process, in constant production and reproduction. At the turn of the twentieth century this was no different. But for Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, the conditions were distinct, especially from European groups. Groups like the Italians, Irish, and other European groups did not face these challenges, and as I outline in this project did not have the same stakes in the naturalization fight as people from the Southwest Asian and North African region did, particularly at this time period.

This is revealed through valuing and examining the expertise and experiences of Middle Eastern people themselves. As I intend to prove the examination of the lives of early Middle Eastern people, the systems of racism they navigated and how they fought back reveal the struggle to become Middle Eastern-Americans was a fight for the freedom to remain, the freedom to move, and the freedom to live, at a time where people were trying to escape death. Outside of merely a top-down approach, I use grassroots, contextual and community analysis because it allows for largely new meanings on what American citizenship, classification, and naturalization truly meant and continues to mean today. And the thesis of a benevolent U.S. that folded these groups into whiteness and that their whiteness was then entrenched forever, begins to crack.

Table 1: Selected Relevant Naturalization Cases 1890-1930[33]

1890	In re Hong Yen Chang	Chinese	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Chinese are not white
1894	In re Saito	Japanese	Government claims not white; Denied naturalization, Japanese are not white
1897	In re Rodriguez	Mexican	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Mexicans are white
1909	George Shishim v. United States	Syrian[34]	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Arabs are white
1909	In re Najour	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Arabs are white
1909	In re Halladjian	Armenian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Armenians are white
1909	In re Balsara	"Parsee" Indian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, “Parsee” Indians are probably not white[35]
1910	In re Mudarri	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Arabs are white
1910	United States v. Dolla	Asian Indian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Asian Indians are white
1910	United States v. Balsara	“Parsee” Indian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, “Parsee” Indians are white
1910	In re Ellis	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Arabs are white
1913	Ex parte Shahid	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Arabs are not white
1914	Ex parte Dow	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Arabs are not white
1914	In re Dow	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Arabs are not white
1915	Dow v. United States	Syrian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Arabs are white
1922	Ozawa v. United States	Japanese	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Japanese are not white
1923	United States v. Thind	Indian Sikh who self-identified as "Aryan"	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Indians are not white
1925	United States v. Cartozian	Armenian	Government claims not white; Outcome: Granted naturalization, Armenians are white
1925	United States v. Ali	Punjabi	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Punjabis are not white
1928	In re Feroz Din	Afghan	Government claims not white; Outcome: Denied naturalization, Afghans are not white

Indeed, Ian Haney Lopez's work is a groundbreaking, comprehensive study of whiteness and what made various migrant groups "white by law," analyzing a wide swath of naturalization cases from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *White By Law*, Lopez proposes that during this time the United States courts decided naturalization, and its racial prerequisite, using two forms of scrutiny in the courts, common and scientific knowledge. In other words, the courts utilized both institutional methods like race science and eugenics and the understandings of the 'common man' on the street, i.e. phenotype, assimilatory potential, culture-based distinction, and social belonging. Simply put, this distinction for Lopez suggests how whiteness was created and codified, through analyzing both institutional and social metrics. If the everyday of institutional and social race-making is the basis of American naturalization, then what do we know of racism institutionally and socially at the time, especially for Middle Eastern petitioners? As Lopez writes, "although largely forgotten, the prerequisite cases were the center of racial debates in the United States for the fifty years following the Civil War, when immigration and nativism were both running high."[36] What Lopez's work does not (and does not claim to do) is interrogate the classification of Middle Eastern Americans beyond the law at the time, the petitioners organizing for naturalization, and the persistence of anti-Middle Eastern racism that set the stakes for the cases and that informed their outcomes. Indeed, with attention to early Iranian-American racialization, Neda Maghbouleh argues that for Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, even when whiteness was present *du jure* historically, non-whiteness was occurring for these communities *de facto*.[37] For Middle Eastern peoples who quite literally remain not only at the limits of whiteness but also, at times even during the earliest mass migration period, out of whiteness entirely, the questions of racialization and classification prove to be complicated.

Scholarship must contend with the ways in which Middle Eastern-Americans moved between whiteness and non-whiteness historically.

Scholarship on the racial prerequisite cases through legal frameworks offer just that, understanding of the workings and logics of power to ultimately understand whiteness. But what does it say of the petitioners? And how do those people also shape, understand and analyze race? In what conditions? And as community organizations fight for the MENA Checkbox on the U.S. Census today, a longer history helps point to that this struggle has always been fraught, unfinished, contested, and in process. And perhaps from yesterday until today, conditional and maybe even impossible.

Critical whiteness studies is an urgent and deeply imperative field especially in the ways in which it demands, finally, the necessity to lock onto the center of power, the white Western settler colonial world, and interrogate it. As the work of Peggy McIntosh reveals, critical whiteness studies helps reveal invisibil(ized) structures of white supremacy.[38] So what happens to those whose whiteness is quite literally disputed? And where do the lives of migrants and refugees who also inhabit non-whiteness in this era particularly under Orientalism, anti-refugee racism, and anti-Muslim racism among other systems, fit? Here then for Middle Eastern-Americans, whiteness studies remain incomplete as the way to understand these early communities and race. In this way, my work on the early naturalization cases departs from studies that only look to the white by law outcomes, and even in close readings of the cases I prioritize and center community testimony, organizing, and conditions over ongoing overemphasis of the ruling by the State. Race is formed not only by top down forces but also by the bottom up, negotiated by the groups impacted and involved in classification.[39] As Yen Le Espiritu reveals in *Asian American Panethnicity*, "ethnic organizations do not merely reflect

existing ethnic consciousness, they can also generate it."[40] Given these realities, I paint a much more complex history of the early naturalization era than previously examined. If one only studies the law, and if you cite the law via the State, then one will understand only a portion of what was happening in the early racial prerequisite era. This study puts the racial prerequisite cases of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in context through evidence and analysis of their lives and lifeworlds: their conditions, campaigns and community formations.

Challenges from Below: Joining Scholarship on Early Middle Eastern Race Centering Community Perspectives

"Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience."
-Edward Said*, Reflections on Exile*

Edward Said's notion in *Reflections on Exile* affirms that exile is "compelling" to analyze but devastating to endure.[41] As a Palestinian exile, Said reflects on what I would argue is ultimately and fundamentally a question of knowledge production. Here too I seek to reflect on what it means to have groups consistently be the subjects of study, while they themselves have analyzed their material conditions and survived racing regimes, and yet are continually disregarded as theorists and actors. This too, then, also changes the frame by which all people come to understand their histories. Like all people, Middle Eastern-Americans have a variety of life experiences, but they often share conditions like histories of displacement, exclusion and exile that are too often absent from discussions of early Middle Eastern-American race though they continue to not only shape how their respective groups have been racialized but how race was made writ large in the United States.

People do not only endure violence, they organize for their survival. Immigrants and refugees, especially, are not only subjected to systems, they understand their conditions and try

to change them. Still, any study of peoples' conditions, including this one, is "compelling to think about" but ultimately futile. As the descendant of some of the refugees I am writing about in this study turned settler, whose family is very much still organizing for the right of return, reparations and the fall of empire, in exile, and outside Western notions of time, I still find the insider/outsider positioning fraught, contradictory and wish to name it so. Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic binary narratives prove impossible. If anything, this study pulls in multiple and overlapping/interconnected forms of violence and empire in which I am complicit. So too this project is limited in scope and in doing so creates and maintains systems of violence and erasures. While its primary aim is to enter refugeehood and organizing into racial classification histories and debates on early Middle Eastern-Americans because a pan-ethnic archive and cross discipline conversation is largely absent, it decenters other fundamental, necessary and central systems that I plan to analyze in my future project and hope this project will spur, even if in very necessary critique. I have felt the need for foundational texts, analysis, and conversations on these communities because the basics are needed in order to build more in the future.

Several scholars in recent years have helped challenge dominant narratives about the history of Middle Eastern groups, offering critical theory on early Middle Eastern American racialization by bringing in community voices and experiences from below. I hope to join this nascent and yet growing field, and add the lens of pan-ethnicity, feminist methods, and critical refugee studies to it. These efforts have been led largely by Middle Eastern-American scholars themselves. Several concepts are particularly useful for the study of *early* Middle Eastern American racialization, including notions of "performing whiteness," "racial hinges," "in-betweenness" and "racial borderlands." These concepts are also useful when centering Middle Eastern refugee, revolutionary, and organizer histories. I show that these theories that emerge

from studies of specific ethnic groups ultimately help explain a current or pattern throughout the analysis of early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee groups. I construct a pattern of racialization, as a racial group, and the conditions from which such racialization springs. I argue pan-ethnic racial classifications originate since the beginning of mass Middle Eastern displacement and migration to the United States.

Patterns emerge when uniting theories of "performing whiteness," "racial hinges," "in-betweenness" and "racial borderlands" for understanding the birth of the subjectivity "Middle Eastern-American." Early Middle Eastern American race, regardless of ethnic groups, was defined by moving, liminal space, an oscillating in-between. Race was about processes for Middle Eastern-Americans, as all groups, constantly being made and remade, in and outside institutions. In the courts, this back and forth is made plain, in the "fights" between the sides of the United States and the defendants. These took a variety of forms. In his analysis of a series of cases in which Middle Eastern migrants and refugees and the State fight over naturalization, John Tehranian argues that the courts "determined whiteness through performance."[42] The State demanded of early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees current and future strict adherence to, and proof of, assimilationism to Anglo American culture and power.[43] This performance was demanded of Middle Eastern litigants denied naturalization and as I later argue in this chapter, refuge, to display and cohere in court and then maintain and prove in everyday life. The dance between poles of non-whiteness and whiteness in early Middle Eastern American racial "performance" is echoed in concepts offered that reveal both liminal and oscillating positionings of Middle Eastern peoples and early race in the United States.

By paying attention to the everyday production of race for Middle Eastern Americans, pan-Middle Eastern racial formation proves to be much more muddied than opaque. Indeed,

theorizing on Iranian-Americans, Neda Maghbouleh forwards the theory of "racial hinges," that Iranian-Americans, as a racially liminal group, through a variety of legal and extralegal actors have classification that acts like a symbolic hinge "that opens or closes the door to whiteness as necessary."[44] Maghbouleh illuminates how whiteness and exclusion for non-Western groups are related, drawing into focus the ways in which "whiteness can be intermittently granted and revoked, or mismatched in the law or on the ground."[45] In the following sections I evidence just that for Middle Eastern-Americans across ethnic groups, since their earliest mass presence in the U.S. While in the court cases petitioners win whiteness by law via U.S. naturalization, the context on the ground continues to maintain non-whiteness for these communities and the stakes they are having to endure both domestically via racial violence and exclusion and abroad in imperial formations are of transnational importance. Similarly, Sarah Gualtieri's concept of "in-betweenness" reveals the liminal spaces between poles of white and not-white. Focusing on early Arab migration to the United States, Gualtieri argues that the processes of claiming whiteness by early Arab petitioners were uneven and contested, that legal and extralegal forces constructed them in both white and non-white ways, ultimately revealing the ways in which they are "in-between."[46] Moreover, Janice Okoomian, studying early Armenian-Americans, offers the concept of "racial borderlands" to mean understanding positions between physical and cultural geographies, a theoretical framework to describe proximity, closeness, movement, and contact of poles of whiteness and non-whiteness for these groups.[47] What I am pointing to is a convergence of these frameworks regardless of their respective ethnic group case studies. The convergence of these concepts reveals a pattern that supersedes individual ethnic group, including here early Iranian, Arab, and Armenian communities, for example, which I argue reveals the ways in which these groups were *racialized,* beyond their respective ethnic identities. Not only were they

racialized in pan classifications that lumped them together, but their conditions, campaigns, and classifications paralleled each other because of such classification. They experienced the courts and streets in ways that were similar, as part of converging pan-ethnic racialized experiences. Thus various, Middle Eastern ethnic groups have always been racialized in similar ways, and these inter-relational categories and parallel conditions are as old as their mass presences in the United States. They faced pan-ethnic racial classification that was relational, and they formed associations to fight the attacks they faced from their racial othering.

Additionally, early Middle Eastern American racialization was also dynamic and marked by "shifts." Race, especially in early law, was a kinetic process, driven by many forces. As Sarah Gualtieri writes, "answering the question 'to what race do we belong?' involved not only legal and popular interpretations of race but also about immigrant concerns about gender roles and family, fear of violence at the hands of nativist groups, and the interplay of homeland and host country solidarities."[48] Terminology shifts, just as the terrain of classification and racialization has shifted. This is demonstrated in the ways in which terminology for physical space and geographies has changed. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, "Syrian" refers to Greater Syria, *bilad al-Sham* in Arabic or the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire that include the territory of present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan,[49] as it does in this dissertation, though today it describes the modern Republic of Syria, its own nation-state, which at present is also going through major shifts of its national borders and its people are subject to mass displacement. Arab in the contemporary sense, did not hold the same usage then, and shifts as a classification decades later also due to transnational and bottom-up forces and movements.[50]

Thus, categorizing, naming and classifying a "we" for these groups, important foundations of constructing race, is always fraught and was so during the era of naturalization.

But some realities were constant in the era. For example, the first wave of Syrian immigrants were overwhelmingly Christians, with one of the biggest ethnic enclaves in New York, "although the majority of persons who immigrated during the [naturalization era] came from what is now Lebanon, they most often referred to themselves as 'Syrians'"[51] Categories and classifications present problems as these do not fit neatly across time revealing that they transformation over time. Race for Middle Eastern-Americans is and was a dynamic process. This is made even more complicated for refugees, indigenous, and stateless SWANA people, whose classifications defy border-obsessed Western lines. As I discuss later, this is further complicated with indigenous illegibilities. As an example, early Assyrians and Armenians who were Ottoman Empire (and Persian Empire) nationals and were labeled Turk (or Persians) were restricted on U.S. quotas under such classifications for "Turks" at large, meaning the whole of the Empire, while simultaneously being systematically annihilated by those empires because they were not classified racially as "Turks" in their homelands. These communities thus experience multiple, transnational classifications and exclusions as they navigate multiple forms of empires. The kinetic quality of naming is reflected in an unbounded geographic region that during the time of the racial prerequisite cases was experiencing great transition. Shifting terms also show the fraughtness of bordering a region that is unbounded and at the crossroads of entire continents, Asia and Africa. These borders not only epistemologically have changed but also were literally physically in flux during the era of early naturalization. There are also huge silences currently not being addressed largely in studies and public discussions on the early racialization of Middle Eastern groups: the massive transnational refugee crisis and SWANA revolutionary movements happening at the time, which centrally shaped this time period. As this dissertation proves, the classification of early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees is bound up

in systems of transnational migration, displacement, criminalization, exclusion, surveillance, transit, and empire which created and colored classification. Middle Eastern migrant and refugee everyday lives and how they navigated systems of oppression offer new understandings of the mechanisms of power and race.

On Naming & Contemporary Constructions: What's in a name? The Middle East is a Construct, The Middle East was Constructed

> Lebanon is east of here. I am sure of that fact. After all, its location is the Middle East. An appropriate name only if one is a colonizer standing west and invading east. The Middle East. What's in a name? Quite a lot actually.
>
> -Jo Kadi, 1994

What links the early twentieth century to today? Indeed, while many scholars are thinking through the classification of Middle Eastern-Americans in presentist terms, I argue that this history is long, through evidence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that is salient for today. This process is fraught even in naming, which I do so here intentionally, to present a throughline of U.S. racing and its terror. If there is such a thing as a "Middle Eastern-American," what does it mean? Where and what is the "Middle East"? Existing scholarship alludes to the fact that the Middle East is both a social construct and a social fact. This racial elasticity has fared well in unbinding land masses for imperial politics and binding land masses onto bodies for racial terror. For example, historically "the Middle East" has often been constructed from an American perspective and today deeply entrenched in histories of global security regimes,[52] marked by an era of U.S. dominance, the newest iteration in a long colonial practice of mapping and naming the region. According to John Tehranian, the "Middle East" likely emerged in the 1850s from Britain's Indian Office.[53] It is built on an older mapping of terms like the "Near East," which has historically been often used interchangeably in certain

fields but now is being replaced as the other goes out of fashion, a European construction that likely originated from a Napoleonic perspective and the history of European transit(s) of capital, goods and power. But while the constructions imposed on bodies have changed, the bodies have not. One cannot look at the denial of citizenship, travel and refuge of the Muslim Ban without seeing how the very same interactions with the State shaped the inception of "Middle Eastern-American" as an identity. I seek in my project to make legible the circulation(s) of these classifications through space and time in the community and the systems they are organizing against. I use "Middle Eastern" primarily, and precisely because it is a racialized Western creation, it is an imaginary just as U.S. racialization of all South West Asian and North African people is. I invoke it in the construction of citizenship because it is a very U.S. American construction that is mobilized for violence consistently and brings forward the intersection of Orientalism, anti-refugee/migrant racism, anti-Muslim racism and other systems across time to the early racing of people who are descended from South West Asia and North Africa and beyond. I also use it to make sense of the historical dynamics I address in terms of the contemporary moment in which I am writing, and vice versa. Furthermore, by naming "Middle Eastern-American" as in the turn of "Asian-American" studies and formations historically, I look to specifically address U.S. racial status and the transnational interplay of being inside and outside "the nation" while naming pan-ethnic race amongst groups. In many ways the siloing of American and Middle East Studies and various other fields have allowed for the erasure of understanding multi-scalar systems crashing down on early Middle Eastern refugees in the United States, along with the limiting of study to one ethnic or national group.[54] The transformation of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees into "Middle Eastern-Americans" is precisely the historical moment and historical fight I am analyzing, which may suggest that this

transformation has been and may be impossible. In other words, Middle Eastern peoples were always excluded from the U.S. nation in critical ways, and continue to be today.

I also sometimes use SWANA (South West Asian and North African) in this study, invoking a decolonial term that was popularized by a youth movement in early 2010s that I have been depply committed to over the past decade, which I will discuss further in other work that challenged certain forms of racism and colonialism.[55] Sometimes when I deploy this term I am signaling challenges to Western classifications or subjects who are directly challenging Western classification. I also use South West Asian and North Africa to directly make reference to the region as land. I do not claim these to be neat distinctions, but referential signposts that should indicate to the reader patterns of inquiry, impossibility and unresolved questions. I will note, Middle Eastern is not the only unstable category in relevant fields of study, and I would challenge that "Arab," "Muslim," and other such ubiquitous terms are also incredibly unstable categories that are politically produced and should be more rigorously questioned and assumptions, justified and un-made.

Feminists and queer SWANA theorists have addressed "Middle Eastern" racialization head on. Before 9/11, in the early nineties, Middle Eastern-American and Canadian feminists gathered together to write the anthology *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* by editor Jo Kadi. Well before the fortification of the War on Terror, these feminists were unpacking the ways in which "Middle Eastern," Muslim and Arab peoples were constructed in popular culture, media and policy. They were making the connections between transnational feminist movements and questions of identity that are now becoming normalized in critical studies fields today. One particularly fruitful discussion for my

work is Jo Kadi's reflections on the difficulty in naming the book because it meant naming a geography and racial experience that is filled with political meaning. Kadi muses:

> My dictionary tells me a map is a representation of the earth's surface showing both physical and political features. This definition fits with what I now believe about maps: they exist in many forms, some are complicated and contradictory, and north is not always at the top...Creating a map is a powerful experience. *Food For Our Grandmothers* can also be understood as a map, presenting both physical and political features of the earth's surface. Complicated and contradictory, north is not always the top. It provides new information about where and how we locate ourselves in the world.[56]

What Kadi identifies here is the troubling task of identification and classification when working in the confines of colonial language and reality. Kadi is asking about *locating* an *us.* And location for Middle Eastern peoples requires mapping a racialized social and spatial geography. Indeed, questions of where and how we locate ourselves are crucial to understanding the political and physical features of social life. But while many have read the early work of Kadi as scholarship, I have read their work as difficult organizing. Indeed, Kadi points out that gathering and grouping the feminist contributors from various ethnic and religious backgrounds was a great struggle manifested in the trouble Kadi found in picking the ultimate title for the book. Jo Kadi states:

> I tried to find a title that included all contributors to this anthology and I did not. But as I searched, I gained a new perspective on the power of names and the effect they have on our psyches. Names are critical for a personal and communal sense of affirmation. Choosing our names and thinking through their implications, rather than accepting those given to us by the dominant culture, is an empowering act. I've come up with three possibilities for naming ourselves as a community-- Arab-American/Arab Canadian, people of Middle Eastern/North African descent, and West Asian/North African. [57]

Kadi continues by presenting what they see as the problems of each of the three classifications they pose. They identify both pro's and cons, like the term "Arab" would "link us to our brother and sisters in Arab countries" but "it does not link us to larger groups of people of color, that is Asians and African, but sets us apart and in isolation;" or that Arab excludes "countries with

whom we share so much--Armenia, Turkey and Iran," they write, while terms like 'West Asian/North African' will once again make Arabs invisible.[58] Kadi's musings are fascinating not because they reveal innate realities of communities, but because they are justifications of racial classification and meaning, from below. They ultimately choose "Arab" to define their contributors.

As Kadi attempts to tie communities together, Kadi is also making decisions about how to organize. So, these decisions also must take into account organizing *strategy* about how to successfully launch and maintain a project. Kadi is theorizing on their own identity and offering up a dilemma of being both the subject of the work and the one doing the work. Kadi is naming the stakes of their community in the process of classification by acknowledging *the power of names.* And they are naming that there is a great responsibility to the community members who they are pulling in/out in doing so. This helps me to think through how classifications like "Arab" "Middle Eastern" "Muslim" "West Asian/North African" "SWANA" are political projects. While seldom cited in academe, the anthology was groundbreaking and set a precedent for much subsequent work, particularly by Arab feminists in the Americas. Indeed, *Food for Our Grandmothers* opened space for texts like the anthology *Arab and Arab American Feminisms* edited by Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber, and *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics and Activism* by Naber, which similarly grapple with the where and of whom we are speaking and even challenge previous projects. These texts help reveal a central question in my project, the central question of classification that communities have asked even as their answers are being chosen for them: Who is *we?* What does the *we* impact our lives? And how do *we* see *us*?

Contemporary quagmires in naming also once again reveal the kinetic systems at play in Middle Eastern-American racing, that scholars recede and highlight various parts of today. Current literature that describes central dimensions of race for "Middle Eastern-Americans" can be categorized around *some* major camps, *including but not limited* to the "Muslim" "refugee" and "Oriental/regional" figures, among many others. For the purpose of space I offer a short overview of *some* contemporary concepts that also impacted early Middle Eastern American race. In the history of the United States, the figure of the Muslim is constructed as a threat, enemy and foreigner in need of control and containment. This looming figure, in contemporary race, is ready to attack U.S. American families at any time and sets up a discursive roadmap--Muslim is outside the nation and needs to be searched out and destroyed. And this discursive reality justifies a material one, the enactment of colonial terror all around the world. Indeed, the work of Sohail Daulatzai, Junaid Rana, and Evelyn Alsultany trace the ways in which the Muslim figure has served the imperial interests of the U.S empire-state in recent history. Daulatzai connects the visual representation of the Muslim in *The Battle of Algiers* as triumphantly anti-colonialist and revolutionary, in critical juxtaposition to its reception by United States military personnel and conservative policymakers as the dangerous terrorist threatening Western domination. For the U.S. empire-state, "Muslims are not sovereign, nor are they rights bearing, and so they are not subject to the protections that those deemed modern citizen-subjects have from violence, war, containment, and so on."[59] Indeed, "Muslims are presumed guilty, and only deemed not so after their death." Similarly, Junaid Rana's *Terrifying Muslims* helps trace the Muslim figure stating that "race is tied to terror and migration precisely through the conjuring of an enemy."[60] Indeed, according to Rana, "the racialized Muslim developed as a geographically external other that was demonized not only through notions of the body, but also

through the superimposition of cultural features onto Muslim and non-Muslim groups."[61] Rana describes a process of racialization that attributes racial signifiers to Muslims. Indeed, in US racial history, Rana explains, "Arabic and Asian regions were often conflated in the racialized figures of the ''Syrian'' and the ''Hindu' and many immigrants from these lands were also categorized as 'Turks from Asia,' including those who claimed Assyrian and Armenian descent."[62] Ultimately, through the process of racial formation in the United States the "conflation of religious and racial difference extended into legal constructions of the foreigner as a threat and an enemy." Rana argues that moral panics combined with imperialist interests collapse identities into racial signifiers of threatening Others. In this way the Muslim figure is flexible and can be applied to a broad swath of communities depending on the needs of imperial interests at the time. And it is also not only done by the state, but by non-governmental actors as well. Similarly, in "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity through Nonprofit Advertising Post 9/11," Evelyn Alsultany discusses the construction of the Muslim as a commodity "to 'sell' ideas of an imagined American community and redfine American identity and citizenship" that is also mobilized by non-profits for example like after the attacks on the World Trade Center.[63] The figure created in anti-Muslim racism is mobilized in the history of Middle Eastern-Americans and race.

Another racial figure impacting these communities is the "Oriental" figure, or the construction of the "East." Edward Said's foundational text *Orientalism* exposes the ways in which the West constructed East in opposition to itself, and thus, in opposition to humanity. His work revealed that culture is a site of race-making, and specifically that Orientalism is the dominant project that constructs Middle Eastern peoples. Indeed, even within the term "Middle Eastern American" is the term "Middle East," a colonial geography constructed via Orientalism.

Said describes Orientalism as the process by which "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."[64] But for Said, Orientalism must be understood as a discourse that manages the "Oriental" figure. Orientalism is a way of dealing, it is a way of Western domination through the fictive to manage the material reality of lives in the East. For Said, culture becomes centrally important to interrogating Orientalism historically. Orientalism is "the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture is able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively doing the post-Enlightenment period."[65] He argues that through culture, the Orient is constructed, and then reproduced for political and social means. But, Edward Said argued that Orientalism is:

> above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment) power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with idea about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do)"[66]

Said illuminates that Orientalism forms everything from raw political power to intellectual, cultural, and moral power. He thus, inserts multiple scales and locations in which power is made and transformed. For the purposes of this project then, Said offers the ability to examine the ways complex exchanges of race happen within raw political power and these other forms of power. Canons of texts and values are thus an important sites of struggle for SWANA social movements to battle with and within. Discourse directly produces and reproduces the material conditions and raw political power afforded to SWANA people.

Nadine Naber also argues how the relationships between hegemonic and counter hegemonic forces also are often not so neat. Indeed, much scholarship of the last twenty years

has constructed binaries of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic Orientalist power for SWANA peoples in the United States. But for Naber, "by contextualizing the complex stories, messages, and lessons of Arab Americans long before September 11" we can "move beyond the tired push-pull of Orientalism and anti-Orientalism and can open up new possibilities for the expansion of internal Arab political critiques that take up urgent, yet often unspoken internal dynamics of oppression."[67]

A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race requires looking to the very communities being discussed. And both in the current day MENA checkbox and the racial classification cases of the early twentieth century, circulations of the "refugee figure" in American discourse are a major driving force in their respective outcomes. As Suvendrini Perera writes, "the voice of the subaltern needs to be foregrounded not as a terrorist, nor as a victim, but as a complex subject who is affected by global processes, and seeking safe passage across borders."[68] Perera demonstrates the ways refugee subjecthood is defined by complexity and not relegated to the constructs created by power. The Muslim Ban, for example, served as the daily enactment of Western domination over SWANA refugees on the bodily level at ports of entry-exit, constituting a routine production of racial signifiers through surveillance, interrogation, detention and registration. To be even more specific, SWANA migrants and refugees from seven nation-states were labeled "terrorists" that were a threat to the United States. Much of the discursive justifications of migrant bans throughout history also relied on anti-refugee racism in daily, intimate, and routinized ways. As Jennifer Hyndman has argued Western agencies came to dominate refugee bodies in mundane and messy ways through the ways agencies process, label, and classify them.[69] It is in the combination of representational and physical enactment that notions of citizenship, belonging and refuge are made. Centering refugee experiences reveal that

inclusion/exclusion in and from the nation for refugees is largely decided by the systems terrorizing them. From the beginning of the earliest refugee populations from South West Asia and North Africa to now, the United States thus makes race in the process of policing them. This is also relevant for notions of citizenship. Helen Heran Jun's definition of citizenship reveals that in practice it is as much about the politics of exclusion as it is about membership or rights. In other words, nation-making and its forms of "citizens" require those in power to define themselves against something else. Thus the study of citizenship particularly from refugee and migrant experiences reveals that power is enacted through mechanisms of exclusion and denial, arbitrated by the State.[70] This provides a needed intervention into discussions of the everyday for early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees.

Indeed, critical refugee studies helps to answer some of these questions for Middle Eastern-Americans. It is a field that conceptualizes migrants and refugees as a critical source of knowledge that problematizes, subverts, disrupts and resists systems of power.[71] As Espiritu analyzes in the case of Vietnamese refugees, the United States constructs and relies upon "the term 'refugee,'[that] triggers associations with highly charged images of Third World poverty, foreignness, and statelessness," to justify and valorize its militarized violence across the world. Anti-refugee discourse relies upon "representations of refugees as incapacitated objects of rescue, fleeing impoverished, war-torn, or corrupt states— an unwanted problem for asylum and resettlement countries. "[72] These contemporary frameworks prove important and useful in describing classification and conditions for Middle Eastern peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Methodological frameworks

When I began this dissertation, I intended to write a one hundred year peoples' history of Middle Eastern racialization and community organizing, a pipe dream of a young and naive optimist (read, fool). Beyond the regular revision of research, during the duration of this project the world was hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, and in this country the pandemic fell under the presidential term of Donald Trump. Plans made actually became impossible, including my intention to travel to certain archives to include in this project and to follow the migration and refugee routes of several of the figures I trace. Rapid response crises and resistance to war and imperialism in which I was part, was also happening at the same time, on which I refuse to elaborate. During COVID, as I organized resources in the community and coordinated measures to protect my family, especially the elders and immunocompromised among us, while I was writing I became less and less concerned about what was supposed to happen, the ways things were or were supposed to be, the systems in place, and more and more concerned with one thing: to preserve life. What came out of the pandemic in my work is likely not a coincidence and is reflected in my project even methodologically. Moreover, this project does not represent a comprehensive nor complete history, there may even be historical errors that remain despite my constant revisions, but, this is a sincere attempt, against the forces of erasure, to begin compiling an archive of life on this subject, even amongst all of the forces in this world and in this country, of death.

My mother, it turns out, is an archivist. She was and has always been an archivist, before I knew what the word meant. She, and her cousins, meticulously document every part of our lives, and are the keepers of our family's connection and history in our homeland. Archiving and bringing people and materials into conversation into a collective presence which did not exist

before, is often not valued work. It is feminized. In many ways it is seen as domestic work—fixing all the ends, labeling, and organizing—unvalued and yet a deeply intellectual labor. The same is often true in the academy of archiving, of trying to both preserve and prompt connections of those who are among the dispossessed. It is the facilitation of more.

As I come from a family of people who are denied access to, reparations for, and connection to their homeland, I was taught to value our stories and artifacts of life as if they were more valuable than gold. My mother has photographed thousands of moments in our lives, a fascination I have always seen as a labor of love, documenting her loved ones so they may remember and be remembered. As I learned more and more about our family history, I learned I came from a family of archivists. They have preserved our memory in a world that continues to deny us, and by multiple governments, that continues to deny we exist. They did not do so in any prestigious institution, but through the passing down of oral storytelling and the keeping of items from loved ones, everyday objects that may appear unimportant in and to dominant histories of record, but are in fact where and how history is made. Many of these memories and objects have become part of this study.

When I started I intended to write a history of the radical SWANA movements I had been part of as a teenager and had the honor of witnessing. I intended to situate these in a historical context that indicted the U.S. system. As I learned more and more, I discovered that these systems are long. And I needed to build a foundation, so the next layer could be built. By long, I mean they have endured, and transformed, through time. In order to understand the present, I came to the realization that I needed to understand the past. In Western Armenian cosmology time is much longer than U.S. concepts of time.[73] When we think of history, we think millennia and do so in connection to land. There is a spatiality to time. An indigenous reality, that is then

disrupted, where the body and community are violently dislodged from connection and belonging, where it is lurched into a new foreign terrain (deportation) or destroyed altogether (death).

bell hooks wrote in 1994, "I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing."[74] In many ways, trying to play interpreter from community objects and state artifacts of death and dispossession to an English-speaking reader was (an)other form(s) of pain. But the desperation to comprehend and heal, the feelings I so deeply identify with in bell hooks' statement, is a will to transform what is, and to dare to speculate about and birth life into the future. I believe this to also be a definition of organizing.

In this context, this project is not sweeping, grand, or "pioneering"[75] claims. It is a rejection of all of that. It is purposely structured as argument through archive and the bringing together of people – because, we need each other. It is an assemblage of disregarded and discarded histories, peoples, events and memories to shed light on processes and as a call to scholars to investigate and theorize further, and do so, across fields, together. In many ways, I hope it is a beginning (as I know it is a continuation) of many more studies to come. It is also a challenge to counter erasure by valuing the everyday as a site where large systems and the people they impact fight for their respective lives, until their last breaths.

Writing through Erasure

I center marginalized histories, bodies, and stories *to write through erasure*, to push through it to see what is on the other side. Dominant histories of record have left out refugee and migrant lifeworlds. They have also not valued our memories, often kept by communities who have had access to no other means, through generations of oral storytelling, names, and objects that have been passed down. By writing through erasure I mean several propositions 1) to think about erasure as a logic of colonialism, imperialism and genocide 2) to name the gaps of current scholarship that erase Middle Eastern migrant and refugee experiences and meditate on what that has produced politically including in current day academic and community discourse and 3) to literally write through erasure when archives have been destroyed, policed, or no longer exist because of white supremacy, colonialism, genocide and immigration regimes of containment and revisionism. My project is in many ways a project of constructing an archive in and of itself (in conversation with other texts), one that uses the everyday of community organizing, and particularly the organizing of the displaced, as a vehicle to think about the logics of race and empire. The archive is a powerful tool for time travel, to analyze the past and imagine possibilities of the future.

A Peoples' History

Methodologically, I answer erasure with a Peoples' History. In the seminal *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn rewrites United States dominant history of record and in doing so moves from margin to center organizers and the conditions through which they organized. Building on Zinn's framework, in *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United State*s, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz proclaims that "writing US history from an Indigenous peoples'

perspective requires rethinking the consensual national narrative."[76] A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race, 1890-1930 requires critical interventions that rupture assumptions of United States history constructed and enabled through white supremacy, racial capitalism, and global empire.

As expanded on throughout this text, much of this field to date has historically relied on the "nation of immigrants" myth, whiteness studies, and analysis of assimilation versus othering to explain complex global processes of race that dislodge such communities from their own histories and cast the United States as benevolent savior. It also does so in ways that silo groups of people. I instead mobilize "peoples'" to both acknowledge there are many peoples that make up "Middle Eastern" and that one does not need the collapse of difference to be in joint analysis or to discuss classification, and to signal a challenge from below. Uniting the lessons of both Zinn and Dunbar-Ortiz, allow for not only an emphasis on reading social conditions and movements as centers of robust theory on social life but also dismantling national narratives that continue to inflict terror on communities, Middle Eastern-Americans and beyond, today.

Borrowing from Chela Sandoval, I construct a peoples' history by relying on sites in which popular resistance circulates debates, images and texts. Sandoval offers incisive understandings of social movements in her landmark text *Methodology of the Oppressed,* which she states is "concerned with a general economy of consciousness in its oppositional forms."[77] For Sandoval, cultural production, for example, outside the State apparatus, is a deep site of theorizing where organizers engage in the everyday to gain support, theorize power, and make tactical choices based on embodied understandings of the forces they face. Sandoval argues that people of color already have the ability to see and possess a consciousness or ability to see and mark power. She names this differential consciousness, a location and process "linked to

whatever is not expressible through words" but known by marginalized communities through embodied experiences and poetic expressions, the consciousness that "functions outside speech, outside academic criticism, in spite of all attempts to purse and identify its origin."[78] The consciousness that Sandoval names here is, of course, the revolutionary consciousness, and the revolutionary action that cannot always be understood, rationalized or recorded in academic thinking. It is the function of the creativity and ingenuity of the people dealing with and resisting material conditions that affect their lives.

In the case of Middle Eastern-American organizing through time, this differential consciousness is utilized by a community of people fighting against mass displacement, white supremacy, colonialism, genocide and imperialism. There are choices that are made because the people experiencing systems of oppression can discern them, and thus as community organizing, make tactical decisions to resist them. They also choose to reify and participate in oppression and violence against others. In this way, I hope to shed light on some of the context and processes of the decisions and debates through "the prerequisite era." Sandoval allows us as Ethnic Studies scholars to do just that, to read social movements as texts, with dynamic actors responding through embodied and affective knowledges, cultural production, and in mobilizations, who respond and transform their realities. According to Sandoval *reading* social movements, in their equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist and separatist ideologies configured through the relationship of signs/signifiers/signified makes them inhabitable, interpretable and transformable. Indeed, Sandoval reveals, analyzing "a dissident and coalitional consciousness effective in making a place for creative forms of opposition to the neocolonizing cultural imperatives of postmodern globalization" signifies "[her] belief that such writings are cultural productions that can be scrutinized archaeologically just as any literary, filmic, or other cultural artifact can be

examined to identify the meanings, hopes, aims, and desires contained within them."[79] Sandoval demands that researchers, scholars and intellectuals take great account of and stock in how communities transform their lives through collective action and to read consciousness building as text:

> US people of color have long acted, spoken, intellectualized, lived out what Cherrie Moraga calls a "theory in the flesh" a theory that allows survival and more, that allows practitioners with faith, hope and moral vision in spite of all else. Methodology of the Oppressed reclaims that theory from the halls of the academy where it has been intercepted and domesticated.

Alluding to Moraga's theory in the flesh allows for a deeper well of understanding and source material. By unflattening collapses and exposing contradiction, we move from "legibility" of Middle Eastern American political organizing and classification to the discussion and an embrace of dissonance. As women of color feminists have proclaimed for decades, this means listening through generations and starting at the foundations-- the roots.

Feminist Refugee Methodology and the Everyday

This study is also grounded in feminist refugee methodology. In *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear*, Nadera Shaloub-Kevorkian reveals the ways in which the feminist everyday becomes a site of production of both racial terror and resistance. Focusing on the experiences of the Palestinian people enduring brutal Israeli settler colonization and occupation, Shaloub-Kevorkian argues that it is everyday, routine, and often mundane checkpoints, searches, invasion of the home, and even, through subtle discursive violences that constitute and reinforce racial projects and racial figures. This is a vastly generative methodological concept for scholars in Ethnic Studies to use. Shaloub-Kevorkian further identifies the space of the everyday, the routine, and the mundane as vast sites for contesting

politics. [80] In Palestine, the Arab body becomes the site for constituting the nation, of social borders of "us" vs. "them," and through routine stops and at physical borders between nation-states. While many scholars have inquired into hard power like that of the apartheid wall, Shaloub-Kevorkian instead primarily interviews women and children to understand the everyday ways security theology in the Israeli occupation is produced in their daily lives, what this reveals about how structural power is produced through day-to-day interaction, and most importantly, how Palestinian women and children themselves theorize their quotidian experiences of violence, *knowing themselves* that they are being targeted and pushed out for the goals of the larger project of colonization and erasure. For the theorization of a peoples' history, Shaloub-Kevorkian unapologetically puts the theorizing of everyday conditions of the people who experience them, from margin to center, as a way to understand race and power.

If the space of the everyday is a space of racial terror, it can also be one of resistance. Indeed, scholars of Ethnic Studies have argued for the importance of understanding social movements, collective action, and culture as inextricable to any conversation of power and domination. Indeed, my project is one that not only exposes power through community voices, but also intervenes into hegemonic discourses to reveal community members as actors themselves, who make power too.

Project Design and Chapter Outline

As outlined, this study analyzes legal racial classification at the turn of the twentieth century alongside everyday experiences of Middle Eastern-American race and racism. I argue that communities were made up of refugees and organizers and that they shaped and navigated classification during this era, not just institutions of power, and that by studying their everyday

lives and organizing we can gain larger understandings of race and U.S. citizenship. My dissertation analyzes archival texts and community voices that describe community conditions, including newspaper articles, editorials, community journals, naturalization hearing transcripts, cultural work, fliers, posters, souvenir booklets, refugee memoirs, organization minutes, housing advertisements, racial covenants, migrant manifestos, non-profit sponsor cards, maps and photographs including extensive collections of Ottoman and Ottoman-era portraiture.[81]

Chapter 1, "Where Our People Are, We Are, We Fight: Classification, Racism and Anti-Racism Organizing before 1915," outlines racial classification, racism and anti-racist organizing before 1915. It does so by identifying representations and constructions of "the East" and early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities in the United States, and outlines what they meant materially for these peoples, especially once in the country. In this chapter, I argue that anti-Middle Eastern racism was present in this earliest mass migration wave and only expanded (greatly) during the 1920s and 1930s. I locate the naturalization cases before 1915 within the stakes of early fights for citizenship, detailing forms of exclusion from the nation and what that meant in an era that was already defined by racialized transnational restrictions on movement, belonging, and personhood. I detail the history of early racial regimes, routinized and bureaucratic forms of racialized surveillance, and immigration restrictions by both Western and eastern Empires looking to control those they deemed "threat." I use early migrant and refugee experiences to analyze large systems of race and power.

Chapter 2, "Refugees, Revolutionaries and Organizers: (Re)storying Race, Community and Classification Amidst Mass Displacement, Massacre, and Crisis," looks at the impact of refugeehood, racialized violence, and mass death on the classification of Middle Eastern communities in the United States. I move from margin to center, the genocide and forced famine

of indigenous peoples in the region as a motivator of transnational organizing to secure survival, self-determination and safety, amidst ongoing threats and waves of mass deportation against these communities in the United States. In this chapter I propose and define the "Middle Eastern Christian figure," a device I argue erases refugee agency, enables Western imperialism, and develops the modern American non-profit industrial complex via white Western Christian missionizing targeting indigenous SWANA peoples. I reveal the ways that this figure and its tropes are often reinscribed in academic study. I challenge the figure with the organizing of the natives themselves, who not only built resistance across oceans but did so often while unapologetically calling out the systems and forces they endured. These discussions stand in stark contrast to dominant recordings of the naturalization era in legal literature. Finally, I counterpose passive receiver with active organizer, by compiling and reviewing collective Middle Eastern migrant and refugee formations, including but not limited to organizations, newspapers, social clubs, associations and campaigns.

Chapter 3, "Stateless Survivors, Refugee Resistance, and (Dis)located Struggles: Naturalization, Racial Terror, and the Everyday, Post-1915," examines the cases and conditions post-1915, in a country defined by violent white supremacy. By analyzing archives, I posit that early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee experiences in the United States reveal another definition (or dimension) of whiteness: whiteness as refuge, the freedom from being the target racialized violence, a reality displaced petitioners desperately sought to obtain, even if to become complicit in systems that then targeted others. I read the prerequisite cases amidst transnational systems of empire, imperialism, genocide and dispossession. The need for safety and asylum, a concept not created by the Western world until it was necessitated because of violence against European bodies in WWII, was a major motivating factor in SWANA refugee and migrant goals

to achieve naturalization which continues to be erased in dominant discourse. Lastly, I reflect on whether the obtaining of U.S. citizenship via legal whiteness in fact fully protected newly formed Middle Eastern-American communities by presenting everyday ongoing moments of racial terror immediately after the so-called "wins" in court, shedding new light on how we arrived at the contemporary moment.

Finally, I conclude the dissertation with modern day implications of these histories, and a call to further interrogate what is and is not presented, to finally do so across disciplines and ethnic, religious, and national lines which continue to silo studies today, and to do the groundwork necessary for the future. I end by making contemporary connections to immigration programs like the "Muslim Ban" and events of mass displacement, and call for critical analysis of campaigns like the SWANA and MENA Checkboxes by situating them in much longer histories of that reveal the ways classification, organizing and conditions of our communities are bound up together in the United States.

Chapter 1 Where Our People Are, We Are, We Fight: Classification, Racism and Anti-Racism Organizing before 1915

The Where of We: Transnational linkages, Homeland and Diaspora as Inextricable

Middle Eastern people in the United State have always been part of transnational networks of belonging. In order to understand the fraught processes that classified communities of South West Asian and North African diasporas in the early twentieth century United States and that continue today, the transnational nature of early “Middle Eastern-American" subjectivity must be unpacked. Particularly in the era of the earliest migrations, Middle Eastern peoples in the United States not only crossed borders physically, but they also, regardless of their geographic proximity to their “homeland,” led, identified with, and participated in the political and social struggle of their nation, even using migration as a tool for their causes of revolution, self-determination, and fortifying their community and loved ones back home.

To understand any history of early Middle Eastern-Americans, then, requires rejecting “homeland” and “diaspora” as neat and partitioned categories, as well as the so-called “Middle East” and “United States" as separate entities or racial imaginaries. The emphasis on defining this era through binaries when it is characterized by cleavages, polarity, and binaries, continues to obscure that early Middle Eastern-American experience has always encompassed domestic and international forms of belonging and classification, a central pillar of their racialization that is both built from below and imposed on their bodies via systems of oppression from above.

Migration and racialization of these communities during this era were kinetic and dynamic processes that crossed boundaries and borders, and so too must fields of analysis. Sarah

Gualtieri explains this reality for early Syrian migrants to the United States. She reveals that for early Syrians, "homeland describes more than the place from which a people departed...Syria continued to exist as a living, changing reality in the imagination and everyday lives of individual migrants."[82] For Gualtieri, early migrants and refugees to the United States understood both diaspora and homeland as part of themselves, and spaces of continuity and connections to which they belonged and could actively shape. Indeed, she describes these migrants as dynamic parts of a process, as actors themselves, for "in the minds of Syrian immigrants, 'Syria' and 'America' were not fixed and separate entities but were linked together, rather like an imagined community in which they were participants" and thus she "conceive[s] of the homeland and host country as one analytical field or, put another way," Gualtieri treats "emigration and immigration as two faces of the same reality."[83] I follow Gualtieri, in thinking of the figure of the Middle Eastern migrant and refugee as one that crosses borders (both physically and ontologically), is a part of a collective nation that is a globalized community, and is engaged in and in conversation with struggles that transcend localized geographies even if they may be happening oceans away. The nation, then, becomes an important concept, especially for those rendered stateless, for whom the nation comes to mean "where the people live," particularly for Indigenous communities in the SWANA region, a region where borders at the time are newly introduced Western or Western-inspired constructions and actively being transformed. As a globalized network, a century before the internet, migrant and refugee linkages acted as webs that transmitted great sums of information about political, social, economic, and cultural struggle, and belonging beyond borders. These webs transferred ideas around how to maneuver and understand systems of race and racism, too.

Early debates on the racial status of Middle Eastern-Americans, as they were being argued about in courts, coincided with large movements for self-determination and the transition from empires to nation-states in the homeland via and through WWI. Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in the United States were active participants in these movements and events. Indeed, racial prerequisite cases in the early twentieth century were happening at the same time as the fall of one of the largest empires of this area, the Ottoman Empire, and the introduction and spread of homeland nationalisms throughout the region. As I expand on in further sections, this international situation of refugeehood and domestic restrictions made the cost of not obtaining naturalization extremely high, limiting migrants' freedom to travel back and forth between the Americas and the SWANA region during political struggles and crises at home. Especially exiles in the U.S. were forming national politics during the invention of forms of nationalism(s) in the region. Simultaneously these same migrants and refugees were being racialized based on where they were from, a "where" that was in an era of great transition and which these communities wanted to shape.

The characteristics of the early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee community in the United States are diverse and composed of a variety of experiences. Like all pan-ethnic classifications, the homogeneity present in racial lumping is not actually the reality on the ground and reinscribing such collapsing limits the ability of fields to analyze the era accurately. In her groundbreaking work, *The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States*, Adele L. Younis outlines the various pursuits and experiences of Ottoman nationals, specifically those who were Arab, in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. She highlights that people from the region were largely looking to expand their economic horizons. But I depart from Younis' analysis that early Middle Eastern migration from the Ottoman Empire were only

and largely about "settling and peddling"[84] since it fails to recognize those coercive forces that brought Middle Eastern peoples to U.S. shores beyond the "immigrant" hope for "better economic opportunity" and the political movements that were operating across oceans; that argument continues to erase the reality of mass dispossession during this time and the role of homegrown revolutionary movements and nationalism(s) in relation to displacement and migration. Other drivers like safety, survival and political strategy were present especially for displaced groups and reveal differences (of stakes) between and among ethnic groups at the time. But moving beyond the commercial motive as a major pull for Middle Eastern migration to the Americas during the immediate pre- and post-World War I era, the centrality of everyday migrant and refugees in transnational networks of coordination, belonging, and systems is revealed. Analysis of Ottoman decrees, as I demonstrate in the coming sections, for example, disclose stated "sojourns" for greater markets for Middle Eastern-peddled goods like carpets, food, tea and textiles, were often only what migrants told immigration officials as to continue their organizing undetected. Such peddlers were often not just pushing wares, but also pushing struggles for power, community, and nation, and to change the material conditions of their peoples. The everyday contexts and experiences of migrants and refugees paint a much more complicated picture of this historical moment.

According to Richard E. Soash, "the Syrian-Lebanese and Armenians were the two largest Middle Eastern immigrant groups in the U.S. during the first two decades of the twentieth century."[85] In addition, a wide array of ethnic, religious, and national groups came from the region to the United States during the late 1890s and early 1910s, and were classified via racial categories that were impacted by these groups, and shifted and moved just as they do today. By focusing on these marginalized histories, and multiscalar systems of race, I think through how

refugees, revolutionaries and organizers drove and impacted racial classification as they fought to change their communities' conditions, and more often than not, fought for their lives. To do so requires a rejection of the U.S. settler apparatus as savior, to critique multiple forms of empire, migration and citizenship at once, and to contend with complicity and contradiction. Middle Eastern migrants and refugees have always fought from where they are with visions of where they want to be. I thus focus on their experiences and words themselves amidst a more complex accounting of the challenges they faced.

Apolitical Adventurers, Settler Logics: The "Conqueror Myth," and A Benevolent, Welcoming U.S.

Prevailing myths within Middle Eastern-American communities today continue to impact discussion on this era. Specifically, an ongoing conqueror myth, glorification of whiteness, and the absolution of the racial terror of the United States and the larger West continues in community discourse around the early period of Middle Eastern migration discussed in this chapter. Many of these discourses then go unchallenged in the academy. There are many reasons perhaps, that migrant and refugee communities do this, along with the anti-Black and settler colonial systems that drive them, and these mythologies remain. In this section, I outline some of these prevailing myths and briefly speculate why they persist and are reinforced in not only current-day community spaces but then are reproduced in academic studies and public discourses.

For example, in *Between Arab and White*, Sarah Gualtieri notes there are ongoing constructions of early Arabs migrating to the Americas as triumphant pioneers and innately predestined settlers, invoking European visions of exploration that to this day are glorified. The reinscription of colonial attitudes actually used against Middle Eastern peoples at the time

continue to persist within contemporary community organizations and formations. Gualtieri discusses that within Arab-American Studies and community discourse there exists the "romanticized theory that Syrians immigrated to the Americas because they had a predisposition, or a migratory trait."[86] That theory persists across time, as when Mulhim Halim Abduh wrote to Cairo-Based journal *al-Hilal* from North Carolina that the Phoenicians were the "first Caucasians to land in America" and or when "The Phonecian Discovery of America was the most popular presentation at the 2006 convention of the Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese American Clubs. [87] Circulations of these myths evoke supremacy, a glorious romantic sweeping history of old conquering empires, a closeness to Europe and the fantasy of the folding of West Asians into the original settler colonial enterprise of the earliest colonization of the Americas. It is no coincidence that these very arguments were demanded of petitioners by white institutions in the early twentieth century, as fundamental pillars of race science that forwarded peoples of European ancestry as biologically predestined to rule the world. And they are being taken up uncritically in community and scholarly spaces currently.

Parallel claims are made in Iranian communities, that Western civilization has its basis in Iran, the original "Aryan people." The Aryan Myth, discussed by Neda Maghbouleh, is another such intra-community discourse and device, used in Iranian-Persian communities, to showcase a closeness to whiteness and the West.[88] The claim of the Aryan Myth is that Iranians are the original white people, the basis of the name "Iran," which in turn is (re)formed into white supremacist claims to power that thus must include Iranian and Persian histories and peoples. Additionally, Martin the Armenian, a man from Iran, continues to be offered as evidence of early Armenian ingenuity and pioneering, in order to forward a message of multicultural inclusion into the legacy of the violent American settler project. Though little is known about the largely

undocumented figure, books like *Armenian Legacy in America: A 400 Year Heritage*, while incredibly generative and substantive projects, foreground and claim his singular figure as being the starting point of the Armenian presence in the United States, while deemphasizing the earliest mass Armenian communities that came as refugees and faced mass structural exclusion from U.S. social, political and economic life.[89] Marking this individual as the beginning of a proclaimed "400 years" of Armenians in the U.S. serves not only to reinscribe settler colonial logics but to also reinscribe anti-refugee attitudes even from within, as hundreds of thousands of peoples' refugees experiences are erased in the name of glorified conqueror myth. Beyond the lack of extensive documentation of this individual, existing evidence indicates he was likely an indentured servant to a European man.[90] These figures are also taken up by white supremacist power, as seen in the early success of *Syrian Yankee.* Likely one of the most well known pieces of Arab-American literature in the early twentieth century, the immigrant autobiography tells the story of Salom Rizk, who leaves his home of Ain Arab, Mount Hermon, Syria, Ottoman Empire, to achieve the "American Dream" in the United States. The book posits his homeland as backward and barbaric in contrast to the civilized and freedom-loving reality of his new home, and thus, as he argues, inspires immigrants to assimilate. It should be noted these are the kinds of texts that were elevated during the early nineteen hundreds by white supremacy, in opposition to Middle Eastern refugee figures and texts critical of the U.S. government or describing community defense against racism. For example, one must question why Rizk became so popular among white U.S. Americans. *Reader's Digest*, for example, sponsored a nationwide lecture tour for Rizk as the model American immigrant.[91]

The cover of the book, though published later in the 1940s, describes in detail his earliest migration and shows Rizk in a painted scene as he views his beautiful new country, which is contrasted with his homeland "of poverty and oppression."

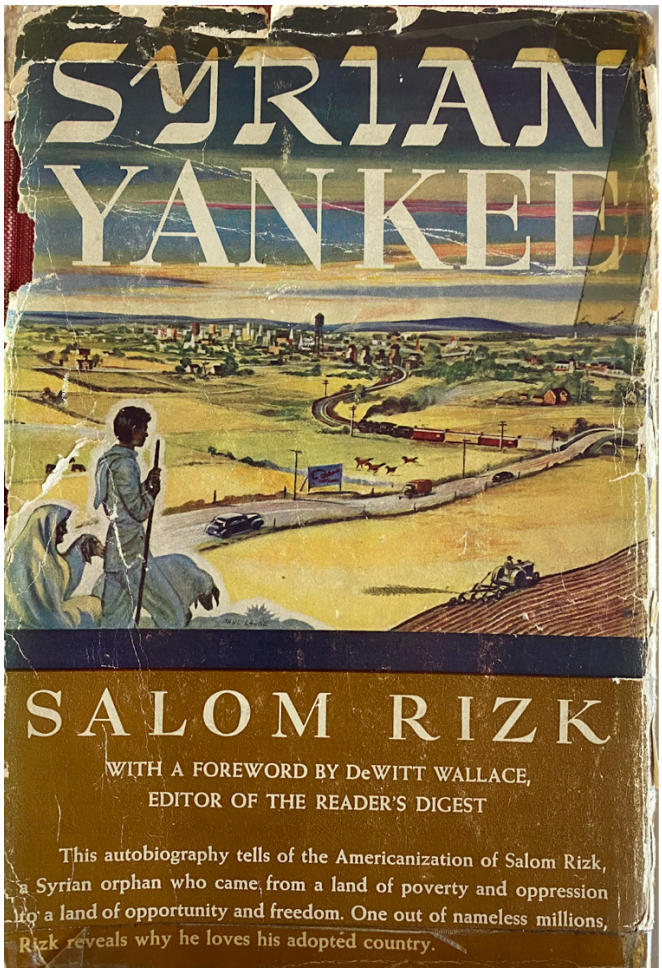


Figure 3: Cover of *Syrian Yankee* by Salom Rizk

The "Americanization " of Salom Rizk, is portrayed visually– as triumphant and idyllic, with green pastures and mechanisms of industry and development. The United States is portrayed as a place of peace and progress, which migrants like Rizk should be thankful and happy to get to experience. The text of *Syrian Yankee* also paints a romantic picture of the first time Rizk is told about the United States by his American teacher in Syria. The passage also highlights another central goal of the time, the obtaining of a passport:

> So many wonderful, unbelievable things my schoolmaster told me...the land of hope…the land of peace…the land of contentment.. The land of liberty… the land of brotherhood.. The land of plenty.. Where God has poured out wealth…where the dreams of men come true…where everything is bigger and grander and more beautiful than it has ever been anywhere else in the world…where wheat grows waist high, shoulder high, sky high, and as thick as the hair on your head…
>
> …where everyone has a chance to learn, even the humblest child of the humblest Syrian immigrant…
>
> It sounded like the fairylands my grandmother used to tell about, and I knew there were no more fairylands and no more fairies. But I wanted to believe this all, I have to believe it and I did.
>
> Where can I go there? I cried.
>
> As soon as you can get word from your brothers, Salom. "As soon as you can get a passport."
>
> "What is a passport?"
>
> "In this case, my son, it is a piece of paper that will let you into heaven on earth."[92]

A piece of paper that guarantees "heaven on earth" reveals many racial and material dimensions in the development of U.S. citizenship and whiteness during this era. The passport in *Yankee* becomes a device of shedding one's home and culture for the United States. Naming the West, and specifically the United States, as heaven, in opposition to the Eastern world, backward and rife with poverty and oppression, constructs a hierarchical binary and opposition between the two. Moreover, the addition of transnational processes of migration and their regulation, in this case the development of "passports," reveals the ways in which cultural and social data is crystalized into systems that regulate movement and demand assimilation into white Western American power. That "God has poured wealth onto" the land is not the product of stolen land and labor through genocide and chattel slavery in *Yankee*, but manifest destiny of settler claims that they are anointed from above. The need to self-inflict othering, the "humblest Syrian

immigrant" which evokes smallness, meekness, and shame, is positioned against the divinely anointed and proud U.S. American land, culture and people.

Both in the Middle Eastern-American community and outside, the conqueror and assimilation myths continue, and are inextricably tied not only to the upholding of white supremacy, but also to, power or proximity to power, as desired goal. They do so while reinscribing colonial attitudes and logics and continue to obscure violence at the hands of white European settlers and community complicity. These mythologies prove powerful today, often coupled with shame and subjugation, and rear up again and again in debates around Middle Eastern-American Census classification a hundred years later. These prevailing myths are in stark contrast to histories of early classification; the anti-Middle Eastern racism that defined the era; the anti-racism organizing of the period itself; as well as histories of violent US anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, and settler colonialism. This continues to beg the questions: who is scared of presenting and learning about U.S. racism? What and who do assimilationist narratives and immigrant success stories protect? What must be denied to be enabled? I turn now to present Middle Eastern community history in the U.S. before 1915.

White Gaze, Eastern View: Representations of the Region at the Chicago World's Fair 1893

In 1893, Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' invasion. At the fair, millions of people witnessed displays of "ethnic villages" on the Midway Plaisance. This proved to be an important place of crafting "the Orient" within the American imagination in decades to come. By an act of Congress, Dr. Cyrus Adler of the Smithsonian was appointed "Commissioner of the World's Columbian Exposition to Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Tunis, and Morocco" and arranged fair

participants from these geographies.[93] Adler worked directly with the Ottoman government at the time to secure its participation. The Ottoman government was eager to display the might of its culture, and to position itself among the world's "great" powers.[94] *The New York Times* described the affair as a "living Oriental exhibit."[95]

The World's Fair proved an important site for constituting and consolidating American Orientalism and invoking racial fantasies of the South West Asian and North African region. F. Hopkinson Smith, in "The Picturesque Side" in *Harper's Monthly Review* in 1893, describes the Midway Plaisance as "where may be seen many strange people from the uttermost parts of the earth, who, with barbaric dancing and weird music may depict the manners and customs of their times." He continues that that there "my dreams are all true…along the crowded thoroughfare move half the wild tribes of the earth-Javanese, Esquimaux, natives of the Soudan, Bedouins from the Great Desert, Algerians, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Syrians."[96] The World's Fair was a place where colonial imaginaries constructed non-Western peoples not only socially but also helped to popularize arguments of race science that deemed such people inferior to the masses of the U.S. populace. Culture became an important site of (re)producing race through the Western gaze on people of the region at the World's Fair, that in turn were built into many institutions of U.S. political, economic and social life.

On display at the fair, United States residents were witness to a wide variety of exhibitions on "the East." The fair included the Odeon Theater which promised an "introduction to the 'Turkish Empire.'" A variety of cultures and communities from the Ottoman Empire were represented that included Turks, Syrians, Egyptians, Kurds, Armenians, Circassians, Moroccans and others. The Turkish theater promised "dancing girls, manners, customs, and amusements of

all the Orient."[97] Other portions of the "ethnic villages" included a "Cairo Street," a "Damascus palace" and a "Street of Constantinople' as part of the Ottoman exhibition.

It is no coincidence that the fascination with probing and exoticizing non-Western cultures in the U.S. unfolds alongside the emergence of early American immigration (and foreign) policy institutions. The naturalization era, defined by the racial prerequisite cases of all non-Black immigrant peoples and people of color, also saw a proliferation of cultural ideas that transited meaning and classification through new technologies, from transportation to the photograph, that connected previously unconnected populations. The scale of connection was changing, as would be seen later in the first World War. The World's Fair was an important place where new ideas came into being and older ones were reinforced. This was true for U.S. perceptions, definitions and classification of people from the South West Asian and North African region.

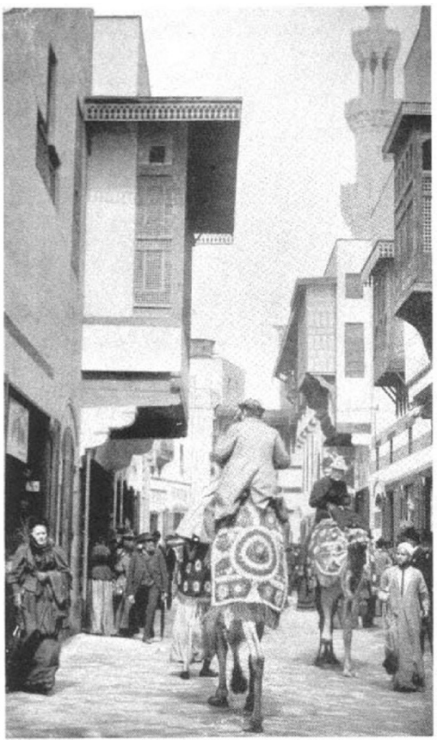


Figure 4: Cairo Street at the Chicago World's Fair, Source: The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views from the World's Columbian Exposition. Vol. 1



Figure 5: Turkish Village Chicago World's Fair, Source: Father Peter Engel

Printed in 1893 by the N.D. Thomas publishing company, *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views from the World's Columbian Exposition* provides a look into American views of the World's Fair at the time. A large publication, it is a photographic portfolio of selected pictures from the event, accompanied by descriptions of the scenes meant as a keepsake to record the Exposition's "varied beauties." The introduction of the publication revels in the event as a triumph for the United States and the Western world, listing and paying special attention to the success of the American, English, French, Dutch, German, Belgian, Italian, Austrian, and Spanish sections.

But the publication also conveys many descriptions of non-European and non-white peoples from the perspective of the American authors. Among them, it reveals U.S. racial

constructions of Middle Eastern peoples, bluntly and unapologetically. One example, is the entry under the portrait entitled "The Persian Sword Dance," an excerpt that reads as follows:

> The civilized Caucasian finds but small satisfaction in the efforts of the Asian to be interesting and entertaining. The juggler alone really captivates his audience, for prestidigitation has become a western art. But the dances of the Far East went begging on Midway Plaisance. The reason was easily found in the monotony and ear piercing nature of the music to which all dancing must be done. It may be admitted that there was a peculiar rhythm to the Turkish drums, and a certain minor roulade in the pipe-tunes; but the unceasing repetition of these sounds, with the attendant misery to the hearer of the increasing *tempo* as the dance progressed, drove away the "Christian" and kept him at a wide distance…

Many pieces of racial information and classification are conveyed in this small caption. For one, white American and other Western onlookers are called "Caucasian," which consistently appears in racial court cases of the time involving SWANA people, whether Persian, Armenian, Arab, Assyrian, Kurdish, or Turkish, as a means of them being banned from naturalization. This is notable, especially as constructed here, as it is directly framed against the Persian entertainers, who are deemed not "Caucasian" despite, of course, the fact that the Persian Empire incorporated some of the actual South Caucasus range. Second, in the caption, the West is juxtaposed to an "East," constructing the Persian swordsmen as "Asian." Like in the racial prerequisite cases, "Asian" becomes a lingering racial figure and construction placed upon Middle Eastern American bodies to produce and justify their otherness, exclusion and expulsion.



Figure 6: The Persian Swordsmen" page in *The Dream City: A Portfolio of Photographic Views from the World's Columbian Exposition*.

Also revealed in "The Persian Swordsmen" is the ways in which Persian and Ottoman Empire displays are grouped together racially in a pan-ethnic racial classification based on being "Eastern." Lastly, the device of the "Christian" constructs the Persian and Ottoman and all other Middle Eastern participants as non-Christian. Whiteness becomes the center of Christianity, with an assumed Western or specifically American onlooker as "the Christian" experiencing a foreign and racial affair. Thus, religion is invoked, implicitly Islam, as an assumed part of the performers' racialization. The construction of the Christian as in opposition to "the East" is an important half of the construction of Islam and Muslims as counterpoint, even so early on.

Ultimately, as Sarah Gualtieri theorizes, the Middle Eastern presence at the Chicago World's Fair "emphasized themes of exoticism and racial otherness."[98] As Cedric Robinson argued in *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II*, the World's Fair was an event that combined race science with popular culture, not only constructing peoples via the academic and the everyday but then disseminating such racial information to the masses through cultural work and forms, including silent cinema, which extended the racializing work of the World's Fair.[99] This paralleled the coupling of race science and the knowledge of the "common man" used as evidence in the early naturalization cases themselves. These early racial constructions of "the East" would come to color American nation and citizenship-making processes as people outside of the category of citizen.

Early Massacres: Displacement, Violence and Classification in Hamidian Times and Beyond

Meanwhile, racial violence also characterized the homeland(s) of early Middle Eastern migrants to the United States. Despite the emphasis on later massacres because of their scale, the years before 1915, which had a direct bearing on Middle Eastern migration to the United States, were also defined by state violence. The period of mass campaigns of violence against various racialized groups in the Ottoman Empire under the Sultan, is often referred to as the Hamidian massacres. The Hamidian massacres, named for Sultan Abdul Hamid II, were events of brutal slaughter and dispossession across the Ottoman Empire, especially in Armenian and Assyrian majority villages, that targeted non-Turkish people. Some major events included massacres in cities across the empire in the late 1890s, orchestrated by the Hamidian government and particularly horrifying massacres organized by local supremacists, like in Adana in 1909. These

events foreshadowed the coming attempted annihilation of the Empire's populations of Armenians and Assyrians. *The New York Times* reports on Dec. 18, 1896, "fifty thousand Armenian children made orphans by the Turkish massacres is the official estimate received at the State Department from United States Consul Bergholtz, at Erzeroum [*sic*]."[100] As Bedros DerMatossian theorizes in *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century*, the policies of racial violence in the Hamidian era transformed into the Young Turk (CUP) Revolution of 1908 and the unfolding policies of annihilation that create the Armenian and Assyrian Genocide.[101] These events reveal a throughline of ongoing racialized violence from the late 1890s to the events of 1920s. The earliest mass displacement events created waves of refugees, dispossessed from their ancestral villages and seeking refuge both in neighboring areas and venturing to find safer conditions around the world.



Figure 7: Armenian refugee camp, Adana, Ottoman Empire, 1909, Source: George Grantham Bain Collection (Library of Congress)

Most of the early ethnic enclaves of Middle Eastern peoples in the United States were started by migrants and refugees from these Hamidian times, who grew in number as conditions worsened back home and more people were driven into exile. These early events that drove migration from the Ottoman Empire continue to be erased, however, in favor of studying later periods. But during this time, racialized immigration policy that attempted to control the mobility of its unwanted peoples on both sides of the Atlantic & Pacific expanded, both U.S. American and Ottoman. And like today, migrants and refugees fought back. They did so politically or by defying draconian State bans, practicing survival as resistance, and maneuvering around racialized restrictions. And they organized to defeat the law or they undermined it, choosing at times to live above or beyond it.

The Stakes of the Naturalization Fight: The Freedom to Move– The Story of Pilibos Kazanjian, U.S. Citizenship and an 'Oriental' Rug

Even before the era of what would become one of the largest transnational refugee crises of the early twentieth century, for marginalized populations under empire, restriction of, or control over, movement was a central type of racial violence. They then came to experience restrictions on freedom of movement in the Americas. Middle Eastern populations in the waning days of the region's empires were controlled by regimes that dictated both belonging and unbelonging (via removal). Deportation was being crystallized into a State sanctioned mechanism, both in the Ottoman Empire, through its anti-Indigenous policies meant to empty the land, target, and regulate its citizenry, and in the United States, particularly through anti-Asian exclusion and Immigration bans during this era. Meanwhile nationalism had been introduced to the region and growing movements for self-determination and self-governance, which included individual rights to move and to travel, were blooming. This impacted Middle Eastern

community fights for naturalization in the United States. For Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, especially those under siege, U.S. citizenship presented a direct and tangible freedom that was a necessity for survival and central to political organizing: the freedom to move.

At play in the question of naturalization, and thus race, for early Middle Eastern migrants was a fundamental ability to connect to and quite literally travel between the United States and their homeland.[102] Indeed, much analysis of early fights for whiteness (via citizenship) and Middle Eastern migrants and refugees' quest to become American risks overemphasizing the notion of American-focused *liberal rights* and those liberal rights being *limited to* within the U.S. nation-state. Currently, discourses in whiteness studies that do not engage transnational SWANA community histories argue that the inclusion of these communities into whiteness was primarily driven by domestic dynamics of achieving internal status with European Americans. Yet the fight for naturalization (and its prerequisite whiteness) for Middle Eastern peoples was importantly and perhaps uniquely *a fight for a citizenship that would allow for travel and safety,* and particularly to protect the travel of migrants and refugees back and forth to their homelands in an era when racial classifications and regimes on both sides of the ocean limited mobility. Despite ongoing myths, their commitments were often not to the U.S. flag nor to U.S. whiteness, but rather were often deeply homeland and ethnic nationalist commitments, especially in efforts to assist political struggles, their families and villages. As I explore later, this becomes seen like life preserver of safety or escape in an ocean of death for hundreds of thousands, especially post-1915. But even early on, as systemic violence began in the Ottoman Empire, especially in rural villages, U.S. American citizenship presented a life raft of escape from what was already unfolding and what many knew was coming. Citizenship, and the battle to be included in it, was a right to move, to cross ports of exit-entry, and to not be deported. Expulsion and exile was a

prominent feature of the naturalization era for Middle Eastern peoples. Movement restrictions, felt especially by Middle Eastern refugees, were a transnational reality on both sides of the oceans they were crossing and would transform into mass displacement subsequent decades. And for one refugee, a man witnessing the Hamidian massacres and the build up to the Armenian and Assyrian Genocides of 1915, navigating the immigration and naturalization system was urgent: to establish shelter and secure money and go back, gain access to the right to move, and ultimately, over time, bring his loved ones over as soon as possible as their situation devolved, an experience repeated throughout history.

Pilibos Kazanjian came to the United States in 1887 when he was seventeen years old from Hussenig, Kharpert/Harput in the Ottoman Empire. He only stayed in the U.S. for three years.[103] Contrary to literature on this era that argues that Middle Eastern migrants were looking to enthusiastically give up their various ethnic identities and ancestral homes, Kazanjian was decidedly Armenian and traveled back and forth to his village repeatedly, each time calculating his next moves and expanding any access or materials he acquired back to his community. He was from Hussenig. Hussenig was an Armenian village in the Kharpert vilayet of the empire, one of the many Armenian provinces in Eastern Anatolia, the eastern area of the current-day Republic of Turkey. In a portrait of him and his family as a boy, he sits with his grandparents' generation and the other children, adorned with the traditional Ottoman fez that Armenians then wore. The family is dressed in traditional Armenian clothing of the Western Armenian style of the elderly and youth. They are sitting in the common Ottoman portrait style, looking directly at the camera and on top of an Ottoman Armenian rug. Ottoman photography was exploding during this time, especially Ottoman Armenian portrait studios. This family portrait reveals many important forms of Armenian culture that no longer exist today. It is unknown what is being held

by the children in the photo, though they have been colored in red after the photo was taken, and the national symbol of Armenia is a red pomegranate, which the family speculates may be a possibility. It also documents the kinship structures to which Kazanjian belonged. In the photo are Mghdesi Boghos, Aznavour Aharonian, Maritza Kazanjian, Hadji Hovhannes Khazanjian, Pilibos and his sister and Hovhannes' grandson Mihran. He had a large and close-knit family.

When he came to the United States as a teen by steamship he took on many roles and did many forms of work, including helping his family set up infrastructure for part of the family business, selling "Oriental" carpets from the homeland to U.S. Americans, a central form of work for many Armenian migrants and refugees at the time. He returned to the United States in 1896 on a second trip during the height of the Hamidian massacres of Armenians. During the duration of his stay he obtained two things of great significance: a camera and U.S. citizenship.



Figure 8: Portrait of Pilibos Kazanjian (top left in fez) as a boy with his family, Kazanjian Collection archives

Pilibos Kazanjian became a U.S. citizen in 1899.[104] To mark this occasion he wove a carpet. He took a portrait with his carpet on one of his return trips.[105]



Figure 9: Portrait of Pilibos Kazanjian with citizenship rug, location unknown but likely Istanbul. Courtesy: Kazanjian archives

In the photograph, courtesy of the Kazanjian collection, Kazanjian lays leisurely in a newly acquired Western-style suit jacket smoking a hookah pipe. The carpet hangs above him and includes a picture of a camel. On the carpet reads his last name Kazanjian, and the date of his American citizenship, 1899. The portrait was likely taken in Istanbul, though the location presently is unclear. He sits on another Armenian carpet while a hat sits beside him. It is thought that he took this photograph to send to his father as a keepsake.

In 1901, Pilibos returned to Hussenig with his Kodak camera.[106] His return home and subsequent documentation of his village's life is an invaluable resource and rare snapshot of

Kharpert, showing Armenian daily life at the time from the perspective of Armenians themselves rather than Orientalist "lookings" by Western journalists and American missionaries, including documenting Armenians attending Euphrates College (see below). Because Pilibos obtained a camera in the United States and traveled back and forth to Hussenig, these rare photographs exist and are proof of indigenous Armenian existence in Kharpert before the genocide of 1915, when the entire Armenian presence and villages there were destroyed. To this day, Pilibos' art and documentation move marginalized subjects and histories from background to foreground: the photographs and migration back and forth between Hussenig and the United States prove and show Armenian life before the Armenian Genocide, a fact which the Turkish government to this day denies and actively refutes. The joy is palpable in many of the photographs in the Kazanjian collections and shows the fullness of the lifeworlds of refugees and migrants like Kazanjian even as they navigated state-sponsored violence across oceans.

Kazanjian's life and so many others would be impacted by what was yet to come. On his last trip to the United States, Pilibos Kazanjian brought his entire family, including his wife and children. By uniting the Kazanjian photographs with recent groundbreaking scholarship by Zeynep Dervim Gürsel, [107] I believe that Kazanjian and his family may have been part of the *terk-i tabiiyet* system. *Terk-i tabiiyet* was geared specifically toward the indigenous Armenian populations of the Ottoman Empire and required coordination and surveillance by Ottoman and American authorities. Starting in 1896, it was one of the earliest examples of transnational immigration regulation (and restriction) systems that used photography to document and control the freedom of movement of certain peoples. As Gürsel has reflected, "studying these photographs has meant learning to see them both as photographs that emerged from a very specific set of contingencies shaping life and politics in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman

Empire and as images that foreshadow the rise of the document-based global mobility regimes that govern citizenship and mobility today."[108] The family being from Kharpert, ending up in Rhode Island, and making the final journey together, never to return, are clues that point to this possibility.

Known at this time, however, is the family portrait of Pilibos with his wife and children is an immigration photo. The family speculates it is a passport photo. It documents their travel to the United States and the family's final departure from the homeland.



Figure 10: Pilibos Kazanjian on his one of his migrations, sitting (left) on a carpet aboard a steamship between the United States and Hussenig, Kharpert [109]



Figure 11: Armenians in front of Euphrates College, taken during Kazanjian's return to Kharpert, Kazanjian archives



Figure 12: Armenians in Kharpert/Harput, Ottoman Empire, (bottom second to left) likely using Kazanjian's camera from the United States, Courtesy: Kazanjian archives



Figure 13: Kazanjian's family (his father smiling and son), taken by Kazanjian during his return to Kharpert



Figure 14: Pilibos and his wife and children, passport photograph of his final trip from Kharpert to the United States. They family would never return to their village again.



Figure 15: Pilibos Kazanjian later in life in the United States, weaving a carpet

Photographs reveal a lot about Kazanjian's life. The remarkable portraits Kazanjian took of Armenian schoolboys in front of Euphrates College documents important historical realities. On the surface, the photo shows Armenians outside a distinct and notable location, the college created by Americans that many Armenians attended.[110] This puts masses of Armenians at the college, which, as thousands of sources document, occurred, despite ongoing Turkish state denial. But the photos of Armenian students outside the Euphrates College and around Hussenig are also unique and intimate moments of everyday life that could only be captured by someone who is part of that everyday life, a part of the community. The ways the photographs appear, and the affective experience they emanate, stand in stark contrast to Western missionary and government documentation of the time. These photos are done by indigenous hands of his village, of his people, of his friends and loved ones, and his way of life. They are not staged in a

studio but among the people and the land. And as the people and land invite him in, so too do they invite viewers.

The solemn family passport portrait (that may be a terk-i tabiiyet photograph), especially in contrast to the vibrant portraits taken, has a different tone. In the photograph Kazanjian looks directly into the camera in a way that is different from the portrait with the hookah and his rug. The gaze is one of someone confronting his own conditions and in a context that by this time is marked by increasing violence. If in fact part of the program, the image confirms his own forever dispossession, and regardless the moment captures the family leaving their ancestral home. They never return to Hussenig again. The photos of Pilibos Kazanjian reveal his important events of his life, including from his own perspective. They counter hegemonic lookings and reveal intimate moments that are captured by native hands. The story of Kazanjian helps reveals important dimensions of early U.S. citizenship, the freedom to move, in a context when movement and migration is increasingly being controlled, surveilled, restricted and driven by State actors. Kazanjian went back and forth multiple times between the United States and Hussenig. He used his U.S. citizenship to travel between and expand access for his community. The story of Kazanjian reveals a fundamental reality, that is a key part of the fight for citizenship for Middle Eastern peoples during this era--the freedom to move across borders.

Presumed Threat, Early Watchlists: Race, Bans, and the Limiting of Mobility of Migrants and Refugees in the Pre-World War I Era

I turn now to discuss mobility and migration restrictions on early Middle Eastern peoples before World War I that impacted indigenous communities particularly who were targets of the state. The work of Zeynep Gürsel and David Gutman reveal the ways in which Ottoman migrant and particularly Ottoman Armenian migrant movement was watched, restricted and controlled.

As mentioned in discussion of the Kazanjian family, Gürsel has identified the *terk-i tabiiyet* program as a large-scale process of unbelonging, that signaled Middle Eastern migrants and refugees severance from their Ottoman homeland, and specifically for Armenians meant they could never step foot on their ancestral homeland again. David Gutman reveals other migration processes, the Ottoman actions that immediately preceded the *terk-i tabiiyet* system, the prohibition of Armenians from leaving the Ottoman Empire to America, under the accusation that they were using their migration to organize against the empire. These ultimately use converging logics and require transnational systems of migration regulation to execute. The Ottoman sultan first tried to ban Armenians traveling to the United States, and then issued a decree that if they did they would no longer be Ottomans and never get to return to their ancestral land again.

According to Gürsel, *terk-i tabiiyet* was a racialized system between 1896 and 1908 where Armenians were allowed to travel to the United States only if the renounced their Ottoman nationality and gave up the right to ever step foot in their homeland again.[111] Indeed, this program came about through conditions in the Empire. Migrants were denied the right to return because they were deemed an inherent security threat because of who they were, and what they would get access to or do in the United States. The Ottoman sultan was afraid of their organizing. The Ottoman government was afraid of their national liberation movement. These programs attempted to control the mobility of racial others, echoing eerily to policies of nation states today. *Terk-i tabiiyet* was dispossession, criminalization and surveillance in action, racial violence routinized via administrative bureaucracy and the marking of indigenous bodies as enemy and foreigner, who were deemed untrustworthy in their oversees activities and thus could not be allowed to return. It was a bureaucratic expulsion. I push further the idea of

criminalization and unbelonging that Gürsel reveals, to describe this program as a type of proto-"terrorist watchlist." Like the U.S. programs of today, these programs were based in racial fears and logics as a way to secure borders from "enemy threats." It was ethnically based and targeted a group because the State was particularly paranoid about if they had access to any type of power, especially that of nationalists in the U.S., and then constructed the total population as guilty by association, by birth. The Ottoman government was incredibly nervous about the ability of ethnic Armenians to move freely to and in the United States where they could build material resources and organizing politically and collectively. The Ottoman government believed the Armenian villagers could not be trusted. The program intended to surveil and control on one hand while cutting off freedom of movement and connection to their homeland on the other.[112] The program also shows both the early origins and continuity of what would become systemic deportation mandates, mobility control, and mass forced expulsion as a "final solution" in the Armenian and Assyrian Genocide. A watchlist requires suspicion of the listed, that casts them as inherently a threat, *a threat to Ottoman national security*. The same ideological justification later for their mass nationwide slaughter. *Terk-i tabiiyet* is a racialized immigration process, because of who they are, who they were born as. Meanwhile, migrants were often looking for ways to maneuver and get around these laws.

David Gutman outlines the earlier phase when immigration restrictions were used to keep Ottoman Armenian nationals in, prohibiting them from leaving to the United States which they could only do by permission of the Sultan and which required coordination between states. The idea was the same in restricting their movement and keeping them in or out. In the eyes of the state stopping their movement was to stop their movements, for self-determination, political rights, and the crowdsourcing of material resources. The interaction of the Ottoman and

American authorities during this era reveal the origins of historic systems of race and oppression that continue today. Anti-refugee and anti-migrant racism was always a pillar of anti-Middle Eastern racism in the United States since the beginning of migrations and mass displacements of Middle Eastern peoples to the United States. As David Gutman writes on the connections between the present and past:

> ...the migrant and refugee crisis [of today] has emboldened and empowered xenophobic rightwing movements from Hungary to the United States, where the figure of the Middle Eastern migrant has been cast as a threat to stability and to civilization itself. The current situation in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions is not without precedent. In fact, at the turn of the twentieth century, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were at the front and center of several developments that would profoundly reshape how states throughout the world govern mobility.[113]

According to Gutman in 1888, the Ottoman government enforced a strict ban on Armenian oversees migration to the United States. They were not allowed to leave without explicit permission from the Sultan. This earlier migration ban "introduced by the autocratic regime of Sultan Abdulhamid was motivated by Istanbul's belief that migration was directly related to the almost simultaneous emergence and rapid growth of political networks and organizations that sought greater autonomy or full independence for the empire's Armenian populations"[114] The immigration policies were rooted in the Ottoman's fear that the looming terrorist figure would upend the Empire. For the Hamidian regime, Armenian migrants were synonymous with the enemy within. Later, the charge of "traitor" "enemy within" comes to be used the justification of why 1.5 million Armenians and Assyrians are exterminated, they are all guilty, by birth.

The Ottoman State and the United States worked together to limit the mobility of Armenians. According to Gutman, Ottoman "concern about the threat returned migrants posed to the political stability of the empire…resonated with American political elites who harbored their own anxieties about 'uncontrolled' mobility. Partly in response to pressure from the Ottoman

State, the United States ceased to recognize the naturalized status of most Armenian returnees beginning in 1901, effectively stripping them of their United States citizenship." Armenians were at the mercy of the anti-migration policies of both states and these governments were coordinating to control and watch them. Gutman reveals, that the United States government was canceling the naturalization of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire who came to the United States obtained citizenship and then went back to their villages in the Ottoman Empire, and doing so by coordinating with the Ottoman government. Naturalization and the freedom of movement was regulated and restricted by these empires over the bodies of these marginalized subjects, together. These enforced these restrictions in an era marked by the outbreak of massacres in Armenian and Assyrian populated towns at the hands of Turkish nationalists. The 1888 Hamidian decree outlines the logic of the Ottoman sultan in restricting the movement of the Armenians. The 1888 Hamidian decree states as follows:

> The government takes no issue with our subjects traveling to America and other places for legitimate commercial purposes. Nevertheless, it is suspected that some Armenians are migrating to find work or for other purposes to 'completely and utterly free' countries such as the United States. Furthermore, it should be assumed that some Armenians who migrate purportedly for educational purposes have instead been encouraged by seditious political organizations to go to America so that they may benefit from the freedom of expression that exists there in order to spread their well-known agenda among the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, And when these individuals return (to the empire) they will spare no expense to poison minds wherever they go. From now on, migrants intending to go to America and similar locations ostensibly to find work, but with the real intent of devoting themselves to the service of such pernicious objectives must not be granted passports, and they must be fully prohibited from departing the empire.[115]

The decree is transparent in its assessment of the "Armenian problem." According to the Ottoman state, like in the actions that follow in subsequent decades, Armenians, and in this case Armenian migrants, and their freedom, are a direct national security threat to the Ottoman state. On the one hand, the Ottoman Empire is constructing an enemy. It is naming the existence of Armenian political organizations in the United States and naming such organizations as a direct

threat to its power. On the other hand, the decree also shows the importance of migration for organizing political struggles that were unable to operate in the same ways within the homeland. According to Gutman, especially following the 1905 attempted assassination of Sultan Abdulhamid, the Ottoman state began deporting Armenians suspected of having illegally returned to the empire after being in North America. This aligns with Gürsel's work and with Armenian and Arab writings at the time and makes sense of the ways in which exiles, and migrants in the diaspora come to be central to the nationalist struggles for self determination at home. And thus, naturalization becomes a process with high stakes that cannot be canceled for these peoples who have little alternatives. Early on, in order to travel back and forth naturalization becomes a vehicle for mobility. Then as return to the Ottoman Empire becomes impossible, naturalization becomes necessity as they are now stateless and need it to survive the new U.S. terrain. Given these realities and restrictions, like today, institutional efforts to prohibit migration and movement led to the emergence of underground networks of smuggling to help migrants and refugees get around the law. As Gutman's work details, Armenians, Arabs, Assyrians and other groups of the Empire organized elaborate transnational networks to defy the immigration restrictions and move people during these times, representing another form of everyday transnational organizing in the face of racial immigration regimes. And these conditions coupled with increasingly frequent outbreaks of mass violence describe the transnational backdrop for the Arab and Armenian prerequisite cases of 1909 and 1910.

Immigration regimes required, created, and necessitated a racialized Other both in the Ottoman Empire and the United States. As these dynamics happened in ports of exit and entry on Ottoman and American shores, exclusion from the nation also happened in cities across the United States. For migrants and refugees who did arrive in the United States, their ethnic

enclaves became spaces though physically within the U.S. nation, were constructed as if outside of the nation. I turn now to briefly discuss the ways in which U.S. Americans constructed concentrations of early Middle Eastern peoples in various neighborhoods within the United States.

Home and White Looking (in): Print Newspaper and the Representations of Early Ethnic Enclaves

For Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, the white gaze constructed not only their homelands, but, as people began to migrate in greater numbers to the United States, also the Middle Eastern neighborhoods they would come to inhabit upon arrival. Ethnic enclaves of Ottoman and Persian Empire nationals sprung up across the United States, oftentimes through codified housing discrimination and other forms of exclusion, which gathered them tightly into small areas. With them came racialized representations of these communities in white America's institutions and publications. These depictions were omnipresent in U.S. newspapers, which, regardless of ethnic background, demonstrated recurring fascination with Middle Eastern neighborhoods at large, and an ongoing anti-Middle Eastern Othering, an indication of pan-ethnic racialization at the time. In 1905, for example, *The New York Times* published an "exposé" on a "Syrian" Arab neighborhood in New York. A depiction that was astoundingly critical and decidedly racist, the article characterizes the enclave as filled with ungrateful migrants who freeload off the U.S. system, and tribal menaces continually warring against each other and bothering white peace. The essay says of inter-community conflict in the Syrian neighborhood:

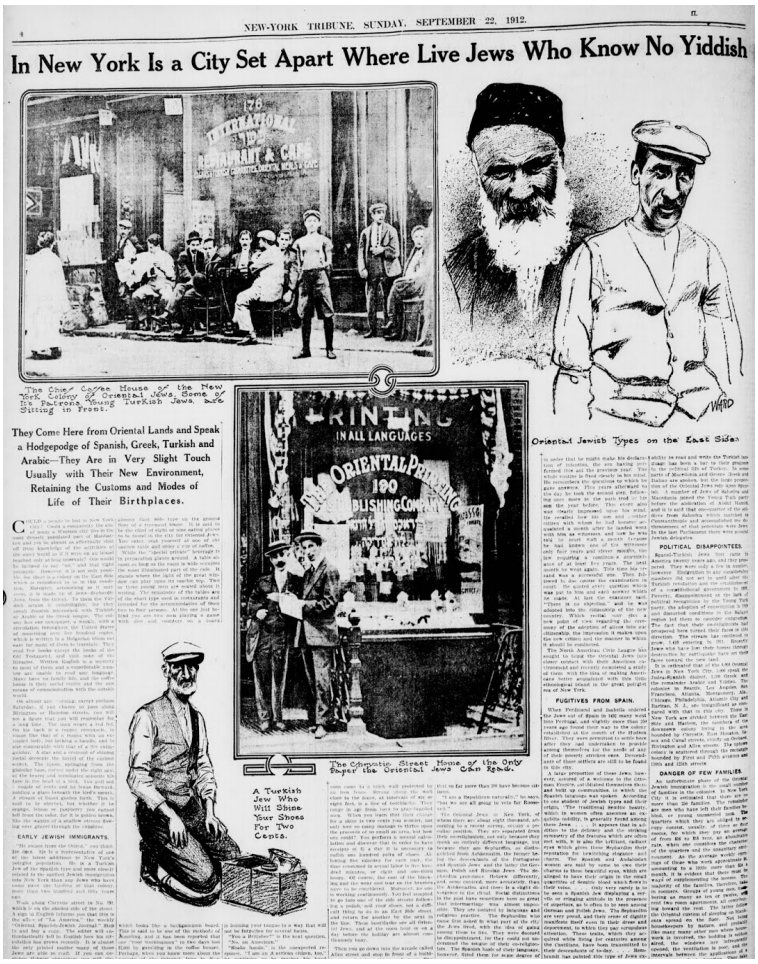
> They came here hither as to a refuge, with famine hunting them to the shores they were abandoning, and the piled up tribal feuds of thousands of years behind them. Having

> found a place where they were protected and could not only get their daily bread but also lay up a little money, to say nothing of the effulgent prospect that their posterity would sometime exfoliate into American citizenship, becoming heirs of all the ages and straddling proudly ahead in the foremost files of time—having, as we remark, compassed all the good and bounteous things by the mere force of coming here, one would think they would sit down and rest and be thankful instead of flying at each other's throats every little while, like Connemara bulldogs.[116]

The disdain of the newspaper for the inhabitants of the Arab neighborhood in one of the country's largest publications at the time is palpable and biting. Each line condemns the neighborhood as a disturbance and nuisance, painting a picture of the community as inherently violent and transgressive of white civil codes and morality. Building off this, the newspaper claims they have "compassed all the good and bounteous things" unearned and yet are not "thankful." The *Times* speaks directly of citizenship, claiming with annoyance Syrians are "protected," unlike in their homelands, specifically bestowed naturalization, despite being an affront to whiteness and its (living) standards, and thus they should shape up and act accordingly. The paragraph then concludes by comparing the Syrians to animals, specifically an Irish dog originally bred for fighting. Ultimately, home for these communities becomes another site of racialized inspection, surveillance, and condemnation for Middle Eastern peoples in the United States that is up for scrutiny and used by white supremacy as justification for their inherent racial difference and subhuman inferiority.

If Middle Eastern ethnic neighborhoods weren't actively being condemned, then they were being ogled at and exoticized in U.S. publications. Bewilderment at the ways of Middle Eastern migrant and refugee enclaves in U.S. cities worked to create clear boundaries between the peoples and white populations, emphasizing their neighborhoods' foreignness and incompatibility within the larger geography in which they were lodged. An example of Middle Eastern migrant neighborhoods facing these representations of racial unbelonging appeared in a

New York Tribune article on September 22, 1912 titled "In New York Is a City Apart Where Live Jews Who Know No Yiddish." This time, unlike *The New York Times* article, the subjects were not Syrian Arabs, but Turkish Jews. Here the enclave is depicted as "apart," a distinct place, marked by racial difference. The article described them as "oriental jewish types [sic]" and makes comments on their appearances. Furthermore, the essay marks Middle Eastern Jews as different from European Jewish groups, making an assumption and articulating surprise that "they come here from *oriental lands*[117] and "speak a hodgepodge of Spanish, Greek, Turkish, and Arabic."[118] Even visually, the article is full of racial meaning. Accompanying the test is a photograph of a group of Turkish Jews in front of a coffee house, a common place of gathering, kinship and belonging for people from the center of the Ottoman Empire. The audience, interpellated as white, is looking in, on foreign Middle Eastern daily life, practices and customs. The article notes that many of those interviewed have in fact been naturalized. Ultimately the article speaks of the ways in which ethnic enclaves were Othered and exotified, and simultaneously provides recorded evidence of the fact that many early Middle Eastern people both lived in community-focused and isolated enclaves that preserved their traditions while simultaneously holding American citizenship.



NEW-YORK TRIBUNE, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1912.

In New York Is a City Set Apart Where Live Jews Who Know No Yiddish

They Come Here from Oriental Lands and Speak a Hodgepodge of Spanish, Greek, Turkish and Arabic—They Are in Very Slight Touch Usually with Their New Environment, Retaining the Customs and Modes of Life of Their Birthplaces.

The Chief Coffee House of the New York Colony of Oriental Jews, Some of Its Patrons, Young Turkish Jews, Are Sitting in Front.

Oriental Jewish Types on the East Side.

The Cosmopolitan Street House of the Only Paper the Oriental Jews Can Read.

A Turkish Jew Who Will Shine Your Shoes For Two Cents.

EARLY JEWISH IMMIGRANTS.

POLITICAL DISAPPOINTEES.

FUGITIVES FROM SPAIN.

DANGER OF FEW FAMILIES.

Figure 16: Portion of "In New York Is a City Apart Where Live Jews Who Know No Yiddish," *The New York Times*, September 22, 1912

Early naturalization did not protect Middle Eastern migrants from the Othering in the U.S. that would eventually become the foundation of the challenges to their citizenship on the basis of race. While white American audiences othered non-white nations at places like the World's Fair and through various forms of Orientalist art, film, and literature, early representations of Middle Eastern ethnic enclaves in U.S news publications indicate the construction of inferior racial difference also extended beyond the racialization of their homelands directly onto Middle Eastern bodies once they were in the United States. Indeed, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in the United States became an extension of the American imaginaries of the lands from which they came, their ethnic enclaves like islands surrounded by land. Despite their religious,

ethnic, or cultural background, Middle Eastern peoples once in the United States were constructed as backward, foreign, immoral, exotic, and, most centrally, "undesirable" and grouped through racial difference in contrast to U.S. whiteness. They were constructed as outside the U.S. nation despite being physically in it. These everyday depictions would come to halls of United States courtrooms in systemic attempts to deny Middle Eastern peoples the ability to become American citizens.

Early Challenges to Middle Eastern Naturalization, the Cases of 1909-1910

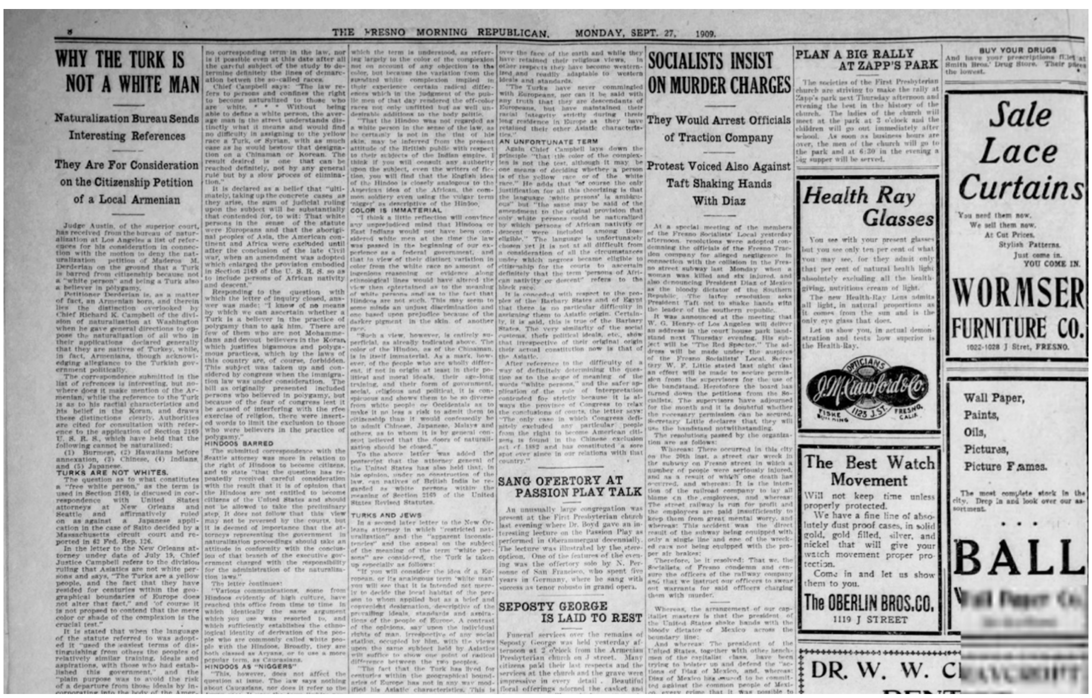
Racialized place, belonging and meaning came to a head in the fight for naturalization that ensued in 1909-1910. The substantial growth in the number of migrants, refugees, and exiles coming to the U.S. and seeking naturalization after 1909 resulted in concentrated ethnic enclaves developing and increased contact between white Americans and Middle Eastern migrants and refugees, and the white federal government and these communities. Certain Middle Eastern migrants early on had been granted American citizenship without much legal contestation from the U.S. government. For example, Sarah Gualtieri writes that Syrians who had applied for citizenship "before 1909 had been granted it without much deliberation."[119] This all changed with the landmark racial prerequisite cases of Middle Eastern petitioners in 1909 and 1910. The United States government would step in and declare that Arab and Armenian petitioners could not be granted naturalization because they were not white.

In 1909-1910, four cases occurred where the U.S. government denied the naturalization applications of Middle Eastern peoples: Shisham, Najour, Halladjian, and Ellis, all classified as "Turks in Asia," who were Syrian-Lebanese or Armenian petitioners and all former Ottoman nationals. In each case, the government rejected the initial petitions by drawing a color line with the petitioners on the other side of it. These decisions sent fear and shockwaves through the

community, whose members were embattled in various forms of exclusion from and in their homelands and now in their host country, via the nascent immigration and naturalization systems. These legal challenges by the U.S. government against Middle Eastern peoples on the basis of race targeted peoples already vulnerable in their homelands, making them desperate in many cases to obtain citizenship. The modern immigration system was being built on top of them, and with that, now the U.S. citizenship system, as migrants outside the white/Black binary. The stage was set for determining citizenship, and it would be done as all American institutions were and would be built, through racial hierarchy and categorization. Middle Eastern communities, aware of the stakes in the fight for citizenship, navigated the racial contours of their new host country and organized through and around it. Various ethnic groups from the region continued to be viewed institutionally and socially in relation to each other and to other groups, in various forms of "pan" categories.

The wrath of the federal government unleashed on these petitioners included one particularly zealous white supremacist top-ranking official, the head of the Naturalization Division within the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization at the time: Richard K. Campbell. As Richard Soash reveals, "convinced that the Syrian-Lebanese and Armenians lacked the civic values necessary for American citizenship, Campbell sought to prevent individuals of the two groups from being able to complete the naturalization process" and did so with a fiery passion.[120] Campbell made his crusade against Syrian-Lebanese and Armenian naturalization and thus whiteness clear in his letters to two U.S. attorneys Andrew J. Balliet and Charleton R. Beatty.[121] Portions of these letters were reprinted in *The Fresno Morning Republican* on Sep 27, 1909. In the article, entitled "Why the Turk is Not a White Man," the Naturalization Division head outlined why he believes Syrians and Armenians are not white and must not be admitted for U.S.

naturalization. Campbell argues to U.S. attorney Charleton R. Beatty that Turkey's social and political structures are in fundamental opposition to the United States[122] and thus Ottomans such as Syrians and Armenians were Asiatics "in a very essential sense," and were "an element of danger" if they "entered in any large numbers into the body politic of the United States."[123] Armenians of Fresno, and Middle Eastern peoples at large, awoke to this article which not only included one of the highest ranking naturalization federal official's denial of their belonging in the country in meticulous detail but under subheadings that used white supremacist arguments and racial slurs that targeted Indians, Armenians, Syrians/Lebanese, East Asians, Black people and Jewish people, like "Hindoo N******", "Whites as Europeans" only, and emphasizing the difference between "Turks and Jews," the first being non-white as opposed to the latter. This was the climate these petitioners were up against, and the system within which these cases were firmly lodged.


THE FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN. MONDAY, SEPT. 27, 1909.

WHY THE TURK IS NOT A WHITE MAN

Naturalization Bureau Sends Interesting References

They Are For Consideration on the Citizenship Petition of a Local Armenian

TURKS ARE NOT WHITES.

HINDOOS BARRED

COLOR IS IMMATERIAL

AN UNFORTUNATE TERM

TURKS AND JEWS

SOCIALISTS INSIST ON MURDER CHARGES

They Would Arrest Officials of Traction Company

Protest Voiced Also Against Taft Shaking Hands With Diaz

SANG OFERTORY AT PASSION PLAY TALK

SEPOSTY GEORGE IS LAID TO REST

PLAN A BIG RALLY AT ZAPP'S PARK

Health Ray Glasses

The Best Watch Movement

The OBERLIN BROS.CO. 1119 J STREET

BUY YOUR DRUGS

Sale Lace Curtains

WORMSER FURNITURE CO.

Wall Paper, Paints, Oils, Pictures, Picture Frames.

BALL

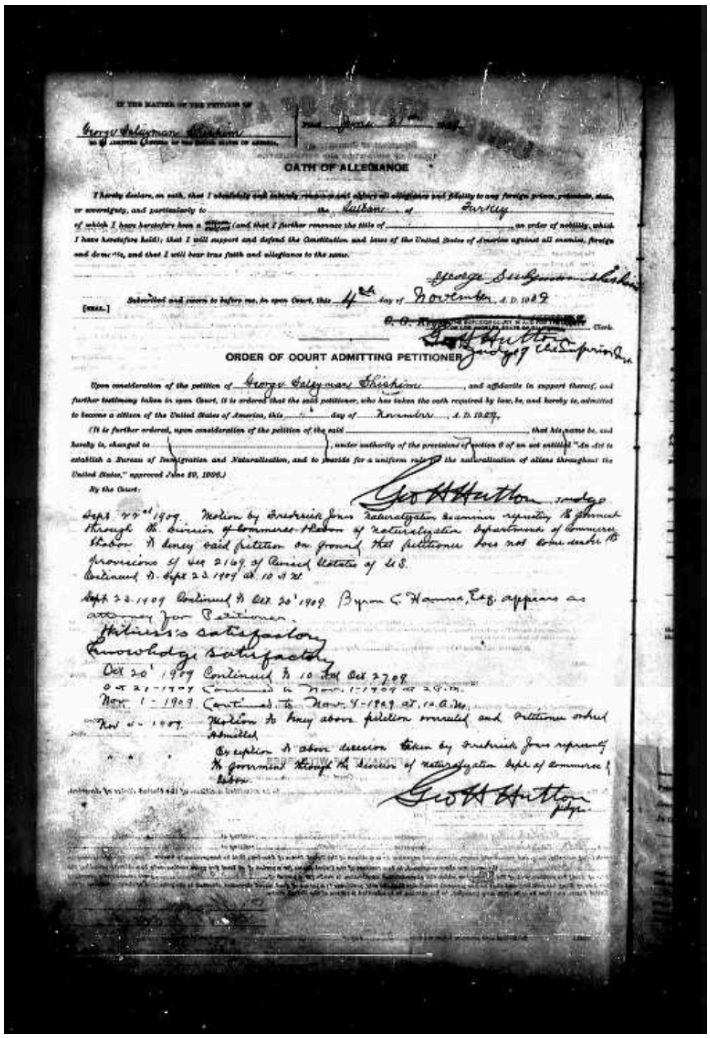
DR. W. W. C

Figure 17: "Why The Turk is Not a White Man" U.S. government official argues why the Armenian, Arab and other Ottoman defendants in the prerequisite cases are not white, *The Fresno Morning Republican*, 1909

The government acted swiftly to deny Middle Eastern applicants the right to naturalize. In *George Shishim v. United States* (1909), the U.S. government attempted to block George Shishim's naturalization petition. Shisham was a policeman in California and his case was heard in Los Angeles. As the presiding judge, Judge Hutton, declares "the federal government, acting through the department of justice, objects to his admission, basing its objection on the sole ground that he is not a member of the white race in contemplation of section 2169 of the revised statutes of the United States." Shisham's case, according to Gualtieri, was "the first Syrian racial prerequisite case to provoke a coordinated response by Syrians."[124] According to his naturalization petition, George Salayman Shisham was born on April 15, 1880 in Zahle, Syria (Lebanon), Ottoman Empire.[125] He emigrated from France on board a steamship. His problems with the law and whiteness came after he arrested the son of a prominent lawyer. The man claimed Shisham could not charge him because he was not a U.S. citizen and not white.[126]



Figure 18: Portrait of George Shisham of *Shisham v. United States*, Source: Sarah Gualtieri[127]



OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

ORDER OF COURT ADMITTING PETITIONER

Figure 19: Shisham's 1909 Naturalization file, *National Archives and Records Administration*

The U.S. Syrian community at the time was greatly disturbed by Shisham's case and worry spread that the outcome would set a dangerous precedent for them all. Leading members of the Syrian community of Los Angeles pooled their resources to hire Shisham's lawyer.[128] Some of them included Phares A. Behannesey, Mike George, Elias Shedoudy, Nick Baida, Saleem Sawaya, and John Safady, who strategized his case and rallied the Syrian community to Shisham's aid.[129] The defense cites a wide range of evidence to prove Shisham is white and his naturalization is won. Judge Hutton cited legal precedent in the courts, claiming that the legal

system “whenever called upon for more than a century, constructed the term ‘white person’ of members of the white race to include Syrians.”[130]

In re Najour was another important Middle Eastern racial prerequisite case among the cases of 1909-1910. Costa George Najour was a Lebanese Christian residing in Georgia. His naturalization petition was denied on the grounds that he wasn’t white. The petitioner appealed *In re Najour,* which took place with presiding Judge Newman. Particularly noteworthy during the Najour case was the way in which visual scrutiny was used. Records of the case indicate that the lawyer for the U.S. government, desperate to prove Najour was not white, had Najour take off his shirt. Najour began to comply but then Judge Newman stopped him.[131] Ultimately, thanks to the citation of race science and Najour’s arguments around the closeness of Syrian-Lebanese Christianity and white Western Christianity, among others, he wins his case.

Another early case involved a petitioner who was a former Ottoman national. *In re Halladjian* was a naturalization case heard in the United States Circuit Court for the District of Massachusetts. The Armenian petitioner was named Jabob or “Hagop” Halladjian. James Ferral, an attorney representing the U.S. government in the *Halladjian* case argued that Armenians were ineligible for US citizenship because among other reasons, the “average man” viewed them as non-white. Ferral proclaimed that “without being able to define a white person, the average man in the street understands what it means, and would find no difficulty in assigning to the yellow race a Turk or Syrian with as much ease as he would bestow the designation on a Chinaman or Korean.”[132] After much back and forth, the Judge ultimately grants Halladjian naturalization. He does so on the grounds of Armenians' ability to be assimilated into white culture. The Judge asks, have “many Armenians ‘become westernized and readily adaptable to European standards?’(and) the answer is, “Yes, they have dealt in business with Greeks, Slavs, and

Hebrews, as well as with Turks, they have sought a modern education at Robert College and other American schools in the East, and they have pursued by immigration the civilization of Great Britain and of the United States."[133] The judge particularly invokes the American missionary schools (who were also attempting to convert Eastern Christians) in the Ottoman Empire. He also at times differs from other period opinions that Asiatics were always non-white. Indeed, he proclaims in his ruling, that "while an exhaustive search of the voluminous records of this court, sitting as a court of naturalization, has been impossible, yet some early instances have been found where not only western Asiatics, but even Chinese, were admitted to naturalization."[134]

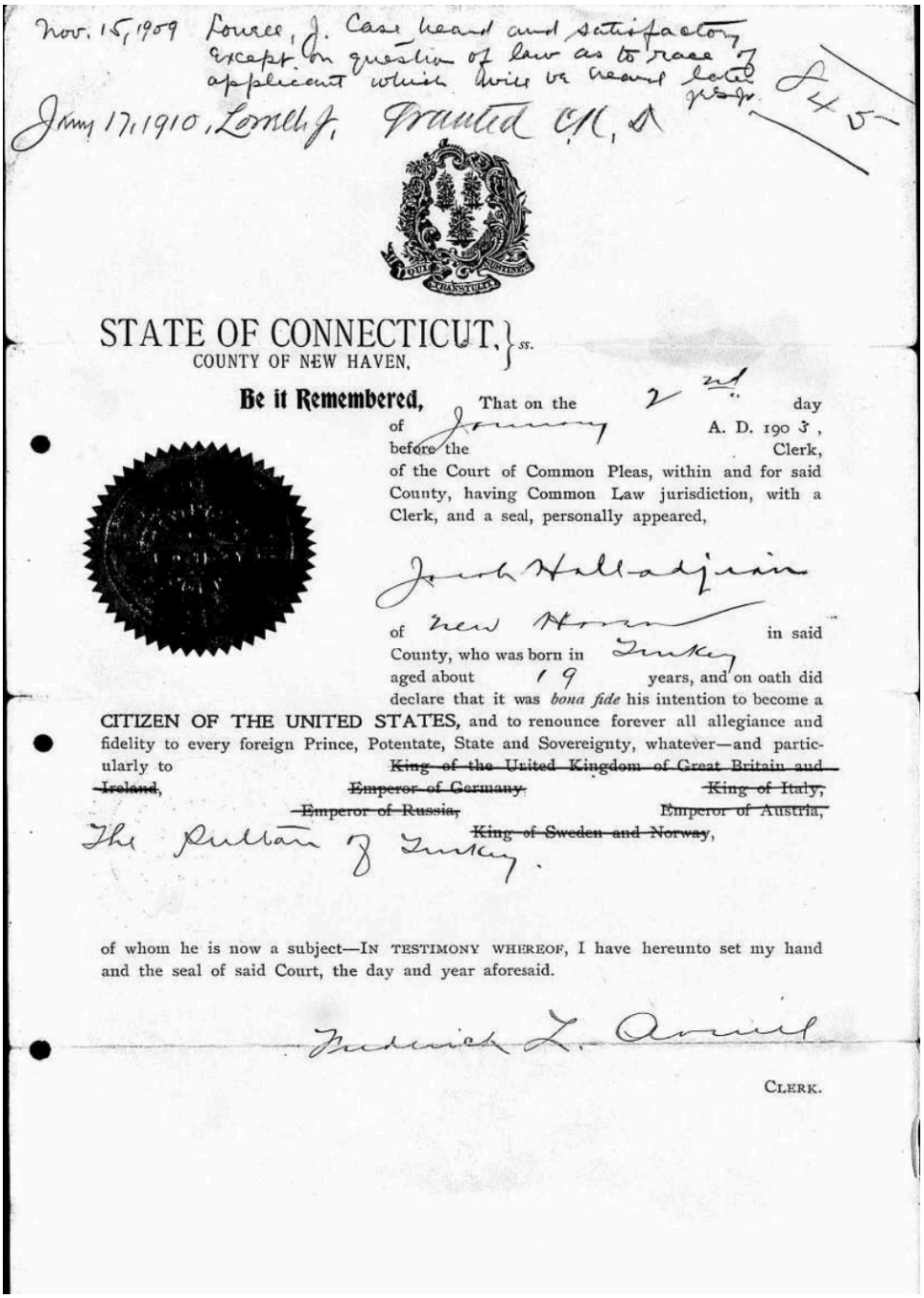
While much information has been brought forward thanks to critical Arab American Studies scholars on the Arab petitioners of this early part of the naturalization, little has been written or researched about the Armenian applicants. After much digging, I found original sources of information on Hagop "Jacob" Halladjian, one of the petitioners in the famous case entitled *In re Halladjian*. Information on him has been difficult to find because of the transliteration of the Armenian surname Halladjian in U.S. records, which actually appears as Halladjian, Hallodjian and Kalajian, among other spellings. I addressed this problem by thinking about how the Armenian pronunciation of Halladjian could differ in appearance, and I searched for variations I could come up with in Mark Aslan's invaluable database of WWI and WWII military records of soldiers. I cross referenced this with any newspaper article of the time I could find that would print his full name, which is surprisingly few, and often he is just referred to as an "Armenian."

In the National Archives records, I found Jacob Halladjian's Declaration of Intention to become a United States citizen. There are many important pieces of evidence in this document that speak to both Halladjian as a person and to the larger systems of race he was navigating. The

Declaration of Intention was filled on January 2, 1903, when Jacob Halladjian appeared before a clerk. The document indicates Halladjian was born in Turkey and is "about 19 years" old. His birthday on various records appears as January 1, in either 1883 or 1884. January 1 was and often is used as a placeholder for immigrants when a birthdate was not known.

Most importantly, additional writing on the document added after his case reveals the fight he ultimately endures for his naturalization. The top of the document reads "Nov. 15, 1909 - Ferral, J. Case heard and satisfactory except on question of law as to race of applicant which will be heard latter *[illegible word]*."[135] This refers to the U.S. attorney who works on behalf of the government to deny Halladjian is white in court. Right below that is another written line, in a different handwriting style, presumably written by someone else, which states "[*Jan or June (illegible)]* 17, 1910, Lowell J. Granted *[illegible]*." These added, handwritten lines indicate this is the Halladjian of *In re Halladjian*. The declaration is filed in the State of Connecticut, in the County of New Haven. Particularly important and interesting in the document is that its template, the printed form itself, defines "European" specifically as the basis for naturalization, and thus whiteness. The form only allows those who are declaring intent, to indicate they are renouncing loyalty to the "King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" "Emperor of Germany" "King of Italy" "Emperor of Russia" "King of Sweden and Norway."[136] On these documents, these lines have been crossed out (by someone, likely the clerk) and in their place below the lines reads "The Sultan of Turkey." This form evidences the ways in which Europeanness or European ancestry was a stipulation of early U.S. citizenship and a requirement of U.S. belonging, and also the ways in which Middle Eastern petitioners were quite literally outside the notion of citizenship presumed and then administered by the United States. It details that early American citizenship for non-Black immigrants required they be white. The petitioner

is assumed to be European and as Halladjian's form is filled out, his existence quite literally necessitates the scratching out and rewriting of the form. Another document corroborates his information. Halladjian registered for the draft amid World War I on September 12, 1918 in Woburn City, Massachusetts.[137] At the time, he was 35 years old. His nearest relative is listed as Rachail Halladjian, his wife.[138] Furthermore, the 1930 Census lists "Jacob Hallagian" as 47 with the birthplace of "Armenia," color "white" years after his naturalization case is won, and residence in Watertown, Massachusetts. His wife is listed as "Rachel Hallagian," an Anglicized version of her name, with five daughters, Beatrice, Alice, Eleanor, Mildred, and Doris, and one son, Albert.[139]



Nov. 15, 1909 Lowell, J. Case heard and satisfactory, except on question of law as to race of applicant which will be heard later pro se. $4.50

Jany 17, 1910, Lowell J. Granted C.H.D.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT, } ss.
COUNTY OF NEW HAVEN,

Be it Remembered, That on the 2nd day of January A. D. 1903, before the Clerk, of the Court of Common Pleas, within and for said County, having Common Law jurisdiction, with a Clerk, and a seal, personally appeared,

Jack Halladjian

of New Haven in said County, who was born in Turkey aged about 19 years, and on oath did declare that it was *bona fide* his intention to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty, whatever—and particularly to ~~King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland,~~ ~~Emperor of Germany,~~ ~~King of Italy,~~ ~~Emperor of Russia,~~ ~~Emperor of Austria,~~ The Sultan of Turkey. ~~King of Sweden and Norway,~~

of whom he is now a subject—IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of said Court, the day and year aforesaid.

Frederick L. Averill

CLERK.

Figure 20: Halladjian's Declaration of Intention, *National Archives and Records Administration*, filed January 2, 1903, County of New Haven, CT

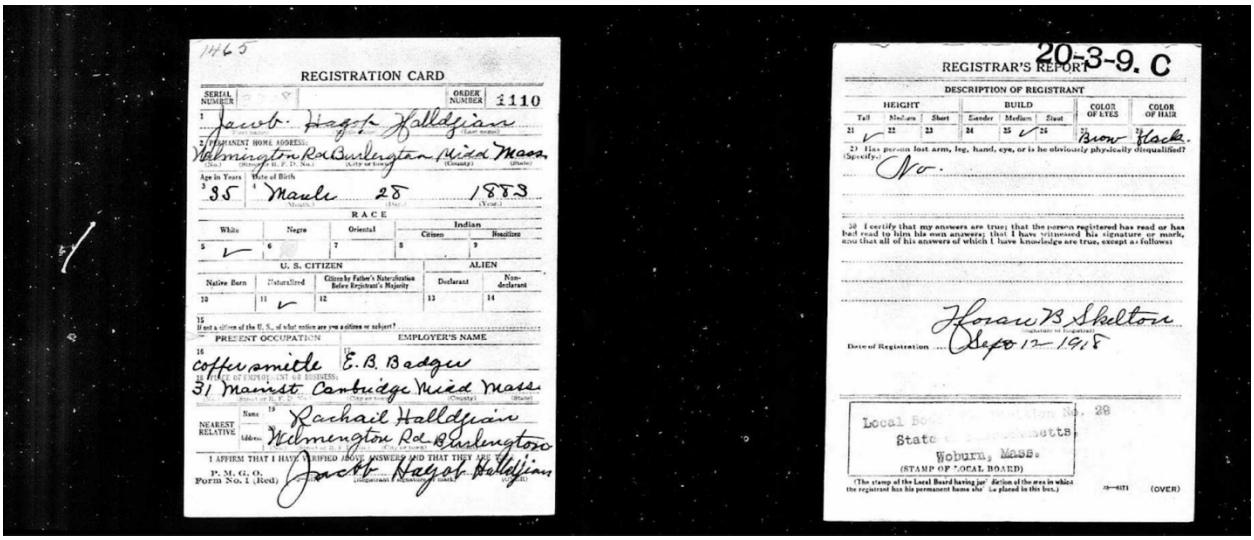
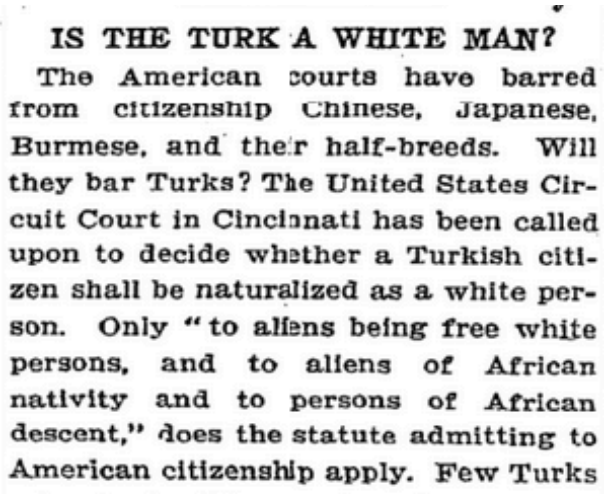


Figure 21: Draft Registration Card of "Jacob" Hagop Halladjian, Massachusetts, September 12, 1918

Another petitioner of Middle Eastern background came to contour racialization for all migrants and refugees from the region, this time defining whiteness in another way. In *1910 Ellis* notions of self governance were put on trial to determine whiteness. Tom Ellis was an Ottoman national, described in the case as "a Syrian, a native of the province of Palestine, and a Maronite" who "lived near Beirut, which city was his port of departure in coming to this country."[140] He appeared in front of Judge Charles E. Wolverton on July 11, 1910 in Portland, Oregon.[141] Lawyers for the U.S. government in the Ellis case "assumed that white Europeans, were familiar with, supportive of republican forms of government," while non-Europeans were, in contrast, "deemed to be dubious products of despotic regimes, politically unsophisticated and likely to taint the cherished pool of American citizenry."[142] As Matthew Frye Jacobson has argued, fitness for self-governance was an important litmus test for immigrants' envelopment into whiteness or not. As he evidences in the cases of early social exclusion of undesirable European immigrants into American whiteness, race science and the ability to self-govern converged in constructions like the American Irish, who, as Jacobson writes "by their very peculiarities of 'Celtic blood' …

posed a threat to the republic; but even more so in their eagerness to assimilate." For Ellis, this was furthered by his "Oriental" heritage which was deemed ungovernable and ungoverned by birth. But ultimately, the Judge grants Ellis naturalization including an argument that the official meaning of the word "white" is unclear and requires clarification from Congress, but by the common popular understanding, Ellis is white.

Ultimately many realities of the 1909-1910 cases reveal how Middle Eastern peoples were racialized. One part of this history is that the Arab and Armenian cases were used to support each other.[143] This emphasizes that even in the earlier court cases before much legal precedent existed, Ottoman nationals were using similar arguments, up against similar constructions of racialization, relying on one another's victories, and within larger convergent racial schemas. This points to the persistence of relational pan-ethnic racialization in the history of Middle Eastern American classification. And the experiences of early migrants and refugees reveals the mechanisms of power. This was also seen in media coverage of the court cases. *The New York Times* ran an article in September 30, 1909 entitled "Is the Turk a White Man?" In the article, the debate of racial classification of Ottoman nationals is framed in relation to "the yellow races," citing origins within the "Mongolian race." Ultimately, American media constructed Middle Eastern-American race relationally. As the article indicates, for Middle Eastern petitioners, because of anti-Asian exclusion at the time, white supremacist forces used race science to define these communities as Asians who were ineligible for United States citizenship on the grounds they were not white.



IS THE TURK A WHITE MAN?

The American courts have barred from citizenship Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, and their half-breeds. Will they bar Turks? The United States Circuit Court in Cincinnati has been called upon to decide whether a Turkish citizen shall be naturalized as a white person. Only "to aliens being free white persons, and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent," does the statute admitting to American citizenship apply. Few Turks

Figure 22: *The New York Times*, September 30, 1909

The United States government and media converged in their dissection of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees racial categories. In public space, race science, and physical visual scrutiny were routinized. These communities were facing structural and physical violence in their homelands that they came from. In the early cases, the lives of petitioners were up to the whims of violently racist structures, seeking to displace them, also, outside the category of "U.S. nation" through the denial of naturalization.

Coverage and Writing Back in News Reports on Early Middle Eastern Court Cases

An Ottoman Ambassador's Pitch for Citizenship and the evolution of an official Turkish nationalist

On November 3, 1909, an open letter was published in *The Washington Post* by a representative of the Ottoman government on the racial prerequisite cases of Middle Eastern applicants. The author is A. Rustem Bey, the "Ottoman Charge d'Affaires in Washington," who would come to be the last ambassador to the United States by the Ottoman government.[144] In the

letter Bey responds to the systemic denial of naturalization spreading against Ottoman petitioners and makes his case for their inclusion on the basis of race. He is compelled to do so, he states, out of a need to defend the Ottoman nation:

> It is unusual for a diplomatic representative to make use of the press to oppose the action of the authorities of the country in which he resides, but a recent decision of the courts of first instance in the United States, declaring illegible on racial ground for American citizenship a Syrian who had applied for naturalization papers, and the fact that certain official expressions of opinion in connection with these decisions have been made public, these decisions and opinions being ultimately of a nature to humiliate the whole Ottoman nation, makes it imperative that for me, as Ottoman charge d'affaires in Washington, to make a statement as public as these decisions and opinions, with a view of combating them in this way and satisfying public opinion in Turkey and reacting against impression they may have made on the American mind.[145]

In subsequent paragraphs Bey defends Ottoman nationals from their classification as "undesirable" and "inferior" migrants. He opines:

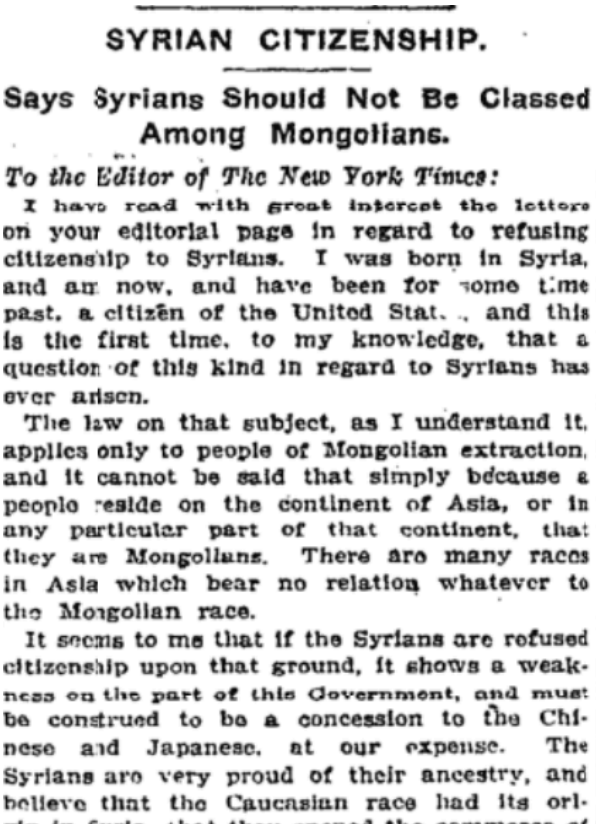
> "The decisions and opinions under consideration are evidently inspired by the theory that several of the races composing the Ottoman nation, namely, the Turks proper, the Armenians, the Syrians, and the Arabs, who are indigenous to Asia, and the vast majority of whose members still live there, are an undesirable element to admit as citizens into the body politic of the United States; in other words, that they constitute inferior races. It is against this theory which puts a stigma on four out of the six principal races of the empire, that the Ottoman embassy is bound to protest, and does protest vigorously.[146]

Bey then goes on to argue for Turkish whiteness via shared European traits. Despite the fact that Turks are "like the Hungarians, of Mongol origin," Bey argues that "owing to the constant and wholesale absorption by them for more than six centuries of large bodies of Greeks, Slavs, and Circassians, they have lost all the physical characteristics of their 'parent stock,' and have acquired most of the moral and mental qualities of the races termed European without losing their native ones."[147] He then argues for Arab naturalization by claiming that "the Syrians and Arabs belong to the same stock as the Jews."[148] Ultimately, Bey writes, "it will be the duty of the Ottoman nation to use every form of persuasion to obtain that change in the wording of the law

and its official interpretation."[149] This is an incredible moment where this Ottoman official is fighting Syrian and Armenian exclusion from naturalization in the United States on the basis of race. He is doing so by defending them and their Ottomanness, as not racially inferior, but worthy of the right to U.S. naturalization.

Bey's defense of marginalized groups of the Ottoman Empire would cease to continue however. Bey would eventually become one of the most outspoken writers in English and French in defense of Turkish nationalism and violence in the Armenian, Syrian and Arab provinces. Upon his appointment as the ambassador of the Ottoman Empire to the United States, he sets out centrally to defend the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians. Notably in 1914, in a statement in the *Washington Evening Star* published on September 8, in response to criticism, Bey argues that the Ottoman's treatment of Armenians was no worse than the U.S. history of lynching Black people or the use of torture on Filipinos,[150] statements, which angered President Woodrow Wilson because they highlighted the U.S.' own violent history.[151]

Another defense of the Middle Eastern petitioners in the naturalization cases of 1909-1910 appears in *The New York Times*, this time by a Syrian community member named H.E. Halaby, who wrote a letter to the editor in which they challenge the refusal of citizenship to Syrians. The article states that they were born in Syria and are a citizen of the United States, and that this is the first time they are hearing of Halaby, and then proceeds to argue for Syrian naturalization proclaiming Syrians are Caucasian, that Christ was born around Syria, and even invoking anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiment under the title "Syrian Citizenship: Says Syrians Should Not be Classified Among Mongolians."[152]



SYRIAN CITIZENSHIP.

Says Syrians Should Not Be Classed Among Mongolians.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

I have read with great interest the letters on your editorial page in regard to refusing citizenship to Syrians. I was born in Syria, and am now, and have been for some time past, a citizen of the United States, and this is the first time, to my knowledge, that a question of this kind in regard to Syrians has ever arisen.

The law on that subject, as I understand it, applies only to people of Mongolian extraction, and it cannot be said that simply because a people reside on the continent of Asia, or in any particular part of that continent, that they are Mongolians. There are many races in Asia which bear no relation whatever to the Mongolian race.

It seems to me that if the Syrians are refused citizenship upon that ground, it shows a weakness on the part of this Government, and must be construed to be a concession to the Chinese and Japanese, at our expense. The Syrians are very proud of their ancestry, and believe that the Caucasian race had its ori-

Figure 23: Letter to the Editor, H.E. Halaby, The New York Times, October 15, 1909

Arguments by Middle Eastern community members indicate that a broad swath of individuals engaged in trying to shape the outcomes of these cases, and were acutely aware of the circumstances of the cases, the arguments they faced, and the characteristics of U.S. race and racism. Syrians in court were being denied citizenship by the United States government classification of Syrians as Asiatics. Halaby and others sought to paint Syrians as white, not Asian, often by declaring their differences and distancing themselves from other Asian groups, even by using anti-Asian racism. Often their efforts entailed fighting for the benefit of their own community at the expense of another, a history which must not be obscured, and a vital means of upholding white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Asian racism and settler colonialism inherent in the United States.

The Stakes: Social Disease, Migrant Material Conditions and Early Anti-Middle Eastern Racism in the U.S. at the Turn of the Century

Racism against Middle Eastern migrants was ubiquitous in the United States in the 1890s, even before the major refugee crises that would later develop in the SWANA region and drive refugees en-masse to the U.S. in the 1910s-1920s. The earliest migrants and refugees were often described and classified through figurations of anti-immigrant racism, specifically like that of the racialized criminal, the diseased, the dirty, the poverty-stricken and the uneducated. Constructed as non-white, communities were often described as invasive threats to white communities whose living situations were compared to animals, via language like "hordes," and through condemnation of their larger familial structure and living conditions.

A full-page article appeared in *The Indianapolis News* on December 14, 1893 entitled "Cases of Squalor" detailing the life of Syrian migrants on Willard Street. The subheading includes "the Wretched Hovels of Syrian Peddlers" and proclaims "They are Breeders of Disease–Doctor says."[153] The article proclaims that the Syrian home is an "abode of filth, vice, poverty, and disease."[154] As Edward Curtis writes, the article "repeat[s] popular anti-immigrant tropes that associated non-white people not just with a foreign culture but also with criminality and disease."[155]



Figure 24: Section of "Cases of Squalor" labeled "Syrian Types", *The Indianapolis News*, December 1893

Interpellating its readers as white non-Syrians, the newspaper's feature evokes both zoo-like voyeurism and abject disgust. A portion of the page even includes depictions of Syrian phenotypes labeled "Syrian Types." Articles like this worked to paint early Middle Eastern migrants especially in towns with small, yet concentrated populations, as racial others.



THE INDIANAPOLIS NEWS, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1893.

CASES OF SQUALOR.

The Wretched Hovels of Syrian Peddlers.

Men, Women and Children Crowded Together In Small Rooms and Revolting Filth.

A Night Police Visit to Some of These "Homes"—They Are Breeders of Disease, a Doctor Says—Life of the Inmates.

The night wind is blowing raw and chill, and the chattering teeth of the pedestrian, who has not had faith enough in the weather to take off his autumnal gauze, tells that wrathful winter has come. A little company is seated about a warm and cheerful fire. It is made up of Superintendent Powell, Chief Detective Splan, Dr. S. E. Earp, police surgeon, an artist and a reporter. There is a wild whistle from the wind, that seems to be chasing some one around the corner of the house and prying into every cranny lest he be hidden there.

"Ugh," shudders the Superintendent, "this is a bad night for the destitute. Do you know," and he touches a match to a fresh cigar, "that there are places in this town that equal in squalor and misery anything that can be found in the larger cities?"

"Don't believe it!" exclaims one of the party, bluntly.

"Certainly not. There are not two hundred people in the city that would believe it. Seeing is believing, though."

The Superintendent smiles. In a few minutes a carriage rolls up to the door. It is well equipped with robes and blankets. Fresh cigars are lighted, and the party gets inside.

"Have you plenty of disinfectants, Doctor?" asked the Superintendent, knocking his knee against that of the police surgeon.

"Oh, yes. All that we will use."

"Well," says the artist, "if you have any to spare you might put some on this hack."

"Where to, sir?" says the long-coated, big-buttoned driver, as he steps to the window and cuts a hole in the smoke with his head.

"Do you know where Willard street is?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, drive us to the north end of it!"

The door shuts with a slam, the driver mounts his box and the miserable night

SUPT. POWELL.

covered with every conceivable object. There are no cupboards or closets and everything possible is hung up on the wall. Old clothes, tinware, dishes with handles, dresses, shawls, old hats for men and women, boots, shoes, peddler's packs, until one imagines himself in a second-hand clothing store or a junk shop. The floor is carpetless and thick with dirt and litter of various kinds.

SYRIAN TYPES.

At one end is a little "monkey" stove, heated almost white, and the pipe leading to near the roof is red hot in half a dozen places. The flues must be well constructed to prevent the stove from firing the house. A backless chair and a partially demolished soap box are in front of the stove. On each side of the room are the beds, a frame work, supported by sawed-off stanchions, supports the outer end, and a cleat nailed again the shaky wall holds up the other. On this frame are thrown a number of cheap mattresses, rough blankets and common quilts, while long bags filled with coarse straw serve as pillows.

There is but one window in this room and that is on the north side. The panes, or what there are left, are thick with dirt and smoke; it would be an excellent smoked-glass observatory on an eclipse day. As if for sarcasm, only a dirty shawl is pinned across the window (it is full of lumps made by the articles shoved into the sash where once there had been glass) to prevent passers on the street from seeing into the room. But a person who could discover anything through that dirt-begrimed window must have a gaze with the penetrating power of a two-inch auger.

On the south side of the room is another frame work supporting more cheap mattresses, rough blankets and common quilts. There is a narrow passageway the whole length of the room between the rows of beds. At one end of this passage is the stove, at the other the door. The row of beds on the south side is shorter than on the north in order to make room for the swinging of a door to another room.

This room is the "store" where the peddlers' supplies are kept and from which the packs are filled. The goods are bought wholesale from a Syrian merchant in Chicago. A row of shelves is on the north side of the room, and on these are piles of goods in boxes and bundles. A filthy cot is placed at one end of the "store," and on this sleeps

covered with paper torn from a meal sack. The Chief knocks loudly.

"A superb place to get sand-bagged," whispers one of the visitors, glancing about him at the shadows hanging over the place. Again and again the Chief knocks, but his vigorous poundings bring no reply. He tries the door. It is locked.

"Open this door," he calls.

A shuffling noise is heard from the inside, and the Chief knocks again.

"What you wanta?" inquires a shrill voice.

"Open the door. We want to come in."

"I have no much. Have You a mach?"

The Chief strikes a match and displays his badge. This is the open sesame.

"Waits minuta."

In a few seconds a light is thrown on the yellow paper. There is a sound of shooting bolts and dropping chains and the door opens. "Mother Shipmon," as she is called, stands there with a lamp held high above her head. She is a Syrian woman of middle age, slouchily dressed, a faded shawl over her shoulders and a scarlet cloth bound about her forehead. Her black eyes peer at the visitors. She recognizes the Superintendent and the Chief.

"You cuma to see me all the timee. You must likee me."

And she displays a row of white, glistening teeth that many a society belle would pay a small fortune to possess. "Mother Shipmon" peddles herself occasionally, but she is really the business manager of several men and women, who look to her to make their purchases for them, fix their prices and attend to other matters. She speaks fairly good English, and is very shrewd and cunning.

"Where is everybody?"

"All gone. They peddle. Be here Sunday."

"Where is the girl?"

"She peddle to. In the country. They no man here."

"MOTHER SHIPMON."

This place is on the same, general plan as the other. The beds are made on shoe and hat-boxes, evidently procured from the wholesale merchants in South Meridian street. Whether they are paid for is another story. The regulation tin lamp hangs to the wall. The bed clothes are dirty, filth predominates everywhere. In girlhood "Mother Shipmon" was no doubt beautiful, and if a few layers of dirt are removed from her features she is not bad-looking now. The Superintendent points toward the ceiling.

"No ovra," and she shakes her head en-

band speaks English fluently, and says he will never again return to "my country." He likes America very much and will become a citizen of the United States. His brother is reading a book. The Superintendent takes it and glances over the pages. It is Syriac.

"No, sabe," and he hands it back. At this the three laugh—the woman the loudest and most discordantly. On the floor is

THE HOME OF SEVENTEEN.

a tin cup, filled with pale blue milk and holding a spoon. An improvised hammock swings from one bedpost to the wall. It is filled—perhaps with old clothes. The Superintendent accidentally bostles it. A gurgling noise comes from under the dirt-stained clothes.

"Have you a baby here?" is the astonished inquiry. Again that gurgling sound.

"Yes, and it is on the verge of pneumonia; don't uncover it; keep it warm;" and the hammock is swung until the wheezing, gurgling voice ceases. The baby is asleep.

"We have another one," exclaims the husband, proudly pointing to the bed. The mother, just as proudly, begins to haul away layer after layer of bed clothes. A faint whimper is heard.

"Oh, Louie! Louie! here."

"Louie," she calls, and drags forth a chunky, chubby, little fellow, with bright red cheeks, black eyes, half submerged in tears, and clad in the garments he has worn all day—even to the shoes.

"Here are some gentlemen to see you, Louie."

But "Louie" is not entertaining visitors to-night, and gives evidence of displeasure by dropping his head on his mother's shoulder, and uttering a series of screams and yells augmented by sundry kicks and punches that cause his mother hastily to drop him back into bed.

CHRISTINE AND BABY

and pile the vile-smelling clothes over him from head to heels.

AT THE "LAFAYETTE" HOUSE.

"Oh, yes; I went to school in my country, and then I went to school in this country. Thomas and Aseba go to school here."

"Why are you all named David?"

"That's the custom in my country. The children are all named after the father. They take his two names."

"All of your people that we have seen to-night have tattoo marks on. Why is this?"

"That's another custom of my country. As soon as the child is born he is tattooed with his name and the time he is born, so when he goes away he can always be found by the marks. See, here is mine," and he pulls a ragged wrist-cuff from a dirt-begrimed and red-cold wrist to display some hieroglyphics in blue ink.

"That means," continues the boy, "that means that my name is Solomon David Fraser, and I was born in 1876. Some have swords, birds and other pictures on their arms, but that is just style."

"How is it done?"

"The picture is drawn with India ink, and then it is pricked in with needles until the blood comes. It's sore for a while, but it gets well, and will never wear out."

"Where do you work, Solomon?"

"Oh, I peddle. I support the family."

"What!" exclaims the Superintendent, looking at the figure against the wall. "Doesn't your father work and help you?"

"He no works," explains the head of the family with a suggestive shrug of the shoulder. "He taka care of the family."

"He likn to be near thea fire," croaks one of the old women.

"Where is your mother, Solomon?"

"She is at the city hospital. She is sick."

"Humph! I should think she would be. How much do you make a day?"

"Sometimes a dollar and a half, or a dollar, or fifty cents, or a quarter—anything I can get; but business is very dull now and I am not doing much. It's mighty hard times with us merchants."

"You a'merchant?"

"Of course. I sell a fifty-dollar diamond for 25 cents!" and a shout of laughter goes up from Solomon David's Syrian friends.

"This boy, with half a chance, will make his mark," said one of the party.

THE POLICE SURGEON'S OPINION.

These Places Are Breeders of Pestilence and Disease—Bad Morals.

Figure 25: "Cases of Squalor," *The Indianapolis News*, December 14, 1893

One particular section that centers the observations of a "police surgeon" sums up the racialized construction of the migrants in the article, who as a representative of the State declares not only that the Syrians have "bad morals," but questions their childrearing, calls them disease-spreaders, and accuses them of a lack of intelligence that "threatens the public"; a threat that must be taken out.[156] Commenting on a house of seventeen migrants, it reads:

> I am free to say that I am not only surprised but shocked... To be an eye-witness only will open ground for belief; otherwise what we have seen to-night [*sic*] would not seem to be in the bounds of reason. Here are little children, stunted in growth, debilitated by the unhygienic surroundings, whose nervous systems and intellect are almost dormant but still further, to the surprise of the beholder, human beings…are reared in this kind of existence. There is but one conclusion to be reached. These places are the most virulent breeders of disease. The elimination of them is of public interest. If these people in their ignorance are placing humanity in jeopardy by the violations of morality, hygienics and

> sanitation, then it is a matter of moment not only to protect the public, also to protect those who know not how to protect themselves.[157]

Here racial difference serves both as a delineation of the bounds of rationality and as a spectacular threat to be contained via utterances of disgust, shock and bewilderment beyond "belief" that a family could live and be reared in this way. Without any context, or care for the conditions that led to their living situations, including their experience of migration, the media questions the personhood and denies the agency of Syrians in implicit contrast with a nativist public. Ultimately, according to the State representative, there is but one conclusion: the elimination of the homes of the Syrians "who know not how to protect themselves." Such representations of early Syrian migrants to the United States show not only the real life conditions they faces, but also how these conditions were represented socially and culturally, and pathologized through early anti-immigrant racism.

Another example of the racial construction of Syrian immigrants as carriers of disease is repeated representations of the community and hysteria over the eye disease trachoma. Trachoma was a disease that caused visual impairment and blindness.[158] Sarah Gualtieri theorizes that some of the "most vitriolic nativist language of the day" was that "which linked immigration to contagion and disease" and for Syrians, trachoma in particular, was mobilized to shape race and migration.[159] According to research by Gualtieri, "in 1909, Ellis Island officials certified 103 Syrians for trachoma, and of the thirty-nine 'races' listed according to numbers deported in 1909 for medical reasons, Syrians were ranked sixth."[160] Indeed, the construction of Syrian immigrants as diseased also intersected with regimes of criminality. Some of the earliest and routinized forms of racing happened at the border, where, in the name of fighting the disease, Syrians were not only checked for trachoma, but were also subject to family separation, deportation, and early forms of immigrant bodily surveillance at ports of entry-exit.

The intersection of criminality and disease in the construction of these immigrants was also demonstrated in a 1906 article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* Titled in bold font "SYRIANS WITH TRACHOMA ARE SOUGHT HERE," the article details the arrest of a St. Louis Syrian peddler who is interrogated by United States Immigration Inspector, James R. Dunn.[161] The article is positioned two columns from an article titled "Negroes Rob Polish Count on Sidewalk," and below a cartoon of an outing of the House of Delegates. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reveals that the peddler had crossed the border from Mexico to Texas and is allegedly part of a smuggling operation.



SYRIANS WITH TRACHOMA ARE SOUGHT HERE

Discovery of Peddler in St. Louis Believed to Indicate Smuggling.

What is believed to be an indication of wholesale smuggling of Syrians afflicted with trachoma, a contagious disease of the eyes, into the United States, across the Mexican border, has been discovered by United States Immigration Inspector James R. Dunn. One

Figure 26: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 19, 1906

The article states that deportation of the peddler, named John Shanadie Jacob, was yet to be decided, but that "he may be a valuable witness for the immigration authorities if they can get him to talk."[162] Noted twice in the article, Jacob "refuses..to tell whether any of countrymen were smuggled into the United States when he was."[163] This act of immigrant refusal reveals the ways

in which Syrian migrants were not only challenging borders but also imagined speculative crossings collectively of other Syrians yet to come. They imagined new lives for their fellow people that included kinship across oceans and time. Another article in 1906 in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, titled "Syrian is Tossed Back and Forth," also details the turbulence of State trachoma testing. Comparing one Syrian to a ball, the article uses the metaphor of being tossed about to describe the turmoil and precarity of his immigration. The subheading proclaims that twenty-year-old Abraham Daher "Has Trachoma and Uncle Sam Does Not Want Him At All."[164]

Border politics, infectious disease, and routinized inspection collide in not only the representation of Syrians, but also in the material migrations of the community. As Gualtieri has revealed, Syrian migrants understood the exclusions of entry into the United States and actively worked around the State to get in. From smuggling rings to paying off immigration officials, Syrian migrants often strategized how to use and work around the trachoma-free immigration requirement. I read these moments against the racist, anti-immigrant representations of criminality in the articles that enable the (re)production of the State and the newly formed immigration-deportation apparatus. These media reports also make visible the ways in which Syrian migrants were deeply susceptible to exploitation on their migration journeys. For example, an extortion ring comprised of healthcare officials in the United States and individuals in Mexico charged Syrians seeking to enter the U.S. to "cure" them of trachoma when many were actually healthy.[165] Many others were denied entry all together.

But the racial dimensions of immigration and trachoma were not only limited to Syrians, but were happening relationally and to all Middle Eastern migrants, including other ethnic groups of Ottoman nationals. In the same period that a plethora of publications are writing on the Syrian trachoma threat, newspapers are also constructing the stories of early Armenian

immigration from the Ottoman Empire around the disease. In 1905, an article appeared in the *Madison County Record* entitled "A Serious Charge," detailing the arrest of a Spanish steamship captain who let an Armenian and a Turk aboard who had trachoma escape from the ship.[166]

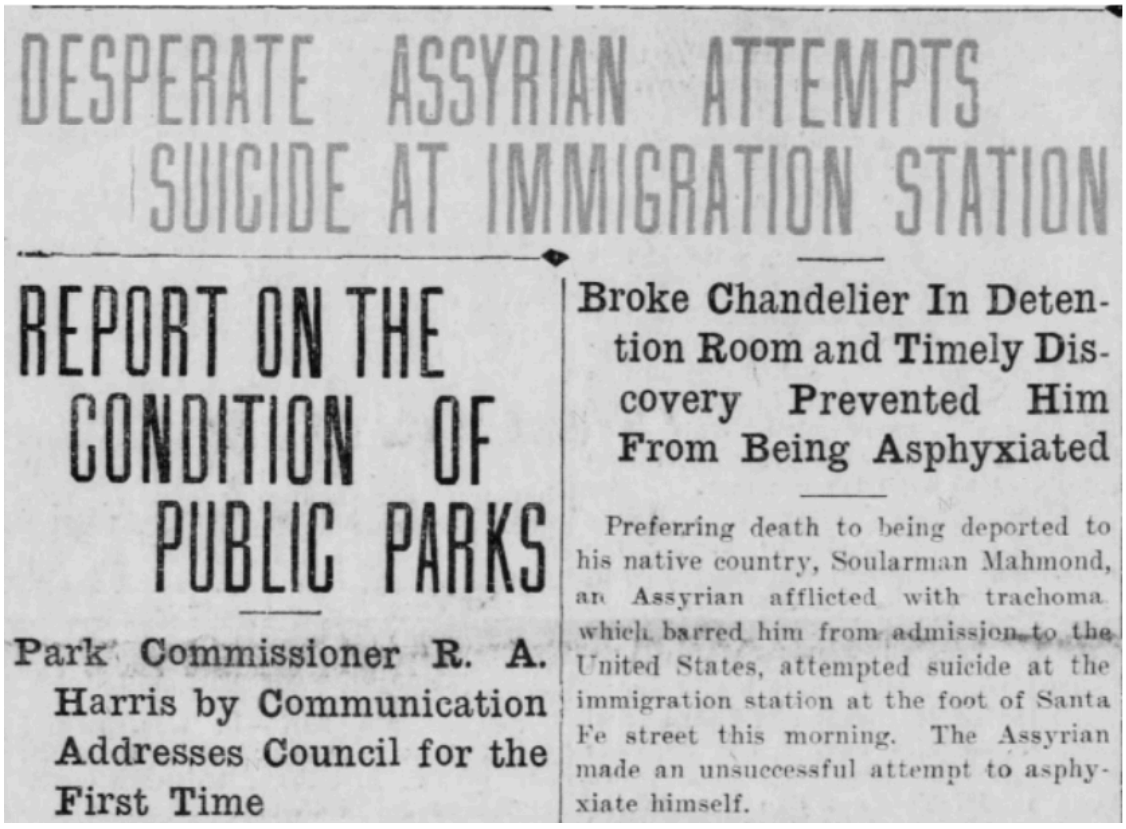
A cover story in *The Minneapolis Journal* in September of 1906 titled "Armenians Alleged to Have Attempted Dangerous Immigration Deal" proclaims that several Armenians attempted to bribe an immigration officer using a $150 promissory note on the condition that a woman could land.[167] The same story was printed in at least fifteen newspapers across the country. The article alleges that the woman and other Armenians suffered from trachoma and were attempting to set up a deal with immigration officials so that the Armenians would pass inspection. One Armenian, in particular, was hoping to charge other Armenian migrants for the false tests and split the profits with an Immigration Inspector. Several individuals were arrested. The circulation of these stories emphasize not only the ways in which disease, criminality, and poverty informed the view of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees by the American public, but also attest to the fact that many of these migrations were in fact treacherous, and would prove to get even worse as a global refugee crisis emerged in the coming decades.

Similarly, U.S. media outlets tied Assyrians to outbreaks of trachoma, and newspaper articles from the era reveal the ways in which disease, deportation, and criminality were inextricable for Assyrian immigrants and refugees. In one particularly devastating article, "an Assyrian" attempts suicide in the middle of his deportation process. "Desperate Assyrian Attempts Suicide at Immigration Station" appears in the *El Paso Herald* on June 20, 1907 and describes how a many attempts to end his own life by using a chandelier:

> Preferring death to to being deported to his native country, Soularman Mahmond, an Assyrian afflicted with trachoma which barred him from admission to the United States, attempted suicide at the immigration station at the foot of Sante Fe street this morning. The Assyrian made an unsuccessful attempt to asphyxiate himself. Mahmond has been

> barred from entering the United States at the El Paso immigration station twice and recently smuggled himself across the border into New Mexico… Chief inspector Schmucker ordered the Assyrian placed in a detention room to await a hearing for deportation…About an hour later gas fumes were smelled and investigation showed that they had come from the room occupied by the Assyrian. He had broken the gas chandelier and gas was coming into the room at full tilt.[168]

Like many Middle Eastern migrants and refugees of the time, Mahmond's "desperation" to cross the border by any means necessary reveals the stakes in the fight to live in the United States and resist deportation. "Preferring death to being deported" to his homeland reveals the plight of those seeking home and/or refuge in the U.S. as systemic rather than individual or isolated scenarios. It also firmly lodges immigration into the reality of the violence at the hands of the Ottoman and Persian Empire governments of the time, bringing into conversation American Studies and Middle East Studies. So much so, that this Assyrian preferred death to returning to it.



DESPERATE ASSYRIAN ATTEMPTS SUICIDE AT IMMIGRATION STATION

REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF PUBLIC PARKS

Park Commissioner R. A. Harris by Communication Addresses Council for the First Time

Broke Chandelier In Detention Room and Timely Discovery Prevented Him From Being Asphyxiated

Preferring death to being deported to his native country, Soularman Mahmond, an Assyrian afflicted with trachoma which barred him from admission to the United States, attempted suicide at the immigration station at the foot of Santa Fe street this morning. The Assyrian made an unsuccessful attempt to asphyxiate himself.

Figure 27: *El Paso Herald*, June 20, 1907

Many Middle Eastern migrants faced similar challenges and conditions in their immigration journeys, and they also were explicitly grouped together in media representations of migration and disease. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on a large deportation of Syrians and Armenians in 1913. The article opens with the declaration that "an unusually large number of Syrians, Armenians, and Greeks" have come to Philadelphia that fall.[169] It then continues that "an unusually large number of the Syrian and Armenian arrivals have trachoma and other preventable diseases and the inspectors are exercising vigilance to prevent such from being admitted to this country," conveniently dropping the Greeks, and valorizing the efforts of U.S. immigration officials for stopping their admission.[170] It is revealed that over 80 Syrians and Armenians are to be deported via Europe on the steamships Haverford and Merion from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, relieving fears of the "unusual" amount of such immigrants coming to the United States



TRACHOMA-INFECTED IMMIGRANTS GROW

Steamship Haverford Takes to Europe Forty Victims and Meri-on to Deport as Many

Special to The Inquirer.

GLOUCESTER CITY, N. J., Dec. 7.—The records of the Bureau of Immigration show that an unusually large number of Syrians, Armenians and Greeks are being taken to Philadelphia this fall on the steamships of the American Line.

Figure 28: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 8, 1913

But most telling of all, the headline blares "Trachoma-Infected Immigrants Grow," positioning them not only together as Ottoman nationals but also as within a larger racial project that constructs the foreigner as contagion. Rather than the disease growing, the headline states it is the immigrants that "grow," evoking the persons themselves as the problem and justifying their expulsion as the solution.

Up until now, scholars have looked at Middle Eastern migrant communities and the racialization of disease and criminality in early anti-immigrant racism separately, by ethnic group. But comparative analysis reveals that various ethnic groups from the region faced similar racial constructions around immigration, disease, and criminality, especially through the threat of trachoma. Various ethnic groups from the region were uniquely constructed as disease-carriers

and a disproportionate threat to the nativist public. In this way, different Middle Eastern groups were being constructed similarly, and at times grouped together, indicating that the development of their collective racialization began early on. They all also used smuggling networks to get around these restrictions on their ability to come to the United States. Ultimately, the development of these tropes helped shape how the U.S. public came to construct and classify Middle Eastern immigrants.

Beyond racial tropes that constructed them as undesirable and diseased, physical violence also occurred against early Middle Eastern communities. A puzzling murder occurred in the very earliest communities of Armenian migrants and refugees to the United States. The mysterious murder of Stepan, Bedros, and Takouki Shahmirian, whose bodies were found in a field two miles south of Fresno, with some believing the murders were because of a dispute over water rights, sent shockwaves through the Armenian enclave.[171] While the murders were likely at the hands of white neighbors angry at the Armenians, what disturbed Armenians most was the lack of government action to find the murderers. This signaled to the Armenian community to keep quiet and keep their heads down as they were unwelcome and unsupported in the town, and that violence against Armenians would be rubber stamped by the state. Berge Bulbulian writes of the murders:

> Criminal events were part of the early Armenian story in Fresno, but what aroused the Armenians in this case was that the Fresno authorities showed only passing concern over the murders. Only tepid efforts were made to interrogate suspects. For that matter, many Armenians also [then] expressed little concern over what had happened. They said they had not spoken up against the crime out of sheer fear.[172]

Such early anti-Middle Eastern racism in the United States was compounded when press reports called violence against Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities “race riots.”

In 1902, according to a local newspaper, a “race riot” occurred between white Americans and Assyrians in the Assyrian enclave in La Crosse b. In July 1902, *The Blanchardville Blade* describes a chaotic and violent scene that resulted in multiple injuries. *The Blade* provides different representations of the victims, however, between and based on the two racial groups. The article claims that five “Americans" were injured and lists them by name, but vaguely refers to “a number of” anonymous injured Assyrians. In this way the newspapers incorporate the Assyrians into a mass, similar to the herd-like descriptions of the rest of the report. “Hot Race Riot at La Crosse” notes that the incident included over 300 Assyrians and 300 white Americans, with ultimately an estimate of 900 people on the scene. The report closes with the proclamation that “shots were fired into the Assyrian settlement, but without serious effect.”[173] Even before the refugee crises that drove thousands to the United Sates and before the well-known and documented white supremacist acts that occur mostly after 1920, white Americans unleashed racial terror at these groups and while doing so portrayed them one, as distinct racial groups and two, as lawless, inherently violent, and susceptible to “tribal” differences.

The Stakes: Early Targeting & ‘Asiatic Exclusion’ against Middle Eastern Migrants and Refugees by White Supremacist Groups

As anti-Middle Eastern oppression and violence began to heat up, it consolidated into calls for policy, especially through relational racial mechanisms of exclusion. This was demonstrated in the ways that Middle Eastern people in the United States became lodged and configured in systems like anti-Asian racism. This era was a major historical flashpoint for the expansion and fortification US anti-Asian racism at all levels. As Yen Le Espiritu reveals “from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, more than six hundred pieces of anti-

Asian legislation were enacted, either limiting or excluding persons of Asian ancestry from citizenship, intermarriage, land ownership, and employment."[174] The hovering Asiatic designation was not only raised in the courts to deny Middle Eastern petitioners American citizenship, but also by non-governmental actors, like white supremacist organizations that were targeting them.

One example of this was the efforts of the Asiatic Exclusion League. The Asiatic Exclusion League was founded in 1905 by white American labor leaders and European immigrants.[175] The League's mission was clear and direct. Its aim was to stop Asian immigration and keep Asians out of every facet of social, economic and political life. Launched in San Francisco as the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, it was later renamed the Asiatic Exclusion League, and the organization defined Middle Eastern migrants and refugees as "Asiatics." The League did not want them to be citizens, and they wanted them banned and removed from what they defined as "their" country.

The League kept scrupulous notes of all proceedings, thanks to longtime Secretary-Treasurer A.E. Yoell. In meeting minutes of the Asiatic Exclusion League held in March 1910 in San Francisco, a portion of the proceedings were dedicated to "Western Asiatics."[176] While scholarly focus has been on the League's East Asian targets, especially the Japanese who were its primary targets of violence, little research has focused on the significant targeting of Western Asians. The League was outright with its assertion that Western Asians were a menace to be destroyed and considered those who came from the geography a threat to the white race. In March 1910, the League declared that it "regard[ed] immigration from Western Asia to be no less inimical to the best interests of the United States than are those from the East."[177] So much so, that the executive leadership of the committee made a point to keep abreast of the number of

immigrants admitted every year and to do everything in their power to bring those numbers to a sudden halt.

Like for all of the targets of its racial terror, the League kept meticulous records of the number of migrants and refugees entering the U.S. and from what ports they used for exit-entry. For "Western Asiatics," this was no different. In the League's proceedings the Executive Board offers the following report while classifying Middle Eastern migrants together, and under the category 'Western Asiatics':

> Since 1899, up to the end of January, 1910, there has been admitted to this country 55,060 Syrians, 30,175 Armenians, and 12,449 Turks, a total of 96,173. It is this class of immigrants that constitutes the 'street stand' and 'push cart' nuisance. They do not come here with any intention of remaining and benign useful members of the community, but remain just long enough to obtain naturalization and then return to their former homes, where they embitter the lives of American Consuls with continued demands for protection. It is among these people that so many cases of fraudulent naturalization have been discovered during the past few years.[178]

The proceedings reveal many realities. Firstly, that Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were directly targeted by the Asiatic Exclusion League and classified by the League as non-white through the system of anti-Asian racism. The figure of the "Asiatic" played out both in the courts, in campaigns, and in the streets. The League describes the Middle Eastern communities as a "nuisance" and condemns their use of U.S. citizenship for the freedom of movement, once again evidencing the argument that was in fact a driving motivation for many early petitioners. The League, secondly, also groups Syrians, Armenians, and Turks together, as "Western Asiatics." And targeted these groups even before the massive refugee crisis that would escalate nativists' attacks against them. This early pan-racialization and targeting of these communities as a racial group happened in multiscalar ways, including in the everyday violent acts of nativist organizations. And thirdly, the League notes record the transnational dynamics these communities were facing, as discussed in other sections of this study.

It also reveals that not only was the government thinking about these groups as nonwhite and within pan-ethnic racial categories, but so too did white supremacist groups who were trying to influence their legal classification. Grouping these communities together was a process of pan-racialization that occurred time and time again. Often referred to as "Turkish subjects" by the League, the records demonstrate that the Ottoman and former Ottoman nationals were not welcome in the United States and targeted by hate groups. The stakes of inclusion as "Asiatics" for these migrants thus meant the apparatuses of anti-Asian exclusion would be unleashed upon them, a large incentive to Middle Eastern communities to distance themselves from the reality of "Turkey in Asia." This is the same designation that appears in the courts, to deny petitioners access to naturalization and citizenship on the basis of not being white. Indeed, and in fact, the Asiatic Exclusion League was a large force during and paid close attention to the court cases determining naturalization for Middle Eastern peoples. The League even drafted a 1909 report that argued that Syrians and Turks "were not white persons and should be denied the privilege of citizenship."[179] As the organization's records indicated, for all Asian peoples they targeted, the League made it its mission to consistently lobby legislators and wrote thousands of letters directly to policy makers and judicial authorities to stop Asian immigration and life. Western Asiatics were no exception.

Early Housing and Social Discrimination against Middle Eastern Peoples in the U.S and Community Response

Racism against Middle Eastern people in the United States was also produced through institutional and social exclusion in housing. One such example of anti-Middle Eastern racism that persisted in Fresno, California, was rampant housing and social discrimination against Armenians. As the work of the late and noted Fresno historian Berge Bulbulian has documented,

housing and social discrimination were ubiquitous, including in the earliest presence of the Armenian community in Fresno. During this time, "Armenians were thought to be non-white," argues Bulbulian.[180] According to Bulbulian, early anti-Armenian racism included discrimination against their cultural traditions. "Armenians' Middle Eastern habit of bargaining" irritated white residents of Fresno and they were stereotyped as dishonest, always trying to pay less, and as perpetuators of insurance-fraud. Bulbulian writes that because of this they were often denied insurance, and they were disliked in the city because they spoke their native language. Additionally, housing discrimination was rampant in Fresno. According to Bulbulian, many white Americans, including recent German and Russian immigrants, refused to rent or sell housing to Armenians, forcing Armenians into concentrated areas mostly in the south and east ends of town, where the housing was in bad condition and much older.[181] Beyond person to person exclusion in housing, like a landlord refusing to rent or a seller personally refusing to sell to Armenian families, many developers, businessmen and money lenders advertised exclusion explicitly.

A housing advertisement excluding Armenians from homeownership appeared in *The Fresno Tribune* on March 16, 1911. The advertisement was by real estate agent James J. Murray, advertising a new housing development on Kearney Blvd. in Fresno, California. The advertisement boldly proclaimed "OWN A HOME" and "KEARNEY BOULEVARD HEIGHTS" at the top with a picturesque illustration of a checkered and columned porch overlooking the neighborhood, a desirable home in a desirable neighborhood "that is destined to be the most beautiful in the state of California." A white male figure with glasses on the left points in the illustrated scene to the row of houses. Upon close inspection its racial project is revealed. What made that housing development particularly desirable, according to the

advertisement, was its explicit exclusion of racial "undesirables." The advertisement opens with the following:

> Kearny Boulevard Heights is the one big residence district in Fresno where Asiastics are prohibited from securing property. No Armenians, no Japanese, no Chinese, no Asiatics of any kind can secure lots in this residence district for the next twenty-five years. And no undesirable building can be erected, such as saloons, laundries, livery stables, etc.

This "model community" is deemed desirable, an object of white fantasy because it does not include "Asiatics." The ad groups Armenians together with other Asians, and assumes that Asian exclusion is very attractive to white homeowners and builders. Indeed, Armenians are explicitly named and constructed as undesirable Asiatics in an era of mass and systemic anti-Asian exclusion. Housing records like the Kearny Boulevard Heights advertisement help reveal racial classification happening beyond the courts, in social, economic and political life. Notably the beginning of the ad explicitly conflates owning a home with being a better citizen. In this way, Armenians are excluded from citizenship in that they are undeserving of a home in Kearny Blvd. Heights life.



TO OWN a home makes a man a better citizen, gives him standing in the community and establishes a credit. Especially is this true if his home is built in Kearney Boulevard Heights, because of the fact that a home built in this addition will constantly increase in value. Kearney Boulevard Heights is the most beautiful home spot in the San Joaquin Valley. It will be a model community, having lawns, trees, water, sewers, electricity, telephones, cement sidewalks, parks, etc., and building restrictions that eliminate all undesirable features found in so many districts.

Kearney Boulevard Heights is the one big residence district in Fresno where Asiatics are prohibited from securing property. No Armenians, no Japanese, no Chinese, no Asiatics of any kind can secure lots in this residence district for the next twenty-five years. And no undesirable building can be erected, such as saloons, laundries, livery stables, etc.

Kearney Boulevard Heights offers greater inducements to both home builders and investors than any other real estate opportunity that has ever been presented in this section of California. And no one should fail to investigate its possibilities.

Figure 29: Racist housing advertisement targeting Armenians as unwanted Asiatics, *The Fresno Tribune*, March 16, 1911 (full advertisement and enlarged section)

Moreover, the advertisement appears before the Armenian and Assyrian Genocide of 1915 that brings a large wave of Armenian and Assyrian refugees specifically to Fresno, California, which previous studies have often marked as the historical beginning of widespread anti-Armenian discrimination in the San Joaquin Valley. This advertisement and dozens of others like it indicate otherwise: that the system existed much earlier and only expanded in the 1920s and 1930s.

Despite the erasure of early organizing of Middle Eastern communities in the United States in dominant histories of record, community members helped each other fight against systemic racism through whatever means they could. Despite revisionist history that paints them on the contrary, early Armenian migrants and refugees did not passively accept acts of racial

aggression in Fresno. Further examination of bottom-up sources reveal that the community actively organized to protect its people, including strategizing on how to defeat the efforts of the Kearney Boulevard Heights developers. Newspapers record community analysis of these acts of racial exclusion, and the larger systems of power to which they were subjected.

The Armenian community of Fresno reacted to the ad in the Armenian language newspaper *Asbarez*. An editorial in *Asbarez* on March 24, 1911 entitled "Battle of the Races," states "last week, Fresno's Armenian community was shaken by reading mean-spirited real estate agent James Murray's announcement in an ad in the local paper."[182] The author conveys that the ad greatly impacted the Armenians of the town. The article states Armenians were on high alert and deeply concerned that the builders were gleefully advertising they would not sell to Armenians "forever and ever" as something they knew would attract white homebuyers. Because of this, the articles states it is "disillusioned and discouraging time" where Armenians are "in the face of destructive racial battles, of the obstacles put before honest people" because of "this type of divisive people."[183] Middle Eastern community newspapers became an important platform for discussion and analysis amongst community members to navigate the white supremacy they encountered both in everyday life and institutionally. These community conversations are an important source of the knowledge production of migrants and refugees who analyzed their conditions and looked to understand and combat early anti-Middle Eastern racism. Community formations like newspapers served as central places of conversation and coordination at a moment when the era of Middle Eastern citizenship exclusion and full scale refugee crisis was about to be unleashed. Communities would have to band together, with organizers, revolutionaries and refugees at the front of the struggle. The growing exclusion of

Middle Eastern peoples in communities across the United States would come to be expanded in the courts in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.

Ex Parte 1913 Shahid: Community forums and Community Concerns

Indeed only two years after the Kearny Blvd. advertisement, a Syrian, Faras Shahid would have his naturalization petition revoked and another Middle Eastern community newspaper would be a site of analysis and debate of the case. Shahid was a 59 year old Arab Christian from Zahle who filed his petition of naturalization in the court of the Eastern District of South Carolina under the district judge Henry A. M. Smith. He could not read or write English and struggled to understand and speak English. When asked if he was a "polygamist or a disbeliever" he answered yes, which Joseph W. Ferris in the *Syrian World* speculated later, was because he did not know English well. It was also reported that Shahid wanted to be naturalized so he could be reunited with his family, as he desired to bring his wife and children from "Syria" to join him.[184]

Joseph W. Ferris writes in *Syrian World* that "the judge in describing him, said that his color was about that of walnut or somewhat darker than the usual mulatto of one half mixed blood between the white and mixed races." [185] Dr. Philip Hitti, a Lebanese leader known as an expert at the time on Arab and Arab migrant culture, adds a footnote to this statement with a pointed declaration: "A superficial consideration of the color of the face does not in itself constitute a scientific basis for race classification….The Hindus belong to the white race but because of the semi-tropical climate are darker than North Europeans."[186] Community forums recorded Shahid's experience and the arguments his fellow migrants expressed and efforts used to defend him. As the state constructed its arguments, so did the migrants.

This proved ever important, as the court case was another race-making moment in action. In his verdict, the Judge determined that Shahid's " wife and most of his children are still living in Syria, and he desires *to be* naturalized so as to bring them over to this country." For Shahid, the stakes of naturalization were the reunification of his family. For the United States government, the stakes were ongoing fortification of whiteness as nationhood. The judge's ruling cites specifically "In re Najour (C. C.) 174 Fed. 735, admitting a Syrian; In re Halladjian (C. C.) 174 Fed. 834, admitting an Armenian; In re Mudarri (C. C.) 176 Fed. 465, admitting a Syrian; Bessho v. U. S., 178 Fed. 245, 101 C. C. A. 605, excluding a Japanese; In re Ellis (D. C.) 179 Fed. 1002, admitting a Maronite; In re Balsara (C. C.) 180 Fed. 294, admitting a Parsee," within his justification. Ultimately, on the basis that "a modern Syrian of Asiatic birth and descent would not be entitled under the statute of Congress to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States," Shahid was denied, and his hope of family reunification in the United States came to a halt.[187] Family separation and homeland crisis would dramatically escalate in the years immediately following.

Chapter 2 Refugees, Revolutionaries and Organizers: (Re)storying Race, Community and Classification Amidst Mass Displacement, Massacre, and Crisis

"Dead Are My People:" The Armenian and Assyrian Genocide & The Great Famine of Mount Lebanon, 1915

"The Ottoman Empire should be cleaned up of the Armenians and the Lebanese. We have destroyed the former by the sword, we shall destroy the latter through starvation."
– Enver Pasha, May 1916[188]

"What can be done for those who are dying? Our lamentations will not satisfy their hunger, and our tears will not quench their thirst; what can we do to save them between the iron paws of hunger?"
-Kahlil Gibran, from "Dead Are My People"

During the last gasps of the crumbling Ottoman Empire (and the turbulence of the neighboring Persian Empire), systematic killings and state violence proliferated and a massive transnational refugee crisis ensued. Enver Pasha, architect of the Genocide, openly admits to the Ottoman government's attempted annihilation of the Armenians of Anatolia (and Assyrians) and declares intent for a similar fate for the Arabs of Mount Lebanon in his infamous quote. The figure of the refugee and the condition of refugeehood continues to largely be sidelined in scholarship on the racial prerequisite cases and early Middle Eastern America race. I argue this figure and experience is essential to both the classification of these communities and the campaigns they launch to try to dictate these categories. For many, access to citizenship (and its central, tenant refuge from racial violence, both from the Ottoman genocide they escape and then the white supremacy they would come to endure in the U.S. which then threatens them with mass deportation on the basis of race and domestic discrimination), now becomes a case of life and death.

Post-1915, the subjectivity of refugeehood deeply shaped Middle Eastern experience in the United States bringing to the U.S. citizenship fight, stark realities and stakes. The term "refugees" increasingly begins to appear in U.S. newspapers to describe the Middle Eastern populations at the heart of this crisis. I turn now to detail the historical context for post-1915 racialization and the refugee material conditions that inform it.

The Armenian and Assyrian Genocide refers to events that saw over 1.5 million Armenians & Assyrians killed, most often demarcated from 1915–1923 (though scholars increasingly argue that the early periods of massacre and dispossession widen this range), and displaced from their land at the hands of the Young Turks, also known as the Committee of Union and Progress, or CUP. This marked a foundational moment in the making of the modern Middle East that is often erased by scholars and organizers in the West. Armenians had inhabited Anatolia in Asia for over three thousand years. For much of that time, Armenia as a nation[189] rarely maintained self governance, except for in brief periods. Armenians have been held together by a distinct language (Armenian), cultural practices and Armenian religion, the Armenian Orthodox church originating in 301 AD. Scholars on Armenian Anatolia have noted how Armenians had both their distinct cultural and cultural religious practices and shared similarities with their neighbors, oftentimes differing considerably from town to town. In the period leading up the Armenian Genocide, for instance, Armenian villages and provinces in Anatolia, like in Adana, Aintab, Tokat, and Caesarea, were almost entirely Turkish-only speaking, while isolated villages like in Hadjin and Kessab not only spoke primarily Armenian, but with a distinct dialect found only in there.[190] Indeed, one draw for Armenians to the American missionary schools being set up throughout the empire by American Protestants was not only the rare access to education available to poor, rural villagers but also the ability to learn standard

literary Armenian.[191] Assyrians also suffered greatly during the genocide in the Ottoman Empire. Assyrians had a long and distinct history in the region, with cultural and language practices that go back to ancient times. Assyrians refer to the events of the Genocide as Sayfo, meaning sword in Aramaic. In the Assyrian Genocide, mass slaughter and forced displacement of Assyrians occurred in the Southeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the Northern provinces of Persia. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed, with scholars estimating the number around 250,000-300,000.

The targeting of non-Turks in the Ottoman Empire directly impacted the fight for U.S naturalization. It is no coincidence that the Middle Eastern petitioners arguing by any means for U.S. citizenship in the known racial prerequisite cases before 1930 are all from communities targeted by these states. In the Ottoman case, racial ideology and racial classification was omnipresent for these communities. Turkish historian Taner Akcam skillfully outlines the birth of Turkism in his book *A Shameful Act*. He declares that "Turkish nationalism or, in more general terms, Turkish national identity, appeared on the historical stage very late."[192] While other forms of nationalism in the region developed as responses to colonialism, including Western colonialism, Turkish nationalism was based on the espousal of a shared racial supremacy aimed at the eradication of "undesirable" populations in the eyes of the State. Taner Akcam describes the entrenchment of Turkism as the "taking root of a belief that the Turks are superior to other nations and peoples, and thereby have a right to rule them."[193] In debates on Ottoman rule in the late 19th century and early 20th, although types of governance transformed what was consistent was the ideology of Turkish racial superiority in the Ottoman Empire.

Additionally, throughout this period "Turkish domination within the Ottoman Empire was regarded as perfectly natural, and any discussion on that point was seen as simply

unnecessary," and "the existence of the other nations within the Empire would only be recognized under the condition that they accepted the principle of Turkish domination." When the Union and Progress movement became a driving force in politics in the Ottoman Empire in the 1910s, the goal was the creation of a modern centralized state that struggled considerably to find unifying factors among diverse ethnic and religious groups of the Empire. As Akcam sites, one of the most important founders of Turkish nationalism, Yusuf Akcura, outlined this problem with a question: "what could be the point of connection between a Christian Serb who plows the fields on the Kosovo Plain and a Muslim Arab who leads a nomadic existence in the desert of Najd?"[194] The plan for a "union of peoples," however, quickly became a policy of racial homogenization through extermination, annihilation and repression.

The year 1915 also marked the beginning of the government-sponsored Great Famine of Mount Lebanon by the Ottoman Turk government. From 1915 to 1918, the Great Famine claimed the lives of at least 200,000 people. Under orders of Jamal Pasha, a land blockade was instituted that starved the Arab[195] population. Lebanese-American poet Kahlil Gibran described the atrocity in a letter on 26 May 1916: "The famine in Mount Lebanon has been planned and instigated by the Turkish government. Already 80,000 have succumbed to starvation and thousands are dying every single day. The same process happened with the Christian Armenians and applied to the Christians in Mount Lebanon."[196]

Kahlil Gibran, born in Mount Lebanon in 1883, was a poet, artist, and writer. He came to the United States in 1895, and spent time in U.S. schools until he went back to Beirut and enrolled at Collège de la Sagesse. His upbringing greatly influenced his work and he spoke not only of his homeland, but his adopted host country in his various forms of art during his life. Gibran was also active in early Arab-American issues including in the fight for migrant welfare

and ultimately, naturalization, as evidenced in the pages of early Arab-American newspapers. He frequently published in Arab-American newspapers which eventually built a name for him.



Figure 30: Kahlil Gibran, 1913, published in *Al-Funun* Arab newspaper where he published many of his works

In a Syrian-American newspaper, Kahlil Gibran published a stirring poem on the Turkish government's forced starvation of Mount Lebanon called "Dead Are My People." With the poem, he uses cultural work to express his pain, mourn the dead, and call his fellow migrants to action. Printed originally in Arabic, for the Arabic-speaking early Syrian community, the poem is an intervention in Turkish accounts of the era, and a thoughtful expression of exile agency and despair through art.



الهلال ٣٢٢

مات اهلي

لجبران خليل جبران

أصدرت مجلة الفنون الغراء عدداً حافلاً سمته (عدد سوريا المنكوبة) جمعت فيه مقالات وقصائد لخيرة كتاب المهجر وزينته بالرسوم الجميلة . فرأينا أن ننقل عنها هذه المقالة البديعة

مات أهلي وأنا قيد الحياة اندب اهلي في وحدتي وانفرادي
مات احبائي وقد اصبحت حياتي بعدهم بعض مصابي بهم
مات اهلي واحبائي وغمرت الدموع والدماء هضبات بلادي وأنا ههنا أعيش مثلما
كنت عائشاً عند ما كان اهلي واحبائي جالسين على منكبي الحياة وهضبات بلادي

Figure 31: Portion of *Dead Are My People*, Kahlil Gibran, printed in Syrian newspaper *Al-Funun*

A common theme in the poem is the poet wrestling with his distance from his homeland and the incredible helplessness and uselessness he feels in what he is doing. Continually, he condemns lamentations as not being enough and lacking utility for his ailing "brothers." Cultural work was used by people like Gibran to express and to stir thought and action. In one section he writes:

My people and your people, my Syrian
Brother, are dead....What can be
Done for those who are dying? Our
Lamentations will not satisfy their
Hunger, and our tears will not quench
Their thirst; what can we do to save
Them between the iron paws of
Hunger? My brother, the kindness
Which compels you to give a part of
Your life to any human who is in the

Shadow of losing his life is the only
Virtue which makes you worthy of the
Light of day and the peace of the
Night

Most poignant in the poem is the line declaring that "the kindness which compels you to give a part of your life to any human who is in the shadow of losing his life is the only virtue which makes you worthy of the light of day." In the poem, Gibran is marking how his people are suffering, and calling on people to fight to end such suffering. But he is also grappling with his powerlessness. Gibran's poem illuminates the ways in which systems of power ripped subjugated communities from home and belonging, the conditions they faced, and the ways in which cultural work was one site of resistance to global forces of colonialism, genocide, and racism, especially in self-organized community formations. Centering the lives of early migrants and refugees, in their own words, reveals a much more complicated history of this era. Middle Eastern community formations discussed what was happening "at home" while also organizing and fighting for revolutionary struggles from exile. And they did so while living through genocide, war, and catastrophe. Their work is U.S. History.

The voices and experiences of Middle Eastern peoples under crisis during this era stand in stark contrast to dominant discourses of and about this time. State-based studies and U.S. History has portrayed Middle Eastern migrants and refugees outside of their political contexts, as passive recipients of political events, and erased their histories. These constructions are racialized, and are needed to enable and maintain domestic and transnational systems of oppression.

The Stakes: Refugee Crisis

A massive ongoing refugee crisis was unfolding simultaneously to the prerequisite naturalization cases which continues to be largely unmarked and uncentered in dominant discourse and scholarly inquiry on the era. This could be because of how various ethnic groups have siloed studies of the time, but a comparative ethnic studies approach reveals refugeehood as part and parcel of pan-Middle Eastern racialization in these decades. As I will discuss in this chapter, this included the mobilization of a Middle Eastern refugee figure, the Middle Eastern Christian figure in need of "saving" in the Western imaginary, although both Western and Eastern empires were sources of their distress. And often these refugee communities were actually saving themselves. Post-1915 presented a major shift in the stakes and scale of the naturalization fight and prerequisite cases because of mass dispossession and the number of communities seeking refuge in the United States. This impacted targeted and marginalized Ottoman communities the most. The era of naturalization was defined by a mass refugee crisis that touched the shores of the Americas.



Figure 32: Ottoman-sponsored Great Famine of Mount Lebanon, Fouad Debbas Collection, Date unknown

At the same time, the United States would unleash the full force of the federal government to bar these already subjugated communities, through the denial of naturalization on the basis of not being white, refugee/immigrant bans, and the making of "American" up and against other communities like these deemed outside the nation. This particularly came to a head in the cases that would follow, *Dow* and *Cartozian,* in the backdrop of massive legislative pushes to bar migration from, from "Asia" which impacted Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities. Refugees were worried about these cases. And refugeehood featured prominently in early Middle Eastern American race, both by how the communities were seen by white Americans and what they endured as displaced and fleeing peoples.

Unpacking the Middle Eastern Christian Figure: Refugees, Erasure and the Birth of the American Non-Profit Industrial Complex

In 1915 the American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief, the original name of the Near East Relief, was established in response to the massive humanitarian crisis happening in the Ottoman Empire. The American organization solicited donations from the American public and ran a relief operation. By 1919, it had grown and changed its name to Near East Relief. As part of its work, the organization released a substantial amount of written and visual materials imbued with great racial meaning. The archives of the Near East Relief organization coupled with and entrenched in American missionary efforts during the time in the Ottoman Empire reveal the ways in which what I call the "Middle Eastern Christian figure" was constructed. I define the "Middle Eastern Christian figure" as a racial figure, a passive recipient of violence at the hands of an implicitly Muslim aggressor and in need of saving by the West, while the West politically sets the conditions for its violences and paints the figure as passive receiptient. Leila

Abu Lughod, in her foundational *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?,* interrogates the mobilization of the Muslim Woman as a racialized figure by the West.[197] She looks at the dangers of reifying culture, apparent in the tendencies to plaster neat cultural icons like the Muslim woman over messy historical and political dynamics. According to Abu Lughod, the Muslim woman figure is a racialized figure needed to justify foreign intervention in the Global South, especially in the SWANA region. Abu Lughod alludes to Spivak's construction of "white men saving brown women from brown men" to describe the construction of the Muslim Woman in need of saving by white Western men via foreign intervention, militarism and war, and she notes the particular mobilization of white femininity to enact such processes.[198] Building on Abu Lughod's work, I define and analyze the Middle Eastern Christian figure which I argue developed at the turn of the twentieth century and in the following sections evidence, and the challenge, the device through the lived realities of communities on the ground, both through their experience in their homelands, and then in the United States, as refugees. This section challenges the valorization of Western humanitarian in the SWANA efforts long gone unchecked as also part of multiscalar racial regimes. I turn now to define racial device that I term the Middle Christian figure.

The Middle Eastern Christian figure is a victim. It is one that is necessary to create and define a formula of "white Christians saving brown Christians from brown Muslims." The salvation is by conversion (saving their soul) and Western humanitarianism (saving them in crisis). The figure and its maker justifies that saving by defining such victims as a helpless receiver and the savior as a heroic actor. The figure also must be removed from its environment and its cultural context. In the functioning of the figure, the Middle Eastern Christian must prove a loyalty to the West with never-ending gratitude for its efforts, that glorifies the white Western

world, even above its own acts of resistance and relief. In this dynamic, the Middle Eastern Christian must never be revealed as also a victim of Western violence nor as anti-imperialist resistors. Rather, the Western construction of the Middle Eastern Christian figure sees the Middle Eastern Christian as a passive object, or "one of us," erasing the figure's connection to its homeland in an attempt to make its struggle its own. In the absence of actual oppression against the White Christian, White Christians inhabit the struggles of the Middle Eastern Christians as their own, in a parasitic-like relationship designed to justify transnational action, while conveniently insiviblizing political solutions that would actually help the targeted, and invisibalizing Western complicity.

The Middle Eastern Christian figure appeared before the Genocide of 1915, as did the American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire. In the Eastern provinces, the Armenian and Assyrian provinces, American missionaries had a widespread operation. Unlike many have assumed, the primary targets of American missionaries' goals to systematically convert the local populations in the Ottoman Empire were not Ottoman Muslims, but Ottoman Christians, Eastern Christians whom they believed had a lesser form of Christianity, must be brought into American Protestantism, and could and should be converted en-masse. American missionaries, especially in the use of schooling and childcare of orphans, particularly mobilized white American women as a force in much of South West Asia and North Africa at the time. As second-class citizens throughout the empire, rural Christian groups like Armenians and Assyrians were often denied basic necessities such as education, healthcare and social services, and so the mission compounds were some of the only places where they had access to the ability to read and write, receive medical care, and get treated for disease. A photo from the Houshamadyan archives reveals a familiar early ailment: trachoma.



Figure 33: Western missionary woman surrounded by Armenian children, treating trachoma, 1909, Hadjin, Ottoman Empire, Source: Houshamadyan archives

The photograph is a portrait of saving the natives, documented by American missionaries to display their "good work" to send back to their followers in the United States to see their efforts. The photograph was taken in 1909 and depicts a white American woman treating an Armenian orphan with trachoma in their eyes. The child is on the lap of the woman with his eyes stretched open looking up at her as she looks directly at the presumably white U.S. American viewer. In this way, the photo visually represents the implicit hierarchy of the mission system, focusing on the gaze of the missionary, to whom the child literally looks up.

Another sitting portrait in Hadjin is of Anna Bowman, an American missionary woman at the United Orphanage and Mission compound. The United Orphanage and Mission (UOM) began in December 1898 by American missionaries and included missionaries from three denominations: Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren in Christ, and Missionary Church Association.[199] The Houshamadyan archives detail the work at the Hadjin compound:

> In Hadjin, the orphans (who had come from Hadjin and neighboring areas) observed strict schedules in the Girls' and Boys' Homes. Prayer meetings, meal time, schoolwork and chores shaped their days. Local women taught sewing, knitting, and needlework to the girls. Each year, a group of older girls sat out the school year and helped with cooking and cleaning, as well as the sewing and mending of dresses, underwear and stockings. This arrangement kept the orphanage on its very tight budget and ensured the girls received proper training as homemakers. Their education being equally important, they attended schools run by the American Board, a separate mission whose focus was education.

The missionaries used education as a primary tool of their work, making school a place of conversion and teaching U.S. and Western culture. The education was run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which was among the first American Christian missionary organizations. The American Board was founded in 1810 by graduates of Williams College and consisted of German Reformed churches, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. And with their schooling they also taught various forms of gendered labor. Like in the Indigenous boarding schools in the Americas, young girls were prepared to be homemakers, learning Western costumes, labors, and crafts. Western femininity played an important role in bringing the natives into the "right Christianity" and was central to their missionizing goals.



Figure 34: American missionary Anna Bowman in Hadjin with Armenian orphans, 1909.
Courtesy: Houshamadyan archives



Figure 35: Hadjin, 1909, now destroyed, Photo by Dorinda Bowman, Courtesy: Houshamadyan



Figure 36: The American Board compound pitched on a hill high above Hadjin, Photo by M. Andonian, Courtesy: Houshamadyan archives

In the portrait of Anna Bowman with the Hadjinsti orphans, Bowman sits on a chair with two children on her lap. She is surrounded by Armenian orphans, boys, who make up an unknown mass around her. Her eyes are directed at the camera, and appears calm and white in a sea of brown figures. Once again, the photo represents hierarchy, centering Bowman, who is seated in a high chair that positions her head above everyone else, including the Armenian adults. There is a backdrop, as much Ottoman portraiture included at the time, indicating that the picture was set and staged. The picture was taken by Dorinda Bowman, another missionary (and her family member) with the United Orphanage and Mission 1909-1938, who was responsible for the newsletter of the organization back in the United States.[200] In the newsletter churchgoers and donors could see the happenings of the organization and what they were in the field. As the photographs detail and organizational histories reveal, much of the American missionary apparatus of today has its origins in missionizing Ottoman indigenous groups and was created

centrally through the Middle Eastern Christian figure. And, as I argue, the basis of the American non-profit industrial complex today was centrally built around this figure and has its origins in these American missions.

Founded in 1915, (what became) the Near East Relief was the second American humanitarian organization to be chartered by an act of Congress. The founding of the Near East Relief marks the very inception of a non-governmental organization. It is the first major "humanitarian" mission via NGO, and it is centered around a Middle Eastern refugee crisis. One cannot see today's liberal mainstream refugee efforts without looking at these legacies. In this way, I argue, the Middle Eastern Christian figure and the experiences of Middle Eastern refugees were central to the birth of the modern American non-profit industrial complex. The strategies used during the turn of the twentieth century are deeply similar to those deployed by mainstream liberal U.S. organizations like Amnesty International, Direct Relief International, and World Vision today and originate in this era. The NEF marks the birth of "citizen philanthropy," the strategy of appealing directly to the public to support such work overseas. This model of philanthropy is now used today by the largest Western non-profits of the world. The Near East Relief was founded by white American missionaries who saw it as their duty to help save, both in the biblical sense of "salvation" and through aid missions, tied to their evangelizing of the peoples of the world.

The material produced by the Near East Relief exemplifies the Middle Eastern Christian figure's centrality to the beginning and development of the American Non-Profit Industrial Complex. Among the most striking images to come out of the Near East Relief was the famous "They Shall Not Perish" poster, a symbol of white saviorism of Middle Eastern peoples,

personified. I offer a critical reading of this image, to decipher and expose the racial information it is conveying.



Figure 37: "They Shall Not Perish" poster, drawn by Douglas Volk, 1918, Source: Library of Congress

Drawn by artist Douglas Volk in 1918, the poster was created to solicit support and donations from the American public for the organization's activities. In the image a white woman stands triumphantly with a sword in her hand, dressed in white, personifying the United States of America, alluding to Lady Liberty. She is upright and ready for battle, in the recognizable and ubiquitous presentation of white femininity as representing the purity and valor of the U.S nation. Like the images of white women personifying the U.S. in paintings of manifest destiny in the American West, she is here to bring freedom and justice to the East, which she does draped in the red, white and blue flag.

Those lands of the "Near East" she is saving are identified on the poster as Armenia, Greece, Syria and Persia. Such nations are personified in the crouching brown female figure, who, scared, is clutching tightly and latched onto the white woman figure embodying the United States. A child, her clothes are torn, with her shoulder exposed, a portrayal that often invoked sexual violence during this time. The mighty woman in white, sword-blazing, will be her rescuer. The image is particularly soaked in racial information, that interpellates the viewer as white, and particularly a white donor. *You too could save a child*, a child personifying an entire civilization here. The poster's purpose is to evoke the hero in every white viewer to donate, suggesting that they too must be the hero in this story and save the child. It does so as the governments of the Western world were actively complicit in the Armenian Genocide alongside its perpetrators which I discuss in later sections. However, a political solution is not conveyed that examines power but rather Western saviorism through religious humanitarianism.

The white saviorism and Eastern victim embodied in the Near East Relief Fund "They Shall Not Perish" posters is also seen in the use of Middle Eastern refugee children and women in many of their posters and their sponsor card program, among the first of their kind.



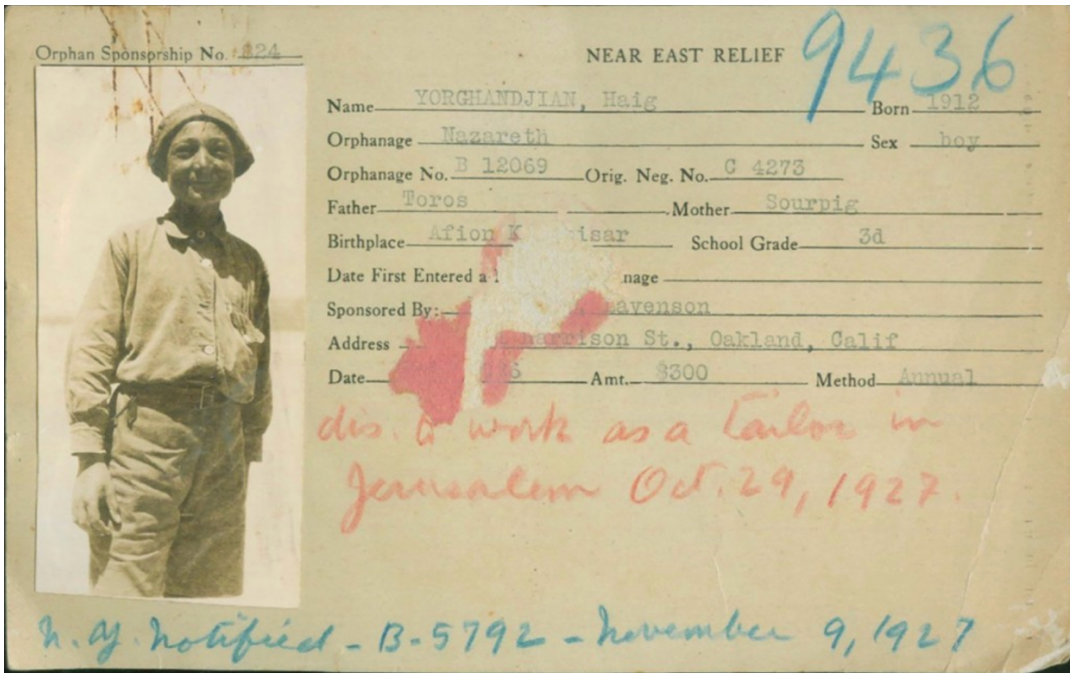
Figure 38: Children in Near East Relief and affiliated images, here Zadi (left) and Shushan (right), Source: Near East Relief Foundation



Figure 39: Armenian and Syrian Relief Campaign poster (Left), early 1900s, Amnesty International poster (Right), 2010s

The materials repeatedly use images of refugee children and women in a state of crisis. The viewer is called upon to save them, *"You can't let us starve."* During the time, political coordination existed between the states that created the conditions for the refugees, those political conditions remain absent from the posters. The refugees are dislodged from power, and rendered powerless.

Another photograph of the Near East Relief Foundation archives reveals the beginnings of the formation of another now normalized and racialized mechanism of the modern American non-profit industrial complex: the introduction and creation of the donor sponsor card. Sponsor cards were part of a system of orphan sponsorship where an American donor would be assigned an orphan when they donated. The organizations, led and established by American missionaries, would send Americans a picture of a SWANA refugee or orphan child, detailing their phenotype and background. A sponsor card of Haig Yorghandjian, a refugee child in Nazareth, Palestine, reveals much about the Near East Relief process. The sponsor card details where Haig was born, his orphanage number, and the information of his sponsor. The card indicates that Haig is being sponsored by an individual in Oakland for three hundred dollars annually.


Orphan Sponsorship No. 824

NEAR EAST RELIEF 9436

Name YORGHANDJIAN, Haig Born 1912

Orphanage Nazareth Sex boy

Orphanage No. B 12069 Orig. Neg. No. C 4273

Father Toros Mother Sourpig

Birthplace Afion K isar School Grade 3d

Date First Entered a nage

Sponsored By: avenson

Address rison St., Oakland, Calif

Date 6 Amt. $300 Method Annual

dis. to work as a Tailor in Jerusalem Oct. 29, 1927.

N. of. Notified - B-5792 - November 9, 1927

Figure 40: Sponsor card of Haig Yorghandjian, a refugee child in the orphanage in Nazareth, Palestine



Figure 41: American missionaries and orphans, Everek, 1900. From left: Samuel Zeligian, the orphanage's carpenter; Fredericka Honk and Ada Moyer, newly arrived to join the other missionaries. Children, from left: Kurdish boy, blind child, Armenian girl carrying sister. Source: Houshamadyan

Another image of UOM orphanage in Everek from the Houshamadyan archives served as a photograph to send to the orphans' sponsors abroad. In the photograph, the boys are easily identified as orphans because their hair is clipped short and they are in the orphanage uniform. They are arranged for the photo, seated and standing. Among them are Krikor Tatoulian, Hagop Elmesekian and Yeghishe Khavzalian, who are documented in the updates to their sponsors.



Figure 42: UOM orphan photograph sent to their sponsors, Everek, circa 1911. Source: Houshamadyan



Figure 43: An Armenian orphan with clipped hair, holds steady the donkey of missionaries' children Theo and Ruth Barker, Everek, 1913, Source: Houshamadyan

On my father's side, I am the great granddaughter of a Hadjinsti Armenian Genocide orphan who grew up in the American missionary orphanage.[201] His name was Armen but his last name is unknown; he was very young when they began the massacres in Hadjin. When the Turkish nationalists came to his village, they massacred his entire family as he watched. He was picked up by American missionaries, who found him and gave him a new Anglo name, Albert. Armen became Albert Armen. Because of the Western colonial presence in Turkey and the Turanism that wiped our homeland from the map, our family tree stops abruptly. Within Armenian cosmologies, names, particularly last names, have a central importance and meaning. They connect one to a collective and record histories under existential threat across generations. Because of the actions of strangers, that of our family is lost on this side.

They had Armen at the American orphanage until he was 18 where he worked and eventually rose through the ranks. Once he reached adulthood, he left his village forever for the United States as the situation devolved into even more violence, alone without his family which

he never found. He struggled throughout his life, reliving scenes of the genocide and these experiences. Once in the United States, in an act of resistance against the forces of erasure he endured, he changed his name from Albert to Avadis, a popular Armenian first name. He became known from then on as Avadis Armen.

The Middle Eastern Christian figure, embodied in the brown refugee child of the non-profit pictures, continues to this day to haunt, inform and drive Western policy and humanitarian action. As I have outlined, the Middle Eastern Christian figure is a helpless figure, that needs a white knight figure to be saved. Its salvation is both spiritual and physical, salvation through conversion to Western Christendom and through the schooling, education, and relief efforts that are and were the extensions of American missionizing and presence in the region. The Middle Eastern Christian figure is removed from its context, no power is located in its representation, nor is the role of the West in its circumstances addressed, let alone the leveraging of Western political and diplomatic power to end the source of its actual suffering. The figure is passive and also does not experience Western violence like all its other Middle Eastern counterparts. In this vein, it is impossible, then, for the Middle Eastern Christian to hold self-determination, to save and know its own community, or be an anti-imperialist resistor. By incorporating the Middle Eastern Christian figure as a decontextualized, subordinate other, white American Christendom cannot only remain pure, but also can be celebrated as a hero.

The Middle Eastern Christian figure results in powerful divide-and-conquer techniques of colonialism and empire. These come to manifest in the borders that would come to carve up the region on the tables of powerful Western men and Middle Eastern supremacist regimes. As today, it is the indigenous who suffer most and also the indigenous who resist their suffering. Dominant records in both American Studies and Middle East Studies to this day, continue to

reinforce discourse that upholds these hegemonic structures. But the lives of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees themselves and their everyday resistances challenge these very fictions. The figures are myths that exist in stark contrast to the community organizing and revolutionary movements that fought for life during the era and simultaneously critiqued and condemned multiple forms of oppression in the West and East. I turn now to bring some such examples that move people beyond bodies and beyond figures, to those who struggle for survival and for life.

Challenging the Construction: Refugees and Migrants as Organizers, Political Strategists, and Revolutionaries

Popular circulations, that today are even taken up in academic studies, see early Middle Eastern refugees in the United States as subjects rather than actors, passive accomplices in world orders and receivers of seismic genocidal violence which they took without defending themselves. Dominant discourses, often reinscribed in whiteness studies, outline the following arguments. Middle Eastern peoples coming to the U.S. in the prerequisite era were just people looking for a "better life" and enthusiastically tried to shed their cultural backgrounds in a new land. This is largely not true and obscures not only that numerically they were largely refugees, including non-Arab and non-Muslim refugees, but that they were emphatically and passionately patriotic to their homeland and ethnic heritage which they had endured mass targeting for, understood the American system as also racist, and were actively both struggling against the mass destruction of their homelands and trying to survive under white supremacy and displacement once in the United States. The struggle for American citizenship has been documented largely in Middle East Studies, Arab American Studies, Armenian Studies, Assyrian Studies, American Studies, and Whiteness Studies without these major elephants in the room. Interdisciplinarity inherent in comparative Ethnic Studies allows for readings from below that

challenge all fields to see SWANA peoples impacted by mass displacement, mobility and immigration restrictions, and empire, as knowledge producers themselves, to read organizing as theory, and to engage the everyday as a site where race is made across national borders and ethnic boundaries. The following sections outline the ways in which, in contrast to the figures imposed on the communities, people fleeing violence analyzed, strategized and organized their survival, surroundings and communities. They did so as powerful State governments, both Ottoman and American, denied them access to the nation. And in their exclusion, they formed their own kinship and social networks for their own forms of belonging and safety. Khatchig Mouradian reveals in *The Resistance Network*, that throughout the South West Asia and North Africa region, "Armenians coordinated a massive robust humanitarian resistance effort, which helped saved the lives of thousands" focusing particularly on the efforts in Ottoman Syria which contrast to their construction as merely recipients of such efforts by the West.[202] As Mouradian instructs "the scholarship and the public discourse largely define the perpetrators and the Western humanitarians–but not the targeted group–as actors, focusing on how the former killed and the later saved" while erasing the resistance of those experiencing the genocide.[203] I take a parallel approach in uncovering refugee resistance in the United States, as in similar ways scholarly and public discourses that narrate history of the era (re)produce and circulate such tropes about these communities. Community formations, migrant and refugee resistance, and relief efforts in the United States are powerful counterpoints to dominant histories on the era, that continue to dismantle hegemonic discourses and open up new conversations on contradictions and complicity.

Migrant and Refugee Nationalisms, Exile & Diaspora Activists: Organizing Nations across Oceans

Early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees were not passive subjects of transnational forces. In fact, the communities who are denied whiteness by the United States government in the racial prerequisite cases are all communities engaging in fierce nationalist liberation movements at the time. The diaspora, whether by exile, refugeehood, or immigration, was a vital part of building nationalist movements among Ottoman ethnic groups. For the purpose of this section I focus on Arab, Armenian, and Assyrian nationalisms. Simultaneously, these groups were challenging Turkish rule, bearing the brunt of it through state-sponsored Genocide and Famine, and experiencing American exclusion, with American citizenship being built and negotiated for non-white and non-Black peoples on their backs. Migrants and refugees from the Ottoman Empire in the United States were not just enduring these systems, they were leading movements against those systems, and the fight for self-determination back home, which played a significant role in the days of the end of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Ultimately, often exiled or dislodged from their homelands, diasporic leaders were deep strategists, organizing their nations across oceans and making political demands under and to a multitude of empires. Thus, this history of early Middle Eastern Americans and race was dominated by migrant and refugee nationalisms.

Literature on whiteness and would-be Middle Eastern Americans has typically assumed that these communities wanted to become American for solely U.S. based reasons. In other words, it is argued that the question of race for early communities including around the fight for legal domestic rights, was a question bound by U.S. geography. Sarah Gualtieri counters this notion and argues that there is a fundamentally transnational notion of belonging and reality that is centrally at play. Indeed, while prior studies emphasized the "American" as the "win" of the

early Syrian prerequisite cases, Gualtieri argues, "yet in the case of Syrians the battle for whiteness, conceived of as a battle for citizenship, allowed for them to connect to the homeland and to a wider Syrian diaspora. Immigrants used their American citizenship to travel back to Syria and Lebanon and petition the U.S. government for assistance in securing the independence of these countries."[204] She continues, maintaining:

> The issue of diasporic nationalism is surprisingly underinvestigated in both Middle Eastern and Arab American Studies. Historians of the Middle East have long been consumed with the development of Arab nationalism (in its multiple forms), and many have acknowledged that nationalist thinkers lived, wrote, and organized from the mahjar (the diaspora). [205]

Indeed, at the time of the earliest naturalization era, at least one out of every six Syrian lived outside of Greater Syria, the homeland. As Gualtieri reveals, "New York, Paris, and Sao Paulo were also hubs in the formation and circulation of nationalist ideas, and dozens of Arabist committees were founded in the mahjar, away from the homeland."[206] In 1911, for example, she states, Naoum Mokarzel, a key Syrian figure in the U.S. racial prerequisite cases, founded Jamiyya al-Nahda, the Lebanon League of Progress, with "the initial goal of the society… to ensure autonomy for Mount Lebanon within the Ottoman framework, a platform that Mokarzel presented to the Arab Congress held in Paris in 1913."[207]

In *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*, Hani Bawardi argues that "the fate of Syria in that period was the core theme that consumed the energies and passion of intellectuals with the support of a large constituency among the first generation of Arab immigrants."[208] Bawardi challenges the notion that "no formal Arab American political activity took place before 1967 due to purported apathy and indifference, inadequate education, and sectarianism" and that the birth of "Arab-American identity" was a byproduct of white supremacist views during the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 as many claim.[209] Instead Bawardi

outlines the many dynamic community forces that built and shaped early Arab-American identity traced all the way back to the earliest mass presence in the United States, and argues that homeland nationalism was the central thrust within it.

As early as the late nineteenth century, U.S. media reported this role of the diaspora in organizing and expressing support for self-determination "back home." During the Summer of 1899, a rally in Little Syria's Washington Street in New York occurred, complete with impassioned speeches and parades, for self-determination against Ottoman rule.[210] Adele Younis reflects on the rally, "many supported the move…more sober heads reflected on the distance between New York City and Constantinople."[211] Furthermore, *The New York Times* reports in 1895 "Armenians Form a League" that Armenians in Massachusetts formed a secret organization to gain self-determination for Armenians, free from Ottoman rule:

> It will be its duty to choose from the most trusty men of the race twelve patriots whose identity will be known to them alone, so that there will be no possible way by which the Turkish Government may discover them, and thus defeat the plans to wrest Armenia from the rule of the Porte. The Armenians at large will have no knowledge of the names of these men, or any source of determining who they are. Their oath will bind them for life to keep the secret of their identity. The colonies scattered throughout the United States have been communicated with, and in a short time will form similar leagues to the one organized here[212]

Diasporic political organizations in the United States, led by political exiles, navigated transnational surveillance as they organized for self-determination for their nations back home. As the article indicates, many of these organizations had to meet in secret so that political organizers would not be assassinated or harmed, and so the Ottoman government did not disrupt their plans. This time of transition promised much for non-ruling ethnic groups, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Tragically, however, the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional government and then republic brought nothing but genocide, under every form of governance. The changes during this turbulent period of around thirty years and the devastation in the region

is seen in the journey of one refugee, Anooshavan Mugrdechian, a guerilla fighter turned refugee to the United States, and his family.

Refugee Revolutionaries: The Tale of Annoshavan Der Mugrdechian

> The kidnapping and rape of girls and young women, the heinous slaughter of children and old people, the beatings and butchery of boys and men, all made me very depressed and unable to face the task. However, I had to continue, to preserve for future generations the history of our forebears [sic].
> -Bob (Melkeset) Der Mugrdechian on the process of translating his father Anooshavan's memoirs, Fresno, 1995

Early Middle Eastern refugees to the United States were not passive subjects of state violence, they were organizers and often, quite literally, revolutionaries, organizing for their nations across oceans amidst genocide, a refugee crisis, and U.S. refugee/immigration bans. I turn now to discuss an example of parallel efforts to the resistance happening in the region that of resistance in the United States, which alongside humanitarian refugee relief included organizing support for guerrilla armed self-defense and national liberation. One such figure that took an active political approach was revolutionary Anooshavan Der Mugrdechian. Armenian-American Melkisetek "Bob" Der Mugrdechian writes his father Anooshavan Der Mugrdechian's story in the book *Anooshavan: The Intrepid Survivor*, a translation of his memoirs and genealogy of his family and history.

Anooshavan Der Mugredchian was a member of the Armenegan party,[213] an Armenian political party out of Van. As Lousine Nalbandian writes in *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement,* in the latter part of the nineteenth century Armenian communities in current-day Turkey experienced a political "awakening" or *zartonk*, that broke into full blown intellectual and political revolution after generations of oppression under Ottoman governance as "their

desire for individual freedom and political rights became an outcry."[214] Annoshavan would first come to the United States in 1911 to the East Coast in the middle of on and off-again massacres of the Armenians of Anatolia. How he got there is a story of violence, resilience, and turmoil.

Van was the center of many massacres of Armenians by the Turkish government from the 1890s-1910s. Der Mugrdechian first experienced the Ottoman massacre of the Ottoman Armenians in Van as a youth and its self-defense by Armenian village guerrilla fighters in 1896. In his memoirs he recounts the horrors of escaping burning buildings and cannon fire from the Turkish government during the massacre, and how he helps save sixty Armenian schoolchildren. Many children were slaughtered and others were left orphaned. But the Armenian village fighters were largely successful at preventing the full slaughter of the whole town. He declares in his memoirs that "the brave Vanestsis showed no fear and did not become disheartened," they fought back though they were significantly outpowered.[215] During the 1896 massacre, the Turkish authorities, conspiring with British officials in the town, put forward proposals to stop continued massacres, one of which was for the Ottoman Armenians to surrender completely and give up all their weapons. This was rejected by the Armenegan fighters. Ultimately, it was negotiated that if the guerrilla fighters left, then the villagers' lives would be spared. Anooshavan joined the fighters, who numbered about a thousand, as they were driven out of the town to Varak Monastery.[216] During the massacre many Armenians had gone to what Anooshavan calls the "Protestant sector" or the European and American missionary outposts, for refuge. Anooshavan reveals that a man called Chalgatrents Haji relays the news to the fighters at Varak that "in the Protestant sector, where many Vanetsis had sought safety, the British consul Williams and [American missionary] Dr. Reynolds were sending all the remaining men out into the streets into

the hands of the Turkish mobs."[217] The Armenian guerrilla fighters encountered multiple attacks in the subsequent days and exchanged fire. He writes of one battle:

> At midnight the commander gave a strict command. "Forward, cut a path through the lines of the enemy." I write as an eyewitness to these accounts. We broke through the lines and reached the summit. We lost fifteen of our men, among them Ouzoun Ohanes, Gabloon, Sanoee Garo, the commander of the guards Sahag Blungoyan, Bambag Kitchian, and Chapijian. Some of the men were left unburied on the slopes of the mountains. These were the first martyrs of the fight for freedom. Kolovian and Akribasian had fallen and spilled their blood on the slopes of the mountains.

These men were revolutionary guerrilla fighters, and they were experiencing the early stirrings of what would come to be understood as, and amount to, the Armenian Genocide. Upon return to his family, Annoshavan speaks at length about the role of American and British missionaries and officials in working with the Turkish government and repressing Armenian revolutionary activity. He recalls one experience when Dr. Reynolds, American missionary and leader of the American orphanage that held many Armenian refugee children after the massacre, questions him for information on Armenegan party activities. Though a young man, Der Mugrdechian pushes back and demands to know why Reynolds is supporting the Ottoman government and interrogating him. Anooshavan recounts the conversation, detailing Dr. Reynold's reply:

> The Badveli[218] said, "The Missionary Board has an agreement with the Turkish government to keep the orphans away from ideas of Armenian independence and must cause them [*sic*] to be brought up as Protestant brothers."[219]

It is revealed that American missionary Dr. Reynolds later called upon Turkish authorities to raid Annoshavan's house and imprison him, under the charge of organizing political activities.[220] The Americans were working in coordination with the Ottoman government. During Anooshavan's first incarceration he was put into solitary confinement for nine days. Annoshavan's experiences describe not only the conditions faced by Armenians in Van, but also the part of American and other Western forces in shaping that reality, ultimately exposing the coordination of American-

Ottoman regimes of revolutionary containment and genocide. Armenian revolutionaries like Anooshavan would come to be both excluded by their own government and later be forced to navigate another system of exclusion, racial laws of U.S. naturalization and immigration once he fled to the United States.

Anooshavan experienced trial after trial in subsequent years. He was imprisoned twice more, almost hanged, interrogated, and beaten unconscious by the Turkish government all for attempting to organize the Armenians of Van, especially Armenian young people. The prisons he was held in were filled with ethnic minorities like himself including Kurds and Armenians, and ranged from revolutionary militants to school teachers. Though he was a young man, his family's house was consistently raided, putting the life of his mother and father at risk. Many of his comrades were killed. He also worked to prevent their deaths, including successfully springing two of them from the Turkish prison he was imprisoned in multiple times. Annoshavan not only felt the wrath of the Ottoman genocide perpetrators and their Western accomplices, he later would become the target of a rival political party, the Tashnags, who wanted to gain control over the now blooming revolutionary movement in Van. After his trials at the hands of both Turkish and Western officials, he then was severely beaten by a group of Tashnag rivals one day while walking down a road. Anooshavan was a revolutionary who experienced all of these realities: Turkish-led genocide, Western imperialism and genocide complicity, and Armenian-revolutionary organization infighting. After his third imprisonment and ongoing raids at his father and mother's house, he was pushed out of Van. This combination of events ultimately left him, a man in his twenties, with few options, and he fled to the United States as violence was escalated and the government was targeting his family. The Armenegan party opened a wing in Boston amidst the chaos of these early massacres and events to operate out of in exile. He would

work out of the wing in Massachusetts and continue their revolutionary struggle from the United States until it was safe to do otherwise. His family would be forced to separate. Little did they know the worst was yet to come for the Armenians of Van.

In 1915, the Turkish government initiated a full-scale nationwide genocide. Armenian guerrilla fighters again prevented the wholesale massacre of the Vanesti Armenians in what became known as a "self defense of Van." Anooshavan left the United States and came back to Ottoman Armenia to join the armed revolutionary struggle and save his family who was still there. Despite pushing back Ottoman soldiers coming to massacre the Armenians, thousands of Armenians were forced to flee their homeland, among them this time, the entire Der Mugrdechian family. Rakel's young wife, who had been left in Van, would instantly become a refugee, displaced from her home and dispossessed of her homeland. When Anooshavan and Rakel are ultimately reunited in the SWANA region, Rakel was completely emaciated from the forced starvation on the death marches.

Rakel had experienced her own trauma. She had been through the infamous deportation through Der Zor. Along the marches in Syria, Armenians in the refugee exile lines forced her to leave her child Lucy behind beside a rock one night because she would not stop screaming, and they did not want to attract attention from the Ottoman Turkish soldiers. Turkish soldiers would single out Armenians in the deportation marches to rape and kill on the spot. After a night, she refused and went back to save her child.

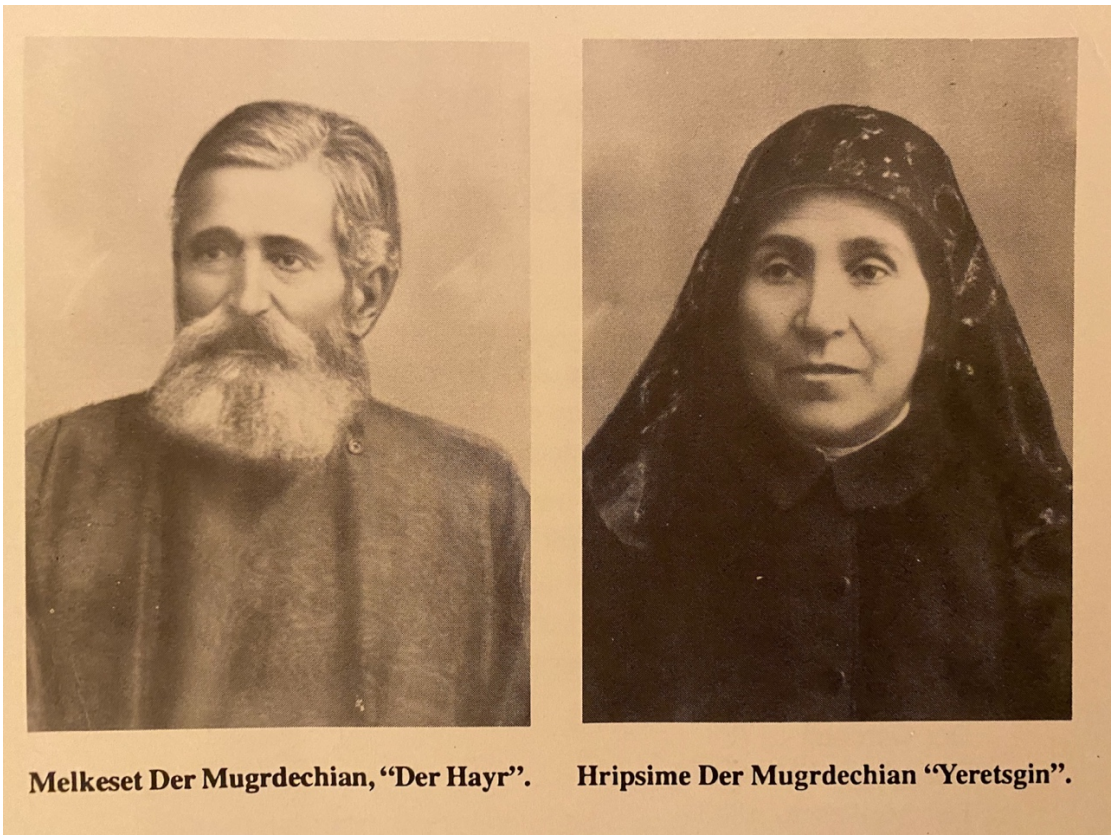


Figure 44: Annoshavan's parents who were exiled from Van and sent on Der Zor Syria death march

In Annoshavan's memoirs, he recalls the transformation of the family into refugees, recounting the refugee caravans that were forced to walk through the desert in Syria where they were killed en-masse, raped, robbed and forced to starve. After several near brushes with death, they escaped to Tiflis. Rakel and the family would eventually make a 6,000 mile journey across Asia on the Trans-Siberian railroad to Vladivostok, in the Russian Empire, on a train filled with refugees. At one point, they were almost prevented from doing so because Rakel had no form of documentation proving her citizenship or residency, but a customs official recognized her from childhood and let her pass. Checkpoints at every port of entry-exit proved again and again to be socially constructed markers of belonging and exclusion, and refugees had a target on their backs because of their identities. Once in Vladivostok the refugees boarded a ship to Yokohama, Japan

where they stayed for forty days until they could get safe passage across the Pacific Ocean to California on the Japanese liner Tenyo Maru.[221] In Japan, they were helped by legendary Armenian leader Diana Apcar who was organizing safe passage for Armenian refugees. Diana Apcar would write the scathing *On the Cross of Europe's Imperialism, Armenia Crucified* in the years immediately following.

Annoshavan's experiences evidence the ways in which early Middle Eastern communities were made up of not only refugees but also that many of those refugees were often revolutionaries and organizers themselves. They were not merely subjects of state violence, but agents shaping political thought and fighting for their survival. They did so under grave conditions as they protected their communities from racialized violence whatever its source. The Der Mugrdechian's story contradicts representations of early Middle Eastern Americans (who would be or become American citizenship petitioners) as immigrants seeking economic opportunity, as merely adventurers in a new land, or as refugees without agency. Annoshavan's experience also again firmly challenges the notion that these early citizenship petitioners were gleefully looking to abandon their own heritage. Rather, they were among the most ethnic nationalist of the communities they came from, and deeply racialized subjects in overlapping and inextricably transnational systems. The stakes were life and death, and yet, while Annoshavan could have stayed in the United States, his travels back and forth reveal he never gave up on his dream of a free Armenia, and that he was willing to sacrifice everything for his people and his family. As his writings indicate, he believed that they would one day return and fought to make it happen. In recordings, he declares they will one day return to their "beautiful Armenia."[222] In his bellowing voice he proclaims a futurity for his people, imagining a world where they are free and on the land.



Figure 45: Annoshavan (right) and his sister Armen (left), Fresno, 1949

The Der Mugrdechian refugee family escaped from eastern Anatolia and traveled from Japan to California by steamship. They would come to live in Fowler and Fresno, California, a hotbed of anti-Armenian-American racism in the early twentieth century referenced in cases like *Cartozian*. Almost all of the Armenian presence in the Ottoman Empire in the historical Armenian provinces would be destroyed, and with it the hopes of ever returning. The family was now stateless, dislodged from their ancestral homeland forever, most of which was now in ruins. Anooshavan had a son, my grandfather, who had a daughter, my mother, who had me, Sophia Rakel Armen, named after Rakel who survived the Der Zor death march.

The depictions by Western sources, including American missionaries and court documents, of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees at the time deeply contrast with their realities. The everyday life of Der Mugrdechian reveals the Western complicity in the indigenous dispossession of the Ottoman Empire and the ways in which people from the land organized

resistance to save themselves, in juxtaposition to the image of the passive de-contextualized figure needed to celebrate Western saviorism and continue genocidal structures. Not only did refugees and migrants organize, they did so while searingly calling out the worlds' hegemonic powers and creating the underground networks necessary for survival. Once such organizer was Diana Apcar, who forged a refugee relief system across oceans to get people out and around migration restrictions while using her pen and voice to condemn her peoples' oppressors and advocate for their safety.

Diana Apcar: Anti-Imperialist, Transnational Feminist Community Organizer

"I am a peaceworker because..I belong to a nation martyred by the imperialism of other nations."
The Great Evil, by Diana Apcar, 1914

In small pockets of community formations and studies in the United States, Diana Apcar has long been hailed as a humanitarian, but in general she has been marginalized from World History and Middle East Studies despite being a heroic and boundary-breaking figure. In this section, I argue Diana Apcar was an early anti-imperialist, transnational feminist community organizer who worked against great odds and offered a sharp political analysis of imperial and genocidal violence in her day. One must question why individuals like Salom Rizk were elevated above such a figure in Western circles, and why they continue to be today. There has been a deliberate attempt in various discourses to whitewash and erase Diana Apcar's full legacy, oftentimes casting her only as a caring, almost grandmother-like figure without any political teeth. Reading her work, her own words, offers a different perspective on her life. While her refugee humanitarian work has been highlighted, her incisive political analysis has often been

erased from dominant and community discourse. One must question is this is possibly because her own words and work threaten and expose multiple systems of oppression and challenge the tropes of Armenians and women, and particularly Armenian women.

Diana Apcar was a diasporic Armenian organizer and writer born in 1859. She coordinated refugee relief and resistance to genocide by helping refugees escape, and securing passage, shelter, food and supplies for them at her own expense. She helped them flee via Japan to the United States, working to establish their safety and arrival. She was also a prolific writer, publishing dozens of books and writing personal appeals to government officials across oceans to stop the Turkish slaughter of her people and condemning Western imperialism that was enabling it. In a letter to David Starr Jordan in 1915, Diana Apcar states "the great dragon of imperialism must be killed before the nations of the earth can be left to peace."[223]

Apcar does not mince words about the violence of Western imperialism and its role in the Genocide in her writings. In her book *On the Cross of Europe's Imperialism, Armenia Crucified,* written from Yokohama in 1918, Apcar proclaims that "the responsibility of every Turkish massacre of Christians for nearly a hundred years can be traced either directly or indirectly to some European Power."[224] The book is a resounding and clear condemnation of the West's role in the destruction of her people. In one particularly poignant and scathing section, she sets her sights on German imperialism, an active accomplice in the Ottoman's genocide:

> The waters of Lake Van are heavily charged with borax. If the Armenians were exterminated? Germany would command a richer supply of borax than the United States obtains from Borax Lake in California.
>
> Silk worms feeding on the leaves of the mulberry trees that grow in Asia Minor produce a silk of the finest texture. If the Armenians were exterminated? Germany would control a market for excellent texture silk.
>
> There are silver, copper, and lead mines in Armenia and Asia Minor with their hidden wealth as yet exploited. If the industrious, wealth producing element[225] in the Turkish

> Empire were exterminated? Germany would be enriched with the hidden wealth of those mines.
>
> The climate of Armenia and Asia Minor is especially suitable for the colonization of the white man. If the Armenians were exterminated? Germans would colonize Armenia and Asia Minor.
>
> As an Armenian I must devoutly wish that God may colonize hell with Germans.[226]

In a scathing condemnation, Apcar outlines possible motivations for Western imperialism's complicity in the destruction of the Armenian homeland. She identifies borax, silk, silver, copper, lead, and even suggests that the colonization of Armenia may be next as it has a nice climate, probably another nice place for the West, the "white man," to colonize. She has had enough. At times she is cheeky, even sarcastic in her writings, but her righteous rage is tangible and analysis clear. She concludes that she wishes God would colonize hell with Germans. The passage is a fiery rebellion against the conditions she is directly experiencing. She is writing during crisis. Coordinating hundreds of refugees' survival, she is seeing the direct result of the actions of the world's powers and the systems which oppress her people. She did not just analyze however, she also advocated to policymakers to both stop assisting the genocide and to help her efforts at securing Armenian refugees' material safety.

As evidenced in her letters to T.J. Edmonds, the Director of Civil Affairs of the American Red Cross at the time, Diana personally advocated to American policymakers and officials to assist her in saving the lives of Armenian refugees. In a letter dates April 28, 1919, she advocated for a Mr. Keshgigian, an Armenian genocide refugee, to be accepted by the United States and pleads for help to secure his ability to find refuge there (a type of asylum before the concept existed).[227] The letter indicates the ways in which racialized citizenship, immigration and refugeehood at the time were deeply intertwined for these genocide survivors and Apcar's

comprehension of the reality of the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee dimensions of the American system which she was navigating in a time of crisis. Indeed, in a later letter to T.J Edmonds on April 21, 1919, she writes in a tone of desperation to the Director:

> As you know, the U.S. Government has ordained very strict regulations against alien immigration, but going the other way via Hong Kong, Singapore… to Port Said there are no restrictions, only difficulty of obtaining passage as there are not enough ships running on this line and they will not give up space.[228]

Apcar specifically names the U.S. anti-immigration policies as impacting Armenian refugee rescue efforts and the ways in which she is organizing around them. Over a period of ten years Diana Apcar navigated the nightmare Turkish genocide and the racialized American immigration system, from her home in Japan. She organized refugees' necessities for survival and used the power of her pen and voice to advocate for her people. A local Japanese newspaper documented her organizing, calling her "Bandzuin Choubei," who was a samurai in Japan's Edo era who was known for standing up "for the weak."[229]



Figure 46: Diana Apcar and her granddaughter, circa 1923, Source: *The Stateless Diplomat* archives

While working to get refugees out, Apcar argued that the powerful nations of the world, particularly the West, would favor their own imperial interests and sell out the Armenians. On May 28, 1918, the First Republic of Armenia was established, largely through the efforts of guerrilla fighters. The young Republic of Armenia gave Armenian women the right to vote and appointed Apcar Armenia's ambassador to Japan. A headline in *The Fresno Bee* shouted "World's First Woman Consul is Mrs. D. A. Apcar in Japan."[230] Not only was the Armenian resistance building a self-determined nation but it had appointed a woman representative before U.S. white women had even obtained the right to vote . These dreams were quickly dashed, however, after the European Powers and Ottoman Empire put their own interests first and ensured the destruction of the First Republic of Armenia. President Wilson's promise to the

Armenians of American protections for a self-determined Armenia state rang hollow. As a headline of *The New York Times* on June 2, 1920 declares "Senate Rejects Mandate, 52 to 23" as "Thirteen Democrats Vote with Republicans Against Action for Armenia."[231] The struggling Armenian refugee nation had been sold out in an agreement between the West and Turkey.


SENATE REJECTS MANDATE, 52 TO 23

Thirteen Democrats Vote with Republicans Against Action for Armenia.

Figure 47: Headline of The New York Times, June 2, 1920

Diana Apcar had been right all along. In the span of a few years, Armenians across the world watched a majority of their historic homeland be wiped from the map. Thousands of years of Western Armenian civilization was decimated. By the end of the Armenian and Assyrian Genocide millions would be displaced and all that would be left of Ottoman Armenian and Assyrian culture was a transnational web of refugees scattered across the globe. During this period, Apcar organized refugee rapid response for over a decade. By the time of her death in 1937, she is credited with saving the lives of over 600 refugees, including my family.

Writing Back, Up and Out: The Early Middle Eastern-American Press

As transnational webs of migrants and refugees fought to secure safety, self-determination, and sovereignty for their people back home, migrants and refugees in the United States participated too. One important medium for both articulating transnational political struggle and debating ideas about the fate of their new American communities was the newspaper or journal. Community newspapers were essential spaces for building both theory and practice for early migrant and refugee communities from South West Asia and North Africa. And it was in these pages that discussion of race also appeared. The early Middle Eastern American press was a mode of shaping public opinion, organizing community and fighting against various forms of racism that persisted against the community. These publications did so while centering the stories, thoughts, lives and creations of everyday community members.

Community publications disseminated culture, news, debates and a bit of home to Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in the United States. The Assyrian press in the United States was an important space of debating politics and keeping up with homeland events. Beyond providing forums for critical analysis and reporting on Assyrian issues, these publications also preserved and advanced Assyrian culture at a time when it was under violent attack. As an indigenous group of the South West Asian and North African region, Assyrian cultural, political, and linguistic practices were under direct threat and violence. Under these conditions, writings of Middle Eastern genocide survivors and refugees in the United States became a space of essential political and social creation, a space of life and worldmaking in juxtaposition to their experiences of mass death and dispossession by empire.

Several Assyrian community newspapers were founded in the early 20th century. The *Assyrian American Herald,* founded in July 1915, was the first weekly Assyrian newspaper ever

published. It was founded, edited and published by Paul S. Newey out of Chicago, Illinois and ran until 1921.[232]



Figure 48: *Assyrian American Herald*, April, 19, 1918

Another Assyrian publication was *Babylon*, a bi-monthly handwritten periodical, published by Naum S. G. Beshrov from 1919 to 1921. Produced in Boston, it was written in Assyrian language but in Armenian script.[233] In the pages of community newspapers, Assyrians in the United States built collectivity, kinship and organizing, helping each other in their new environment and learning and exchanging ideas.

Like for Assyrians, the community journal was also an important medium for early Arab communities, especially in organizing around naturalization and for migrant material conditions. *Syrian World* was an important early Syrian publication. *Syrian World* directly took on the

naturalization cases and was a central platform for disseminating information, debates, and instructions to and for the "Syrian" Arab community on race, classification, and citizenship. Joseph W. Ferris's article "Syrian Naturalization Question in the United States" outlines all prerequisite cases involving Syrians up until 1928.[234] In *Syrian World* 1928, editor Salloum A. Mokarzel, maintains the attack on Syrian naturalization in the United States is "one of the most acute crises of the Syrians in the United States." Morkarzel says "through the whim of a certain Southern Judge [sic]" Dow was judged "not by ethnological considerations but by his color… the Syrians of America were piqued at this slight to their race and banded together for common defense. That was one of the rare instances when they brushed aside their petty causes of difference and rose in common and with the closest approach to unanimity to engage in the task of self defense. And they won."[235] Morkarzel comments on another case, this time in New Zealand, where "Syrians" are also fighting for citizenship on the basis of whiteness. He says "the fight now looming on the horizon in New Zealand should be watched with special interest as it is the latest development in what seems to be a world-wide outburst of antipathy against the Syrians." Community-based newspapers closely followed the race-based citizenship cases. For example, the Syrian newspaper *Meraat ul-gharb* out of New York, translated Judge Smith's ruling in the Dow case in full for its Syrian readership.[236]



Figure 49: *Al-Hoda*, Arabic-language newspaper

The early Arabic-language and Arab-serving press, primarily organized by and for the early Syrian-Lebanese population, was a major community force for analyzing and organizing against early anti-immigrant and anti-refugee racism and debating Arab politics. Early Arab newspapers included *Al-Ayyam*, *Al-Dalil*, *Es-Sayeh* and *Al-Bayam* out of New York, along with *Al-Hoda*, *Al-Jamiah*, *Al-Funun* and *Al-Kalima.*

Like for the other Ottoman nationals, Assyrians and Arabs, Armenians too also used the community press to organize and build. Many newspapers were tied directly to Armenian revolutionary political parties or focused on the struggle and crises in the homeland. *Hairenik*, meaning “fatherland” in Armenian, was an Armenian newspaper that became a weekly in 1899 in New York.



ՀԱՅՐԵՆԻՔ

1899 - 1918

HAIRENIK

THE OLDEST, LARGEST AND LEADING ARMENIAN NEWSPAPER IN U. S. A.

FOUNDED 1899

Issued Daily Except Monday

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $5.00

TEL. BEACH 2969 Published by Hairenik Pub. Co. 7 Bennet St., Boston, Mass. SUNDAY, JUNE 30 PRICE 2 CENTS

Published and distributed under permit (No. 513) Authorized by the Act of October 6, 1917, on file at the Post Office of Boston, Mass. By order of the President, A. S. BURLESON Postmaster General

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Figure 50: *Hairenik*, Armenian-language newspaper

It moved to Boston in 1900 and was an official organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), or the Tashnag Party. Another important early ARF publication is *Azbarez*, started in 1908 in Fresno, California, which served as a major forum for growing Armenian-American power and homeland nationalism. Baykar (Պայքար), meaning 'struggle' in Armenian, was established in 1922 as an official organ of the Ramgavar Party.

Across various ethnic Middle Eastern groups, the newspaper served as a powerful forum for publishing and disseminating community politics, ideas, culture, campaigns, movements, art, business, refugee relief and mutual aid networks. In similar ways, Middle Eastern organizations organized migrant and refugee welfare, and ultimately fought for American civil rights as

refugees transitioned to life in the United States, as the legal battle over U.S. Citizenship and racial classification was waged.

Against Exclusion, Organizing (the) Community: Early Middle Eastern- American Organizations, Associations and Social Clubs

Another form of early Middle Eastern migrant and refugee organizing was through the formation of groups. As Middle Eastern migrant and refugee communities experienced both institutional and social exclusion, community organizations became a lifeline for them, where members could take on problems collectively, navigate immigration, build kinship with fellow diasporans, participate in culture in their native language, fight acts of racism, and organize for political causes either in the United States or in the homeland. As the years went by in the naturalization era, organizations took on many roles for the community, including helping people come to the United States who were displaced, and building the earliest forms of Middle Eastern-American civil rights. Community organizations were numerous and this section is not a comprehensive representation but rather puts forward the common constitution and tactics across various ethnic groups, just as their efforts collectively made up the early Middle Eastern-American press. Community organizations were places where Middle Eastern peoples formed relationships, political struggles, and beloved communities, oftentimes creating a sense of belonging that they were refused in wider U.S. society. Many of these organizations were run by men but often had women's groups associated with them, which greatly expanded in the subsequent decades. Middle Eastern organizations of the early years had similar patterns across them. They often were formed in moments that needed mass mobilization or the protection of a community, but over time the needs of refugees became the needs of racialized U.S. citizens,

especially youth, and the organizations were often places of refuge from forms of exclusion in the United States and the white supremacist culture that demanded assimilation or the shedding of their important cultural practices.

Arab organizations at the turn of the twentieth century were numerous and covered a wide range of focuses including political, economic, cultural and social activity. In the earliest waves of migration, associations of Syrians were often based in an ethnic enclave and not necessarily formalized into an organization with a charter and sustained form. However, they became more structured over time. One example of an early Syrian organization was the Syrian Association of Atlanta which would eventually turn into the Cedar Club of Atlanta. The Syrian Association was founded in 1910 by Ellis Koury Nour, Charles George (Azar), Ellis Mansour, Costa G. Najour, T.L. Saliba, S. Maloof, Jacob Ackel, Mike George (Azar), G.N. Saliba, D. Andrews, John Mansour, Aseff George (Azar), M.J. Coury, Tom Najjar, Soloman Jabaley, Deep Duraney, Eassy Ellis, Kalil Dahar, and George Zachem.[237] Notably Costa G. Najour of the *Najour* case was one of the founders, and many of the Syrians involved in iterations of the association helped during his case. The organization worked on issues surrounding Syria in the World War I era and was instrumental in the founding of many Arabic-speaking churches in the area. Members and descendants of the members of the Syrian Association of Atlanta later formed a new Club called the Young Men's Syrian Association (YMSA). The YMSA focused on the social and athletic pursuits of its members.



Figure 51: A Syrian organization, the predecessor of what became the Syrian Association of Atlanta and then the Cedar Club, Date unknown, Source: Cedar Club of Atlanta

Another example of an early Arab-American organization was “The Pen Bond” or al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah. The league was an Arab cultural organization of cultural workers that forwarded Arab literature in the United States. It was formed in 1916 by Nasib Arida and Abd al-Masih Haddad but fell apart, coming together again in 1920.[238] An early member was the famous Kahlil Gibran. A picture in 1920 shows four members of The Pen Bond, Nasib Arida, Kahlil Gibran, Abd al-Masih Haddad, and Mikhail Naimy.[239]



Figure 52: Four members of the Pen Bond, 1920, Source: Robin Waterfield[240]

The earliest organizations of Assyrians initially focused on uniting Assyrians from a particular region or village in their new home in the United States.[241] The Young Sepurghan Association, for example, helped bring together young Assyrians from the village of Sepurghan in Urmia, Iran.[242] Some of the early examples of these associations, according to Vasili Shoumanov, were organizations like the Ardishai Society, Sepurghan Association, and others. These organizations focused on organizing initiatives and events to bring Assyrians from various homeland villages together, preserve and innovate their culture, and navigate new life in the United States with each other.

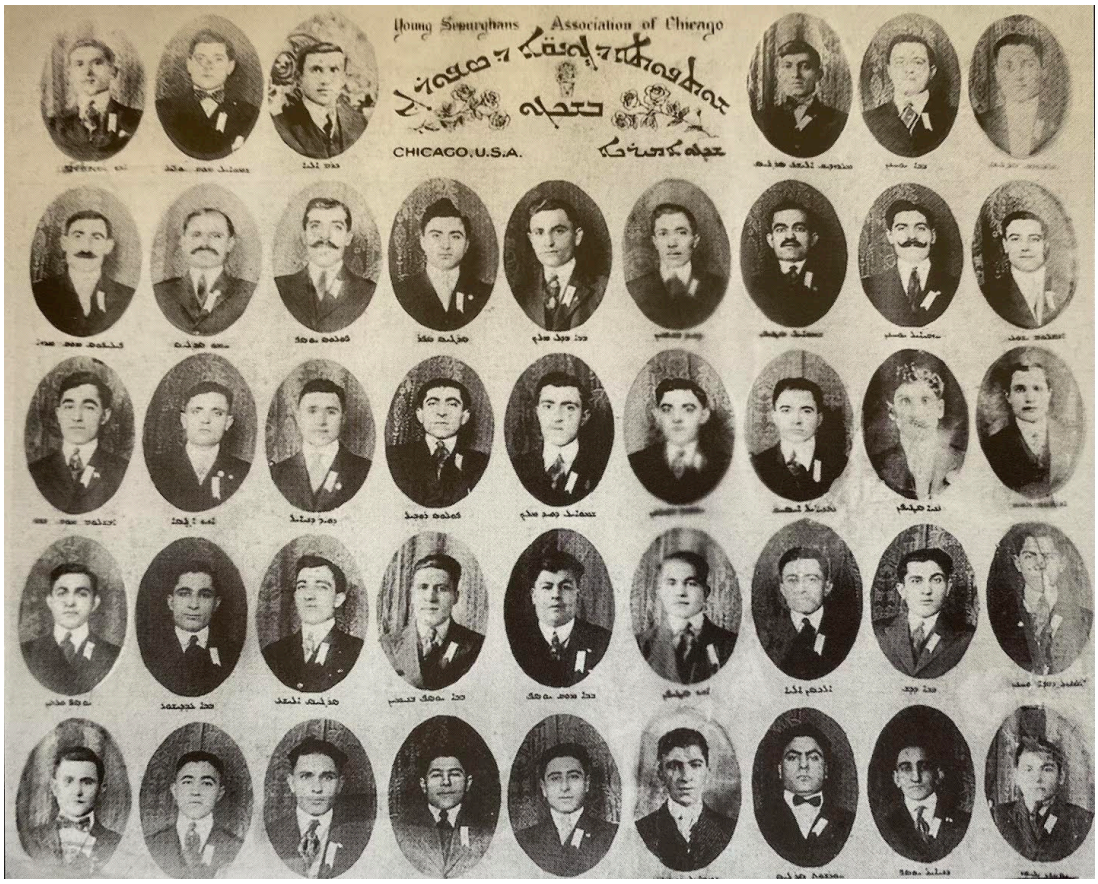


Figure 53: Picture of the Young Sepurghan Association of Chicago. (Source: Assyrian American Association of Chicago, Vasili Shoumanov, Courtesy of Dr. Norman Solhkhah)

Over time, a transition occurred from regional and homeland village-specific associations of Assyrians to groups organized as a united front of "Assyrians" in the United States. This was demonstrated in the birth of the Assyrian National Association of America, founded by David Yadgir, Reverend Joel Warda, and Pera Benjamin in 1914.[243] Once such branch, the Assyrian National Association of America of Chicago, was formed in 1916. In its earliest days, the Assyrian National Association of Chicago organized many events, gatherings and initiatives of social and political activity.

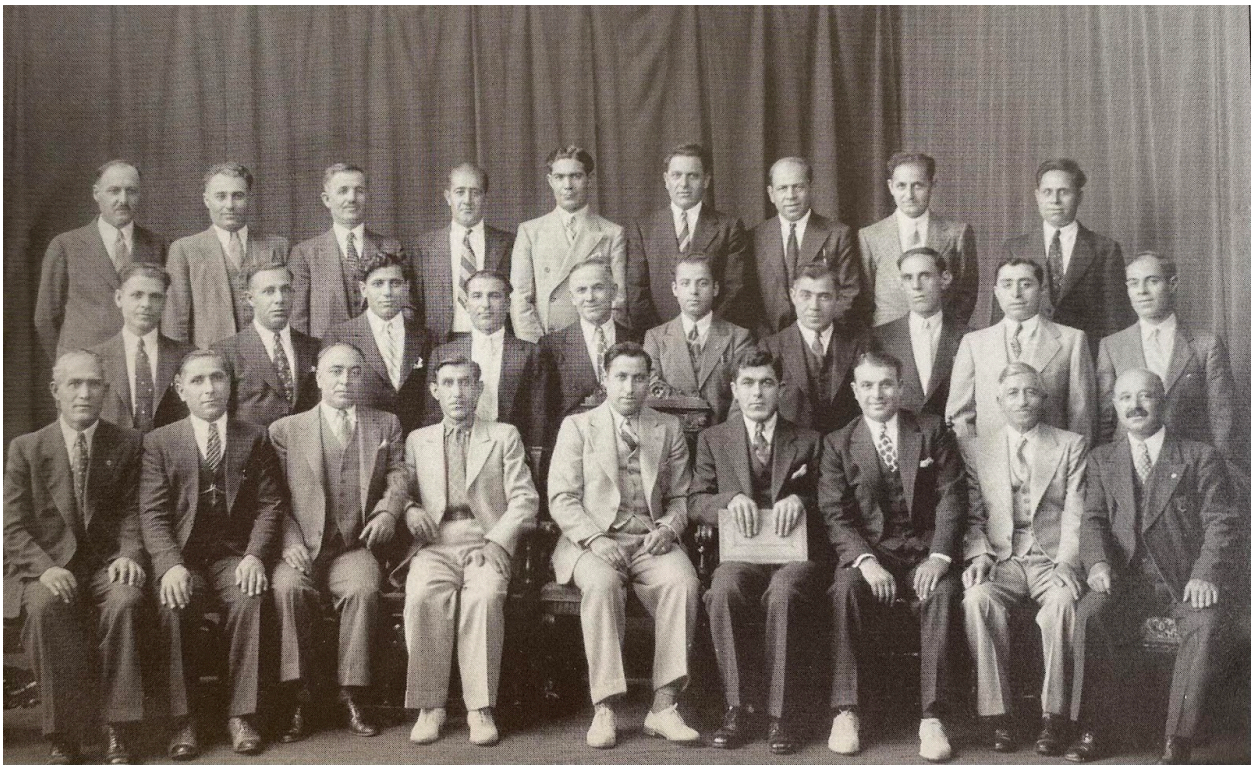


Figure 54: The Founding Members of the Assyrian National Association of Chicago., Source: Assyrian American Association of Chicago, Vasili Shoumanov 2018, Courtesy of Dr. Jack David Jr.

The activities of local Assyrian associations included advocating for the needs of newly arrived Assyrians in the U.S.; staging plays, translated from English to Assyrian; organizing sports games and picnics; and holding women's sewing circles. Early Assyrian migrants and refugees in the United States organized their own forms of comradery and advocacy to meet the needs of the community. They actively sought to preserve their cultural heritage and navigate their new lives in the United States as they transitioned to Assyrian-Americans.

According to Sargon Donabed, some of the earliest Assyrian organizations were established in Massachusetts and included the Assyrian Benevolent Association, the Assyrian Five Association and the Assyrian Harput Association. Several individuals from Harput, in current-day Turkey, created one of the first associations to unite various smaller organizations into what became the United Assyrian Association of Massachusetts "to enliven the Assyrian

spirit and to promote the intellectual, moral, and civic welfare of the Assyrian people," according to their charter.[244]



Figure 55: Portion of panoramic photograph of Harput Assyrian United Association of America event, 1926, Courtesy: Project SAVE Archives

Similarly Armenian migrants and refugees organized community organizations to help people in the United States and forward the Armenian cause. These spaces were centers of life amongst ongoing systemic death and were essential once Armenians under the Turkish government were suddenly stateless. The members of these organizations came from a wide array of backgrounds. Organizations served a diverse set of functions in early Armenian-American society including building comradeship, facilitate grassroots refugee support and resettlement, hosting social events and gatherings, creating spaces of belonging, and forwarding Armenian aspirations for self-determination.

The establishment of Armenian organizations that centered on Armenian life in the United States represented an important transition for the community that tried make some form of home in the new country, as it became clearer and clearer there wasn't a "going back." Armenian refugees transitioned to Armenian-Americans who built organizations to come together amidst social exclusion. The Triple X Fraternity (or "Trex") was founded in Fresno, California in 1918. Eight Armenian boys from Fresno High School created an Armenian youth organization because, as Berge Bulbian writes, "Armenians were not allowed to join other student clubs because of racial discrimination."[245] Instead of resigning themselves to their fate,

these Armenians came together to create a space of joy, refuge, and solidarity. The name Triple X referred to the number "30" in Roman Numerals, as they hoped to convene thirty members. They held their first meeting in Fresno's Roeding Park. Senior members note that in its earliest days, the Trex men, as they were called, always tried to dress up in formal attire for their meetings. Triple X served as a space of community, brotherhood, and comradeship for young Armenian men, particularly as they navigated life in exclusionary Fresno and U.S. society at large. Early events included picnics piled with Armenian food, Armenian dances, and school debates, which grew into larger events like the Triple X Convention. Thr space proved to be an essential formation especially for youth.



Figure 56: Triple X Fraternity founders laying on grass, sometime around 1918, Courtesy: Triple X Fraternity

Another early fraternal organization was Vartanantz Asbedner or "Knights of Vartan" in English. Knight of Vartan was established by Armenian community leaders during the Armenian Genocide at the Bingham House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1916. The organization was established to encourage its members to "assume leadership roles in cultural, educational,

religious, and charitable organizations and activities on the local, national and international level for the betterment of the Armenian nation worldwide" and to forward a proclaimed "brotherhood."[246] The organization, like Triple X, modeled the formation on many different U.S. fraternal organizations at the time, from which they were largely excluded.

Other Armenians organizations directly helped with the refugee crisis unfolding. The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) was founded in Cairo in 1906 by Boghos Nubar, son of Nubar Pasha the prime minister of Egypt, which in the following decades moved its headquarters to New York. AGBU directly organized and led tangible refugee crisis efforts, settling up schools and refugee camps throughout the SWANA region for genocide survivors. They organized orphanages and coordinated transnationally to help their nation under death and siege. Armenian Relief Society was another community-led direct relief organization formed during this period, primarily organized by women it centered the role of women in rebuilding the Armenian nation. ARS began in September 1910, when Edward Agnouni (Khachadoor Maloomian) arrived in the United States for a tour of the Armenian communities. Through his teachings, writings, and group discussions, he argued for the leadership of Armenian women in the community and encouraged Armenian women to aide relief efforts in the homeland. In a period of a few months, Agnouni organized the existing women's groups and through their union founded the "Armenian Red Cross," which changed its name to the Armenian Relief Society in 1918.

Finally, the cause of homeland nationalism was a major pillar for Armenians to organize around. They included the largest Armenian political parties and their organs: Ramgavar, Tashnag(ARF), and Hunchak. Existing Tashnag youth arms would be consolidated into one youth organization by the ARF Central Committee in the early thirties, with the birth of the

Armenian Youth Federation (AYF). The legendary Armenian fighter, General Karekin Njteh, was invited to the United States to help mobilize the communities around the idea of a consolidated youth movement and to forward Armenian refugee mobilization and self-determination. He toured the country from city to city calling on community members to join the cause.[247] His famous oratory skills recruited hundreds of youth into the AYF's ranks. Lastly, the ANCA was another important organization. The ANCA was outgrowth of the ARF affiliated American Committee for the Independence of Armenia which was founded by Vahan Kardashian after World War I [248]

Chapter 3 Stateless Survivors, Refugee Resistance, and (Dis)located Struggles: Naturalization, Racial Terror, and the Everyday, Post-1915

The Cases post-1915: Dow, Cartozian, and Refugee Regimes of Containment and Death

> We have, then, this condition: That in the numerous reconsiderations of the statute, when it was amended or repealed and re-enacted, the Congress must have been aware that certain Asiatics, near the Mediterranean Sea, including Syrians, were generally classed as white people. It seems to follow that, even if the Congress of 1790 considered that the law of that year would be understood to allow the naturalization of persons of European nativity or descent only, the legislators of later years could not have supposed that the term "free white persons" would carry that restricted meaning.
>
> **-Dow v. United States, 1915**

> Defendant is a native of that part of the Turkish Empire known as Turkey in Asia, or Asia Minor, having been born in Sivas, which is located in Western Armenia, towards Anatolia, and is of Armenian blood and race. It is alleged that he is not a free white person within the meaning of the naturalization laws of Congress. No charge of fraud is made, and the sole question to be determined is whether defendant is to be classed, for naturalization purposes, as a "free white person."
>
> **-United States v. Cartozian, July 27, 1925**

George Dow, born in Batroun, Syria in 1862, filed for American citizenship in 1913. Judge Henry A. M. Smith represented the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Southern Carolina at Charleston. Judge Smith ruled that Dow did not meet the racial requirements of naturalization. The acting judges for the Dow appeal in 1915 were Judges Pritchard, Knapp and Wood. Circuit Judge Woods would ultimately give the final ruling. The case initiated a legal battle that would result in opinions, official and unofficial, in both courts and transnational Arabic newspapers and community formations. *Dow* would ultimately declare Syrians white in 1915. The same year of the outbreak of full-blown genocide and forced famine in the Ottoman Empire and the year the also genocidal, anti-Black, and white supremacist propaganda film *Birth of a Nation* was released.

The *Dow* decision reveals many truths about larger systems of race and power and the construction of U.S. citizenship. In the first paragraph of the opinion Judge Woods names that Naturalization Act of 1790 was made for Europeans and to deny Black people naturalization. U.S. naturalization was made through white supremacy and via anti-Blackness. He opines:

> In 1790, when the first act was passed, immigration to this country was almost altogether from Europe; and doubtless the act of 1790 was intended mainly to provide for naturalization of aliens from Europe, and to deny naturalization to negroes. With other peoples this country had little intercourse and little concern.

Syrian people in this case at the time of the ruling are those "other peoples" as they are not "aliens of Europe." Studying Middle Eastern migrant and refugee lives during the racial prerequisite cases era reveal larger mechanisms of power and oppression, both U.S. and transnational. This text reaffirms the ways in which violent anti-Blackness and white supremacy was codified via early naturalization law. The Naturalization Act was only amended to include "people of African descent" after the Civil War. It also names Europe, and descendants of Europe, as the ultimate granter and metric of humanity and in many ways shows the process in which Dow was granted whiteness necessitated the stripping away of any signs of his Asian-ness, instead he needed to prove his connection to Europe. In his final opinion the Judge uses this as his argument to allow Syrian naturalization. He states that the original framers of the act "were so closely related to their neighbors on the European side of the Mediterranean that they should be classed as white, they must be held to fall within the term 'white persons' used in the statute." Sarah Gualtieri demonstrates that the Arab organizations that came to the aid of Dow used this line of defense largely because they understood that Dow would not be granted naturalization via whiteness without constructing Syrians via Europe. As Gualtieri has argued, this case "established a weighty precedent for Syrian whiteness based on affinity for Europe." The invocation of "neighbors" in the Judge Woods opinions shows U.S. courts wanted proof of

affinity to Europe and that Arab organizations were successful in mounting a defense that proved such a relationship. Lastly, the Dow opinion also cites other communities' court cases as legal precedent. As Khaled Beydoun reveals, these cases were historically linked to each other in the rulings themselves. Judge Woods specifically cites previous cases of Syrians, Armenians, and "Parsees" to evidence his opinion. Indeed, Judge Woods cites the earlier cases of "In re Halladjian (C. C.) 174 Fed. 834; In re Najour (C. C.) 174 Fed. 735; In re Mudarri (C. C.) 176 Fed. 465; In re Ellis (D. C.) 179 Fed. 1002; In re Balsara, 180 Fed. 694, 103 C. C. A. 660." In the ruling all other major immigrant ethnic groups in the region are cited to construct Syrian classification. This reveals the pan-ethnic classification happening during the period, and the relational nature of race by law in the United States in the early twentieth century. The triangulating nature of these cases is present in the ruling. Indeed, in the opinion, the differences among the other cases are collapsed into one. As Khaled Beydoun has noted, collapsing has been an essential function of American Islamophobia since this era. He argues that since the early twentieth century, Muslims and Arabs have been viewed as synonymous for example and that religion had featured prominently in the Arab cases, using "religion as a proxy for race."[249]

The Dow case particularly startled the Arab-American community and prompted community-wide mobilization. *Syrian World* reported that the Syrian American associations played an active role in the Dow campaign.[250] The first judge's decision that Dow was an Asiatic and did not qualify for citizenship, "raised considerable discussion and controversy throughout Syrian communities in the United States, resulting in an application for rehearing."[251] This rehearing got the whole community involved and T. Moultrie, an attorney from Charleston, represented Dow and the Syrian American Associations. The arguments used by the government in the various cases were numerous and included the claim that Syria was a nonwhite part of

Asia. The government also cast doubt on whether Syrians were actually Semitic, and discussed their relationship with the Arameans, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Persians, Greeks, and Turks. Also used against Dow, as reported by Syrian newspapers, was the fact that he spoke Arabic, which connected him to "the Berbers and Moors and Egyptians of North Africa."[252] It was in response to these racial arguments that Syrians developed counterpoints in order to secure the citizenship of Dow. This is one of the motivators of Philip Hitti's use of the argument that "the Turkish blood never flowed in Syrian veins though the Turks were the masters of the land for four centuries."[253] The Syrians and the defense attorneys in the case also tried to make the argument that the admission of European Jews would include the admission of the Syrians as "both are Semites" and that Jesus was a Jew who spoke the "Semitic language," but according to *Syrian World*, the Judge said such arguments were "purely emotional and without logical sequence"[254] Ultimately, the Syrians organized extensively not only keeping track of each step of the trial but mobilizing around the case to stop the cancelation of Dow's naturalization and the end of naturalization for them all. A mass letter-writing campaign was initiated by the Syrian Society for National Defense (SSND) after George Dow's first failed trial, a grassroots effort that helped secure his appeal.[255] Both fighting violence and uphold violence characterized these cases.

Race-Science Write-Backs: Middle Eastern-Americans Respond to the Cases in Mainstream U.S. News, post-1915

Indeed, Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in the United States knew the stakes were high in the post-1915 naturalization cases. Many of them took action not only to influence the opinion of the courts, but also took their defense to the court of public opinion. A series of letters to the editors appear across national publications in defense of Middle Eastern petitioners, marking a climate charged with racial supremacies and ripe with horrifying race science,

mirroring the arguments used by the federal government. Some also, attempt to correct conflations of communities via counter race sciences to the ones being presented in court, which demonstrates how they were being racialized in pan-ethnic ways, how U.S. society did not know nor care about basic information about and distinctions between their cultures, and the divide and conquer techniques of U.S. white supremacy.

In 1917, F.I. Shatara writes a letter to the editor of *The New York Times*, declaring "Syrians are not Turks." Shatara, pointing to the U.S. view of Turkey in World War I, invokes a sharp distinction between the two groups, categorizing Syrians "as different from the Turks as regards their race, religion, and language" and concluding that "the tendencies of the two races are entirely opposed."[256] Another letter to the editor appears from a Syrian to clarify who Syrians are and are not. Syrian thinker, scholar, and leading community figure, Phillip K Hiti, attempts to correct an error that labels Assyrians of the Persian Empire as Syrian. In doing so, he argues that the "failure to keep clear the distinction between Assyrians and Syrians has often led to great confusion."[257]

Syrians Are Not Turks.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

I wish, through your paper, to bring out one point with strong emphasis, namely, the fact that the Syrians are not Turks. This is of extreme importance just now, in view of the coming conscription. The Syrians differ from the Turks as regards their race, religion, and language, and the tendencies of the two races are entirely opposed. As a matter of fact, there is nothing that binds the Syrians to the Turks except a sense of revenge for the Turkish atrocities in Syria. The Syrians in the United States hail with enthusiasm the entry of America into the war, and both as a community and as individuals are preparing to fight under the Stars and Stripes. Some of them are already fighting under the French tricolor. The writer has enlisted in the United States Medical Reserve Corps, but was told that his services may not be accepted, although he has his first naturalization papers. It will be a great pity if, through failure to distinguish between two races, which are entirely antagonistic, the United States will prevent the Syrians from doing their bit in the great world work of ending Turkish atrocities and overthrowing German autocracy.

F. I. SHATARA, M. D.

New York, May 30, 1917

Figure 57: "Syrians Are Not Turks," *The New York Times*, 1917

Assyrians Not Syrians.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

In a Chicago dispatch that appeared in your columns this morning the statement was made that the Persian Consul, according to certain charges, helped Persians and "Syrians" to evade the draft. No Persian Consul in the United States could have anything whatever to do with the Syrians, whose interests since the severance of diplomatic relations with Turkey have been in the hands of the Spanish Embassy and Consulates. Evidently the reference is not to Syrians, but to Assyrians, who come from the northwestern part of Persia, and would naturally come within the scope of the Persian Consul's activity. Failure to keep clear the distinction between Assyrians and Syrians has often led to great confusion.

PHILIP K. HITTI.

Columbia University, Aug. 15, 1918.

Figure 58: "Assyrians Not Syrians," *The New York Times*, 1918

The writing back of Middle Eastern peoples in the United States in public forums reveals two dynamic processes. In this case, Syrians and all Middle Eastern peoples are being lumped together, they are collapsed into one group in the U.S. imaginary, just as they are being declared so in the courts. Additionally, groups are countering this by trying to assert their distinct heritage, often throwing each other beneath the crushing force of racism, but also in ways that correct historical inaccuracies present in the collapsing of racism. This self-expression mirrors the self-defense strategies discussed in community focused newspapers and evidences the ongoing need for massive grassroots community engagement in U.S. press to counter negative portrayals of the groups they are experiencing. Social and legal discrimination exists alongside many systems of violence during the post-1915 cases.

The Stakes: Racial Covenants and Refugeehood

In his expansive research on housing restrictions in Fresno, Armen Don Minasian demonstrates the ways in which racial covenants were a critical tool of maintaining white supremacy through housing in California's Central Valley. Minasian reveals that hundreds of racial covenants appeared in Fresno that barred "natives of the Turkish Empire" from buying homes, with a large portion from 1912-1926. According to Minasian "restrictive covenants against Armenians stemmed from the unwillingness of the dominant white-native population in Fresno to associate with Armenians."[258]

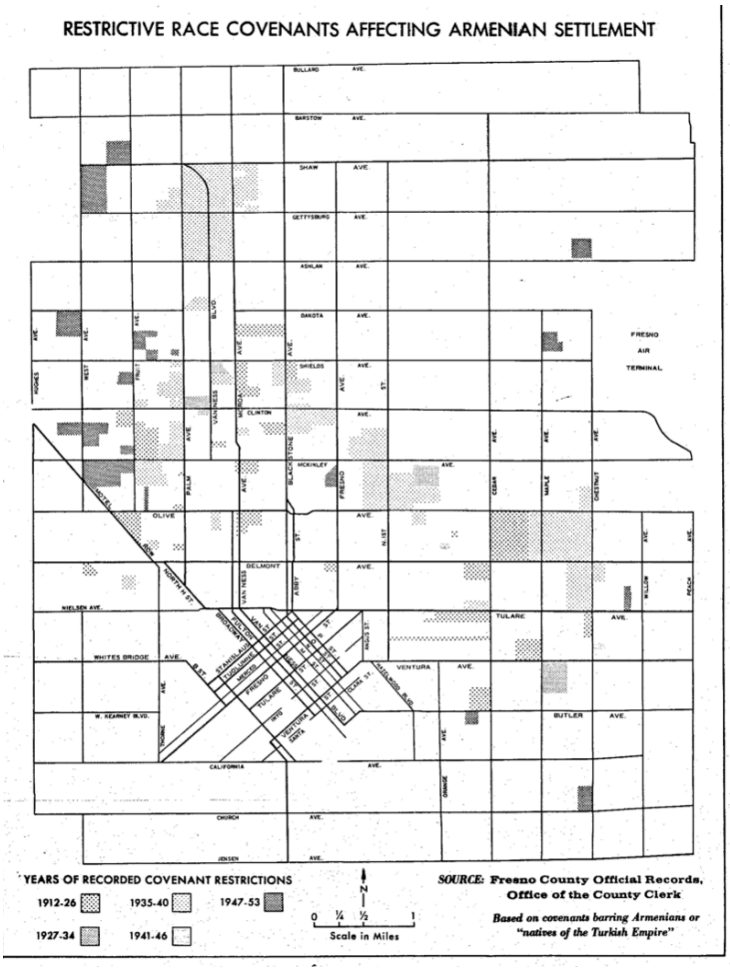


Figure 59: Restrictive Racial Covenants Against Armenians, Map created by Armen Don Minasian pulled from Fresno County Office Records, Office of the Country Clerk, 1973

Racist housing restrictions significantly shaped the lives of Armenians, helping to produce the Armenian "enclave" of the city. As Minansian states, "the covenants against Armenians were the most significant involuntary factor in maintaining the areal concentration of the ethnic group in Fresno" and continues to impact the city today.[259]

Early Middle Eastern-Americans across ethnic and religious communities faced racialized housing exclusion via the racial covenant system. A sample property deed from Washington D.C. in the 1920s reveals an example of what racial covenants looked like:

> None of the said lands, interests therein or improvements thereon, shall be sold, resold, leased, rented to or in any way used, occupied or acquired by any person of Negro blood

> or to any person of the Semitic race, blood, or origin which racial description shall be deemed to include Armenians, Jews, Hebrews, Persians or Syrians.

As seen in the property deed, racial covenants of the era are another form of evidence of the ways in which Middle Eastern peoples were racialized in groups. Often grouped as "Semitic" in "race, blood, or origin" they appeared beside each other. The racial covenants codified into law racial discrimination against non-white groups and were carried down from generation to generation. Housing was a racialized experience for early Middle-American communities.

The 1920 Census: Classification, Nation-States and Racial Geographies

The 1920 Census which occurs post-*Dow* and post-beginning of the Assyrian and Armenian Genocide, reveals a wide array of racial classification information. For example, in reviewing Census sheets that recorded Assyrian households, Dr. Sargon Donabed revealed that in many cases during the early twentieth century, columns in Census accounts became political terrain. According to Donabed, many of the largest and earliest Assyrian communities in the United States were from Harput and Diyarbakir, and listed their place of origin as Assyria, not Turkey or Turkey in Asia. Then in many cases, Census officials would later strike the "As" from "Assyria," turning the record into "Syria," though these Assyrians were not from Arab or Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire at all.[260] Assyrians were forced between two nationalisms and empires, one U.S. and the other Ottoman, rendering their identity invisible and incompatible. This made them completely illegible on government documents, and inaccurate in their classification, from then on often being labeled as "Syrians."

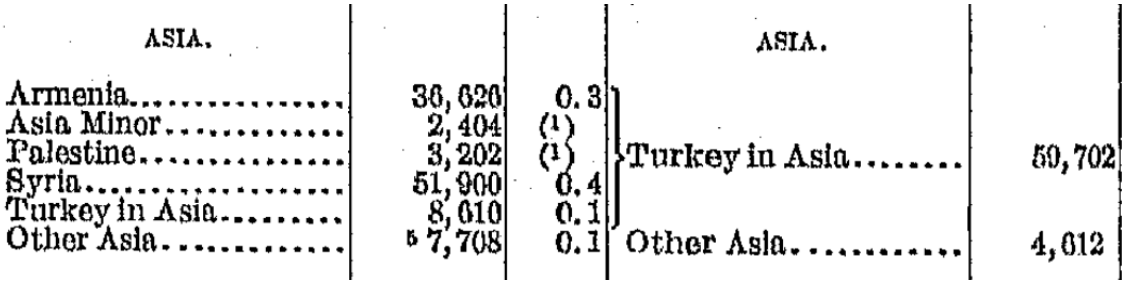
Furthermore, the 1920 Census is a fascinating example of the many complications, contradictions, and complexities of the classification of Middle Eastern peoples in the United

States. Middle Eastern populations are listed there as “Foreign Born White Populations.” But they also are listed as such under a subcategory of “Asia,” while other populations are listed under “Europe,” with designation like “Hungary,” “Germany” and “America,” including “Central and South America” and “Mexico” which are also considered white.

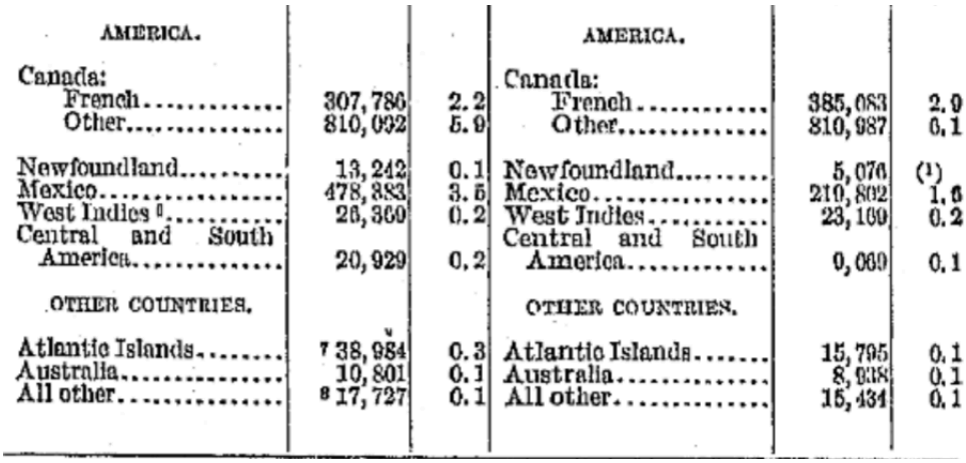
TABLE 6.—COUNTRY OF BIRTH OF THE FOREIGN-BORN WHITE, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1920 AND 1910.

1920			1910		
COUNTRY OF BIRTH (POSTWAR BOUNDARIES).	Number.	Per cent distribution.	COUNTRY OF BIRTH (PREWAR BOUNDARIES).	Number.	Per cent distribution.
All countries	13,712,754	100.0	**All countries**	13,345,545	100.0
EUROPE.			EUROPE.		
Northwestern Europe:			Northwestern Europe:		
England	812,828	5.9	England	876,455	6.6
Scotland	254,507	1.9	Scotland	261,634	2.0
Wales	67,066	0.5	Wales	82,479	0.6
Ireland	1,037,233	7.6	Ireland	1,352,155	10.1
Norway	363,802	2.7	Norway	403,858	3.0
Sweden	625,580	4.6	Sweden	665,183	5.0
Denmark	189,154	1.4	Denmark	181,021	1.4
Netherlands	181,709	1.0	Netherlands	120,053	0.9
Belgium	62,686	0.5	Belgium	49,307	0.4
Luxemburg	12,585	0.1	Luxemburg	3,063	(1)
Switzerland	118,659	0.9	Switzerland	124,834	0.9
France:			France	117,286	0.9
France	118,569	0.9			
Alsace-Lorraine	34,321	0.3			
Central Europe:			Central Europe:		
Germany	1,686,102	12.3	Germany	2,501,181	18.7
Poland	1,139,978	8.3	(2)		
Czechoslovakia	362,436	2.6	Austria	1,174,924	8.8
Austria	575,025	4.2	Hungary	495,000	3.7
Hungary	397,282	2.9	Serbia	4,635	(1)
Jugo-Slavia	169,437	1.2	Montenegro	5,363	(1)
Eastern Europe:			Eastern Europe:		
Russia	1,400,499	10.2	Russia	1,002,752	12.0
Lithuania	135,608	1.0			
Finland	149,824	1.1	Finland	129,669	1.0
Rumania	102,823	0.7	Rumania	65,920	0.5
Bulgaria	10,477	0.1	Bulgaria	11,463	0.1
Turkey in Europe	5,284	(1)	Turkey in Europe	32,221	0.2
EUROPE—continued.			EUROPE—continued.		
Southern Europe:			Southern Europe:		
Greece	175,972	1.3	Greece	101,264	0.8
Albania	5,998	(1)	(3)		
Italy	1,610,109	11.7	Italy	1,343,070	10.1
Spain	49,247	0.4	Spain	21,977	0.2
Portugal	67,453	0.5	Portugal	57,023	0.4
Other Europe	4 5,901	(1)	Europe, not specified	2,883	(1)
ASIA.			ASIA.		
Armenia	36,626	0.3			
Asia Minor	2,404	(1)			
Palestine	3,202	(1)	Turkey in Asia	50,702	0.4
Syria	51,900	0.4			
Turkey in Asia	8,610	0.1			
Other Asia	5 7,708	0.1	Other Asia	4,612	(1)
AMERICA.			AMERICA.		
Canada:			Canada:		
French	307,786	2.2	French	385,083	2.9
Other	810,932	5.9	Other	810,987	6.1
Newfoundland	13,242	0.1	Newfoundland	5,076	(1)
Mexico	478,383	3.5	Mexico	219,892	1.6
West Indies 6	26,360	0.2	West Indies	23,109	0.2
Central and South America	20,929	0.2	Central and South America	9,060	0.1
OTHER COUNTRIES.			OTHER COUNTRIES.		
Atlantic Islands	7 38,984	0.3	Atlantic Islands	15,795	0.1
Australia	10,801	0.1	Australia	8,938	0.1
All other	8 17,727	0.1	All other	15,434	0.1

[1] Less than one-tenth of 1 per cent.
[2] Poland included with Germany, Austria, and Russia in 1910.
[3] Albania included with Turkey in Europe in 1910.
[4] Comprises Danzig (2,049), Fiume (384), Saar Basin (263), and "Europe, not specified" (3,205).
[5] Comprises Hedjaz (8), India (2,532), China (716), Japan (278), and "Asia, not specified" (4,174).
[6] Except Porto Rico.
[7] Includes Azores (33,788) and Cape Verde Islands (2,370).
[8] Comprises Africa (5,222), Pacific Islands (3,643), country not specified (3,560), and at sea (5,302).



ASIA.			ASIA.	
Armenia	36,626	0.3		
Asia Minor	2,404	(1)		
Palestine	3,202	(1)	Turkey in Asia	50,702
Syria	51,900	0.4		
Turkey in Asia	8,610	0.1		
Other Asia	5 7,708	0.1	Other Asia	4,612



AMERICA.			AMERICA.		
Canada:			Canada:		
French	307,786	2.2	French	385,083	2.9
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OTHER COUNTRIES.			OTHER COUNTRIES.		
Atlantic Islands	7 38,984	0.3	Atlantic Islands	15,795	0.1
Australia	10,801	0.1	Australia	8,938	0.1
All other	8 17,727	0.1	All other	15,434	0.1

Figure 60: "Foreign Born White" and Close up sections in 1920 Census

The subcategory of Asia in the 1920 Census "Foreign Born White" included 36,626 listed as Armenia, 2,404 listed as Asia Minor, 3,202 listed as Palestine, 51,900 as Syria, 8,610 as Turkey in Asia, and 7,708 listed as Other Asia. These "countries of birth" often overlap and/or name unbounded or shifting geographies. In this way, place becomes charged with racial information. The "where" of Middle Eastern Americans is essential to their racialization, and how they are folded or not, into the U.S. national project. As is the case today, the United States Census was a site of racial contestation and inclusion/exclusion in the logics of the state and its self-proclaimed protections. Classification was a contested and shifting terrain.

Indigenous Illegibilities, Immigration Bans, and Race-Making in Early Refugee Regimes

"They are barred because they cannot produce an Armenian passport"
–*Chicago Tribune*, 1921

On September 16, 1921 an article in the *Chicago Tribune* reports that Armenian women and children fleeing the Armenian Genocide attempting to seek refuge in the United States find themselves banned because of the new U.S. immigration restrictions, one that is also incompatible with, and cannot recognize, their personhood. The new immigration system is the Immigration Act of 1921. And the women and children are newly arrived Armenian Genocide refugees displaced from their homes from destroyed Ottoman Armenian villages. The article declares that they are held on Ellis Island because of an alleged technical flaw in the law or its interpretation: the whole of the Ottoman Empire is counted as Turks including Syrians, Armenians, Assyrians, Turks, Kurds and others, and the number of Turks allowed had been hit for the month, a number purposely set incredibly low. Clashes of racial classification

transnationally are exposed through the Armenian refugees' experience attempting to move through ports of exit and entry and encountering racialized experiences on either end. "The Armenians," who are "refugees from Turkish rule," were barred because they were classified as Turks. Meanwhile, their villages had been destroyed precisely because they were not Turks, and now homeless. Beyond the routinized race-making of the nascent immigration system at a port of entry, the Armenians faced a compounded classification conundrum. They are barred from both nation-making projects, by inverse uses of the same racial classification.

Perhaps more jarring beyond the collapses made in racialization is the ways in which nationality and race become tied in the experience of these refugees. The article declares: "*If they had an Armenian passport, they could enter."* This reveals not only the stakes in the citizenship fight but also in the larger cause for national self-determination that so many Armenians were fighting for at the time, not only to free themselves from a genocidal regime but because it meant all types of self-governance, and self-preservation, including in the face of Western imperial migration systems. Their personhood is not recognized because U.S. American personhood is defined by a State in the eyes of the United States, and they are stateless. In this case, the limits of citizenship come to be defined by the borders of nation-states or lack thereof. And the State apparatus that the Armenians do have, the Ottoman state, is actively denying them inclusion via genocide. The lack of self-governance, or the specific configuration of a nation-state in the eyes of Western powers, valorized thus as deserving of international human rights, means expulsion and deportation for refugees. The Armenian's indigenous nation is not enough, and illegible, without Western recognition and definition of its national borders. The experience documents the shifting geographies over the life of the subjectivity "Middle Eastern-American" and the ways in which political imaginaries are quite literally "mapped" onto bodies.

In the *Chicago Tribune* article, George H. Topakayan, an Armenian organizer and the General Secretary of the Armenian Immigrant Welfare Society, speaks to the press to defend the Armenians and make sense of their circumstance amidst the large systems and hegemonic discourses directed against them. Informing the American press of the illegibility of the Armenian refugees under the American immigration bans, Topakayan describes the law, the state of the Armenian refugees, and the need for structural change. For his community, he narrates their multiscalar reality in the pages of the *Tribune* and in doing so forwards the stories and stakes of his people. Dealing with a immigration refugee ban, in the middle of a refugee crisis, eerily echoes Trump's Ban during the Syrian refugee crisis. Middle Eastern bodies are seen as foreign and a threat, collapsed as racialized Others deemed unwanted and invasive. They are targets of their homeland regimes, rendered stateless and homeless, and simultaneously unwanted by the US settler project. It is up to organizers, to both challenge policies that condemn people to death, and to speak to their material needs in the midst of crisis and to do it by any means necessary.

The Stakes: Refugees, The Immigration Act of 1924 and Nowhere to Go

The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants allowed into the United States through a national origins quota that was the strictest to date. Built on previous bills and iterations, the quota provided immigration visas to only two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States as based on the Census of 1890.[261]

The Act severely impacted Middle Eastern immigration to the United States. The fall out of the Assyrian and Armenian Genocide and the Great Famine directly impacted Ottoman Arab,

Armenian and Assyrians already roiling from homeland devastation. Their immigration is dramatically reduced, almost to a standstill, abruptly. As the Arabic newspaper *Mir'at al-Gharb* stated on May 29, 1924, "passing a camel through the hole of a needle became easier than the entry of a Syrian immigrant" to the United States.[262] According to Diogo Bercito the Immigration Act of 1924 established a quota of merely 100 individuals from "Syria," while around 112,000 Syrian-Lebanese immigrants had arrived between 1880 and 1924 with an average of about 2,500 per year. This was only increasing with the number reaching 4200 immigrants per year in 1920. The Immigration Act of 1924 changed this dramatically. On one side of the migration matrices of race for Middle Eastern people were Immigration bans and quotas, and on the other side, for Middle Eastern migrants and refugees was a suspended state, without home. These were the conditions within which *United States v. Cartozian* occurred.

Contextualizing Cartozian, 1925

In 1923, the United States Bureau of Naturalization and Immigration was established. That same year Tatos Cartozian, an Armenian rug salesman, applied for naturalization in Portland, Oregon.[263] He was provisionally accepted by Judge Robert Bean, with the caveat that the government could initiate cancellation proceedings immediately.[264] The government did. Cartozian's case, like *Dow* before it, would be another pivotal part of the racial prerequisite cases, cases that sought to determine the right to naturalize for migrant and refugees between poles of white and Black, and ultimately would fold Middle Eastern-Americans into American citizenship via whiteness.

The United States government immediately challenged his citizenship on the basis that he was not white. And they did so in a new environment that had changed considerably since

Halladjian of 1909. The Cartozian cases from 1923-1925 that resulted in *United States v. Cartozian* happened in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, a transnational refugee crisis, where thousands of Armenian refugees not only now found themselves in (or trying to get in to) the United States, but increasingly found such refuge blocked or under greater scrutiny than ever before by white nativist forces in the U.S. This section is a (re)storying of *United States v. Cartozian*, bringing from the margin to center the story of the Cartozian family as a stateless, refugee (and organizer) family, alongside the Armenian community in the U.S. at the time. Cartozian was an Orientalized subject. He understood American racial scripts and performed them in his daily life and in court to obtain refuge for his family via naturalization. As John Tehranian writes, in the early prerequisite cases "whiteness was determined through a performative lens.[265]" In place of actual white belonging, petitioners had to perform whiteness, while simultaneously experiencing Otherness. I bring into view this central aspect of refugeehood on early Middle Eastern petitioners, especially that of Armenian petitioners, which until now continues to be obscured if not entirely erased from dominant readings of Cartozian.

Indeed, in contrast to his ubiquitous representation as a successful carpet businessman which many have focused on, a fact that did have bearing on his case, I highlight another important dimension of his life that continues to be marginalized. Tatos Cartozian was a stateless Armenian from Sivas/Sepastia,[266] who was now trapped in the U.S., post-genocide, a former Ottoman national whose village would be emptied and destroyed by the Turkish government some years shortly after his departure to the United States. The Cartozian family were the direct victims of the early massacres of Armenians, the Hamidian massacres, that eventually transformed into the Armenian Genocide. According to research by Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, Tatos Cartozian's father, Oshkan Cartozian was

killed in a massacre in the bazaar of Sepastia/Sivas in October 1895.[267] But the family did not flee immediately. According to Gürsel, migration from "the Ottoman east to the American west"[268] brought the first Cartozian brother, Aram, to the United States in 1903 and Tatos, Haig and Hovsep Cartozian soon followed in 1906.[269] Once in the United States, the Cartozian brothers moved to Portland, Oregon and set up a carpet business, which brought "Oriental rugs" to the United States through a transnational family network, with their brother Phillipos Cartozian in Sepastia sourcing the carpets.[270] They attempted to set up home and capital for the transnational family. At the same time violence escalated in the Ottoman provinces. The Cartozian family escaped racial violence, deportation, and exclusion rooted in debates on personhood, classification, and racial supremacy, and then came to another land with its own.



Figure 61: The expatriation photograph of Tatos Cartozian and his family, May 1906, Source: Zeynep Devrim Gürsel

Displacement and exclusion, even before the wide-scale events of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1917, was not merely a physical process, as many have emphasized, but also a routinized administrative process. Cartozian was in the terk-i tabiiyet program. Terk-i tabiiyet required Cartozian to give up his nationality, his right to return, and his connection to his homeland forever.[271] In this way, the interaction between the Ottoman and American governments over Armenian exclusion was a process of racialized legal dispossession on both sides. The Cartozian family, who had been direct victims of massacre in and what in Gürsel calls unbelonging from Sivas, found themselves in the U.S. now being denied naturalization. These contexts evoke questions that center the material realities of the case. *What were the stakes for Cartozian and his family in U.S. v. Cartozian? What were they worried about and why? What was his vision for his and his family's future and his strategy for making it reality? And how did this translate to his case?*

Reading the racialized experience of indigenous peoples in the Ottoman Empire via nascent immigration regimes alongside Ethnic Studies reveals multiple dimensions of racialization and classification. Mass deportation and restrictions to enter the United States for Armenians and other Middle Eastern peoples loomed above the Cartozian case because realities like the Immigration Act of 1924 and ongoing anti-Middle Eastern discrimination in the United States. Armenian refugees across the world would be impacted by the case' outcome. Cartozian was an Ottoman "expat" who was stripped of his right to return to his homeland ever, which by now in 1925, was in ruins. Thousands of Armenians who had fled to the U.S. as refugees during the genocide were stuck stateless and now at the mercy of the outcome of Cartozian's case.

The racial prerequisite cases were the cases of peoples who did not fit neatly between the poles of white and Black. People who today would be thought of as non-Black people of color

and non-European immigrants, also faced attacks on their freedom to enter the United States, and to travel and to move. They would have to fight against transnational racing systems, physical violence, discrimination, and deportation for citizenship, or what I call *the Middle Eastern refugee stakes of American naturalization.* Following critical whiteness studies, I render the invisibilized contours of whiteness within this case and how it reveals the ways in which Cartozian was argued to be non-white by the United States government.

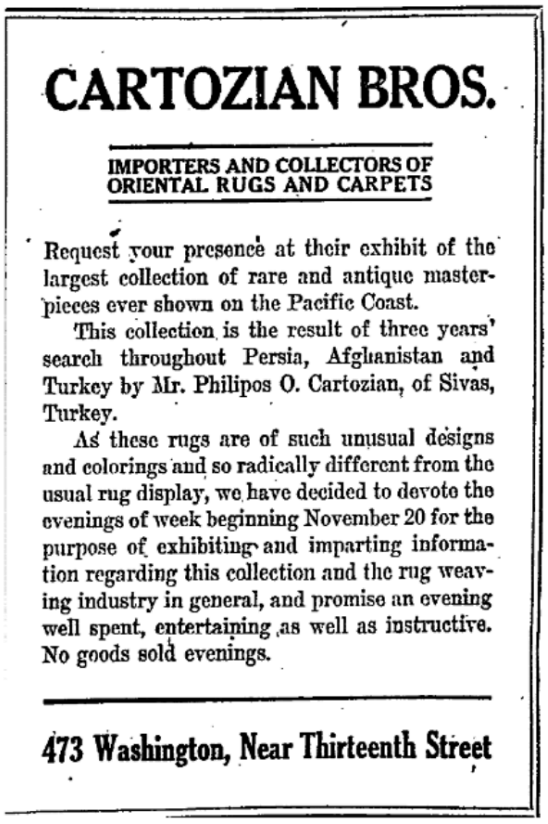
Indeed, the dynamic of racialized dispossession was not just made for Armenian refugees by the Ottoman government. Rather it was made by and in coordination with the United States' own racial regime especially via the emerging U.S. immigration system. Indeed, the Cartozians were experiencing transnational systems of racialization, classification and citizenship simultaneously. According to Gürsel, "both Ottoman Armenian expatriation and American naturalization are processes of exclusion, processes in which the state polices a boundary around nationality by determining who can be allowed to leave or enter not only a geographic territory but also a polity."[273] This is evidenced by Cartozian's own journey, especially pronounced in his migration documents and "expatriation portraits" of the Cartozians themselves. Uncovered by Gürsel, the Cartozian family posed for the "emigration portrait" on May 17, 1906. According to Gürsel, "the portrait was processed for the family's expatriation and emigration to America on the explicit condition of never returning to the Ottoman empire."[274] Their activities would be monitored by the Turkish state. After taking a portrait, "one copy would have been archived in the Police Files, one copy in the Ministry of the Interior, and this third print was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."[275] According to Gürsel, this process can be described as the taking of a preemptive mugshot, and as I discussed previously, it was in this program that Armenian is cast as enemy threat and the Armenian threat within, looms. In the process of citizenship making

and unmaking, Armenians like Cartozian are marked as racialized bodies, a threat by their existence, who if they want to leave must consent to never to having home in or seeing their homeland again. By their very existence as Armenians, they are marked as outside of the Ottoman nation, and a racialized threat[276] to the national security of the Empire. And many Armenians took that opportunity, especially seeing the writing on the wall for what was yet to come.

By 1925, the Armenian Genocide post-1915 landscape loomed large for the Cartozian family and for all Armenians. These were incredibly uncertain and devastating times. An article in *The Oregon Daily Journal* in January 1920 reveals that Cartozian's nephew Nersses, who was 17 years old, experienced the genocide and then has run-ins with authorities, smugglers, and swindlers looking to harm refugees during his displacement and as he attempts to escape to the U.S. and join his family members. The newspaper comments that "he and his people were forced to flee the wrath and massacres of the Turks…for two years the boy was a refugee in a mountain retreat."[277] He escapes to the United States alone, speaking no English, his uncles unaware of his whereabouts, until he arrives in New York and a welfare worker calls them. These were the perils the family escaped, and the stakes even just in their own family, let alone the entire now dispossessed Armenian community both in the U.S. and trying to come. The context of the Cartozian family paints a much more vivid picture of what they faced, including what they had already lost, and what Armenians still risked if they lost their court case. A deeply uncertain future loomed for Armenians, when the U.S. government denied Cartozian's naturalization on the basis of his race.

Cartozian came to the United States in 1906. When Cartozian first came to the United States he and his family did everything in their power to build new lives for themselves,

especially as they were now stateless both via bureaucratic dispossession of Hamidian times. They worked hard and used their culture to make a living in the United States. By the 1920s, when the Cartozian case occurs, the Cartozian brothers were advertising themselves as "America's Largest Oriental Rug Organization."[278] Indeed, they eventually built a substantial "Oriental" rug business and advertised across the United States. They did so putting their identity front and center, taking on the logo of a camel, which was printed on all their advertisements.



CARTOZIAN BROS.

IMPORTERS AND COLLECTORS OF ORIENTAL RUGS AND CARPETS

Request your presence at their exhibit of the largest collection of rare and antique masterpieces ever shown on the Pacific Coast.

This collection is the result of three years' search throughout Persia, Afghanistan and Turkey by Mr. Philipos O. Cartozian, of Sivas, Turkey.

As these rugs are of such unusual designs and colorings and so radically different from the usual rug display, we have decided to devote the evenings of week beginning November 20 for the purpose of exhibiting and imparting information regarding this collection and the rug weaving industry in general, and promise an evening well spent, entertaining as well as instructive. No goods sold evenings.

473 Washington, Near Thirteenth Street

Figure 62: Early Cartozian advertisement, 1911

An early Cartozian advertisement in 1911 reveals the ways in which the region is tied through transits of meaning and geography that also come to be understood in the American imagination and then in the American court cases. Cartozian advertisements connect places like

"Persia" "Afghanistan" and "Turkey" through "Oriental" wares that are made possible only because of the Cartozian's connection to the region. Yet the advertisement simultaneously constructs the rugs via their unique and exotic nature, "as these rugs are of such unusual designs and colorings and so radically different from the usual rug display." Of course, for Cartozian, the rugs are familiar, so the ad is aimed at white U.S. readers, for whom they are cast as unusual. Self-exotification, as Linda Jacobs notes in her descriptions of wares sold and worn by peddlers in Little Syria, was also present as all Middle Eastern peoples in the U.S. self-strategized and navigated racial codes as they tried to make a living.[279]

The Cartozian advertisements are rich in regional signifiers and thus racial meaning. The carpet advertisements connect the family to Asian, and specifically Middle Eastern, imagery. As Gürsel argues, "in order to become US citizens, the Cartozians had to exit the category of 'Asiatic' and join the ranks of the unmarked citizenry in the United States" yet "counterintuitively, they managed to do so while advertising their family business frequently and boldly as 'America's Largest Oriental Rug Organization.'[280] This interplay of negotiating dynamics of race, reveals the ways in which early migrants and refugees understood, analyzed, and organized against systems of race and racism. This dynamic would transfer from everyday life to the courtroom.

Refugee and migrant-led rug business in the early twentieth century represented a meeting ground for many transnational forms of meaning. Minoo Moallem argued that historically "Orientalism is relevant to not only the carpet as a sign, a trope, or an image but also the carpet as a material object. As material objects, Oriental carpets are boundary objects separating the East and the West, domesticating the East and subordinating it to the spaces of consumerism in the West. Indeed, owning material objects implies more than an investment in

the image of the carpet or the trope of the carpet."[281] For Moallem, the carpet functions as a material object that produces and reproduces the borders between East and West. Through Orientalia, Western consumers construct the East as foreign and exotic, an object to own. As a commodity, the "Oriental" rug is characterized by difference. The Cartozians were part of an important transnational industry where racial difference appeared in advertisements for white consumers. Moallem also reveals the gendered dimensions of selling carpets, true in the Cartozian era as well. The Oriental rug is a:

> gendered commodity given that gender hierarchies are produced and sustained through both their consumption and production processes" as it is largely "created through the work of women and children, [thought] men control their circulation, trade, and marketing. Their ownership is also characterized as masculine, though they are advertised as feminized commodities juxtaposed with the image of a woman or with the figure of female carpet weavers at the loom. Their distribution is massively reliant on transnational connections and networks of production, trade, advertisement, and consumption beyond the territorial boundaries of nation-states.[282]

The carpet then becomes a space of colliding racial and gender politics and transnational systems of capital and transit. Orientalia represented objects and things from the mysterious and exotic "Orient" to Western buyers. As the Cartozian ads lists South West Asian and North African countries that it imports rugs from, this requires lumping together different geographies into a figurative "Orient" that mirrors similar constructions by the West. This Orient is inextricable from an Other that Middle Eastern migrants and refugees are bumping up and into legally in the courts and immigration system at the time and in many ways they skillfully navigated their othering in the hopes of changing their material conditions during crisis.





Figure 63: Cartozian Brothers rug business advertisements

The contradiction between the whiteness petitioners performed in court and their everyday expressions of homeland identity is also discussed by scholar Neda Maghbouleh. In *The Limits of Whiteness*, Neda Maghbouleh notes that while the Cartozians tried hard to present every possible proof of their whiteness in court in order to cast off their exclusion, from showing that they could read and write English to dressing in "clean," American/European style clothes, while in their everyday lives, they were fervently and proudly Armenian, especially Tatos's daughter Hazel, who would testify in the court. According to Maghbouleh, her testimony in support of her father's whiteness was in stark contrast to Hazel's everyday life where she proudly pronounced her Armenian-ness. According to Magbouleh, she "radically self-identified as Armenian and was strongly affiliated with her heritage in Portland," in contrast to the testimony she gave about the family's assimilationist ability and pledge to fit in. As an Armenian teenager she appeared in the local newspaper often and was an outspoken leader of her girls' debate team. She proudly practiced Armenian culture through music, Armenian language and speaking on Armenian history. She was an outspoken critic of the Turkish government's dispossession of the Armenians and organized for Armenian refugee relief. Meanwhile, in court, she would mute her and her family's Armenian identity in the presence of the U.S. federal government to navigate the racialized U.S. immigration and naturalization regime. According to Magbouleh, "in punishingly assimilative times, Hazel nonetheless, practiced a hybrid identity as a second generation youth… Evidence of her love, commitment and affiliation with where she was from, not just where she lived, cannot be denied."[283] In her everyday life she would wear her Armenian identity radically out loud, with pride and ultimately as a political organizer.

The United States government forcefully declared Cartozian ineligible for citizenship on the basis that he was not white. Like immigrants and refugees of today, the Cartozians analyzed

their court cases and their circumstances. They fought back within the courts to stop the cancellation of their naturalization, firmly lodged in the United States racial schema they were now learning in a new land. Cartozian, as many of the petitioners of the racial prerequisite cases of the era, appealed to the government to overturn their denial of his naturalization. According to John Tehranian, in these early racial prerequisite cases, "the courts sent a clear message to immigrants: the rights enjoyed by white males could be obtained only through assimilation."[284] This brought forth a series of arguments by both the government and the Cartozian family. As Dough Coulson reveals, the realm of the rhetorical is an essential part of how law is made and fought over and thus, a site of the convergence of racial and national formations.[285] Coulson, through a close reading of the *Cartozian* transcripts, forwards that centrally a "shared external threat" strategy among others was utilized by the Cartozian family and its lawyers to win the case. After analyzing the courtroom testimonies myself, building on Coulson's imperative work, I offer my own analysis and outline the arguments in *United States v. Cartozian* can be characterized as follows:

Strategies of the U.S. Government to Deny Armenians Naturalization in *Cartozian*

- Argue Tatos Cartozian does not look phenotypically white to the everyday white American on the street
- Use colonial race science that shows that Armenians are not white but Asian.
- Emphasize the ways in which Armenians live and socialize together in the Americas in Armenian ethnic enclaves and ghettos, for example in Fresno and other portions of California's Central Valley
- Because of Armenian intra-socialization, they are not white and not able to assimilate into whiteness
- Use pan-ethnic racialization. Associate Armenians with other nationals of the Ottoman Empire, as peoples of the "East," emphasizing their proximity to and contact with Islam as proof of "non-white status." Because Armenians are a Christian ethno-religious minority of West Asia, since Armenian Muslimness is readily unavailable as proof, the government uses their proximity to Arabs, Turks, Kurds and others as proof they have intermixed with Muslims and Muslimness

- Use the words of the U.S. founding fathers indicate that Armenians are not genetically comparable nor compatible with Europeans, nor did the framers of the constitution intend to include them
- Use the words of Armenians who, in Armenian-facing community newspapers and books, describe anti-Armenian racism and discrimination at the hands of white Americans, emphasizing the separation between Armenians and whiteness

Strategies of the Armenian Defense to Win Naturalization in *Cartozian*

- Use Anthropologists like Franz Boas who challenge race science by arguing that race is cultural, proving that Armenians can assimilate culturally even if biological race science is considered or places them outside the bounds of whiteness
- Have witnesses dissociate from Armenian enclaves, argue Armenians do not remain together in the United States
- Call witnesses connected to white American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and Protestant Armenians as witnesses as opposed to heads of the Armenian Orthodox church
- In response to the construction of and fresh off their experiences as refugees of ethnic and religiously motivated massacres in the Ottoman Empire, dissociate Armenians from other peoples of the Ottoman Empire, emphasize Armenians as a group that does not practice Islam, and they were only forced into practicing Islam as part of the tactics of the concurrent Genocide
- Provoke sympathy through testifying that proto Armenian non-profit organizations coordinating major transnational refugee reunification run by naturalized Armenians in the United States would be forced to halt all operations and to Armenians are currently a stateless people caught without a place to go when deported
- Reference some Armenian individuals who are willing to intermarry with white people and assimilate in other aspects of white culture to prove they should be citizens and belong, that they will be grateful as refugees in their new home
- Deny anti-Armenian racism and discrimination exists, assert that racial harmony with white people characterizes Armenian experience in the United States

While many have emphasized the State ruling itself, I turn attention to the depositions of *Cartozian* to understand not only how Armenians strategically won their naturalization and in the process molded a useful Armenian-American subjectivity, but also the ways in which the case also reveals the mechanisms of how whiteness, power and race worked at the beginning of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of the transcripts of *United States v. Cartozian*, the U.S. Attorney John S. Coke argued that "It is the contention of the government that it makes no difference whether a man is a Caucasian or not or what the racial and language history of his people may be if the man on the street does not recognize him as white."[286] Coke is arguing the "common knowledge" definition of race that Lopez identified as a new legal development in the prerequisite era. According to the United States government, Cartozian was not white because he did not look white to the average white man on the street. In this way, Cartozian's phenotype excluded him from legal whiteness.

Another mechanism used by the U.S. Government to deny Cartozian's whiteness was utilizing pan-ethnic classification to firmly lodge Armenians in Easternness. The government attempts to construct Armenians relationally, connecting them to Muslims and Syrians, to prove they are not white. A particularly interesting part of the depositions is the interaction between the government and one of the defense's witnesses where the government tries to claim Armenians are Muslim. In cross examination of one of the defense's witnesses, Mr. Parounogian, Coke strategically attempts to draw parallels between Armenians and Syrians. Unlike Armenians, because Syrians are both Christian and Muslim, relating them to Armenians undermined Cartozian's claim to be white. The government argues that Armenians are non-white by the transitive property, or their similarity to Syrian Christians who are similar to Syrian Muslims. US whiteness was constituted in opposition to Islam, with the U.S. government repeatedly claiming the inferiority of Muslims as part of the inferiority of Middle Eastern peoples.[287] In response, Armenian witnesses and their lawyers attempted to disassociate themselves from the rest of the citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Ironically, Armenians were targeted for genocide precisely because they were not part of the majority group in the Ottoman Empire, and yet in US

court they were being constructed as central to its racial representation in the United States. Indeed, when Coke repeatedly pushes Parounogian getting him to try to admit that Armenians convert to Islam. For Armenians, as an ethno-religious group, in the region this was just not accurate and particularly at a time where they were experiencing mass death because of such identity. Parounogian replies that there are only Armenian Muslims "by force,...only to save their lives" referring to the forced religious conversions of the Armenian Genocide and prior massacres that was happening during this era.[288] This is a fascinating section in the deposition as the events of the Genocide are being explicitly named and argued over.

Fresno, California was known at the time of the Cartozian case not only as a center of Armenian migration but also as a site of non-whiteness for Armenians, and anti-Armenian racism there was directly referenced during the case, revealing the racial construction of ethnic enclaves as an important part of how classification developed in the United States. Although the Cartozian family was based in Portland, Oregon, Fresno, California is referenced repeatedly by the U.S. Government in the case. For example, as Coke attempts points out that Armenians live and socialize together in order to demonstrate their racial otherness and inability to assimilate into white neighborhoods, a witness, Mr. Fereshetian, repeatedly conveys his willingness to deny his affiliation with Armenians and thus deny his Armenianness. In response, Coke tries another strategy. Almost out of the blue, he brings up that Sacramento, where Mr. Fereshetian once worked, is "close to Fresno."[289] Once again, relation becomes an important way that race operates. The State's relational claims push witnesses to deny a collective affiliation with other Armenians (and other peoples of the "East") not only in the homeland but in the Americas. Fereshetian, for example, emphatically denied he had any relation or connection to Fresno as a means to achieve naturalization.

The United States government also maintained that Armenians were not white because they actually experienced racism. In response another strategy of the Armenians at the trial became to completely and entirely deny that they had experienced any form of racism, often times in contradiction to prior statements, experiences and reports they themselves who were present at the trial had made. Mr. Parounogian, for example, was asked by the defense if the "color-line" had ever been "drawn against" him, to which he replied "I have always been held in the highest respect, and I have mingled with the best families of the United States, in any part I have lived in." [290] This was repeated by every witness from the defense, a glaring repetition with a defiant and simple "no" when asked "have you experienced racism?" But Mr. Coke, the U.S. Attorney, quickly challenges these claims, citing the testimony of an expert witness for the defense, M. Vartan Malcolm, an outspoken figure in the Armenian community, who was supposed to be there to help Armenians become naturalized. Citing Malcolm's book *The Armenians in America*, Coke references direct passages that speak to Armenians' unbelonging and racial exclusion in the United States. Malcom denies that that is not what he meant.

M. Vartan Malcom, a lawyer born in Sivas, Turkey and from New York, was an important figure in the case. He had long been making the arguments that Armenians were white to secure Armenian naturalization. As he details in his deposition, he was a member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union and vice president of two newspapers in the Armenian language, one in Boston and the other in Fresno. He also was counsel for the Armenian National Union of America in 1918. And in 1922 was appointed the Armenian National Delegation to Paris, another effort that would ultimately leave the Armenians without hope. Malcolm's statements during the trial reveal important dimensions of American citizenship largely erased today in discourse.

The Stakes: Organizations, Statelessness, and Transnational Refugee Networks Under Threat: *Refugee Precarity After Mass Death and Devastation*

Malcolm's deposition in the Cartozian trials is a rich source of information on the conditions the community faced and their strategies to claim the right to naturalize in the moment of *Cartozian*. As this was the immediate years after the majority of the Armenian homeland had been destroyed and the community was reeling, refugeehood and statelessness is evidenced and takes a central role in the trial. In one particularly tense exchange between Malcolm and the U.S. Government, the fate of Armenia is discussed. The U.S. Government constructs the Armenians as still loyal to their homeland, and wanting citizenship to return back to Armenia, thus making them unworthy of naturalization. Malcolm responds by claiming that "No Armenian colony that has ever left Turkey, your Honor, has ever returned to Turkey or to Armenia, which during the last several hundred years has been a part of Turkey."[291] This, of course, was historically inaccurate. When repeatedly pushed on the subject by the U.S. Malcolm finally walks-back and reveals a more complete picture, a more devastating reality:

> Mr. Coke.. there is no Armenia now. President Wilson was delegated, under the Treaty of Sevres, to mark the boundaries of Armenia which was to be created. He did delimite [sic] those boundaries, but Armenia has never been created, and today the entire Armenian peoples are scattered all over the Near East, and the possibility of Armenians going back to the old country is absolutely dead. My point in the paragraphs you read is argumentative. What I say there does not mean that the Armenians are not faithful and good citizens of America, but that the Armenian colony in America would furnish some material which, in some measure, would help to build up the Armenian state, and help to improve the conditions in the East and to make a better world and less war.

Malcolm makes it plain to Mr. Coke that the Armenians are beginning to realize their homeland is gone. The Western Powers had sold out its promise to help Armenians in the Treaty of Lausanne with Turkey, the Armenian provinces were given to Turkey and Armenian presence in Anatolia would cease to exist. Also in the Treaty of Lausanne, a declaration of amnesty was

issued, granting immunity for the mass atrocities of the Armenian Genocide. The Cartozian transcripts firmly place refugeehood and statelessness within the development of U.S. racial classification. Most scholarship on the racial prerequisite cases does not even mention, let alone analyze, refugeehood and displacement as a major driver in the fight of communities for U.S. citizenship.[292] By rendering the conditions and community organizing of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees invisible, the significance of displaced people, refugees, for the construction of US citizenship is also made invisible. Malcolm's testimony reveals another motivation for Armenian petitioners in 1925: refugee resettlement efforts and the central role of organizations. In multiple instances, Malcolm reveals that if Armenians do not win naturalization, their large, transnational, community-driven refugee relief and resettlement operation would be directly under threat:

> No Armenian will be granted a passport to travel in any part of the world. The Armenians will become a people without a country. Under Turkish law– and most of the Armenians have come here from Asia Minor or Turkey in Asia Minor– under the old regime, and also the present regime, a Christian Armenian who has left Turkey forfeits all his personal and property rights, and therefore the Turkish government will not issue a passport to him, and if he is not a citizen of the United States, then the United States government would not issue a passport to him and therefore it would be impossible for any Armenian to travel.[293]

Malcolm references the restrictions on Ottoman Armenian movement I discuss in Chapter 1. His assessment of the situation so early on is searing. Armenians will become a people without a country. Years before the concept of asylum in international law was even drafted and institutionalized, American citizenship for the community was the key to asylum for these people.

Furthermore, he maintains that he "know[s] of Armenians, brothers, who maintain at their own expense, [refugee] orphanages in Palestine, in Bulgaria, and in Athens Greece," and that "they pay the expenses of the entire organization, costing them at the reach of one hundred thousand dollars a year." Malcolm is referencing the operation of organizations from the United

States by Armenians who are financing and coordinating refugee resettlement and relief efforts, especially for orphans, and rapid response organizing throughout the SWANA region at the time. The lawyer explains, "if it should be determined that their citizenship is invalid, they can't go abroad and visit these institutions," and he calls "the Court's attention to the hardship it would bring about."[294] The defense explains explicitly Armenians coordinating relief networks "are citizens of the United States, and the foundations which they have formed, in which they have placed their funds, are corporations organized, in most instances, under the state of New York."[295] He then continues that these efforts would be under direct threat if Armenian citizenship is denied. If their citizenship is canceled they can't travel to secure safety for more Armenians nor advocate for the Armenian cause. Organizations, statelessness, and transnational refugee relief reveal the precarity of Armenian communities at the time, an era marked by mass death and dispossession greatly contextualizes the Cartozian trial and gives new definition to U.S. citizenship and whiteness.

Whiteness as refuge, as safety from racialized violence: A Definition of American Citizenship, A Dimension of Whiteness

In the following section, I argue the experiences of Middle Eastern refugees in the prerequisite era reveal new definitions of U.S. whiteness. Building off analysis of refugee and migrant campaigns, in this section I posit additional dimensions or definitions of whiteness that hold true to today and has Middle Eastern refugees crossing perilous journeys and border crossings: *Whiteness as refuge*, *whiteness as refuge from racialized violence*, and the deeply inextricable *freedom to move, to stay and to live.* Whiteness is the ability to not be the target of racialized violence. The context of *Cartozian* is Armenians fleeing racial violence in their

homeland in a context of life and death, and then once in the U.S. were targeted in racial discrimination via their non-whiteness, racial regimes that are colliding on their bodies when they need safety first and foremost.

Profound scholar Cheryl Harris revealed in her watershed 1993 study that whiteness is property. In "Whiteness as Property" she argues that whiteness itself "shares the critical characteristics of property and accords with the many and varied theoretical descriptions of property." [296] She challenges the ways in which issues of property and ownership rights and race have been siloed or understood as mutually exclusive concepts. Rather, Harris argues that while whiteness may have originally been constructed as a form of identity, historically it transformed in a form of property, produced and reified by American institutions through the ongoing legacies and (re)constitution of chattel slavery and anti-Blackness. She discusses the ways in which institutions and various branches of government not only produce whiteness as property, but then protect it. As Harris instructs, "whiteness– the right to white identity as embraced by the law– is property if by property one means all of a person's legal rights."[297] Following slavery and conquest, whiteness became the basis of allocating power and was imbued with several rights: rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, rights to reputation and status as white, and the absolute right to exclude. Building on Harris' theory, the history of Middle Eastern American race, especially when centering refugeehood, reveals another central dimension of whiteness which in turn delineated humanness and non-humanness, life and death.

The histories of early Middle Eastern people in U.S. court cases and immigrant/refugee bans during the massive crisis from the genocide by, and subsequent fall of, the Ottoman Empire in the early 1900s, suggest that a defining dimension of whiteness is refuge from racial violence, to live free of being the target of racial violence and thus, to live. In the case of the Middle

Eastern refugee experience, escape from both homeland and U.S. racial regimes of unbelonging and terror, is highly present as not only motivation but goal. As my analysis of legal cases and their contexts suggest, for Middle Eastern migrants, particularly those who were stateless, whiteness meant the freedom to move to escape death and the freedom to stay to escape death. As it does today with migrants and refugees at the border, obtaining U.S. citizenship is often defined in this way. In early years it first meant mobility to go to and from your homeland to overcome racialized restrictions on movement and by post 1915—it literally means safety, being able to come into the country to find refuge, and to stay. This continues to not only color discussions of early Middle Eastern American court cases, but also today, as refugees from the region continually seek U.S. citizenship even while being staunchly dedicated to their homelands or critical of U.S. empire. *Dow* and *Cartozian* occur before the concepts of genocide and asylum are coined[298] which would only produced later because of its need during WWII via European bodies and thus denied to early Middle Eastern migrants which impacted the fight for naturalization. Middle Eastern migrants and refugees wanted and needed *Whiteness as refuge*, *whiteness as the ability to not be the target of racialized violence*, as they were experiencing current (and worried about even more potential) violence based on their race both in their homelands and in the United States.

Middle Eastern refugees faced bans on their entry to and exit from the United States following genocide in the Ottoman Empire, and did so before the legal definition of asylum existed which heavily impacted the fight for naturalization.[299] Another wage of whiteness was refuge, and this refuge itself was even defined and originally classified around Europeans. The stakes for Armenians were plain. Deportation was not an option, it meant death or destruction. An *Associated Press* article entitled "Seventeen Armenians Killed After Being Deported from

U.S" that ran in many major U.S. Newspapers makes such realities clear. The article reveals that seventeen women and children are murdered by Ottoman authorities in the years of the Armenian Genocide when they are deported back to the Ottoman Empire because they did not meet the racial standards of desired US immigrants. The Immigration Acts barred the refugees, with the quota reached for "Turks" at the time. At the border, Middle Eastern refugee race is routinized, administratively executed, and the Armenians are sentenced to death, a fate not by coincidence but by institutional design. Deportation regimes have rendered these proto-asylees helpless. Ultimately, it is the stories of not only how people die but also how they organized for life, in fraught ways built on pillars of more death and unbelonging. This is the definition of whiteness. A mechanism of consuming life in its path, and the denial of safety and refuge to those that are non-white.



have representation at the industrial exhibition to be staged in Denver February 20 to 2, an in-

also exceedingly facile pens and vivid imagina tions.

SEVENTEEN ARMENIANS KILLED AFTER BEING DEPORTED FROM U.S.

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19.—The murder at Constantinople in September of seventeen Armenians, women and children who came to the United States seeking safety but who were deported, was reported to the house immigration committee today by C. V. Knightly, counsel for a welfare organization at Boston. They were deported as being in excess of the quota allowed from their country. Details of the killing were obtained, Mr. Knightly said, from an American student at Roberts college, Constantinople in a letter to an Armenian student at Boston, whose mother and sister were among those killed.

VIRGINIA DALE ITEMS

H. H. Lilley has returned to the ranch after several weeks visit in Denver.

J. P. Fowlston visited several days at the Dale, looking after his ranch and other interests. He left Thursday for Idaho and other places, looking for a location.

WHEAT DECLINES IN EARLY TRANSACTIONS THRU POOR SUPPORT

CHICAGO, Dec. 19.—Wheat declined today in the early transactions, bearish sentiment developing because apparently the market was without any aggressive support. Trade was for the most part of a holiday character. On the downturns in prices, however, demand improved owing more or less to forecasts of a cold wave. Opening quotations, which varied from 1-8c off to 1-8c advance, with May $1.12 1-2 to $1.12 3-4 and July $1.02 7-8, were followed by a moderate set back all around and then something of a reaction.

Later the market took an upward swing, owing to indications that export business was being done at Winnipeg. The close was firm, 1 1-8c to 2 1-4c net higher.

Big receipts here weakened the corn market. After opening 1-8c to 3-4c lower to 1-8c up, May 52 3-8c to 42 3-4c, prices underwent a slight general sag.

DENVER, Dec. 19.—Wheat—No. 1 dark hard, on track, 85c bid. Corn—No. 2 yellow, on track, 50 1-4c bid; 52 1-4c ask. No. 2 yellow, five-day shipment, 50 1-4c bid; 51 3-4c ask. No. 2 mixed, on track, 52 1-4c bid; 54 3-4c ask. No. 2 mixed, on track,

KANSAS MINE WOMEN PLEAD 'NOT GUILTY'

Six More Married Women Arraigned in Court for Being Leaders in Mine Raids

By Associated Press

PITTSBURG, Kans., Dec. 20.—The procession of women alleged to have participated in the marching on the mines of the Kansas field early last week, into the Crawford county district court continued today. Late today six women, all of Capaldo, came into Pittsburg under escort of deputy sheriffs. They were charged with unlawful assemblage in connection with the marching upon a mine of the Porphir coal company near Capaldo. The women all are married.

Pleading not guilty, their bond was fixed at $750 and their hearing set for February.

SUPT. TOLL GIVEN FINE ENDORSEMENT

Trail and Timberline, the official publication of the Colorado Mountain Club, has the following to say about

Figure 64: "Seventeen Armenians Killed After Being Deported from U.S." by *Associated Press*

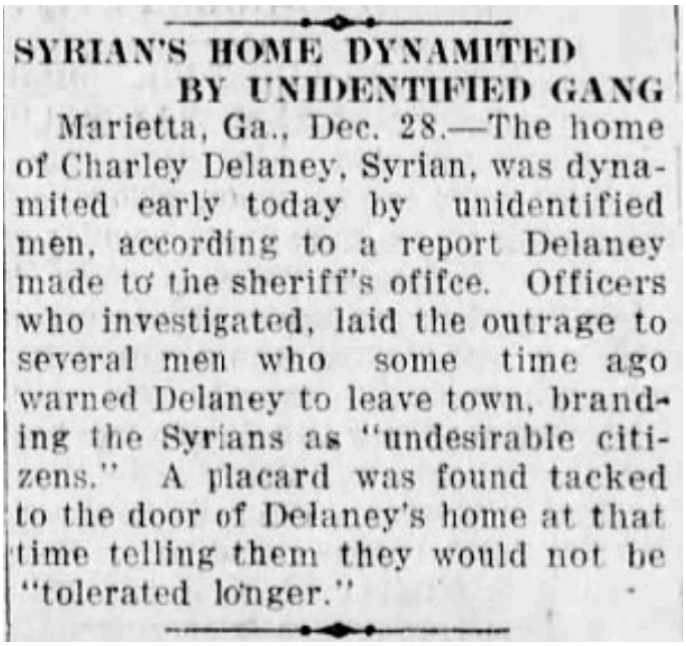
The stakes were high in the post-1915 cases. The Armenian refugee community of the United States raised 50,000 dollars, quite a sum of money at the time, through a transnational crowdfund campaign to hire the best white lawyers in the country for the *Cartozian* case to secure their ability to naturalize. They did while simultaneously enduring mass extermination in a genocide and immigration bans as they escaped as refugees. They used white anthropologists like Franz Boas, who would help them by arguing they could be assimilated into white culture rather than that were biologically predetermined to be inferior as non-white people which were the arguments they were up against. They did so during a refugee crisis and a genocidal campaign that saw three thousand years of indigenous culture in present day Turkey, destroyed in mere few short years. Annihilation had already arrived, and the question became what could be salvaged of themselves. As the rest of the "Middle East" became riddled with Armenian refugee camps, Armenian communities built from the ground up wherever they fled and with whatever they had available to them, which often was not much. The Armenian displacement to the United States was no different. These were the stakes of naturalization and the Armenians won the case based on their pledge to assimilate, disassociate from each other, and perform whiteness required for citizenship. And these are the stakes of American citizenship, still a pact with white supremacy, interacted with and navigated by refugees to this day.

Citizen Undesirables: Racial Terror & Anti-Middle Eastern-American Racism after the "Wins"

This section intervenes in dominant discourses that claim whiteness as a final destination of classification for these communities, and marks the racial prerequisite cases as the end of the non-white racialization of Middle Eastern migrants and refugees. Indeed, events following the

cases suggest court-pronounced whiteness for these communities would not be the final word, but race would be (re)produced again and again for these could-be naturalized peoples, and thus, could-be "Americans." Without a critical ethnic studies, bottom-up approach, one could argue the fight had been fought, the ink had dried, and the status ruled, per State records. By law, for example, Arabs were white, eligible for citizenship and naturalization, and all they entailed. But did the strategy of citizenship work? Were Middle Eastern migrants and refugees now white and in turn, free from racialized violence?

On December 29, 1922, seven years after *Dow,* the *Vicksburg Evening Post* reported that a group of white men blew up the home of a Syrian family with dynamite in Marietta, Georgia.[300] "Syrian's Home Dynamited By Unidentified Gang" notes that the home belongs to a man named Charley Delaney, a Syrian merchant and part of the small "Syrian colony" of the town.[301] Investigating officers, the *Post* article states, "laid the outrage to several men who some time ago warned Delaney to leave town, branding the Syrians as 'undesirable citizens.'" Along with the detonated explosives, the unidentified men also left a "placard" on the doors of the home they bombed, telling the Delaneys that "they would not be 'tolerated longer.'"[302]



SYRIAN'S HOME DYNAMITED BY UNIDENTIFIED GANG

Marietta, Ga., Dec. 28.—The home of Charley Delaney, Syrian, was dynamited early today by unidentified men, according to a report Delaney made to the sheriff's office. Officers who investigated, laid the outrage to several men who some time ago warned Delaney to leave town, branding the Syrians as "undesirable citizens." A placard was found tacked to the door of Delaney's home at that time telling them they would not be "tolerated longer."

Figure 65: "Syrian's Home Dynamited by Unidentified Gang," *Vicksburg Evening Post*, December 29, 1922

Instead of the situation improving for the Syrians, it heartbreakingly devolves. The bombing and threats to the Delaneys and other Syrians in the Syrian enclave proved to be too much. As a headline in the *Macon Telegraph* reported just three days later, "Syrians of Marietta to Leave in 60 Days, Foreigners Announce They Will Sell Out and Depart Following Threat Against Them." White supremacist terror had forced the families to pack up and relocate. Particularly jarring is the fact that the story is reported because they made a point to make a large public announcement to the town that they are leaving, presumably to save their lives and stop more threats. And this was not limited to just the Delaney family, but all Syrians of the entire enclave: "The other members of the Syrian colony have signified their intentions of leaving with the Deraneys [*sic*] as soon as they can sell their homes and their stores." This article demonstrates several realities of life for the Delaney's, which occurred after the court rulings on Syrians in the racial prerequisite cases. Seven years after *Dow v. United States,* a Syrian family's home experiences the wrath of whiteness. Legal whiteness did not protect them from their house being bombed and

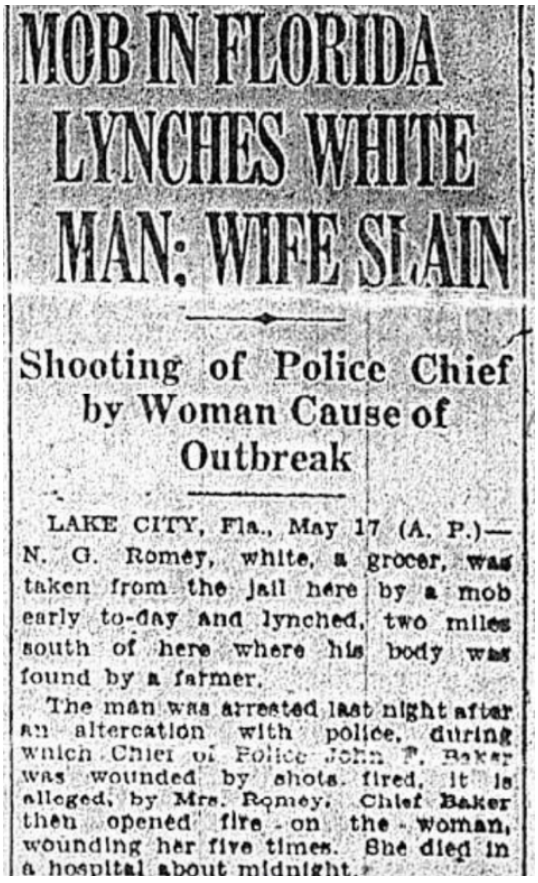
their family being physically displaced again under a system of racial exclusion and violence. New legal whiteness did not prevent them from being victims of a race-motivated attack. New legal whiteness did not protect them from the organized mob in their town, nor from the white institution of policing that ultimately protected the mob from prosecution.

It would be sometime before the figuration of "terror" would come to contain a galaxy of racial signifiers, specifically and inextricably targeted toward and linked with Middle Eastern-Americans. White American's racial terror however has a much longer history, the history of the U.S. began in the foundational genocides of Black and Indigenous peoples in slavery and conquest, yet is rarely labeled "terror." Years after *Dow*, the Delaney's, "legally white" according to the all federal U.S. institutions, had their house bombed by white supremacists, are then forced to flee town because of multiple consecutive threats on their life, and the explosion's description in the media characterizes them as "foreigners," on the run yet again. This is a climate of racial terror.

Another event that challenges the limits of legal that whiteness was the lynching of Syrian Nola Romney. First brought to light by Sarah Gualtieri, the case indicated the exclusion of Middle Eastern migrants from the refuge of whiteness. Nola Romney was lynched by a group of white men who took him from the local jail on May 17, 1929 in Lake City, Florida. Nola had migrated with his wife Fannie from Zahle, Lebanon. Before his lynching he experienced physical violence at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Valdosta.[303] Their grocery store then became targeted by local police who shot Nola's wife and imprisoned him in an altercation in Lake City. He was then killed by a white mob after being taken from the jail. Analyzing the media representation of the events and the subsequent discussions of the lynching in the Arab-American press, Gualtieri argues that "the lynching of Nola Romey and the murder of his wife

were about race and the work that race did in a town where they were foreigners and outsiders." She ultimately contends that the events reveal the racial in-betweenness of Syrians as they were simultaneously cast as white in press and by law while still experiencing racialized violence and exclusion as foreigners.

Indeed, particularly paradoxical and yet also rich with racial classification, headlines reporting the lynching label Romney a white man but also an outsider. One headline reads in bold "MOB IN FLORIDA LYNCHES WHITE MAN: WIFE SLAIN" to describe the brutal murder of Romney and his family.



MOB IN FLORIDA LYNCHES WHITE MAN: WIFE SLAIN

Shooting of Police Chief by Woman Cause of Outbreak

LAKE CITY, Fla., May 17 (A. P.)— N. G. Romey, white, a grocer, was taken from the jail here by a mob early to-day and lynched, two miles south of here where his body was found by a farmer.

The man was arrested last night after an altercation with police, during which Chief of Police John F. Baker was wounded by shots fired, it is alleged, by Mrs. Romey. Chief Baker then opened fire on the woman, wounding her five times. She died in a hospital about midnight.

Figure 66: "MOB IN FLORIDA LYNCHES WHITE MAN: WIFE SLAIN," Newspaper article describing the lynching of a Syrian, Nola Romey, Courtesy of the Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies

The media representation shows the “yes, and” reality of early Middle Eastern communities after naturalization was achieved. Yes, they were legally white, and they experienced ongoing racial violence, indicating the continuing of their non-whiteness. Sometimes they benefited greatly from legal whiteness, at other times they did not have access to it. Their racialization continued to be defined by shifting and unstable characterizations. And their lives followed such.

CONCLUSION

"Race is myth, Racism is reality."
-Cedric Robinson, UC Santa Barbara, 2012

"We want the end of the white theft of our sense of self and our self image"
-SWANA Alliance demands, *The Non-Negotiables*, 2016

"We looked back and history had built a door.
We were on the outside."
-Sara Abou Rashad, "16 poems & prose," PYM, 2023[304]

On January 27, 2017, newly elected Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 13769, commonly referred to as the "Muslim Ban," barring entry of nationals from Sudan, Iran, Somalia, Libya, Syria, and Iraq. Immediately, TSA agents and immigration officers racially profiled those perceived to be such nationals, detaining, questioning, deporting or in many cases refusing them entry, thereby turning entry-exit points into hyperacialized processing centers defined by often arbitrary, unstable and uneven federal orders.[305] In the wake of increased focus on profiling programs and the fortification of immigration restrictions in the Trump era, SWANA organizers argued that a "registry" prototype for Trump's policies already existed. The most famous among them was NSEERS, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, which predated the Trump administration. Indeed, in an interview with the women's style publication, *Glamour Magazine*, Palestinian American organizer Linda Sarsour, referring to the NSEERS program, exclaimed that "people were outraged by the [Trump] campaign rhetoric and promises of a Muslim registry program. But I was thinking to myself, that already happened."[306]

NSEERS, enacted on September 11, 2002 by the Bush Administration, required registration based on specified countries of national origin. The original announcement of the

program by then-Attorney General John Ashcroft on September 3, 2002, specifically detailed that male nationals of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria over the age of 16 must immediately register for the program.[307] The NSEERS program was comprised of two separate components: designated port-of-entry registration and domestic registration, representing a large-scale expansion of coordination between domestic and transnational apparatuses like that of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The 2002 Ashcroft memo justified the establishment of NSEERS as the definitive way "to keep track of those entering and leaving our country in order to safeguard U.S. citizens and America's borders."[308] Federal and local agencies coordinated on issues of the newly-rebooted mission of "national security" on a massive scale. And it would become the blueprint for ICE's activities through the early 2000's largely used against Latinx and Black immigrants. In an interview with Hrag Vartanian in 2017, he detailed his experience in the NSEERS program to me, describing how he was forced to come to an immigration processing room with all Middle Eastern men when the program was announced, was given a NSEERS registration slip he had to hold on to, and then was required to check-in at every U.S. port of exit and entry while other non-Middle Eastern passengers went on with the regular lives, passing him in line and making their routine commutes. For Vartanian, his movement was restricted, surveilled and policed, with his racialization as outside the nation, routinized. He also detailed an experience of being questioned on a train by an undercover government officer and the fear and confusion that characterized the NSEERS era for himself and many other people of Middle Eastern descent in the United States. The Obama administration continued the NSEERS program until it was officially dismantled on December 22, 2016 in the immediate aftermath of the election of Donald Trump and following a coalitional, grassroots advocacy campaign led by organizations like the

Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). [309] Kris Kobach, the architect of the NSEERS program, was appointed in the new Trump administration, reportedly because of his experience building NSEERS.[310] NSEERS and Executive Order 13679 (the "Muslim Ban") marked contemporary moments where Middle Eastern peoples were deemed outside the nation, constructed via racial figures as terrorist threats and where the freedom to live, to move and to stay was racialized. Like in the Immigration Act of 1924, racial regimes targeted Middle Eastern immigration on the basis of their national origin.

A poster of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center, a radical Arab-American organization based out of the SF-Bay Area committed to fighting white supremacy, colonialism and Zionism, detailed an upcoming event in 2017. The flier states that a rally against the Muslim Ban would occur at the Federal Building in San Francisco, California. The event is titled "Freedom to Stay, Freedom to Move, Freedom to Return." An organization largely made up of and led by Palestinians, AROC identifies fundamental conditions of freedom in the flier that are under attack in the Muslim Ban migration and movement restrictions and in the world at large.

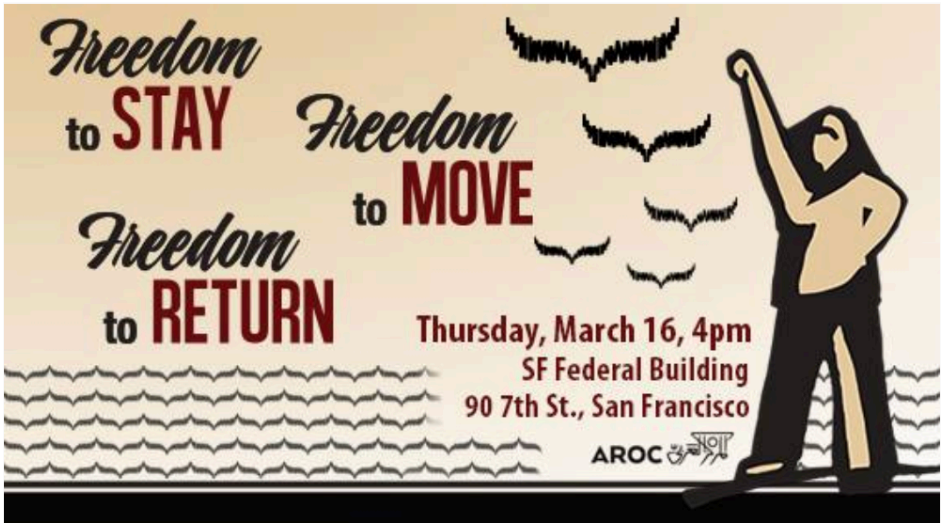


Figure 67: "Freedom to Stay. Freedom to Move. Freedom to Return!" Rally against the Muslim Ban flier, by Arab Organizing and Resource Center (AROC), SF-Bay Area, 2017, Source: AROC Facebook

The sentiments described in the poster echo hauntingly the conditions faced by early Middle Eastern migrants and refugees in the naturalization era of the twentieth century. Those freedoms were under attack by American and homeland systems of oppression. Early migrants and refugees, especially who faced great precarity, looked to obtain the freedom to move, the freedom to stay, the freedom to return in the fight for U.S. naturalization. This was at a time when white nativists were legislating Immigration Bans on non-white peoples. At the same time, the freedom to remain in their homeland, migrate via the routes to and from the destinations they wanted, and right of return to their historic homelands were under systematic attack and at one point became unavailable to them. As this dissertation has shown, for marginalized populations under empires restriction of, or control over, movement was a central type of racial violence. And it was a type of racial violence that could mean life or death, just as it does today. These migrant and refugee material conditions happened simultaneously as communities fought to define their own classification and organized, as also they have at the turn, and early decades, of the twenty first century. Classification was a site of contestation with great stakes and a site of converging and overlapping transnational systems, as it is today.

Two parallel campaigns have existed during recent years that once again bring questions of belonging and classification to the forefront of Middle Eastern-American community issues and struggles: the MENA Census campaign and the SWANA checkbox. Beginning in the 1990s, largely led by Arab-American organizations like the Arab American Institute and ACCESS, Middle Eastern-American grassroots organizations began to crystallize a movement to change the racial classification of the community, removing it from under “White” on the U.S. Census and creating its own category of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) outside of legal

whiteness. This effort brought together a coalition of various Middle Eastern-American ethnic groups and constituencies to claim a pan-ethnic category and advocate for its inclusion in all levels of the United States. They did so citing a wide variety of reasons that included greater resources in education, healthcare, housing, anti-discrimination efforts, and political representation. After years of organizing, the Obama administration greenlit the checkbox. But Trump, while he declared many nationals from South West Asian and North Africa banned on the Muslim Ban, denied the MENA Checkbox, refusing to give the groups the legal classification of non-whiteness, instead keeping them white.

The SWANA Checkbox campaign began in the early 2010s thanks to a student at the University of California, Berkeley, named Nairi Shirinian. Shirinian was an Armenian-American woman whose family is from Egypt who learned about the idea from another student leader named J.P. Shami, whom she met through Lebanese and Armenian student organizations. The SWANA (South West Asian and North African) checkbox campaign was a student initiative to remove SWANA people from the category of "White," at the University of California. Many organizations, initiatives and collective movements came out of the early SWANA movement at the University of California, but it was the SWANA checkbox campaign that sparked the popularization of the framework, led by Shirinian. Shirinian ran for student Senate at U.C. Berkeley upon the urging of members of Students for Justice in Palestine, on the platform that she would organize the checkbox campaign. The name proposed for the checkbox initially was NASWA (North African and South West Asian), because Shirinian wanted to center "North Africa" because of the ways that it was often marginalized in terms like "Middle Eastern" historically and also whose communities' needs were often marginalized in advocacy. According to Shrinian, a SWANA checkbox on official U.C. materials "became a very important issue for

[her] as a student Senator and a student organizer because so many of the resources that communities of color had on campus to support their communities didn't exist for the Middle Eastern communities because of these categories." Issues like retention and recruitment, outreach to student groups and students, and resources to help students graduate were all needs that Shirinian identified as gaps particularly for SWANA students, based on a lack of data. She was inspired especially by Asian American student organizers before her in the 1990s, who launched similar campaigns. In an interview with me in 2023, Nairi Shirinian stated that she was also motivated to organize the checkbox because of her community experience, she had long been familiar with Armenian community campaigns to "check Other, and write Armenian" growing up. Shirinian launched the campaign in 2021 and built an impressive multi-step and multi-tiered campaign that she eventually brought directly to the UC Office of the President (UCOP). Shirnian worked with Shami during her Senate term. During the campaign Shirnian then brought in Christina Mehranbod, a student of Iranian-Armenian and Iranian-Persian descent to lead the efforts with her. Now named "SWANA" because it was easier to say in the day-in and day-out grind of the organizing work, Shirinian and Mehranbod organized the campaign across U.C. campuses, garnering support from students, and directly advocating and organizing at UCOP. Shirnian and Mehranbod brought the campaign to the UC Student of Color Conference (SOCC) in 2012 and teamed up with other organizers and organizations to pass student resolutions at several University of California campuses and the U.C. Student Association (UCSA). Joint struggle, cross-movement, and feminist and queer tactics of organizing characterized the early SWANA movement. The SWANA checkbox campaign was also taken up by students across campuses because a simultaneous political movement was occurring by many of the same SWANA leaders, the beginning of the student divestment movement for Palestine. During this

era, a political consciousness was developing amongst SWANA student organizers of their own racialization as they were targeted in local, state and national attacks. Events like the Irvine 11 and the repression of SJP activities politicized and radicalized SWANA students at the University of California and Cal State University campuses. As Shirinian confirms, SWANA students were experiencing massive surveillance and backlash for their organizing on campus and this even impacted the SWANA Checkbox campaign as some students were wary of the U.C. collecting data that would identify SWANA students as SWANA, given this context.[311]

In order to make an inclusive and united campaign, Shirinian and Mehranbod purposely did outreach to ethnic-based SWANA student organizations in the U.C. systems and through their praxis produced powerful women of color theory. The campaign united Kurdish, Armenian, Iranian, Arab, Chaldean, Assyrian, Turkish, Druze, Yazidi, Somali, Turkmen, Copt, Amazigh, Sudanese, Circassian and many more students in joint struggle to dismantle marginalization and oppression at the university while mobilizing difference. They won and the SWANA checkbox still appears on the U.C. application as of publication of this study. A hundred years after community members argued for their inclusion in the category "white", based on their needs, lived experiences, and strategic organizing goals, youth organizers were attempting to remove themselves from white. As outlined in this dissertation, race is made from above and below and is constantly negotiated, a fight with stakes that power and people shape. For Middle Eastern-Americans, this has been no different.

Indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese, Mexican, Arab, Armenian, Japanese, Indian and Afghan people all fought for legal whiteness, the condition for American naturalization, from the U.S. government in what became known as the racial prerequisite cases from the 1890s-1930s. At the beginning of the twenty first century, Arabs, Persians, Armenians,

Kurds, Turks, Assyrians, Amazigh, and other Middle Eastern ethnic groups all fought and are fighting for legal non-whiteness, in the campaign for the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Census checkbox from the U.S. government, from the 1990s- today. Much has happened between these campaigns, but race continues to endure as a master category shaping the United States and the world.

Recasting early Middle Eastern-American experience through the lens of refugees and organizers, in *A Peoples' History of Middle Eastern-Americans and Race 1890-1930* I have offered new pan-ethnic evidence, readings and perspectives of early diasporic communities' racialization beyond the law, through a bottom-up, community-centered approach. The dissertation has moved from margin to center some of the histories of Middle Eastern Americans under orbiting systems of racism. The convenient deportation of information, the omissions of critical experiences and lives from documentation and analysis, once challenged, renders whiteness studies incomplete and incapable of fully explaining the ways in which Middle Eastern people in the U.S have experienced classification and lives of non-whiteness that have existed parallel to legal white classifications since the very era of when the subjectivity of "Middle Eastern American" comes into existence. This study has brought literature from various Middle Eastern ethnic groups into conversation and emphasized the centrality of refugeehood, statelessness and displacement in understanding early Middle Eastern race in the United States.

A hundred years later and through the work of decades and dozens of organizations, Middle Eastern-Americans would fight to be legally classified again, this time as nonwhite. They would do so again amidst genocide, war, colonialism, imperialism, and uprising and they would be led by refugees, revolutionaries, and organizers yet again trying to change the material conditions of their peoples, trying to outsmart death, trying to flee violence and destruction, and

battling the terror of white supremacy and racism in the United States and abroad. They would try to fight violence and enable violence. Time after time, these realities hold true.

ENDNOTES

1. Tom O'Connor, "Iraqi Christians Face 'Death Sentence' as Trump Prepares Mass Deportations." *Newsweek*, 14 June 2017, www.newsweek.com/iraq-christians-trump-death-sentence-deportation-625722.
2. Chris Gelardi, "When ICE Came for the Chaldeans." *Slate Magazine*, Sept 4, 2017, slate.com/news-and-politics/2017/09/michigans-iraqi-chaldean-community-is-fighting-to-protect-dozens-of-people-from-deportation.html.
3. "Protesters Block US Deportation Buses Carrying Iraqi Christians." *RT International*, 12 June 2017, www.rt.com/usa/391963-protesters-block-us-deportation-buses/.
4. Tom O'Connor, "Iraqi Christians Face 'Death Sentence' as Trump Prepares Mass Deportations." *Newsweek*, 14 June 2017, www.newsweek.com/iraq-christians-trump-death-sentence-deportation-625722.
5. Chris Gelardi, "When ICE Came for the Chaldeans." *Slate Magazine*, Sept 4, 2017, slate.com/news-and-politics/2017/09/michigans-iraqi-chaldean-community-is-fighting-to-protect-dozens-of-people-from-deportation.html.
6. "Trump Administration Civil and Human Rights Rollbacks." *The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*, 16 Nov. 2022, civilrights.org/trump-rollbacks/#.
7. Sarah Rahal. "Refugee Who Died after Being Deported to Iraq Laid to Rest in Michigan." The Detroit News, September 7, 2019. https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2019/09/06/funeral-refugee-jimmy-aldaoud-who-died-after-being-deported-iraq-laid-rest-michigan/2219741001/.
8. Earlene Craver, "On the Boundary of White: The Cartozian Naturalization Case and the Armenians, 1923-1925." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2009): 30–56.
9. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, "Classifying the Cartozians: Rethinking the Politics of Visibility Alongside Ottoman Subjecthood and American Citizenship." *Photographies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2022): 350.
10. Shawn Lay, The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s (Champaign Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
11. See John Tehranian, *Performing Whiteness: Naturalization Litigation and the Construction of Racial Identity in America*. The Yale Law Journal (Jan. 2000). 819.
12. I repeatedly invoke the phrase "racial terror" to describe the systemic violence of white supremacy during the prerequisite era. I do so intentionally to name that the system itself terrorizes, rather than its victims, challenging the construction of Middle Eastern bodies, especially refugees in the eyes of the U.S. (and Ottoman) system at the time and today, as perpetrators of terror and instead indicting the U.S. system of terror and genocide that has impacted people around the world generationally. In the prerequisite era, U.S. society inflicted racial terror via mass deportations of non-white peoples, anti-Asian exclusion, ongoing settler colonialism, lynchings, massacres, and systematic violence, Jim Crow, land theft, etc. against communities on the basis of race.
13. While some Western scholars have insisted that the Armenian Genocide was limited to the years 1915-1917, Armenian and Turkish scholars have revealed the continuity between the Hamidian massacres of the 1890s and the extermination policies of the Young Turk party that resulted in what people often refer to as the "Armenian Genocide" beginning in 1915. See Ronald Grigor Suny, *They can live in the desert but nowhere else": A History of the Armenian*

Genocide, Taner Akcam, A *Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility,* Morris, Benny, and Dror Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities, 1894-1924. Harvard University Press, 2021,* and *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, edited by Richard Hovannisian. Furthermore, as I have argued, genocide is not a one time event but an ongoing structure of violence and dispossession with race as its central logic. For that discussion see, Sophia Armen and Banah Ghadbian "The Armenian Genocide is not a Past Event, It is an Ongoing Struggle" https://medium.com/@SophiaArmen /the-armenian-genocide-is-not-a-past-event-it-is-an-ongoing-struggle-72ef4234f668 reprinted by *MuslimGirl*.org.

14. Earlene Craver, "On the Boundary of White: The Cartozian Naturalization Case and the Armenians, 1923-1925." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2009) 30–56.
15. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, "Classifying the Cartozians: Rethinking the Politics of Visibility Alongside Ottoman Subjecthood and American Citizenship." *Photographies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2022).
16. "Armenian Youth Reaches Portland After Long Trip." *The Oregon Daily Journal*, January 21,1920, 11.
17. Yen Le Espiritu, et al. *Departures: An Introduction to Critical Refugee Studies*. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022). 91.
18. Ibid., 91.
19. Ibid., 91.
20. For definition of domination see bell hooks' discussion on the "ideologies of domination" in hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000).
21. Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*. (Oxford University Press, 2004).
22. Both in the struggle, as in the movement, and also under the severe distress of racialized violence.
23. I use migrants, in place of immigrants because of the ways in which these communities thought of geographies and were defined by movement and transit. I make a distinction between migration and refugeehood by calling attention to and demanding the centrality of forced migration i.e. displacement in the making of MENA petitions for naturalization. See later section, Chapter 1, on Kazanjian to demonstrate the kinetic lives of early Middle Eastern communities and orbits of, and in, transit.
24. Here I refer to Neda Maghbouleh's notion of Iranians sitting at the "limit of whiteness" and also how limited it is to use whiteness as the frame to understand Middle Eastern Americans and race.
25. Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. (New York: Routledge, 2015).
26. Naturalization Act of 1790, March 26, 1790.
27. John Tehranian, "Performing Whiteness: Naturalization Litigation and the Construction of Racial Identity in America." *The Yale Law Journa*l (2000), 818. https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7941&context=ylj.
28. Khaled A. Beydoun, "Between Muslim and White: The Legal Construction of Arab American Identity." *New York University Annual Survey of American Law* (November 24, 2013). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2529506.
29. John Tehranian, "Performing Whiteness," 819.
30. Ibid., 819.

31. Janice Okoomian, “Becoming White: Contested History, Armenian American Women and Racialized Bodies.” *Oxford Journals Press, Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS)* , vol. 27, no. 1, (2002).
32. Arnoldo De León, *In Re Ricardo Rodriguez: An Attempt at Chicano Disfranchisement in San Antonio, 1896-1897*. (San Antonio, TX: Caravel Press, 1979).
33. See the work of Lopez, Beydoun, Maghbouleh, Gualtieri.
34. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “Syrian” referred to people of *bilad al-Sham*, Greater Syria, which includes people of present-day Lebanon, Syrian, Jordan and Palestine, who today in the United States would be called Arabs. This also reveals the ways that classifications have shifted over time which I discuss in other sections.
35. See Lopez for discussion of Congressional intent.
36. Ian Haney-López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
37. Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).
38. Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” *Peace and Freedom*, (1989), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791-4.
39. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).
40. Yen Le Espiritu, Asian American Panethnicity (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, University of California, 1996), 160.
41. Edward W. Said, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays (London: Granta, 2012)
42. John Tehranian, *Whitewashed: America's Invisible Middle Eastern Minority* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 5.
43. Ibid., 5.
44. Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 5.
45. Ibid., 5.
46. Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4
47. Janice Okoomian, "Becoming White: Contested History, Armenian American Women and Racialized Bodies," MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, vol. 27, no. 1 (2002).
48. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White,* 4.
49. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds., Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).
50. For the scope of this study I do not go into the transformation of the term Arab nor the popularization of “Arab-American” historically, as I limited this project to 1890-1930. However, like “Middle Eastern-American” I invoke these terms to highlight and draw lineages of racialization across time for populations of South West Asia and North Africa diasporas and communities in the United States. More thinking is needed on this in ways that are foundational, introductory, and produce useful key terms for our field(s) that cross American Studies, Middle East Studies, Arab-American Studies, Assyrian Studies, Armenian Studies, Iranian diaspora studies, Ottoman studies, Ethnic Studies, etc. Oftentimes, prior imperative work like that of Adele Younis, have used terms like the “Arabic-speaking peoples in America.” I here draw the fraughtness and limits of language in historical study of these communities in Ethnic Studies in my section “On Naming” where I also argue further pan-ethnic scholarship and co-thinking is

needed that interrogates rather than assumes definitions of these terms. I understand these words as both limits and possibilities, as provocative questions to encourage more.
51. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, xv, 46.
52. See for example CIA Definition of the Middle East. CIA.gov. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/middle-east/ or http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/reference/factbook/region/region_mde.html. As the Middle East & Islamic Studies department at UNC describes through practices of colonial mapping and governmental intelligence agencies, The Middle East has been constructed in America and Europe and its designation and bounds have shifted through time. Maps available here https://mideast.unc.edu/where/ show how the designation has shifted through time, along with meanings of nation-states.
53. Tehranian, *Whitewashed,* 65.
54. For example, stating the history of Chinese communities in the United States to mean all "Asian-Americans" would be inaccurate. Further work is needed to address the fundamentals of racial categorization which also then would address some of the gaps that persist when not reading various ethnic groups' migrations and displacements alongside one another, which is currently preventing needed comparative and meaningful Ethnic Studies for SWANA peoples. My hope is that from a peoples' demand, SWANA Studies will emerge as a joint struggle that centers difference as it did in the community, driven by the youth/student movement.
55. For a discussion of the term SWANA, see the Conclusion.
56. Jo Kadi, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1995), xv.
57. Ibid., xviii.
58. Ibid.
59. Sohail Daulatzai, *Fifty Years of the Battle of Algiers: Past as Prologue* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).
60. Junaid Akram Rana, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 16.
61. Ibid., 28.
62. Ibid., 42.
63. Rabab Abdulhadi et al., *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 2.
64. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 2.
65. Ibid., 2.
66. Ibid., 20.
67. Nadine Naber, *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 253.
68. Suvendrini Perera, "Oceanic Corpographies, Refugee Bodies and the Making and Unmaking of Waters," *Feminist Review* 103, no. 1 (2013): 64.
69. Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
70. Helen Heran Jun, "Citizenship," in *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Vaμ Linda Trinh, and Kevin Scott Wong (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 21.
71. Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

72. Ibid., 4.
73. For clarity, Western Armenian in Armenian language practices refers to the Western part of the Armenian nation (not Armenia or Armenians in the West).
74. bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice," in *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
75. My emphasis is intentional.
76. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 2.
77. Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 10.
78. Ibid., 140.
79. Ibid., 5.
80. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology, Surveillance and the Politics of Fear* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
81. I also executed limited interviews. Some oral history interviews I did, did not make it into the scope of this project and will be used in its transformation into a future book.
82. Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 6.
83. Ibid.,17.
84. Adele L. Younis and Philip M. Kayal, *The Coming of the Arabic-Speaking People to the United States* (Center for Migration Studies, 1995), 126.
85. Richard E. Soash, "Tempered Inclusion: Syrian-Lebanese and Armenian Immigrants and Progressive Era Policy Making, 1894-1924" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2018).
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