BEYOND THE LABEL:
ARAB AMERICAN FACES, PLACES, AND TRACES

Arab American Studies Association
Conference in Honor of
Alixa Naff (1919–2013)

Arab American National Museum
Dearborn, Michigan
April 4-6, 2014
HistoriAN, folklorist, and pioneering scholar of Arab American studies, Dr. Alixa Naff, passed away in 2013 at the ripe age of 93 in Bowie, MD. She began with humble origins, born in 1919 in Rashayya al-Wadi, a village located in the former Ottoman province of Syria and now part of the country of Lebanon. Shortly thereafter her parents moved to the U.S., to Spring Valley, Illinois, then to Fort Wayne, Indiana, before settling in Detroit, Michigan, to run a family grocery store. Alixa became interested in the subject of Arab Americans when she wrote a paper on Arabs in America for a history seminar on immigration during the senior year of her B.A. degree at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Intrigued by the subject, her professor gave her $1,000 to collect more oral histories. In the summer of 1962, she set out with the grant money and a tape recorder in a VW Beetle she affectionately called “the camel,” visiting 16 communities and collecting over 87 interviews on tape as well as many artifacts. After completing her Ph.D. in History from UCLA in 1972, Dr. Naff became a university professor first at California State University, Chico, and later at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In 1977, she left teaching and came to Washington to serve as a consultant for a documentary film on Arabs in America. Frustrated by the lack of materials, Naff became re-dedicated to collecting and archiving the history of Arab Americans. She collected more materials and she donated her tape recordings and artifacts to the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian in a collection named after her parents, Faris and Yamna Naff, in 1984. In 1985, Southern Illinois Press published her important book Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience. For years after her book was published and the collection inaugurated, Dr. Naff served as a volunteer archivist of the Faris and Yamna Naff collection. She also created another collection on her research in Zahle and its surroundings at the National Anthropological Archives, simply called the Naff collection. A colorful figure, Dr. Naff lectured on the archival collections and her work across the country into the 1990s. Alixa Naff wrote so that a new generation of researchers would be able to further her work and write the next chapter on Arab American Studies and the history of immigrants to the United States. We are pleased to honor her legacy at the inaugural conference of the Arab American Studies Association (AASA) here at the Arab American National Museum (AANM).
DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,

On behalf of the Arab American National Museum (AANM), its staff and National Advisory Board, I want to welcome all of you and thank you for participating in this important conference. To have so many scholars, writers, students and community members under our roof for a weekend of presentations, dialogue and fellowship fulfills the mission of the AANM to document, preserve and present the history, culture and contributions of Arab Americans.

The AANM’s founding director, Dr. Anan Ameri, was committed to the success of the Arab American Studies Association (AASA) and enthusiastically volunteered the Museum as the venue for its inaugural conference. Since becoming director in July 2013, I have remained committed to strengthening the relationship between the AANM and the AASA. This conference is a wonderful testament to the cooperative spirit of our community of scholars.

In addition, we gather together to honor the life and work of Dr. Alixa Naff, pioneering scholar in Arab American studies and prolific chronicler of the Arab American experience. Dr. Naff’s work not only inspired many of you, but was also a crucial component to the success of this Museum, as she served as a consultant throughout the planning process. Over the three days of this conference we will hear presentations about cutting-edge research in the field as well as reflections on the efforts of previous generations of scholars like Dr. Michael Suleiman, Dr. Evelyn Shakir and Dr. Naff, all of whom have passed on their legacy to us.

The conference organizers and AANM staff have worked diligently to make this conference a success. I hope that as you partake in the conference, you will also take time to admire our Arab American National Museum. With our rotating exhibits, diverse programming and building expansion, we strive to be a dynamic institution that serves our equally dynamic community.

Sincerely,

Devon Akmon
Director, Arab American National Museum

FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR
A WELCOME FROM THE ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

DEAR FRIENDS,

On behalf of the Arab American Studies Association (AASA), we welcome you to our inaugural conference. We planned this conference in partnership with the Arab American National Museum (AANM) and in honor of Dr. Alixa Naff to celebrate her legacy and her work. It is in her pioneering spirit, spurred on by the 2011 Conference in Honor of Dr. Michael Suleiman that the AASA was founded and now convenes its inaugural conference.

It is fitting that the conference is held at the AANM where we convened almost three years ago. It is also fitting that we meet in Dearborn, home to many Arab Americans. It is from here that our work will grow and expand into new vistas and lines of inquiry.

AASA is dedicated to the study of the history, culture, literature, art, music, politics, religion, and other aspects of Arab American experience. The Association’s goals are to stimulate academic research in Arab American Studies and to advance the study of Arabs in diaspora. Seeing so many scholars and artists who offer contributions from different perspectives on “Arab Americans” gathered here at this conference confirms the timeliness and relevance of pursuing and nurturing the study of Arab Americans. We are delighted to see so many of you here and look forward to the conversations that your contributions will generate both at this conference and beyond it.

This conference could not have been possible without the dedication, planning, and hard work of individuals who have contributed their time, money, and talent to organize this conference and launch the Arab American Studies Association. We owe many thanks to the Arab American National Museum, especially to its staff for handling onsite details, and to both its former director Anan Ameri and current director Devon Akmon for their early support and continued commitment to the success of this conference.

It is our honor to welcome you with us today.

Sincerely,

AASA BOARD MEMBERS

Akram Fouad Khater, President
Suad Joseph, Past-President
Randa Kayyali, Treasurer
Pauline Homsi Vinson, Secretary
Lutfi Hussein, Web Coordinator
Rita Stephan, Member-at-Large
Nadine Naber, Member-at-Large
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday, April 4, 2014

3 – 5 P.M.
REGISTRATION AND COFFEE
Community Courtyard

4 – 4:45 P.M.
ONLINE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ON ARAB AMERICANS
(optional presentation, open for educators of all levels)
Lower Level Auditorium

5 – 6:45 P.M.
Lower Level Auditorium

ARAB AMERICAN FEMINIST STUDIES:
FORMATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS
CHAIR: Happy Hyder, Artist (California), l.a.hyder@att.net

FEMINIST LITERARY INTERVENTIONS IN THE
CONSTRUCTION OF ARAB AMERICAN IDENTITIES
Lisa Suhair Majaj, University of Cyprus, lmajaj@cytanet.com.cy

FROM THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS TO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST:
ARAB AND ARAB AMERICAN FEMINIST COALITIONS
Nadine Naber, University of Illinois, Chicago, naber@uic.edu

FROM “BECOMING AMERICAN” TO TRANSNATIONAL ALLIANCES:
FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES
Therese Saliba, Evergreen State College, salibat@evergreen.edu

6:45 – 7:30 P.M.
RECEPTION
Community Courtyard

7:30 – 9:30 P.M.
TARAB TOGETHER
Lower Level Auditorium
Separate ticket required
8:30 – 9 A.M.
REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST
Community Courtyard

9 – 10:45 A.M.
Lower Level Auditorium

TWO VISIONS OF ARABS IN AMERICA: NAFF AND RIHANI
CHAIR: Gigi Awad, University of Texas at Austin, gawad@austin.utexas.edu

RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY
IN EARLY ARAB AMERICAN HISTORY: NAFF’S PEDDLING THESIS
Charlotte Karem Albrecht, Denison University, albrechtc@denison.edu

AN ARAB IN NEW YORK: THE ENCOUNTER OF ARAB AND AMERICAN
MODERNISMS IN THE WORK OF AMEEN RIHANI
Michelle Baroody, University of Minnesota, baroo001@umn.edu

TOWARD A GENEALOGY OF ARAB AMERICAN WOMEN’S LIFE
WRITING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ALIXA NAFF AND EVELYN SHAKIR
Christina Najla LaRose, University of Michigan, clarose@umich.edu

10:45 – 11 A.M. COFFEE BREAK
Community Courtyard

11 A.M. – 12:45 P.M.
Lower Level Auditorium

PERFORMING ARABS
CHAIR: Salah Hassan, Michigan State University, hassans3@msu.edu

MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICANS IN REALITY TELEVISION:
NARCISSISTS, PATRIOTS, AND MUSLIMS
Evelyn Alsultany, University of Michigan, alsultan@umich.edu
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

POLYCENTRIC PALESTINIANISM: TRANS/NATIONAL CINEMA AND IDENTITY POLITICS AT THE BOSTON PALESTINE FILM FESTIVAL
Umayyah Cable, University of Southern California, umayyah.cable@gmail.com

"PLAYING EAST": ARABS PERFORM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA
Linda Jacobs, Independent Scholar, ljacobs78@gmail.com

ARAB AMERICANS OR ARABS-IN-AMERICA?
MANUFACTURING IDENTITY IN HOLLYWOOD’S STUDIOS
Waleed F. Mahdi, University of Minnesota, mahdi004@umn.edu

1 – 2 P.M.
LUNCH
Community Courtyard

2 – 3:45 P.M.
Lower Level Auditorium

ARABS AS MINORITIES, ARABS AS HEGEMONS
CHAIR: Adam Yaghi, University of Victoria, adamyagh@uvic.ca

OUT OF ANN ARBOR: EDWARD SAID AND ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES
Sarah Gualtieri, University of Southern California, gualtier@dornsife.usc.edu

THIRD WORLD ALLIANCES: ARAB AMERICAN ACTIVISTS AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES, 1967-1973
Pamela E. Pennock, University of Michigan-Dearborn, ppennock@umich.edu

ARABS IN THE POWER ELITE
Rita Stephan, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, rita.stephan@gmail.com

KURDISH AMERICA: WORKING WITH, THROUGH, AND AGAINST ARAB AMERICA
Stanley Thangaraj, City College of New York, stan.thangaraj18@gmail.com

3:45 – 4 P.M.
COFFEE BREAK
Community Courtyard
4 – 5:45 P.M. Lower Level Auditorium

WRITING IDENTITY

CHAIR: Janice Terry, Eastern Michigan University, jterry@emich.edu

BEYOND THE LABEL “POTPOURRI”: TRACING THE COMIC PULSE OF ARAB AMERICAN GIRLHOOD AND SEXUALITY IN ALICIA ERIAN’S TOWELHEAD AND RANDA JARRAR’S A MAP OF HOME

Leila Ben Nasr, Ohio State University, Columbus, ben-nasr.1@osu.edu

SEARCHING FOR HOME: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE GIRL IN THE TANGERINE SCARF

Rachel Norman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, ranorman@email.unc.edu

SCHEHERAZADE AS MUSE AND METAPHOR IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB AMERICAN WRITING

Mejdulene B. Shomali, University of Michigan, mejdulene.shomali@gmail.com

TRAVELING TALES: STORYTELLING AND THE FABRICATION OF IDENTITY IN RABIH ALAMEDDINE’S THE HAKAWATI

Pauline Homsi Vinson, Diablo Valley College (California), pvinson@dvc.edu

6 – 7:15 P.M. KEYNOTE DINNER

Community Courtyard

Keynote Speaker: Suad Joseph, University of California, Davis

7:30 – 9 P.M. Lower Level Auditorium

THE FUTURE OF ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES AND THE AASA: A COLLECTIVE DISCUSSION

Chaired by Akram Fouad Khater, North Carolina State University, and Nadine Naber, University of Illinois, Chicago
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 6, 2014

8:30 – 9 A.M.
BREAKFAST
Community Courtyard

9 – 10:45 A.M.
Lower Level Auditorium
RELIGION, CLASS, AND RACE
CHAIR: Matthew Jaber Stiffler, Arab American National Museum, mstiffler@accesscommunity.org

CLASS AND COLOR AMONG ARAB AMERICANS:
THE TRULY INVISIBLE ARAB AMERICANS
Rosina Hassoun, Saginaw Valley State University, rhassoun@svsu.edu

CIRCUMSTANTIAL IDENTITIES:
WHEN ARABNESS IS NOT THE (ONLY) THING
Sally Howell, University of Michigan, Dearborn, sfhowell@umich.edu

"MESSIHI OR MUSLIM?": ASSUMPTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS OF ARAB CHRISTIAN IDENTIFICATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA
Randa Kayyali, American University, kayyali@american.edu

10:45 – 11 A.M.
COFFEE BREAK

11 A.M. – 12:45 P.M.
Lower Level Auditorium
TRANSNATIONALISM IN ARAB AMERICAN IDENTITY
CHAIR: Lutfi Hussein, Mesa Community College (Arizona), lutfi.hussein@yahoo.com

HOMELAND IMAGININGS AMONG DIASPORIC PALESTINIAN AMERICAN YOUTH
Louise Cainkar, Marquette University, louise.cainkar@marquette.edu
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

CROSS-RACIAL AND TRANSNATIONAL
REFORMULATIONS OF ARAB-AMERICAN IDENTITIES
Carol Fadda-Conrey, Syracuse University, cfaddaco@syr.edu

“SH*T ARABS IN DEARBORN DO”: THE FRICTIONS OF ARAB AMERICAN
YOUTHS’ SELF-REPRESENTATIONAL STRATEGIES
Candice Haddad, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, candice.haddad@gmail.com

OVERCOMING THE DIVIDE: PALESTINE’S ROLE
IN CRAFTING EARLY ARAB-AMERICAN IDENTITY
Suraya Khan, Rice University, surayakhan01@gmail.com

12:45 P.M.
LUNCH AND DEPARTURES
Community Courtyard

SPECIAL THANKS

THE CONFERENCE committee would like to thank the AASA Board members
for their contributions to nurturing AASA and facilitating its development. We
are also grateful for the hard work of the members of the Abstract Reviewing
Committee, including Janice Terry, Louise Cainkar, and Akram Fouad Khater. This
conference became a reality thanks to the partnership and funding from the Office
of Multicultural Impact and the Center for Arab American Studies at the University
of Michigan-Dearborn, the Arab American Institute Foundation, and the Arab
and Muslim American Studies program at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

AASA 2014 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
Randa Kayyali, co-chair
Matthew Jaber Stiffler, co-chair
Pauline Homsi Vinson
Lutfi Hussein
Rita Stephan

www.arabamericanstudies.org
ACCOMMODATIONS
A discounted conference rate of $89/night is available by calling the award-winning Comfort Inn Near Greenfield Village (20061 Michigan Ave., Dearborn, MI, 48124) at 313.436.9600 and asking for the “AANM rate.” Complimentary ground transportation will be provided between the hotel and the museum.

REGISTRATION
The registration fee for the conference is $125 and $35 for students. The registration fee includes a Friday evening reception, breakfast and lunch on Saturday and Sunday, and the keynote dinner on Saturday evening.

You can register online at http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/BeyondTheLabelConference, or in person on Friday at the conference.

TARAB TOGETHER MUSICAL EVENT
FRIDAY, APRIL 4 - 7:30 P.M. • LOWER LEVEL AUDITORIUM

Join Amer Zahr and his ensemble of local Arab American musicians as they present an energetic, fun-filled night featuring the classic artists of Arabic music.

Tickets $10/conference attendees
www.1001laughs.com

BOOK VENDORS
Please visit the book vendors on site at the conference: Syracuse University Press, New York University Press, and Wayne State University Press.
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AASA
Arab American Studies Association

Arab American National Museum

In partnership with

Arab American Institute Foundation

OFFICE OF METROPOLITAN IMPACT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN

LSA DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE
ARAB AND MUSLIM AMERICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN