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village" phenomena: globalization of cultures, races, images, capital, products ["information age" or dissemination of images and information across national boundaries with a sense of a global mixing of cultures] (Kennedy and Danks 2001, Punter 2005, Lash 1990).

11. The image of Arab Americans changed within hours of the September 11 attacks (Shryock 2000, Varisco 2000).

12. Cainkar (2002) observed that during the 1990s, a major shift in identification, affiliation and behavior occurred among a significant proportion of Arab Muslims in Chicago. Their primary affiliation changed from secular to religious. They began to identify as Muslims first, and Arabs, Palestinians or Jordanians second. Mosques and religious institutions replaced secular community centers as locales for community social life and education. Secular Arab student organizations dwindled while Muslim student organizations thrived. Muslim women who in the 1980s did not cover their hair began to do so. Islam became more than a private way of life; it became a public, active way of being.

13. Though Edward Said discussed Muslim and Arab diaspora, he, through his personal memory, identified himself as Palestinian (Said 1986). Also, see Dirlik's discussion (1999) of the experience of Asian-Americans who identify themselves with their origins in local societies.

institutions and academic centers. For more incidents related to Campus Watch, visit, for example, the following websites: http://www.danielpipes.org/ and http://www.campus-watch.org/

6. "Edward Said demonstrates the often paradoxical nature of identity in an increasingly migratory and global world" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999:7).

7. According to a recent report (Parry 2005), "Arab-American men and women earn more than their counterparts in the general population. The median salary for men in 1999, the most recent statistics available, was $41,700, compared with $37,100 for American men as a whole. For women, the average salary was $31,800, compared with $27,200 for all American women". But the population in Metro Detroit, one of the nation's largest hubs for people of Arab descent, defies a national trend of Arabs being wealthier and better-educated than other Americans (Heath and Gregg 2005).

8. For further information on the global aspect of Islam see Schmidt 2004, and el-Aswad 2000; 2002; 2005.

9. The new Dearborn mosque (70,000-square-foot with gold-domes costing $15 million) was established by the Islamic Center of America to serve as a spiritual home for metro Detroit's Arab American population.

10. According to postmodernism, what we call knowledge is a special kind of story, a text or discourse that puts together words and images in ways that seem pleasing or useful to a particular culture, or even just to some relatively powerful members of that culture. It argues that the belief that one particular culture's view of the world is also universally "true" was a politically convenient assumption for Europe's imperial ambitions of the past, but has no firm intellectual basis. Also, post-modernism refers to "global

Endnotes

1. Diaspora may be understood here as a globally mobile category of identification as well as something objectively present in the world today with regard to something else in the past — the place of origin (Axel 2004: 28, Clifford 1999: 244-277).

2. Ethnic archetypes and negative stereotyping of the Arab Americans have been addressed by scholars such as Edward Said (1979, 1981, 1983, 2001), Jack Shaheen (1997, 2001), Soad Joseph (1999), Edmund Ghareeb (1983), Stockton 1994), among others. It is worthy to observe that "there is no box on the census forms for Arab Americans in the ethnicity section, as there is for Asians or Hispanics, for example. Instead, Arab Americans tend to check the box for white or other" (El Guindi 2003: 631).

3. Arab Americans suffered a serious backlash immediately following September 11, 2001. The worst elements of this backlash, including an increase in the incidence of violent hate crimes, were concentrated in the first nine weeks following the attacks. See Report on Hate Crimes and Discriminations Against Arab Americans - The Post September 11 Backlash: http://www.911investigations.net/document1276.html. Also, in Chicago, in the late fall of 2001, an Assyrian church on the north side and an Arab community organization on the southwest side were damaged by arson. The rebuilt community center was again vandalized in March, 2002 (Cainkar 2002).

4. The complete report entitled "Unequal Protection" may be viewed at: http://www.cair-net.org/asp/2005CivilRightsReport.pdf].

5. The problem of targeting Muslims and Arabs has extended to scholars and those working (or who applied to work) in

themselves with broader identity of Arabism or being Arab as well as of Americanism, they show a very strong sense of their motherland identity. For example, they strive to preserve their "Egyptianess" (misriyyah)[13].

Conclusion

Through the usage of the metaphor of Sindbad, this paper has highlighted the significance of migration, narration, family, religion, and media as grounds for the formation of Arab American identity in both public and private zones. The movement between local and global spheres has played a major role in creating a particular sense of Arab immigrants' identity attached to both local and global communities. Arab American identity, one argues, is shaped by many factors but particularly by continuing interactions between conditions in the old and new homelands and by the interplay between their perceptions of themselves and how others see them.

Like other Arab Americans, Egyptian immigrants have moved to the new world of the USA participating in its modern life, while at the same time striving to preserve their cultural heritage. Those who have shown a distance from their old homeland are not against the country or their culture as such, but rather against the politico-economic corruption. The migration of Egyptians to the US is viewed here as integral not only to the global economy but also to global processes of transformation of multiple identities. Arab Americans now are more visible through their successes in representing their identity as well as in economic, political and public life.

Transnational identity is not confined to geographical borders, rather it develops dual consciousness bridging multiple real and imagined spaces. Though Egyptian immigrants tend to identify

debates and work to reduce spatial divisions as well as to accentuate temporal connections between Arab-Americans and their members in the homeland. This all occurs instantaneously, transnationally and at the push of a button.

them with a wonderful opportunity to unite their interests in order to benefit from the diverse material and cultural resources for the purpose of reducing the sense of alienation or ghurba.

Emerging Internet practices require fresh exploration into the parameters of what may have become the norms for analyzing the experience of Arab Americans. The interplay between local and global scenarios is reflected in the mass media and popular culture. Though Arab satellites are globally oriented, they are viewed by Egyptian Americans as representing the local concerns of their (Arab) homeland. Although Al Jazeera (the satellite station based in Qatar) still dominates, other channels, such as Egypt Satellite, NILE, LBC, Dubai, and MBC among others, are challenging its grip on Arab viewers both in the United States and other western-oriented countries. From an Egyptian American's point of view these channels have developed different perspectives and conflicting views even in dealing with the very same event. These different and conflicting channels, however, attract the Arab-American viewers for the fact that they offer different perspectives from those of western or American channels, such as CNN, Fox and the BBC.

Arab satellite stations present critical programs and talk shows inviting eminent Arab thinkers, as well as western and American intellectuals to discuss issues related to liberty, democracy, peace, violence, civil rights, and regional conflicts. Among those interviewed have been successful Egyptian Americans who have been portrayed as role models for the new generation especially those in the homeland. Talk shows include various topics and various programs engaged in religious, political, and economic

Over the years, Egyptian migrants have traveled back and forth between Egypt and the United States, securing a constant circular flow of resources and information. In the new land, Arabs or Egyptian Americans look for social networks (relatives, friends) to lessen the feeling of alienation (ghurba). Ghurba implies meanings of absence (ightirab) from the homeland, alienation and, most importantly, the 'otherness' and 'strangeness' persons experience in a new or unfamiliar environment. The sense of alienation or ghurba has deepened not only because of being away from the homeland or being in a new milieu, but also because of the insecure environment in the new home or country especially since September 11, 2001 when Arabs and Muslim have been mistakenly stigmatized, relatively isolated, and made targets of racial assault[11]. This calamity has generated a soul-searching orientation to socially and religiously cope with the crisis' negative consequences[12]. The new challenge of the postmodern Sindbad or Said and Arab Americans lies in the transnational or double identity they have constructed. They have to cope with both the old localizing strategies (kin-base societies, bounded communities, organic cultures, region, and nation, for instance) and the new globalizing strategies accounting for transnational circuits of culture, identity, and capital.

One of the major changes in the worldviews of Arab immigrants is their effort to look for and use alternatives for enhancing their communication in unconventional ways. This change is embodied in the usage of the most up-to-date electronic means for communication. Cyber-space and Internet sites provide other avenues for bridging Arab Americans with their homeland. Communication networks and transnational media have provided

have become the most visible, the most targeted, and the least understood ethnic group in America. Public interest in Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam has exponentially multiplied since those attacks (EL Guindi 2003: 634).

The shining side of the picture, however, is represented in the preservation of Arab and Muslim heritage on US soil as embodied in two grand cultural events that occurred in Dearborn, Michigan: the opening of the Arab American National Museum on Thursday, May 5, 2005 and the opening of the largest mosque in the US on Thursday, May 12, 2005[9]. While Mansour, a 35-year-old Dearborn resident of Egyptian descent, and his friends observed pictures, musical instruments and other artifacts inside the newly inaugurated Arab American National Museum (the first museum to be established about Arab-Americans), he remarked, "We are finally represented in an excellent way. We can confirm that we are now part of American life"

Postmodern Sindbad[10]: Media and Global proximity

"Identity- who we are, where we come from, and what we are- is difficult to maintain in exile" (Said 1986 :16). It is hard to find in the world today a family or community that has not already had a member, relative, or friend (like Sindbad) migrate to another geographical locality or return home with narrations of stories and possibilities. Within this migratory context or experience, media or mass-mediated events play a significant role (Appadurai 1996: 17). Advanced technological means of communication, such as the Internet and mobile phones, have transcended geographical barriers and enhanced social ties between immigrants and their relatives and friends in the homeland.

This sophisticated statement is expressed though differently by ordinary Arab Americans. For instance, in an interview with a veiled Muslim woman of Egyptian descent, moving from a private or personal reaction to a universal or global consideration, she narrated:

"Americans became sensitive against Muslims after 9/11. I do not want to stereotype. Like me, some women preferred to stay at home to avoid troubles, but could not avoid going out. On the one hand, I work and, on the other, I did not do anything wrong. I found out that some times cultures can force people from other cultures to give up some of their beliefs to make themselves safe, so they have to adapt living without practicing some of what they believe. That makes those people from other cultures suffer in silence. Surprisingly, the problems we faced and the dangerous atmosphere we were involved in, turned out to have benefits which we never thought of, nor dreamed about. Now we are known all over the world and our religion begins to spread out faster than before. People want to know more about the only religion almost all non-Muslim countries fight, or at least, do not like, and abuse."

It is worthy to observe that an Arab scholar, reviewing a book on Arab Americans in Detroit, and commenting on their new condition, stated that the book jacket of Arab Detroit expresses what was until recently an accepted fact, namely, quoting the author, that despite the "complex and rich world the Arabic-speaking immigrants have created [this group remained] barely visible on the landscape of ethnic America". El Guindi, however, said: "Interestingly this observation was made before the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. I say this is no more the case. Almost overnight Arabs and Muslims

government employees including professors are poorly paid or insufficiently "subsidized".

Samir asserted that the good thing in the U.S. is that people respect the one who does not deny his/her identity (roots) for whatever reason. "No one can escape his/her social skin," Samir narrated saying that he had been frequently asked by persons belonging to different ethnic groups if he were Egyptian, to which he answered, "Yes". In ghurba one becomes more Egyptian than in Egypt. He or she thinks about the homeland more than those who live there. Other interviewees do not accept such a view arguing that people living there [in Egypt] experience alienation [ghurba] because of the difficulty and hardship of life. However, such a view is refuted by Egyptian Americans, especially successful businessmen, who like to invest their capital and experience in various projects in Egypt thereby maintaining economic, social and political ties with the homeland.

Though Muslims in America found in the common acknowledgment of their Islamic identity a bond for social cohesion, the Arab American identity goes beyond the borders of religious affiliation in such a way that a non-Muslim Arab can express common ideas notwithstanding religious or Islamic implications. In his work, "The Clash of Ignorance", Said (2001a) argues that "if we think of the populations today of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Britain, America, even Sweden, we must concede that Islam is no longer on the fringes of the West but at its center... in the creation of this new line of defense the West drew on the humanism, science, philosophy, sociology and historiography of Islam... Islam is inside from the start"[8].

their objective in having a new identity through being American citizens, they also stressed their sincere desire to keep their Egyptian identity. Those who came as immigrants confirmed that they had come to the US to have a good education, occupation or job, and a convenient environment that appreciates their potential and industriousness. "I am proud to come to America as well as to be American. This feeling of pride is doubled when I go visit relatives back home", Samir recounted. He also said, "I work hard here and I make a modest living that I would never make in my homeland[7], even If I spent my whole life there. But, there is no relaxation here in the US. I like to go home to see and visit my relatives, friends and beloved places as well as to relax". It is not a matter of divided loyalty leading to split personality or the feeling of ghurba or alienation as some intellectuals might think, but rather a matter of longing for roots, real or imagined, in the homeland and full acceptance in the new land. Double identity encompasses a form of double or transnational belonging.

The condition of being in ghurba indicates a state of being far away or alienated physically, socially or psychologically from a social environment. To be more specific, the sense of ghurba is generated from the tension owing to the ongoing process of selecting the best values and modes of behavior found respectively in both Egypt and the US, on the one hand, and rejecting certain patterns of behavior dominant in the two countries, on the other. Regarding Egypt, Samir pointed out that though he loves the country and would like to retire there, the deteriorating economy makes him insecure. He indicated, for example, that prestigious institutes such as public universities suffer from inadequate facilities and meager funding and

to know more about Arabic language and culture. Arab Americans who maintain their Arabic language are eager to communicate in that language at least in the personal and private zones. Even among Arabs who do not speak Arabic, an interviewee recounted that he could not tolerate the situation in which he became "mute and deaf" in utililizing the Arabic language. He blamed his parents for that. I interviewed some elderly Egyptian Americans who regretted that they did not maintain the Arabic language. A retired scholar in Arabic literature recounted that his children, now in the American mainstream, cannot enjoy the beauty of Arabic poetry and literature.

Metaphorically, however, the other side of Sindbads' identity is positively represented. Mobility and plasticity of Arab American identity is represented in what Samir, a manager of a reputable department store, calls "gahiz," a multidimensional term including simultaneous meanings of being "ready" "smart" "alert", "sharp", "capable" and "on the move". "I'm having a new identity that brings new strengths to me. It is a unique blend of both the traditional and "new" or modern sides of "me". It is a combination of sameness and difference. It is like speaking two languages by the same person".

Through his experiences with multiple ethnic groups, Samir, like other Egyptian Americans, has developed strong global awareness without loosing his identification with his motherland or his "Egyptianness". Egyptian-Americans embody the "double identity" or dual citizenship according to which there is a new identity, i.e., the U.S. citizenship added to his/her preexisting Egyptian nationality. Though Egyptian interviewees expressed

ongoing pendulum between the margin or periphery and the center, or between, the old home and the new land respectively is represented in the language. The conflict with language reflects identity conflict. As Said stated: "I always have the sense that I'm not really writing in my own language… I use English, but I was brought up speaking Arabic … I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt. What I do know, however, is that the two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other, sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often each correcting, and commenting on, the other. Each can seem like my absolutely first language, but neither is" (Said 1999). Having lost his country in early youth, Said wrote often that he never felt fully at home anywhere – except perhaps in the 'country of words' (Said 1984). The new generations of Arab Americans face the problem of deficiency or insufficiency of speaking or understanding Arabic. In an electronic message sent to his father working overseas, a 15 year old Egyptian American high school student wrote:

> "Dear baba,
> I don't know exactly what I am. Am I American or Egyptian? I mean, if I am Egyptian, why do I know English so much better and why do I feel like this (the U.S.) is my true home. But, if I am American, why do I hate prejudice found almost everywhere here? I am confused and this has been bugging me a lot. I am wondering if you can help me with this. It seems like I don't fit in either place. Anyway, how are you baba? I hope everything is tamam [perfect] there. Ok baba, Salam".

There is an urgent need for the American society or government

locality. During our interview, a principle of an elementary school in Dearborn, an American with non-Arab descent said, "The more I know about Arab American culture in America the more I know about the Middle East and the Arab world. I wish I could speak Arabic". This phrase, acknowledging the spread and diversity of Arab culture, emphasizes the bond between Arab Americans and their homeland as seen not only from an insider's view but also from an outsider's.

On considering the relationship between migration and changing identities, it is important to realize that the array of anticipated possibilities is significant. Some identities may be dissolved or vanished in the new society, while other identities gain new dimensions. Personal and cultural identities are never given but are negotiated, constituted and validated through ongoing interactions. Identity formation involves construction and reconstruction throughout the life-course of individuals and groups and through their different faces, roles and circumstances (Hall 1990; 1992, Eriksen 2002). Arab Americans have experienced a gradually emerging sense of identity framed by the American culture as well by the deep consciousness of, and identification with, the old homeland. Put somewhat differently, there has been a tremendous change among Arab immigrants manifested in the transition from static to dynamic views of space and time as well as from a limited number of alternatives to unlimited options and open possibilities. Because the immigrant sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actually here and now, this notion of "double perspective" (Said 1996: 60) leads to the development of new identity[6].

The notion of double identity as well as the theme of the

"America is a multi-cultural society as well as the land of opportunity. This opportunity is for everybody regardless to her/his ethnic background. I do not have problems with any particular ethnic group. But after September 11, solid evidence has shown that only certain kinds of multi-cultures or ethnic groups are acceptable, while others are "questionable". If a person belongs to the "questionable" culture or group, he/she may be unwelcome. This issue generates a big question mark for me, especially here in the land of freedom. Some stories of incidents that occurred to some Arabs and Muslims following September 11, make me feel as if I were living in a Third World country where government officials and policemen target the citizens based on suspicion, and not on evidence"[5].

Sindbad with Double Identity

Edward Said instigated the question of "traveling theories," suggesting the idea that travel generates a complex system of cultural representation that depends not on power, but on motion and willingness to go into different worlds, use different languages, and understand a multiplicity of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals (Said 1983). Being positioned on the boundary that signifies the division between home and away inspired Said to produce a theory for an intellectual who identifies himself as distanced or alienated and deeply tied to both Western and non-Western cultural elements (Kaplan 1996:115). This statement, one argues, establishes common ground between Said's thought and the experience of ordinary Arab Americans. The concept of movement implies the spreading of cultural elements beyond the confinements of

As unfairness and discrimination increase, the majority of the Arab immigrants experience a sense of alienation ghurba [far away from the homeland]) and consequently an identity crisis. Some interviewees, both Muslim and Christian, recounted that even before 9/11, they changed their names, hid their faith, and did their best to assimilate American culture so as to live without fear of discrimination. Regardless of the rich experience and success of many Arab Americans, since 9/11 the previously passive perception of Arab Americans has changed to take on a destructive and ungodly face3. For them the world, regionally and globally, is becoming increasingly insecure and merciless. The most up-to-date report released on May 11, 2005 by CAIR (the Council on American-Islamic Relations) indicated a total of 1,522 incident reports of civil rights cases in 2004 compared to 1,019 cases reported to CAIR in 2003. This constitutes a 49 percent increase in the reported cases of harassment, violence and discriminatory treatment from 2003 and marks the highest number of Muslim civil rights cases ever reported to CAIR. In addition, CAIR received 141 reports of actual and potential violent anti-Muslim hate crimes, a 52 percent increase from the 93 reports received in 2003[4].

Not only Muslims, but also Christians from Arab descent suffer from the stereotyping against Arabs in general because of physical appearance, language and customs. And the negative attitude toward Muslims does not differentiate between Arab and non-Arab who narrate their own realities and identities. Arab Americans try to prevail over such stereotypes and hardship. This new situation is reflected in a statement of one of Egyptian American. 'Ali, a dentist living in West Bloomfield, asserted:

image as 'an immigrant success story', as 'the capital of Arab America,' changed within hours of the attacks; suddenly, it was a scene of threat, divided loyalties, and potential backlash" (Shryock 2001: 917). Such a sketchy and impressionistic conclusion, made immediately after the 9/11 event, however, does not say how Arab Americans survived such a tragedy. Shryock goes on to say, "In the days following September 11, Arab Detroit was awash in American flags. They were displayed prominently in the windows of liquor stores and corner groceries, they flew over gas stations, they even adorned churches and mosques. Flags were worn around throats, affixed to lapels, and tattooed into the skin. For some, American flags were talismanic shields, for others, they were defiant assertions of patriotism. Many non-Arab and non-Muslim observers thought it was all for show—some of it was, of course—but this skeptical attitude only proved how hard it was for Arabs and Muslims to be seen as "authentically" American" (Shryock 2001: 918- 919). Even when they strived to show patriotism, solidarity or loyalty to the society with which they are identified, they were denied such honor.

Arab Americans have experienced a variety of forms of discrimination and stereotyping based on factors such as race and ethnicity, inability to speak the language, dress, customs, and religion[2]. Some critical dimensions of these stereotypes go back to the way Western scholars have misrepresented the Arab (or East) as a changeless, passive, dependent "other" (Said 1979; 1984; 1993; 1996). At the personal level, Edward Said, before 9/11 and in his book, Orientalism (1979), positioned himself as an Arab intellectual in the West, and as such was subject to the very web of racism, cultural stereotypes, and dehumanizing ideology.

decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile" (Said 1993: 332). Through the usage of the metaphor of Sindbad, I extend this concept of "consciousness" to be incarnated also in the ordinary, non-academic, or non-artistic immigrants, like the case of the Egyptian interviewed by Ghosh and those of the metro Detroit communities interviewed for this research. In a word, my argument here is that ethnographic findings show that the difference between the intellectual and the ordinary lies in the difference between two forms of discourse: writing or documented discourse and narrating or verbal discourse. If the writer or intellectual, from Said's point of view, finds home in writing, ordinary Arab [Egyptian] Americans (like Sindbad) make a home in narrating or telling stories about their faraway homeland, heritage and personal memories. In addition, I have found that other less formal forms of writing, including personal letters and electronic messages, are used by ordinary immigrants to convey their experiences to their relatives and close friends, as well as to themselves. In a word, for a person who has lost their immediate touch with the homeland, narrating is considered a discursive social space providing a novel source of the sense of rootedness associated with the old homeland. Arab Americans commence their narratives of identity with their homeland.

Prior to September 11, 2001, many Arab-Americans achieved prosperity in business, academia, engineering and other fields and as such were successful and mainstreamed in U.S. society and politics (Boosahda 2003, El Guindi 2003, Nabeel & Shryock 2000, Suleiman 1999). However, one reads that on "September 11, 2001, Arab Detroit entered its own state of emergency. Its

theoretical insights that help us understand the core features of multiplicity, diversity and plasticity of Arab American identity.

The reason for focusing on Edward Said lies in the fact that he wrote eloquently about his now well-documented diasporic experience1 in the U.S. Although some of his writings occur prior to 9/11, they nonetheless highlight the hardships Arabs and Muslims face in both their new and home lands. When confronted with diaspora, Arab intellectuals are torn between their commitment to universal-human values, their commitment to their new land and their attachment to their homeland.

Data drawn from Egyptian communities is used to examine to what extent Edward Said's ideas of migrant and exilic experiences express the common views of other Arab Americans and are not confined to his own case as a dispossessed Palestinian. Finally, Said has been criticized for his formulation of an exilic space because it privileges the Third World writers or academic intellectuals, and not the ordinary exiles who have come to live and work in the metropolis (Kaplan 1996:30).

Sindband's stories of the Self: Edward Said and Arab Americans

In his study of an Egyptian village, Ametap Ghosh, an Indian ethnographer, noticed that both he and an Egyptian interviewee were comparing their cultures in relation only to "the West" saying that "despite the vast gap that lay between us, we were both travelling, he and I: we were travelling in the West" (quoted in Clifford 1997: 4-5).

Said stated that "liberation has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused,

Introduction

This paper focuses on the specific dynamics of movement and dwelling, and the related concepts of travel, migration, and exile that can be cross-culturally studied. Despite the fact that cross-cultural studies of travel as well as transnational cultural studies are scant, population movements and transnational migration are currently the focus of broad academic debates and surround such issues as transnational cultural relations, the renovation of migrants' worldviews, and the dynamics of identity reconstruction (Axel 2004, Clifford 1988; 1999, Cohn 1987, el-Aswad 2004, Kaplan 1996). Studies of migrants' communities have noted that immigrants span borders and attend to multiple national realities (Coutin 2003, Kearny 1998; Levitt 2001, Ong 1999). The migratory experiences of Arabs to the West (or America) as reflected within their expressive narration and writing need to be articulated. They are not well represented in the literature of travel. This paper examines cultural practices related to migration as ways in which persons experience change in their views of the world, of themselves, and of other people. For instance, migrants experience profound changes in their conceptual-social orientation as they move from the state of being a 'majority' at home to that of being a 'minority' in another country, causing the feelings of bewilderment and alienation (ghurba) with which they have to cope.

The study is based on ethnographic data collected from twelve case studies representing different and multi-dimensional experiences of Egyptian Americans living in three metropolitan Detroit, Michigan communities: Dearborn, West Bloomfield, and Troy. These case studies reveal some important and comparative

Sindbad in America: Narrating the Self among Arab Americans

D. el-Sayed el-Aswad

Abstract

Migration is a prototypical rite of passage involving transition in space, territory, and group membership. Migrants are border-crossers who create transnational identities that mediate between different geographies and nations. This transnational identity recalls the folk archetype of Sindbad the Sailor of the Arabian Nights, a metaphor used here to indicate a role model for migrants' successful adventures that go beyond locality, regionality and nationality. Sindbad is not merely a boater, but a determined traveler, adventurer and navigator spirited to succeed in finding new opportunities in new frontiers. Unlike authors such as Clifford (1997: 38), Julian (2004), and others, who have focused heavily on the oral histories of immigrants, in this paper, I discuss different forms of expression, in addition to oral narration, including writing. Arab American writings have played a critical role not only in documenting social and political events, but also in alerting nations and local communities of the consequences of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim attitudes intensively prevalent in the US following 9/11, thus providing a platform for discussions and potential solutions. These views are examined within the perspectives of both Arab American writers, as represented here by Edward Said, and ordinary Arab immigrants of the Detroit metropolitan area. The paper analyzes their complex positioning and various alternatives that have been proposed and discussed by Arab-American intellectuals, especially Edward Said, as related to the experiences of ordinary immigrant Arab Muslims and non-Muslims, and particularly, as in this paper, Egyptian-Arab immigrants [Arab Americans, identity, travel/immigration, diaspora].

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