# Tracing Your Arab American Roots RootsTech 2024

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### **Definitions Used in Presentation**

- Arab Americans Individuals residing in the United States from, or descendants from, countries identified as Arab
- MENA Region Middle East North Africa Region
- **SWANA Region** Southwest Asia North Africa Region

### **Research Considerations**

• Definition of who is Arab is not consistent – most commonly identification comes from the 22 countries of the Arab League.

Arab League Members		
Bahrain	Comoros	
Egypt	Iraq	
Kuwait	Lebanon	
Mauritania	Morocco	
Palestine	Qatar	
Somalia	Sudan	
Tunisia	<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	
Yemen		
	Egypt Kuwait Mauritania Palestine Somalia Tunisia	

• There are people of many other ethnic/cultural-identities in the region that do not identify as Arab.

#### **Examples**

Afghan, African, Armenian, Assyrian/Chaldean Azerbaijani, Circassian, Georgian, Imazighen (Berber), Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish, etc.

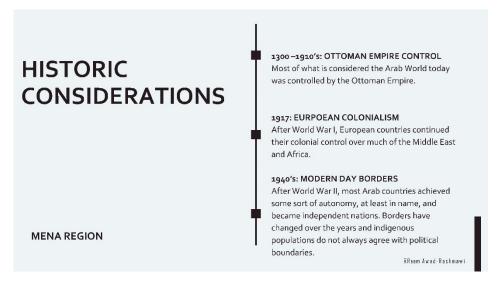
There are diverse religious identities and records.

# **Issues Hindering Research**

- There are no clear Arab or MENA/SWANA identifications in US records.
- US records use changing identities for Arabs or others from the region.
- Spelling variations and naming practices are unfamiliar to researchers.
- There are language barriers to research.
- There is limited research on enslaved North Africans who may have identified as Arab or spoke Arabic.

# Historical Considerations (Make locality guides or study history of the region)

MENA region historical context



US historical context

# Where to start – Before looking at records

- **Around the house** What records do you have or you can get from family members? Documents, photos, objects, etc.
- **Interview family members** Do you have living relatives in the US or internationally that you can interview about your family history?
- Write down what you know Write out or use a computer program to include all you know about your family history names, places, dates, stories.

# Resources & Archives (US & International)

- Genealogy Research Sites
- Libraries (Public, University)
- Archives
- Social Media Groups

- Religious & Ethnic Groups
- Country, City, Town, Community Organizations
- Government Agencies

### Methodology Tip

- Use Google Translate to translate from English name to Arabic for online searches (not great for the other way around because Arabic names have meaning that are literally translated)
- Use FAN research (Elizabeth Shown Mills) also known as cluster research –
   Arabs often travel together or to a place someone else had already visited.

# PRACTICAL STEPS

- 1 begin with what you know
- 2- interview and ask questions
- 3 research online databases
- 4 research in person in the United States
- 5 DNA tests
- 6 research abroad

### **Immigration Record Tips**

- Check records going in & out of the United States
- Check naturalization records
- Check border crossings from Mexico, not only passenger lists
- Check consular records registrations, birth abroad

### **Arabic Name Tips**

- In most Arab countries, legal documents list 4 names—given name, father's name, grandfather's name and family name—instead of the Western use of 3 names. Upon immigration to the US, the family or clan name might be dropped.
- Traditions Father's name as middle name or eldest son named after grandfather
- Dashes/spaces optional Example: Abdul-latif same as AbdulLatif and Abdul Latif
- Spelling variations Example: Sabreen same as Sabrine same as Sabrin

#### **Research Resources**

- US Records –photosmemoriesbyreem.com/arab-american-genealogy-research
- International Records photosmemoriesbyreem.com/arab-genealogy-research

# DNA - Genetic Genealogy

- **Testing** Many Arab Americans are taking autosomal DNA tests, also Y and Mitochondrial DNA on *Family Tree DNA*.
- **Family Tree DNA Group Projects** Group Projects provide communities for people who are interested in a specific topic. There are at least 18 groups related to Arab DNA some country specific and others are name specific.

Where to find more information on tracing your Arab American roots:

**National Society for Arab and Arab American Genealogy (NSAB)** - The mission of the organization is to foster interest in Arab & Arab American genealogy, by encouraging education, research, writing & recording family histories and preserving records.

<u>arabamericangenealogy.com</u> § <u>facebook.com/arabamericangenealogy</u> <u>instagram.com/arabamericangenealogy</u>