

The logo for Arab American Heritage Month is a stylized, multi-lobed shape in shades of orange and yellow, set against a dark teal background. The text "ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH" is written in a bold, serif font, with "ARAB" on the top line, "AMERICAN" on the second, "HERITAGE" on the third, and "MONTH" on the fourth, all in a dark teal color.

# ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

APRIL 2021 | NEWSLETTER

SPUNO DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

## Arab American Heritage Month

### [National Arab American Heritage Month](#)

#### **What's in a Word?**

In the United States, the terms "Arab" and "Middle Eastern" are used almost interchangeably, however, this should not be the case. Though individuals of Arab and Middle Eastern descent come from regions Westerners may consider similar or even the same, it's important for us to acknowledge that they are distinct from one another. According to the Arab American National Museum (AANM), The Middle East includes non-Arabic nations, such as Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Likewise, many Arabic nations - such as Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria - are located outside of what is typically considered "The Middle East".

#### **Supporting Arab American Students**

According to Insight Into Diversity (2021), Arab Americans have long been left out of academic conversation and are thus an understudied population. Arab and Muslim students are in great need of culturally competent and responsive counselors that understand issues within the context of their culture, religion, etc. Although, research suggests that professions such as counseling have not been adequately trained to meet this population's individual needs. Unfortunately, because of this, Arab American's emotional well-being and academic success are more at risk. They may experience unsettling and racing thoughts of feeling in danger and their minds and bodies are on permanent alert, or feel emotionally detached and empty. Additionally, students feeling dismissed, judged, or misheard are discouraged about seeking or returning to seek counseling services.

### [Challenges Facing the Arab American Community from a Legal Perspective](#)

Since first immigrating to the U.S. and following the events of September 11th, 2001, Arab Americans have faced substantial animosity, racial profiling, and continue to face risks of hate crimes and discrimination. This has heightened psychological distress, feelings of isolation and stigmatization and reduced levels of happiness to this group (Audi, 2021). In the article linked above, violent acts and criminal "suspect" treatment carried out by individuals against Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims are mentioned and are based on nothing more than the physical features and attire of this group.

# Celebrating Arab American Women



Zahra Lari is the first Arab American professional figure skater on the U.S. Olympic Team during the Winter games in 2018. Lari was featured in a campaign for the Nike Pro Hijab later that year.

Rashida Tlaib made history in November 2018 when she became one of the first Muslim women and the first Palestinian American to be elected into Congress.



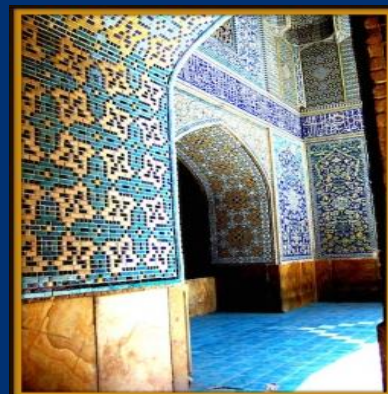
Ilhan Omar also made history in November 2018. Omar was one of the first Muslim women, as well as the first Somali American to be sworn in to Congress. Omar is also the first hijabi to enter Congress, marking the end of a 181-year-old ban on members wearing any type of headwear in chambers.



# Resources for Educators

There is a huge list of resources [here](#) they have different things such as lesson plans, teaching modules, and educational resources.

- Lessons on History and Culture
- Arabs in Hollywood
- The Golden Age of Islam
- The Middle East As Net Exporter of Religion
- Art of the Ancient Near East
- Assyrian Empire
- The Contributions of Arab Civilization to Mathematics and Science



Also, check out the [American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee's Educator Resources](#) and [Arab American Stories Educator Resources](#) website.

## Best Practices For Educators

According to the [American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee](#), Arab Americans in US schools represent more than 20 countries around the world. They share similarities with other immigrant groups seeking to establish an ethnic identity in this country, but they also face additional challenges. Listed below are some ways educators can create a supportive school environment for Arab American students and families.

- Represent the Middle East, Arabs, and Muslims accurately, completely, and fairly in the curriculum and school activities. Education provided should be accurate and unbiased.
- Due to increases in prejudice following political events involving Arabs, educators should be prepared to respond to possible harassment of Arab American students and to refer to school policies against hate crimes and discrimination as appropriate.
- Schools should not enforce dress codes or showering requirements that violate the Muslim tradition of modesty.
- To account for the individuality of Arab families, it is important for educators to take the lead from students and their parents when approaching them about school and other related issues
- When working directly with Arab-American students, consider cultural influences including the student's level of acculturation and family values and culture when providing services.
- Work with school staff to promote cultural understanding and awareness of influences that may potentially impact Arab-American student learning.



# Community Resources

## [The National Network For Arab American Communities \(NNAAC\)\\*](#)

A growing network of independent Arab American communities and organizations aimed to provide programs that involve capacity building, advocacy and civic engagement, and youth and community services.

## [The Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee \(ADC\)](#)

A great resource for gaining knowledge on the rights of Arab Americans, including students. The organization has a long history of promoting and advocating for Arab culture in America.

## [The Arab American Institute \(AAI\)\\*](#)

A non-profit organization focused on providing legal and civil rights resources to Arab American communities across the nation.

## [Arab American National Museum](#)

The only museum in America dedicated to Arab American history and culture. The site is an excellent resource for discovering and learning about the vibrant and diverse community.

\*Denotes organization website is under construction as of April 2021

## Call for Action!

According to [census data](#) collected by the Arab American Institute Foundation, Arab American families and communities reside in more than half of the counties in Nebraska. However, a quick (or even thorough) search online for local resources for Arab American families turns up little to no results. This appears to be the case for searches in Omaha, Lincoln, Nebraska, and even the Midwest (unless you want to drive to Chicago).

While this does not mean that resources do not exist, it does bring into question the accessibility of these resources. Even universities like UNO, UNL, and Creighton do not have any resources or organization affiliations present on their websites for Arab American students.

There are religious organizations such as the [American Muslim Institute](#) in Omaha that promote and celebrate religions most commonly practiced by Arab Americans, we recognize that not all Arab Americans practice those religions. Thinking of within-group differences in culture is essential when providing resources to families and communities. Like national organizations, our local communities should have resources and services that promote Arab American culture and celebrate the diverse histories of the families and individuals that identify themselves as Arab Americans.

**Going forward, how can we as individuals working in schools and communities advocate for Arab American resources and services? How can we ensure that those resources are accessible to families and students?**