



# Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium

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# Who Are Arab Americans?: An Introduction



# Land Acknowledgement

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the land and the people to whom this land belongs. This is the land of the \_\_\_\_\_ people, and they are still here.

WE STAND in solidarity with ALL indigenous people and their right to self-determination, liberation and peace.

WE COMMIT to working toward the healing of generational trauma, theft and dispossession that native and indigenous people have faced and continue to face.

In this light, MY PLEDGE today is to....

Indigenous land loss from 1784-present



Palestine land loss 1917-2016.

# Ancestor Acknowledgement

Said wrote extensively about the West's misrepresentations of the Arab cause. In 1979, in an essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," Said argued in favor of the political legitimacy and right to a Jewish homeland; but also on the right of the Palestinians for self-determination.

In an essay published in The Nation in 1980, "Islam through Western Eyes," Said wrote, "Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression."



**Born:** **Edward Wadie Said**  
1 November 1935  
Mandatory Palestine

**Died:** 24 September 2003 (aged  
67)  
New York City, New York,  
U.S.



Cultural Energizer

# Who are Arab Americans?

Locate any countries that you think are part of the Arab world.



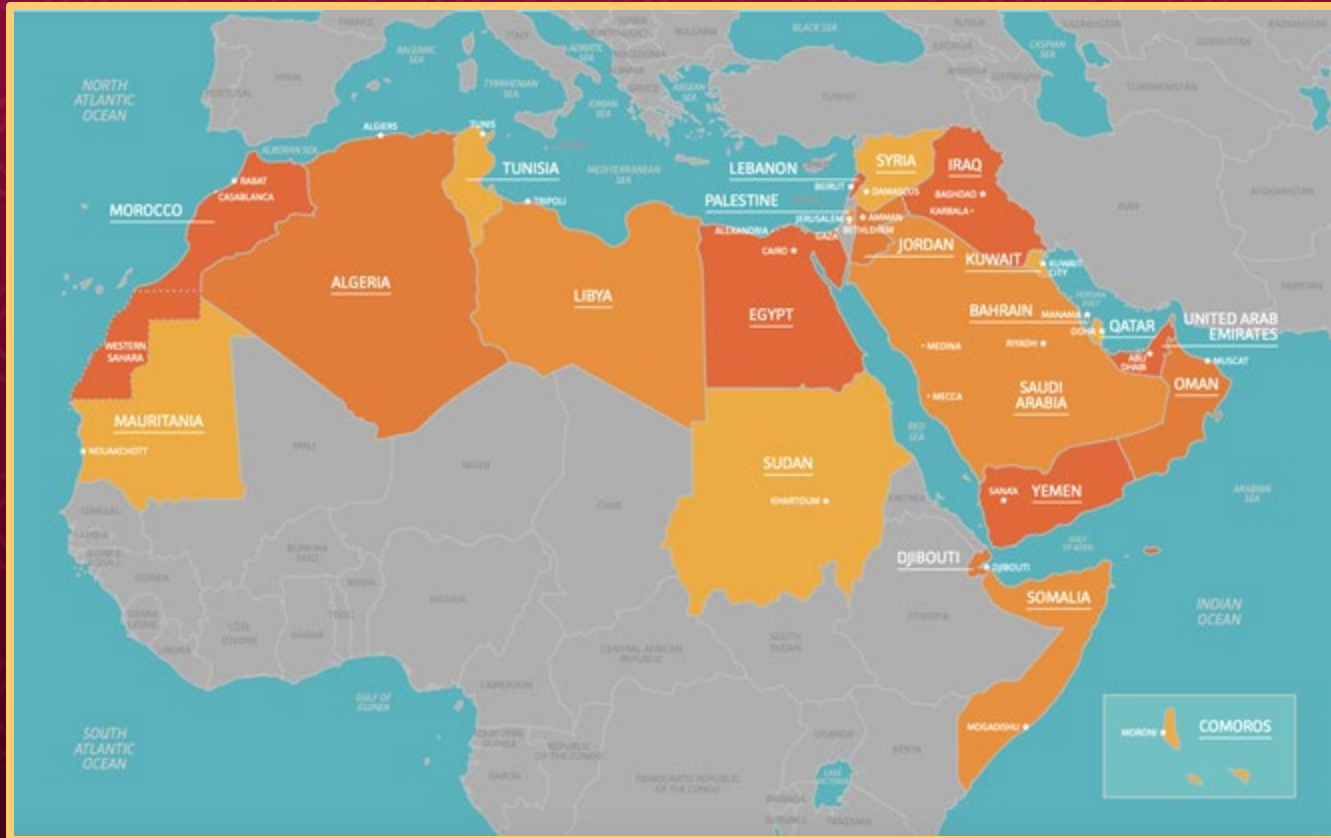
# Where and what is the Arab World?



The Arab world is often defined by membership in the League of Arab States (also known as The Arab League), which consists of 22 countries: Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Tunisia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Mauritania, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Djibouti and Comoros Islands (listed in order of size of population).

Most of these countries consider Arabic their national language, although they may have substantial non-Arabic speaking populations. Even if they speak English fluently, attachment to the Arabic language as their native tongue is one of the cultural aspects that Arab Americans, particularly more recent immigrants, share.

What do you notice about the countries that are part of the Arab world? Is anything surprising to you?







# How is the Arab World different from the Middle East?

- While many in the U.S. tend to use the terms “Middle East” and “Middle Eastern” casually, it is not fully interchangeable with the more specific term Arab.
- Although both geographic -cultural terms are debatable, the Middle East includes countries that are not considered Arab, including Iran, Turkey and Cyprus.
- Rather than identifying their main national language as Arabic, people in these countries speak Farsi, Turkish, Cypriot Turkish and Cypriot Greek, respectively.
- The State of Israel is included in the Middle East, where Modern Hebrew and Arabic are the two official languages.
- In addition, African Arab countries are often not placed in the Middle East and are categorized either as separate countries or by their location within the African continent.



# How is the Arab World different from the Middle East?

- The reasons behind the unclear terminology lie in history and changes in Western colonial perceptions of the region.
- Early European geographers divided the East—broadly meaning the Asian continent—into the Near East (the area extending from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Gulf), the Middle East (from the Arabian Gulf to Southeast Asia) and the Far East (the region facing the Pacific Ocean).
- In the 20th century, these traditional delineations changed when the Ottoman Empire broke up and the British military command in World Wars I and II began to claim that areas in both the Near East and the Middle East were part of their “Middle East command.”
- The term Middle East slowly began to refer to the whole region in general, but which exact areas were included is subject to interpretation and context.



*Critical Concepts*

**True or  
False?**



# True or False:

Most Muslims in the U.S. are Arab American.



**FALSE.** Although many people think “Muslim” equals “Arab” (and vice versa), the majority of U.S. Muslims are not people of Arab descent. Arab Americans constitute only 12% of this country’s Muslim population. The bulk of U.S. Muslims are African American (42%), while immigrants of South Asian descent comprise almost 24% of American Muslims. There are also 80,000 people of Western European heritage who practice Islam. Further, a large number of Arab Americans are Christian. Between the latter part of the 19th century and World War II, a multitude of Christians left Syria and Lebanon and came to America. These immigrants (and their descendents) represent roughly 70-75% of Arab Americans today.

# True or False:

Arab Americans live mostly in urban areas.

TRUE: Arab immigrants began coming to the U.S. in sizable numbers during the 1880's. Today, it is estimated that nearly 3.7 million Americans trace their roots to an Arab country. Arab Americans are found in every state, but more than two thirds of them live in just ten states: California, Michigan, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Metropolitan Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York are home to one-third of the population.



# True or False:

Most Arab Americans speak a language other than English in their homes.

TRUE: Fifty-one percent of Arab Americans speak a language other than English in their homes. The vast majority, however, are bilingual. Only 8% of Arab American school-age children speak little or no English.



# Arab American Immigration Stories: Community Collaboration





# Immigration Stories

View the stories and take notes on why each person/family came to the United States.



Yemen to US

# Immigration Stories

View the stories and take notes on why each person/family came to the United States.



Sudan to US

# Immigration Stories

View the stories and take notes on why each person/family came to the United States.



Lebanon to  
US

# Conclusive Dialogue: Reasons for Immigration

