



The Arab Americans: A History

Gregory Orfalea

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Gregory Orfalea's new and definitive work spans a century-and-a-half of the life of Arab immigrants and their descendants in the United States. In *The Arab Americans: A History*, Orfalea has marshaled over 150 interviews and 25 years of research to tell the story that begins in 1856, when camel driver Hajdi Ali (or Hi Jolly) was hired by Jefferson Davis to cut a "camel trail" across the Southwest, and continues through the 2005 arrest of a former Virginia high school valedictorian accused of plotting with al-Qaeda. Once seen as the "benevolent stranger," as the author points out, today Arab Americans are "the malevolent stranger." His book, however, is an assault on such ignorance, both celebration and warning.

The Arab Americans is the culmination of a life's work, a landmark in the history of what it means to be an American. It is also the history of a community uniquely repressed in American scholarship, history, literature, and politics. *The Arab Americans* fills a sizable void, and it could not be more timely. With American troops sprawled across the Arab and Muslim world, Orfalea's work is like light in a dark tunnel—facts, not stereotypes; people, not shadows; the vibrant world of a lost American experience come to life.

Orfalea brings to this work an historian's love of meticulous and telling detail, a poet's ear, and a novelist's sense of story. The cumulative effect is symphonic and its arrival none too soon.

"Orfalea gives a detailed and highly readable account of the three major waves of Arab immigration to America, from 1878 to 1924, 1947 to 1966, and 1967 to the present, providing an intimate description of today's Arab Americans and their historical experiences. He also discusses the country's principal Arab American organizations and examines the impact of post-9/11 developments on the Arab American community. This eminently clear and well-written book is essential for anyone interested in going beyond the media stereotypes of Arab Americans. Highly recommended..." -Library Journal

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