

ity and the Palestinian cause became more included (though not perfectly) among other Americans' minority activism, that does not translate into acceptance by the mainstream American public.

■ ■ Reading the book, we see that the war of 1967 acted as a wake-up call for Arab Americans and galvanized them into action. To what extent was this a result of the US backing an Israeli imperialism and to what extent was it an ethnic identity awakening?

Both of these factors converged in that moment to create the galvanizing effect on Arab American activism. It is difficult to determine which



factor played a larger role. This is speculation, but I think if the 1967 Arab-Israeli War with U.S. backing of the Israelis had occurred a decade earlier, Arab Americans would not have been actively mobilized because the civil rights movement, particularly the more nationalist trend in identity awakening, had not yet permeated through other American minority groups before the late 1960s. Another reason is that a reform in U.S. immigration policy occurred in 1965 (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965) that opened the doors to many more immigrants from the Middle East. This meant that in the late 1960s there was an influx of new immigrants from Arab countries, and they tended to be more immersed in Arab World politics. On the other hand, I would imagine that even with the new immigration and the ethnic awakening in the 1960s, if there hadn't been the earth-shattering Arab-Israeli War at that juncture, with its clear demonstration of U.S. government support for Israel, the ardent Arab American activism may not have emerged in that period.

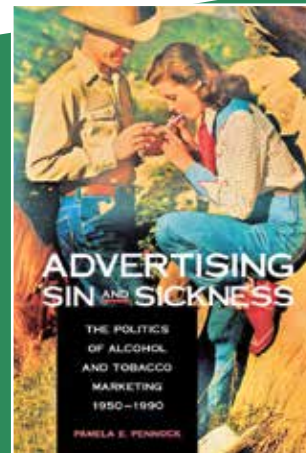
■ ■ How big an obstacle was stereotyping of Arabs as terrorists for Arab American Left to sell its progressive agendas to the wider American public? And although Sirhan's assassination of Robert F. Kennedy definitely didn't help, did Arab Americans have no other choice but to denounce it as they did?



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Students from various campus groups, including the Black Student Alliance and the Young Socialist Alliance, protesting against Israel at the University of Colorado-Boulder in 1973.

The prevalent stereotype of Arabs as terrorists was and still is a significant obstacle to not only projecting an Arab American political agenda but even living without fear in the United States. The stereotype remains difficult for Arab Americans of any political stripe to overcome when trying to gain acceptance in the United States, and I think it is a key reason the wider American public continues to be prejudiced against them. In terms of how most Arab Americans responded to Sirhan Sirhan's assassination of Robert Kennedy in 1968:



■ ■ Now that, as you write, "most Arab American political organizations had grown less oppositional and more accommodationist to mainstream American political attitudes," what chance do they have to truly champion the Palestine cause?

I realize that my answer to this question may seem overly sanguine, especially because it has been over thirty years since the accommodationist trajectory in Arab American political organizing began, but I think that accommodation instead of opposition is the approach that Arab Americans and other proponents of Palestine must take in order to acquire greater influence in American politics. I think oppositional approaches, while they feel principled and uncompromising, tend to isolate the minority and generate backlash.

Through largely accommodationist approaches, Arab American individuals and organizations have gained more inroads in multicultural coalitions and within the Democratic Party. I think that over the last twenty years we have seen more understanding by American liberals of the Palestinian perspective and, in the last ten years, more criticism of Israel. Before the 1980s, the Democratic Party was almost entirely pro-Israel. Now, the party is split on the issue. As with so many issues in American politics and society, there is still intense polarization and in some ways progress on this front seems to have been halted.

If Arab Americans had responded with sympathy for Sirhan's motives or even tried to adopt a neutral stance, I think they would have suffered a severe backlash in this country that would have damaged livelihoods and perhaps even lives. I think if they hadn't denounced the assassination and distanced themselves from Sirhan, it would have set Arab Americans further back than they already were; it would have made them visible in a very damaging way.

■ ■ One might say that Operation Boulder intended to hamper Arab American activism, but after its initial success, led to a stronger ethnic and cultural identity. How much do you agree, and how similar in conduct do you regard Trump's Travel Ban?

The U.S. government's Operation Boulder program to scrutinize and deny immigration visas of people coming from Arab countries in the 1970s was harmful, and it did serve to intimidate some Arab Americans, especially recently arrived immigrants who did not want to get in trouble with the government and be deported. And yet, overall I think that the program backfired because it actually served to heighten many Arab Americans' activism and "rights consciousness." The government's program was so blatantly discriminatory that it made even apolitical and assimilated Arab Americans realize that they could be treated differently by their government due to their ethnicity and have their civil rights violated. Thus this episode served as a wake-up call for some Arab Americans who had not been mobilized by the Palestinian cause. They realized that Arab American issues were not just about injustice in the Middle East but also about injustice they faced in the United States.

I agree that Trump's Travel Ban, targeting mostly Muslim countries, was quite similar in its intent and also its effect on raising consciousness among Arab and Muslim Americans. One positive difference between the two episodes, if we can find something positive, is that many more Americans joined Arab and Muslim Americans in protesting the Travel Ban than had joined in speaking out against Operation Boulder in the 1970s.

