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Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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A few days after September 11, 2001, the Japanese American National Museum (National Museum) issued a public statement to its 60,000+ supporters nationally and to the media. The National Museum's statement reaffirmed its mission to interpret and link the lessons of history to the present and a commitment to reach out to Arab American and Muslim communities who could be unfairly targeted on the basis of their ancestry. Additionally, the National Museum held public programs that brought together Japanese Americans, Arab Americans, law enforcement officers, and federal agencies to discuss the challenges of maintaining national security while also protecting the civil liberties of America's residents.

No Japanese American was ever found guilty of espionage or disloyalty.

Therefore, in the days following September 11, the Japanese American National Museum believed it was important to share the lessons of history and create a dialogue about their relevance to the crisis of today. It was understandable that Americans were concerned about their country's safety and security. But in the name of that concern, troubling incidents began to surface as Arab Americans, Muslims, and other South Asians became suspects based on their race.

It became evident immediately following the events of September 11 that most Americans knew very little about the history of Arab Americans. Like many other immigrant groups, their history dates back to the mid-1800s, when Arab immigrants first came to the United States. But the image too often cast in the national media following September 11 was one of a community of terrorists who were recent arrivals to the United States.

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In June 2002 the National Museum's Board of Trustees held its quarterly meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, which provided an opportunity for informal networking among the leaders and staff of the two organizations. The National Museum leadership wanted to express strong institutional support for the work of ACCESS in creating a new museum and cultural center and to learn about the history and current issues the Arab American community was facing.

The long-term collaboration between the Japanese American National Museum and ACCESS's Arab American National Museum will be important to both organizations.

The Japanese American National Museum is committed to working with diverse ethnic groups throughout America to place the Japanese American experience within the broad context of American history. Through the museum's presentation of art, history, and culture, we believe it is important not only to look at the past but to ensure that the lessons of the past are relevant to the issues of today. Past mistakes do not have to be repeated. We must work with others to educate all Americans about Japanese Americans' diverse and intricate history. We look forward to working with ACCESS and many other organizations nationally and globally to enable education and exploration through dialogue and reflection, to create a better world for the generations to come.



JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM
369 EAST FIRST STREET
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FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Jessica Lee	FROM: Robyn Hamada Gilmore Executive Assistant
COMPANY:	DATE: 05/10/06
FAX NUMBER: 202-224-6747	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 7
PHONE NUMBER:	SENDER'S PHONE NUMBER: 213-830-5651
RE: Copy of Irene's article	YOUR REFERENCE NUMBER:

URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Hi Jessica,

Pet Irene's request, I am faxing a copy of her article for Senator Inouye to refer to for his upcoming speech in Detroit.

Please feel free to contact me should you need anything further.

Thank you,

Robyn

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SOJIN KIM

20. Tomás Benitez, executive director of partner organization Self Help Graphics & Art, had always suggested in meetings that the exhibition—with its diverse participants—would necessarily provide multiple vantage points from which to view the neighborhood, in his words, “from up close and from a distance.”

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Irene Y. Hivano

History, Current Events, and a Network Link

THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM
AND THE ARAB COMMUNITY CENTER
FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SERVICES



BACKGROUND: THE EVENTS OF 1942 AND 2001

September 11, 2001, is a day forever marked in American history. It is also the day when the issue of who is an American was raised once again. The terrorists' attacks in the United States resulted in homeland security becoming the central issue discussed by all Americans concerning all aspects of their lives. Clearly, Americans wanted more security. But the United States is a democratic society, and the U.S. Constitution was created to protect the rights and liberties of all its citizens. Following September 11, 2001, some Americans and even government agencies cast a suspicious eye on Arab Americans and Muslims because of their ancestry. For Japanese Americans, these suspicions based on race were reminiscent of the days following the outbreak of World War II, when Japanese Americans were considered “the enemy” by their own government by virtue of their ancestry. The mistakes of the U.S. government's actions in 1942 are essential to remember in the aftermath of 2001 to prevent a similar miscarriage of justice.

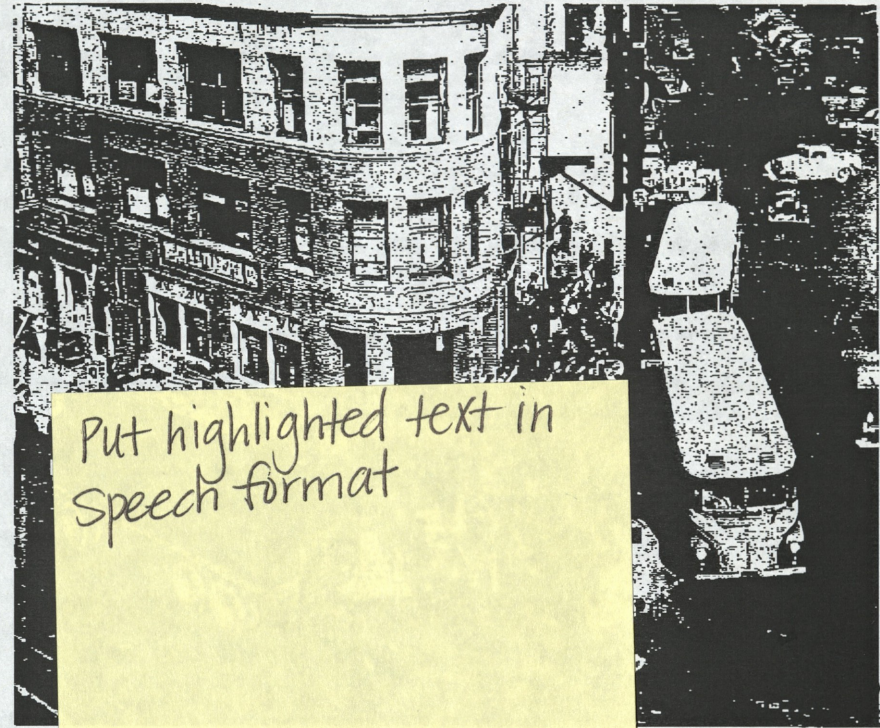
THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM
POST-SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

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As discussed in previous chapters, following the outbreak of World War II, Japanese Americans experienced intense racial discrimination that culminated in the unconstitutional incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which forced Japanese Americans—both citizens and “non-citizens” (first-generation Japanese immigrants were prohibited from becoming naturalized citizens until 1952)—to leave their homes, their belongings, and their businesses and live in American concentration camps. Government officials and the majority of the American people feared Japanese Americans would be disloyal to the United States. In fact, no Japanese American was ever found guilty of espionage or disloyalty. Solely on the basis of race, these U.S. residents were denied their civil liberties. In 1988 the U.S. Congress and the president took the historic action of apologizing to Japanese Americans and issued token monetary reparations—one of the few times in history a government apologized for actions it later determined were unjust.

Therefore, in the days following September 11, the Japanese American National Museum believed it was important to share the lessons of history and create a dialogue about their relevance to the crisis of today. It was understandable that Americans were concerned about their country's safety and security. But in the name of that concern, troubling incidents began to surface as Arab Americans, Muslims, and other South Asians became suspects based on their race. People boarding planes who appeared to be of Arab descent were viewed with suspicion, and acts of targeted racism occurred. But unlike 1942, when the number of voices speaking out in support of Japanese Americans was limited to a courageous few, many individuals and political leaders referred back to the World War II experience and called for restraint and the protection of civil liberties in a time of fear over national security.

U.S. secretary of transportation Norman Mineta, who had the enormous responsibility of installing massive security measures in airports throughout the country, was one of the first voices in President George Bush's administration to



13.1 This building was once a Buddhist temple but is now the headquarters of the Japanese American National Museum. Gift of Jack and Peggy Iwata, Japanese American National Museum [93.102.102].

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Having a prominent American of Japanese ancestry as secretary of transportation was a groundbreaking appointment in U.S. history. Secretary Mineta's presence in President Bush's cabinet was clearly one key to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Shortly after September 11, President Bush visited a mosque and met with leaders of the Arab American and Muslim communities.

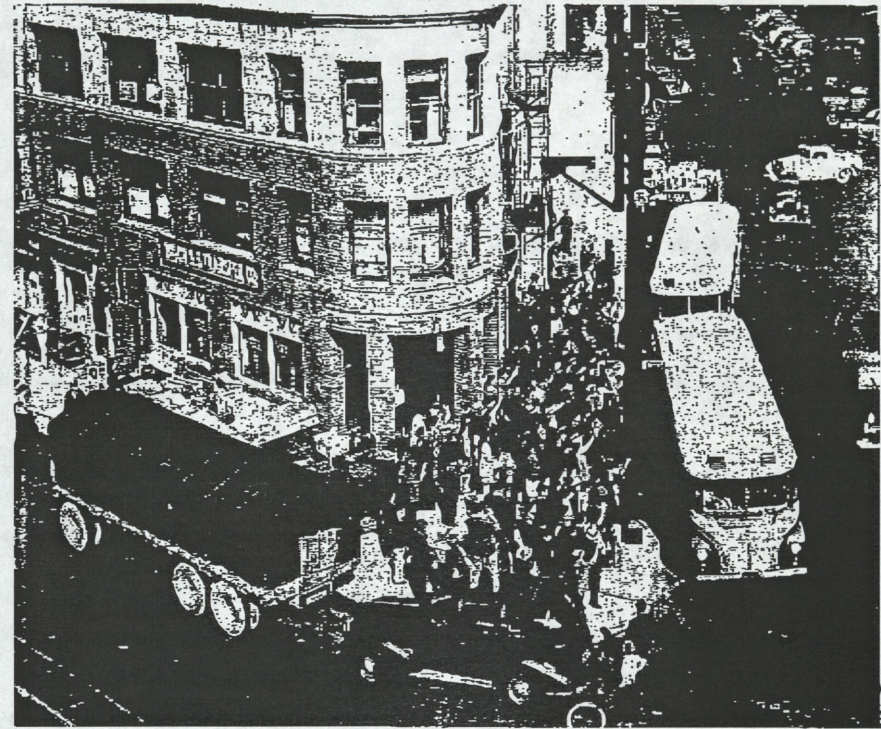
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POST-SEPTEMBER 11—A DIFFERENT STORY FOR ACCESS

It became evident immediately following the events of September 11 that most Americans knew very little about the history of Arab Americans. Like many other immigrant groups, their history dates back to the mid-1800s, when Arab immigrants first came to the United States. But the image too often cast in the national media following September 11 was one of a community of terrorists who were recent arrivals to the United States. Immigrants from the Middle East came to America—like other immigrants—looking for a better way of life, often because of the economic conditions in their home countries. After World War II, many immigrants and refugees continued to come to America in search of greater opportunities. The conflicts in the Middle East to the present day have forced many people to seek their fortunes in America. This community is made up of people from diverse countries, cultures, religious backgrounds—Muslim and Christian—and generations. It is important to note that the differences between the Middle Eastern immigrants of the 1880s and the Middle Eastern refugees of the 1990s are vast.

In the days following September 11, Arab Americans and many government, community, and business leaders looked to prominent Arab Americans and Arab American organizations to call for civil rights protections and ethnic and religious tolerance. Michigan is home to the largest concentration of Arab people outside the Middle East. Over 450,000 Arab Americans reside in the state, the majority in the southeastern section. One of the organizations called upon to speak out in the aftermath of September 11 was the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), located in Dearborn, Michigan, and led by Executive Director Ismael Ahmed. Following September 11, ACCESS organized support for the Arab American community by putting together teams of counselors and educators to visit area schools to help students—Arab and non-Arab—deal with the aftermath of September 11 and become more aware of Arab American history and culture. ACCESS joined with other civic organizations and leaders to sponsor public programs, interfaith candlelight vigils, town hall meetings, cultural events, and other educational programs.¹

Ahmed also felt the personal effects of September 11. He received hate mail in the form of letters, e-mails, and threatening verbal communications. In one incident a group of young white men followed him in a car shouting threats that they would kill him. Ahmed appeared on local and national media, including 60 Minutes, often to defend unfounded and inaccurate statements about the financial and moral support of terrorists by the Arab American community.

ACCESS is a human service organization committed to the development of the Arab American community in all aspects of its economic, social, and cultural life. It is the largest Arab American human service agency in the United States, with an annual budget of \$10 million and 140 full-time staff. Since its founding in 1971, ACCESS has sought to meet the needs of low-income families (both Arab

and non-Arab) and to help newly arrived immigrants adapt to life in America. The organization provides a wide range of social, mental health, educational, cultural, employment, legal, and medical support. ACCESS's assistance to newcomers includes employment services and job training, medical and community mental health services, and educational, recreational, and social programs for youth and families.²

ACCESS's Cultural Arts Department was established in 1987 to support a wide range of Arab American arts and humanities programming throughout southeastern Michigan. Its staff works to promote an appreciation of Arab and American culture through education and the arts. The Cultural Arts Department has organized several exhibitions that have been displayed in ACCESS's administrative building. It has provided materials to various scholarly publications and the media. The department created a traveling exhibition, *A Community Between Two Worlds*, which was shown at various sites nationwide. ACCESS has developed publications that include an elementary school curriculum; an Arab American encyclopedia; a pictorial history book, *Arab Americans in Detroit*; and an award-winning documentary video, *Tales from Arab Detroit*. The Cultural Arts Department has worked collaboratively with other groups in the Detroit metropolitan area and has jointly sponsored events with "mainstream" arts and cultural organizations. These events include the annual Concert of Colors, the East Dearborn International Festival, film festivals, and other concerts, art exhibitions, and cultural presentations.³

Since September 11, 2001, ACCESS's educational outreach program has expanded dramatically. Designed to promote cultural literacy and address stereotypes regarding people of Arab descent, the educational program has focused on the needs of educators, students, law enforcement personnel, and legislators in Michigan.

The new Arab American National Museum ACCESS is creating plans to raise the profile and enhance the understanding of the Arab American community both nationally and internationally. The museum will be housed in a \$12.8 million facility, located on Michigan Avenue opposite Dearborn City Hall. A new 38,500-square-foot building will provide exhibition space; an auditorium for music, theater, and dance programs; and facilities for meetings and gatherings.⁴

The mission of the Arab American National Museum is to document, preserve, celebrate, and educate the public about the history, life, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans. The museum will serve as a resource to enhance knowledge and understanding about Arab Americans and their presence in the United States. The goals of the Arab American museum are:

- To preserve and collect the history, culture, and art of Arab Americans
- To meet the growing interest in understanding the diversity of our nation and to address the need for more reliable information about Arab Americans

- To provide community members, students, artists, and scholars with a research facility and resource center
- To promote cross-cultural dialogue between all American ethnic and religious groups
- To create opportunities for visitors to explore the contributions immigrants have made and continue to make to American society and its history.⁵

The museum's mission, goals, and foundation in the community have drawn parallels for many familiar with the Japanese American National Museum.

The need for an expanded facility and to do more in the areas of education and outreach is clear to ACCESS. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), hate crimes targeting Muslims and people who appear to be of Middle Eastern ethnicity increased from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001. Representatives from the Arab American communities believe many more incidents went unreported. Significantly, the FBI reported that prior to September 11, Muslims were among the least targeted religious groups in the United States. In August 2002 the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that around 1,200 persons were arrested after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.⁶ The names of those persons and the conditions in and under which they were kept have never been revealed to the public. In a January 2002 article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Ahmed stated, "It makes us want to redouble our efforts—raise the money, open the museum, teach people about who we are, and institutionalize our presence in this country so that we are seen as part of the whole, as Americans, not separate."⁷

A TIMELY COLLABORATION

Many national cultural leaders and funding sources have recognized the work of the Japanese American National Museum, in particular its collaborative approach in developing cross-cultural programming. The staff and leaders of the National Museum are often called upon to share their experiences with new cultural organizations, especially those in ethnic communities that are exploring the feasibility of establishing a cultural center, museum, or historical project.

As ACCESS was beginning to develop its plans for a new museum and cultural center, several funding sources and cultural leaders referred the organization to the Japanese American National Museum. The sources included the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Kresge Foundation, headquartered in Troy, Michigan—both previous funders of the Japanese American National Museum. In mid-2001, before the events of September 11, ACCESS contacted the Japanese American National Museum for advice and assistance.

I met ACCESS's cultural arts director, Dr. Anan Ameri, and other ACCESS staff on a trip to Dearborn, Michigan. I was interested in learning more about

their future plans to build a museum and cultural center. I toured the city and the ACCESS facilities and was impressed with ACCESS's strong organization, community commitment, and prior work with other Detroit arts and cultural organizations. Since the National Museum's opening in 1992, the philosophy has been to "give back" to the field and to assist new organizations interested in building centers for art, history, and culture. The Japanese American National Museum has always benefited from its colleagues in the museum, funding, and cultural fields and likewise has expressed its willingness to assist ACCESS in whatever way possible to launch its new cultural center and museum.

Although ACCESS was helping the Arab American community grapple with the aftermath of September 11, the organization proceeded with earlier plans to convene an NEH-funded planning conference in December 2001. The meeting, which I had the privilege of attending, included museum professionals along with Arab American scholars. Its goals were to review the proposed plans for the cultural center and museum and to enlist input on the core themes of the exhibitions and public programs. This planning meeting was followed in October 2002 by a meeting of a broader cross section of Arab American community leaders, museum professionals, and educators with the exhibition team and staff. Nancy Araki, director of community services at the Japanese American National Museum and the first staff person hired in 1985, attended the second meeting. Both planning meetings provided ACCESS with solid community and scholarly engagement and advice for developing its future plans. Nancy Araki and I came away from the meetings encouraged by the depth of scholarship, the engagement of a growing number of Arab American community leaders in other parts of the country, and the commitment of ACCESS to learn from others.

In June 2002 the National Museum's Board of Trustees held its quarterly meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, which provided an opportunity for informal networking among the leaders and staff of the two organizations. The National Museum leadership wanted to express strong institutional support for the work of ACCESS in creating a new museum and cultural center and to learn about the history and current issues the Arab American community was facing. A few months prior to the June board meeting, Secretary of Transportation and National Museum trustee Norman Mineta spoke at ACCESS's 2002 annual dinner, an event attended by over 2,000 people.

At the time of the June 2002 board meeting, a joint public program was organized featuring three speakers: the Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, United States senator and chairman of the Japanese American National Museum's Board of Governors; Ismael Ahmed; and Daniel Krichbaum, executive director of the National Coalition of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) in Detroit, an organization that has worked to build multicultural coalitions and programs. Local members of the Japanese American National Museum in the greater Detroit area and members of ACCESS and the NCCJ were invited to this program.

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In the evening the board and senior staff of the National Museum were guests at a dinner hosted by the leaders of ACCESS at a local Arab American restaurant. The evening provided an opportunity for ACCESS leaders to understand the central role the leadership of the National Museum has played in its overall achievements. National Museum board members travel at their own expense and devote a significant amount of time to the organization, and ACCESS leaders thus began to understand the potential to build a strong national board.

Subsequent to the June 2002 board meeting, Dr. Frank Ellsworth, chairman of the National Museum's Executive Committee, offered to meet with ACCESS to provide insight into the role a board can play. Ellsworth is a noted national educator and adviser to thousands of nonprofit organizations in the area of philanthropy, particularly regarding endowment development and investment strategies. Ellsworth met with ACCESS in Dearborn in September 2002 as a follow-up to the National Museum's board meeting.

In November 2002 Ahmed and Ameri were invited to speak at the All-Camps Summit organized by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. The summit was cosponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, and a Camp Advisory Committee composed of former inmates of the ten World War II War Relocation Authority camps and the Justice Department Camp in Crystal City. The summit focused on providing dialogues and discussions for sharing the World War II camp experience among former inmates, educators, scholars, and students. It centered on preserving these stories and included workshops and demonstrations by National Museum staff on how families can document and preserve stories, photos, and other memorabilia. The summit looked at efforts to preserve the World War II campsites and showcased ongoing efforts by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service.

The premise of the All-Camps Summit was that the lessons learned from the World War II incarceration experience have never been more relevant than they are today as the nation grapples with important questions and increasingly difficult issues related to civil liberties and personal freedoms.

At the All-Camps Summit, several keynote speakers addressed the importance of the Japanese American community speaking out about its experiences and the potential abridgement of civil rights in the post-September 11 environment. Ahmed chronicled his personal story, which illustrated the long history of Arab Americans in the United States. Ahmed has a mixed Middle Eastern background. His mother's family came to the United States from what is now Lebanon more than a hundred years ago. His father arrived from Egypt at age ten, and his stepfather came from Yemen. When Ahmed was six, his father moved his family to Michigan. Ahmed's grandmother, Aliya Hassen, was an Islamic and civil rights activist. She was a cofounder of ACCESS, along with Ismael. Ahmed became executive director of ACCESS in 1980. Under Ahmed's leadership, ACCESS has

grown into a significant institution that has garnered support from community and public leaders because of its presence as a dynamic force for change and growth within the Arab American community.

Anan Ameri's academic credentials, professional experience, and commitment to building up the Arab American community have made her an outstanding leader in ACCESS's effort to build a strong cultural arts program. Ameri spoke on a panel at the All-Camps Summit on the lessons of 1942 and 2001.

In January 2003, ACCESS staff, including Ameri and Chief Financial Officer Maha Freij, spent several days at the Japanese American National Museum holding in-depth discussions with National Museum staff at all levels of the organization.

In May 2003 the Annual Meeting of the Council of Foundations featured a panel presentation, "Partnering to Preserve an Ethnic Identity: Innovative Collaborations," that focused on the work of the Japanese American National Museum and ACCESS. The National Museum and ACCESS will continue to present both their individual and collaborative work to bring together two communities affected and then intertwined by world events nearly sixty years apart.

THE FUTURE

The long-term collaboration between the Japanese American National Museum and ACCESS's Arab American National Museum will be important to both organizations. As in all institutional collaborations, both partners must benefit from the work they do together for the exchange to be sustained and meaningful. The Japanese American National Museum leaders and staff, like many other Americans, recognize that Arab American history is not well-known. We are learning from our colleagues at ACCESS, and in turn we believe our knowledge and experience in building an ethnic institution dedicated to arts, culture, and history will help ACCESS with its ambitious project.

The Japanese American National Museum is committed to working with diverse ethnic groups throughout America to place the Japanese American experience within the broad context of American history. Through the museum's presentation of art, history, and culture, we believe it is important not only to look to the past but to ensure that the lessons of the past are relevant to the issues of today. Past mistakes do not have to be repeated. We must work with others to educate all Americans about Japanese Americans' diverse and intricate history. We look forward to working with ACCESS and many other organizations nationally and globally to enable education and exploration through dialogue and reflection, to create a better world for the generations to come.

NOTES

1. ACCESS, 2001 Annual Report, Dearborn, Michigan.
2. ACCESS Publication, "The Arab American Heritage Campaign," Dearborn, Michigan.

IRENE Y. HIRANO

3. Mark Singer, "Home Is Here: America's Largest Arab Community in the Aftermath of September 11th," *New Yorker*, October 15, 2001.

4. ACCESS, Arab American National Museum, Preconcept Design, June 2002, Dearborn, Michigan.

5. ACCESS Publication, "The Arab American Heritage Campaign," Dearborn, Michigan.

6. "U.S. Courts Weigh Liberty, Security," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 4, 2002, A1-A18. The *Chronicle* reported that around 1,200 persons were arrested after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. The names of those persons and the conditions in and under which they were kept have never been fully revealed to the public.

7. "Making a Place for Arab Americans," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, January 10, 2002.

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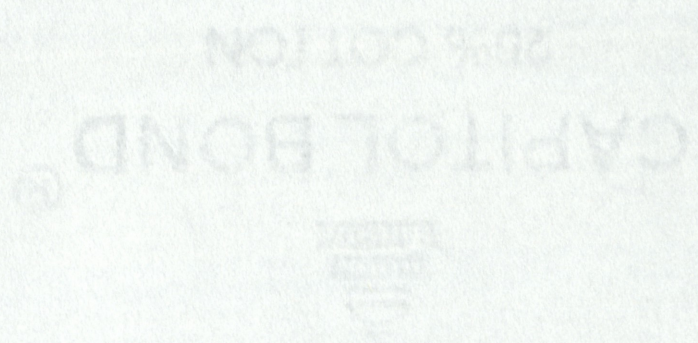
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