

# **Rethinking Security: Perspectives from Arab- American and British Arab Activists**

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# Security and Migration: National Perspectives

- Migration increasingly framed as security threat
- “Border” is now everywhere
- Rise of the “biometric” border
- Particular concern for Arab and Muslim populations

# Security and Migration: Arab and Muslim Perspectives

Security threats include:

⇒ Harassment

⇒ Discrimination

⇒ Deportation

⇒ Retrenchment of Civil Liberties

⇒ Loss of Freedom

# Activist Responses: Communication

List-servs

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Local law enforcement

⇒ Detroit/Dearborn

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⇒ Los Angeles

It was a spur-of-the-moment, day before, town hall meeting that we called and 2000-2500 people showed up. We got a room at the Sequoia Center and got an INS person to come and speak. It was all women and children and people who had family in jail. People were crying, not knowing what to do or where to go. It was such a good meeting to have, because it got everyone together in one room. We raised money to bail people out. We told people what was going on. We educated them, told them that they would not get deported right away, and gave them some knowledge. The hard thing is to be in the dark. And then the INS guy made an announcement - and this is after everyone is up there saying "My husband has a green card application pending. You're the ones taking too long" - he said that "I assure you that the government has nothing to hide." For him to say that to a bunch of women whose husbands are in jail and they don't know where they are or when they're coming home, it's such a slap in the face. They weren't going to have it. It was scary. I was worried about him. I told him "You'd better not stand up anymore. Maybe you should leave."

# Activist Responses: Communication

- Difficult to sustain
- More effective locally than nationally
- Local work easily undone by national actions



# Activist Responses: Creating Safe Spaces

- Closed community spaces: eg. Cyber communities, clubs, networks

⇒charges of self- segregation

⇒at odds with “social cohesion”

# Activist Responses: Enclaves

- Role of enclaves in immigrant resettlement
- Heightened importance in context of threat

⇒ Detroit/Dearborn

⇒ “Arab City” in Orange County, CA

# Reappropriating Security

- Muslim-American Homeland Security Congress
- Mission:

The Muslim-American Homeland Security Congress shall foster education and understanding, organization, empowerment, communication and cooperation with the American public to protect and defend the United States of America and people through the prevention of terrorism and any acts of prejudice.

# Conclusions

- Talking about security engenders *insecurity*
- Activist frustration with discourse of security
- Continued efforts to create safe spaces