

**Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham, eds. *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, 1983) 208 pp., \$5.95 paper.**

This book is a collection of sociological essays on immigrant Arab communities in the United States. It is divided into three sections: the first provides historical background to the flow of immigrants from Arab countries; the second is devoted to case studies of Arab communities in the Detroit area (where the greatest concentration of Arab-Americans in the United States is located); and the third provides a useful bibliography of current scholarship about Arab-Americans.

As one of few books attempting to describe the experience of Arabs in the United States, this volume is a welcome addition. The essays in this collection provide insights into the process of immigration and acculturation as experienced by Arabs. The book places the immigration process in an historical context, explaining the particular make-up of early immigrants who were mostly Christians from Mount Lebanon, and later ones which included Palestinians and Yemenis who were for the most part Muslims. Further, the essays show the frictions and tensions, as well as cooperation, which characterize Arab communities in this country.

The essays explore the relationships between the early arrivals (1880s-1940s) who are characterized as being largely "assimilated" into white American culture, and the new immigrants (1950s—1980s) who brought with them strong political ideas (Arab Nationalism) and religious convictions (Revivalist Islam) which set them apart from white American culture. The interaction between the two groups within Arab communities has led to a revitalized interest in affirming the distinctiveness of Arabs as an ethnic minority, as well as opposing the racist stereotypes which are perpetuated against their Arab heritage.

The book seems to falter in that it does not elaborate more extensively on the experience of Arab immigrants with racism. No essay analyzes sufficiently the changes which the tradition and culture of Arab immigrants undergo when they come into contact with a different cultural reality. Consequently, we are left with a more descriptive than analytical view of the process of acculturation. The book, as a whole, does not provide an adequate description or explanation for the basis and form of racism which is directed against Arabs (documented in other works such as Edmund Ghareeb's *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*) nor does it explore possible solutions for the problems posed. This charge, however, is to note the need for such analysis rather than a direct criticism of the book which did not pretend to deal with that issue in the first place. Another point to be raised is that the book does not seriously evaluate the changing roles of women within

Arab communities. The book only hints at the new roles women have adopted, but it never really explores them.

*Arabs in the New World* serves well as a primer about Arab immigration into the United States and about the process of acculturation. Further, it lays the basic ground for more analytical studies which need to be done about Arab communities, about their changing structures and accompanying changes in socio-political roles within them, and about racism which they encounter as an ethnic group, especially in the wake of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict and its repercussions throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world. For the reasons cited here, I recommend *Arabs in the New World* as a text and as a resource book.

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**Richard D. Alba. *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985) ix, 182 pp., \$15.95, \$12.95 paper.**

Rejoice, students of ethnicity and Italian Americans generally! A body of scholarly literature on the Italian American experience is growing. Richard Alba's book, one of the Ethnic Groups in American Life Series (Milton M. Gordon, editor) is a recent addition to the quality social science writings about this ethnic group.

Never mind that Alba quotes only from studies of Italian Americans in the East and Midwest, ignoring research over the past decade, or that he describes only the original culture of the *Mezzogiorno*, still he has summarized the most salient facts and theories about the Italian immigrant experience in this book which, though relatively small (fewer than 200 pages), may be the best summary extant of the general literature about this ethnic group.

Alba, a sociologist, demonstrates that immigration patterns and generational changes have resulted in assimilation of Italians who now have little ethnic cohesion remaining outside the family rituals. He supports his conclusion that Italian Americans are moving into the twilight of ethnicity with evidence including the growing intermarriage rates, the close correspondence between occupational and educational status of Italians and WASPs.

Because Alba has ignored the Western and Southern experiences of